Department of Political and Social Sciences

The World Is My Workplace? The Meaning of Locality and Distance for Finnish Professionals in Silicon Valley

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The World Is My Workplace?
The Meaning of Locality and Distance for Finnish Professionals in Silicon Valley

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the meaning of locality and distance in the global world. Prominent social theorizations have declared locality and distance dead in the global era, which is characterized by the widespread use of virtual communication. Yet diverse empirical studies on transnational skilled mobility, global brain circulation, and innovation and knowledge transfer show that locality and distance still matter. I argue that grand theorizations would benefit from empirically grounded research, while empirical studies would gain from explicit, systematic studies on the issue of the presumed demise of distance and locality. The present study aims towards filling this gap with an empirically grounded approach close to real-life meanings and experiences. The empirical questions focus on two issues: 1) personal motivations and identities in relation to place and 2) everyday work and knowledge sharing both locally and at distance.

The approach is qualitative and inductive with ethnographic features; the main data are in-depth interviews with Finnish professionals in Silicon Valley. Highly skilled Finns in Silicon Valley represent a case of West-West mobility; from one successful Western location to another. Skilled professionals are an interesting case for the investigation of the meaning of locality and distance, because according to many authors more privileged people in particular are presumed to be detached from localities and free from the realities and constraints of distance.

The findings show that locality and distance are still very much alive from both personal and work perspectives. Firstly, the relationship between personal motivations/identities and place is a two-way one: locations can be seen as targets or ways to fulfill personal or professional dreams, achieve goals, or challenge and develop as a person. Changing locations also evokes new identities, such as the pioneer or the mediator, which are counterintuitive considering the presumed death of distance. Secondly, the dynamics of locality and distance are present in everyday work, which is structured across several time zones, not only the local one. Virtual communication has therefore changed the organization of work locally, but has not erased distance or rendered locality less significant. In contrast, the awareness of distance is emphasized in virtual communication. Physical distance and differences of context (time of day, weather, cultural environment) can pose challenges in reaching mutual understandings or making joint decisions. Furthermore, being present in a locality and experiencing face-to-face interaction becomes even more meaningful in the form of chance encounters, taking collaboration to the next level, accessing certain types of information and knowledge, and inspiration (the experience of "being at the center of things"). Furthermore, the findings indicate that certain kinds of information and tacit knowledge do not travel well across distance and that local presence is needed to access these. The meaning of locality for these professionals can be summarized as three I's: Information, Interaction and Inspiration. Finally, I will consider the idea of the death of locality and distance and what has actually changed and what has not when it comes to their current meanings, on a more interpretive level.

1 INTRODUCTION: The Meaning of Locality and Distance

1.1 The Death of Distance and Locality?

> "With 'distances no longer meaning anything', localities, separated by distances, also lose their meanings…" (Bauman 1998, 18.)

This research aims to understand the meaning of locality and distance in the current era from the viewpoint of highly skilled, globally mobile professionals. Popular literature has declared the world to be flat (Friedman 2005), while distance was pronounced dead (Cairncross 1997) around the turn of the millennium. Academic theorizations on globalization partly reflect these views. Prominent sociologists and cultural theorists have made grand claims about the revolutionary changes brought about by globalization. The general spirit of these theorizations seems to be that advances in information and communication technologies have either fundamentally diminished or completely erased the meaning of locality and distance. Different conceptualizations aim to capture this phenomenon, for example: "time-space distanciation and the "disembedding" of social relations from local contexts" (Giddens 1990); the "deterritorialization of the social" and the "collapse of distance" (Beck 2000); the "annulment of temporal/spatial distances" (Bauman 1998); and the "space of flows" and "timeless time" substituting of the role of places (Castells 2000a).

The diminishing meaning of place and distance implies changes both for people's experiences of themselves and for their work. Sennett (2000) has suggested that identities based on place, that is the sense of belonging somewhere, are not easy to sustain in the global world. In particular, he argues that this occurs in global cities, "places where the new sort of work gets done, cities which are increasingly home to the global elite as well as lower-level migrants" (Sennett 2000, 176). As virtual communication has allowed for work, business and innovation activity to become more mobile, it has been suggested that work (and in particular, highly skilled 'knowledge work') can be done anywhere; that as long as there is virtual connectivity, places no longer matter.

A look at various empirical studies, however, suggests that rumors of the death of distance have been greatly exaggerated. Some theorists have called for more complexity in

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studies of globalization (Urry 2003) and have argued for the recovery of place in discussions of the global (Sassen 2007a&b; Massey 2005; 2007; Swyngedouw 1997; 2004). But, perhaps more importantly, there is a growing body of empirical literature on the experiences of transnational migrants (see, e.g. Smith & Guarnizo 1998; Smith & Bender 2001; Smith & Favell 2006; Smith & Eade 2008; Favell 2008; Recchi & Favell 2009; Aneesh 2006; Beaverstock 2002; 2005; Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007; Nowicka 2007) and global ethnography (Burawoy et al. 2000) that implies that despite virtual connectedness, localities and the distances between them continue to be real in many ways. However, despite their undeniable value, these studies often do not address the questions of locality and distance explicitly: they are issues that are only implicitly present in various micro-level studies of globally mobile people, and one has to read between the lines to get a sense of whether or how localities and distances still matter.

There are some exceptions of empirical studies that have explicitly challenged the abstract theorizations. For example, O'Riain's (2000; 2006) ethnography of the global workplace shows that on the contrary to diminishing, the experience of time and space has become more explicit: knowledge workers are more aware of time differences than before and distances and space can be mobilized as a resource in global competition – a process O'Riain (Ibid.) calls *time-space intensification*. Burrell's (2008) qualitative study on Polish migrants in Britain challenges the idea of temporal simultaneity that characterizes many understandings of the global world. Her research shows that connecting virtually across localities and time zones often requires considerable planning and arrangements that are in themselves time consuming. Traveling, moving from one location to another also still takes time and "one cannot physically be in two places at the same time" (Ibid., 35). Nowicka's (2006; 2007) studies have pointed to the limitations of the typical dualisms associated with geographical space in the global world (such as embeddedness-disembeddedness): the actual experiences of skilled migrants are more complex and new and old patterns of socio-spatial processes appear simultaneously.

Furthermore, studies on global brain circulation and knowledge transfer illustrate the continuing importance of face-to-face interaction and the micro-level ties that connect locations. Saxenian's (2006) research on global brain circulation between Silicon Valley and Taiwan, China, Israel and India shows that the most economically beneficial ties between distant locations are created by individuals who possess the cultural skills and local know-how relevant to each place. The "new Argonauts" are highly skilled immigrants in Silicon Valley who return to their home countries and create new links between these areas. They become active players and important role models in transforming and developing economic institutions and practices (such as venture capital investing, telecommunications regulations, education system) in their countries of origin. Importantly, these global entrepreneurs possess the cultural and linguistic skills necessary to act as connectors and link innovators and businesses in different locations. These skills could not have been acquired had they not spent significant amounts of time in both locations. Moreover, studies of information and knowledge transfer suggest that some kinds of tacit knowledge do not 'travel' easily, but are tied to people and places, which also challenges the idea that where one is located does not matter (see e.g. Brown and Duguid 2000; Nonaka 1994; Leamer and Storper 2001). If the world were one place, significant cultural differences or the need for face-to-face interaction and local presence for accessing knowledge would no longer exist.

Finally, Florida (2002; 2005; 2008) has explicitly rejected the idea that places lose their meaning in the global world. His research on highly skilled professionals – dubbed the "creative class" – emphasizes that choosing where to live and work is one of the most important decisions in these individual's lives. People do not merely move for work-related reasons anymore, they seek overall meaning and happiness in life, which makes the qualities of localities (such as diversity and opportunities for personal creativity) even more crucial.

It seems obvious that the changing meaning of locality and distance is one of the key issues of the global era. Various bodies of literature are useful for approaching this issue. Yet, even though they are useful, these different literatures often do not speak to each other. The grand theorizations lack empirical grounding but their worth lies in explicitly attempting to capture and conceptualize the changes in the meaning of locality and distance. Conversely, the richness and diversity of the empirical literature often implies, but does not explicitly or systematically address, questions of the meaning of locality and distance that clearly seem to be among the most fundamental of the current era.

Thus, while drawing on the empirically grounded approaches, I also aim to speak to the more general theorizations by explicitly addressing the question of the meaning of locality and distance. Furthermore, Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006) have identified a gap in the research on the real-life experiences of highly skilled migrants: my study contributes to this agenda. It is also relevant to discussions on global brain circulation (Saxenian 2006) and how location

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matters for the so-called creative class (Florida 2002; 2005; 2008). Finally, this study specifically aims to advance the understanding of global professionals' relationships to location from both personal and professional perspectives (O'Riain 2000; 2006; Aneesh 2006; Beaverstock 2002; 2005; Bozkurt 2006; Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007). My study will contribute to these literatures by showing, among other things, how places still represent ways to fulfill personal goals and aspirations and evoke new kinds of identities; how the relationship between global and local presence is dynamic, both influencing each other; and what challenges and myths still exist related to distant, virtual communication.

1.2 Finnish Professionals in Silicon Valley

The research approach is qualitative with ethnographic features. The empirical research focuses on Finnish highly skilled professionals in Silicon Valley. Specifically, the focus is on professionals whose work is relevant for innovation activity.

Silicon Valley continues to be among the most important regions in the world when it comes to innovation and high technology. It is interesting because, as Brown and Duguid (2002) note, it is the very place where the technologies that are supposed to have diminished the need for meeting face-to-face and made the world smaller were created. Still, it continues to be a place where global highly skilled professionals gather from different parts of the world, to be in closer contact and to interact with their colleagues (Ibid.). So, while it is one of the places where the meaning of place was supposedly erased, its existence seems to prove that place still matters. In sum, it is perhaps the place where the contemporary dynamics and tensions concerning the importance of place/locality are most obvious.

Finland is an appealing case for studying the meaning of location and distance, because it can be seen at the same time as both relevant and marginal. It is a technologically advanced, innovative and successful national economy. It can be considered in some ways as an important area for global high technology markets and innovation. However, it is also small and geographically peripheral, and certainly not one of the key locations for attracting global talent. Migration both to and from Finland is relatively low; unlike many other nationalities or ethnic

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groups, Finns do not have significant diaspora or highly skilled migration in Silicon Valley that would clearly facilitate the global connections of today's innovators.

Why focus on highly skilled professionals? Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006) have pointed out that highly skilled global mobility remains insufficiently understood and empirically little studied. Migration studies typically focus on unskilled migration from the "global South" to the "global North", or make no distinction between the highly skilled and the unskilled. Because of this, there are many assumptions regarding global "elites" and their relationship to place that remain empirically unfounded. Many authors imply that as these people appear to be the freest to move and travel, and have the best levels of access to the latest communication technologies, they form a group who are detached from place and for whom distance is dead. For example, Appadurai (1996, 9-10) and Castells (2004b, 11) have argued that globalization has diminished distance and the meaning of place for elites in particular, who inhabit the "timeless space of flows of global networks and their ancillary locales" (Castells 2004b, 11). Bauman (2007, 75) has even suggested that the virtual world is the real home of the privileged, and that the places where they physically live are "just one locality among many".

Finnish skilled professionals in Silicon Valley represent a case of West-West (or North-North) migration; from one Western, economically prosperous location to another. Their work is also typical to the global era in that a crucial part of their everyday activities involves the use information and communication technology, and often travel. Another essential part of their work is being in contact or collaborating with people who are located in other, often geographically distant places.

Therefore, studying these skilled professionals helps shed light on the possible limitations of the idea of the death of distance and place: if they are not dead for these people, they can be assumed to be alive and kicking for others as well. Finns in Silicon Valley offer an opportunity to empirically investigate the general assumptions about the freedom of mobility and detachment from place of more privileged migrants.

1.3 Framing Locality and Distance

Besides looking at the meanings and real-life experiences of global professionals, this thesis also analyzes locality and distance as cultural ideas. This means that locality and distance are also considered from the perspective of rhetoric and framing. The concept of framing refers to the "principles that organize our experience" (Goffmann 1974), and suggests that phenomena or objects do not have their own meanings as such, but that these are created socially. Framing, in turn, influences how we see things and react to them. For example, framing a specific action as a theatrical performance or the "real" thing makes a difference to our behavior. Thus, the way things are framed has consequences (Entman 1993).

The study therefore has a decidedly constructivist and discourse analytic underpinning, which means that attention is paid explicitly to how locality and distance are talked or written about. The contemporary theoretical literature is also considered from the viewpoint of framing; in terms of how it plays a part in the way we understand locality and distance. Thus, for example, when distance is said to have "collapsed" (Beck 2000), a certain framing of distance is occurring which emphasizes some aspects of the current situation (e.g. virtual connectedness) while leaving others out (e.g. the time it takes to travel across geographical distances or the need for face-to-face interaction). Even if such expressions do not represent all the sophistication and nuances of the works of these authors, they are catchy and have an impact on how we consider distance. Yet it is important to emphasize that my intention is not to assess the bodies of work of the prominent social theorists in themselves; my interest goes only so far as they explicitly deal with locality and distance. Each is distinct and noteworthy in its own way, and much richer than is discussed here. Moreover, in line with discourse analytic approaches, I do not make assumptions about the possible intentions "behind" the texts (for example, whether the authors "really" mean to say or think that distance is dead). The spirit of this work is constructive: I wish to arrive at a better understanding by using the available materials (both written and empirical) and by investigating and making explicit the cultural frame I believe structures our view of locality and distance.

Nevertheless, the study sets out as an investigation of the real-life experiences and meanings of the skilled professionals. After examining their relationship to place and distance, I will discuss the current cultural frame that emphasizes the diminishing meaning of distance, and offer an alternative frame that takes the empirical observations into account.

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The thesis proceeds in the following way. Chapter 2 reviews the theorizations on globalization, in particular from the perspective of locality and distance. Chapter 3 discusses the existing empirical studies in the literatures on transnationalism, global work and knowledge transfer that in different ways examine the experiences highly skilled professionals have about locality and distance. The chapter concludes by identifying the questions this study aims to answer. Chapter 4 describes the empirics of the study, starting with the qualitative, ethnographic methods used and then reporting the fieldwork and data collection and introducing the Finnish professionals who formed the focus of this study. Chapter 4 also discusses the departure and destination locations, Finland and Silicon Valley, as two successful but very distinct innovation environments. Chapter 5, the first chapter dedicated to the findings, examines the professionals' personal relationship to place, focusing on their motivations and identities and how locations matter to these. The dynamics of location and distance are investigated from the work perspective in Chapter 6. The chapter starts by looking at everyday work and considers the ideal typical working day of the highly skilled professional. Then, information and knowledge access are analyzed and the issue of whether the professionals could do their work anywhere is discussed. Chapter 7 continues the reporting of the empirical findings and considers the experience of both distance and locality. It examines what aspects play a part in the experience of distance and, on the other hand, why being in a locality matters. The question of locality and distance as cultural ideas or frames is addressed in Chapter 8, which presents two different framings, the current "Distance is Dead" frame and an alternative "Distance is Dynamic" frame. The concluding Chapter 9 offers some final critical reflections on what it means to study the globally mobile and on the strengths and limitations of the study.

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2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Locality and Distance in the Global World

2.1 What is Different about the Global World?

Globalization is one of the great contemporary topics and seems to be related in one way or another to most major discussions concerning current issues across the social sciences. Although it is not the focus of the present investigation, it is the context within which the meaning of locality and distance are explored and thus relevant. Let us start by briefly reviewing what globalization means.

Globalization refers to increased *interdependency* between different areas in the world; what happens somewhere else – often far away – can have an effect on one's immediate surroundings. "Globalization implies a high and increasing degree of interdependency and interrelatedness among different and geographically dispersed actors." (Archibuigi & Iammarino 2002.) This interdependency implicitly refers primarily to economic markets, but is not separate from political or cultural spheres. Today instances where distant events are relevant to local circumstances are common.

Globalization also appears to mean more *connectedness* than before; there simply seem to be many more links between localities, and being connected either virtually or via transport links to different places is probably more common than ever. Both interdependency and connectedness refer to an overall *intensification* of social relations across the globe, of being more aware and more attached to what is happening in other parts of the world (Giddens 1990). Giddens (1990, 64) defines globalization as the "intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa."

Globalization cannot be discussed without reference to the ideas of *network forms* of social organization; these are seen as an essential characteristic of globalization and closely related to the increased interdependency, connectedness and intensification of social relations both globally and locally. (Giddens 1990; Castells 2000a&b). Giddens (1990, 64) writes of

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globalization as a *stretching process* in which the connections between different contexts and geographical areas form networks across the surface of the earth. According to Castells (2000a&b), globalization is characterized by the dominance of information networks.

Countries and locations have always interacted with each other in diverse ways and to different degrees. What seems to make today's situation essentially different from what it used to be? Many authors agree that in general there have been various processes that together, in interaction with each other, have contributed to make the world change in some fundamental way. The two most important are: (1) the liberalization and deregulation of world markets, that is the restructuring of capitalism that started in late 20th century and; (2) the availability and increasing use of new, flexible information and communication technologies. Globalization is often linked to the joint effects of these two processes. (Castells 2000b; Ali-Yrkkö & Palmberg 2006, others.) In Castells' (2000b) view, these two processes have furthermore favored the emergence of information networks as the most efficient form of organization.

There are different views, however, concerning how deep or radical these changes are compared to the past (Hutton & Giddens 2000, 3-4). Some observers do not see any great interruption between the past and the present, rather parallels and continuities: there is "nothing new under the sun" (Ibid., 3). Yet most of the prominent contemporary social theorists seem to emphasize the sharpness of the differences between the global era and previous ones. In Giddens' view, "our era is in some ways profoundly different from the past" (Ibid., 4). An important watershed was the fall of Soviet communism in 1989; in fact, for Giddens globalization refers essentially to the period following this historical event (Ibid., 1-2).

Giddens summarizes the aspects of today's world that render it different from what it had been. To begin with, there is the term 'globalization' itself: it was barely used before the late 1990s, yet today globalization is discussed in practically every country in the world. Indeed the concept's very use and the way it has spread globally is evidence of the changes it attempts to describe. Furthermore, along the lines of Castells (2000a), Giddens identifies the "world-wide communication revolution"; the intensification of global communications which started in the 1960s (when the first satellite made instantaneous communication between any part of the world and another possible), and culminated in the emergence of the Internet. The knowledge economy, i.e. the 'weightless economy' operates according to principles different to those of the industrial economy. In Giddens' view, financial markets are the leading edge of the knowledge economy, with their extraordinary scope, instantaneous nature and turnover. (Hutton & Giddens 2000, 1-2.)

In a similar vein, with an explicit emphasis on the changes brought about by information technology, Castells (2000a) also sees the world as fundamentally transformed. His three-volume treatise (Castells 2000a&d; 2004a) is indeed an attempt to document and make sense of this transformation (that he sees as a "revolution"): "to formulate a systematic theory of the information society which takes account of the fundamental effects of information technology on the contemporary world" (as described in the inside cover of the trilogy's 2nd edition).

Appadurai (1996, 3) too argues that "… the world in which we now live… surely does involve a general break with all sorts of pasts…". He attempts to advance "a theory of rupture" in which mass media and global migration are the central phenomena of the modern, or global era. Appadurai understands this as a theory of the recent past, concerning, more or less, the last two decades (Ibid., 9), as it is only during this period that mass media and migration become widely globalized. In particular, Appadurai (1996, 6) notes that one of the features separating the present from the past is that more people than ever can imagine themselves or their children living and working in places where they were not born. However, it is important to remember that people move for very different reasons and circumstances. Indeed, Appadurai makes the distinction between "diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror and diasporas of despair" (Ibid., 6). (Yet it should be noted that the kind of highly skilled professionals examined in the present study do not fit easily into any of these categories; indeed, they seem to apply to the more typical setting of migration studies that focus on people who move from the global South to the global North.)

Many theorists go even further, specifically arguing that because of the fundamental transformations involved in globalization, social science itself is not adequate to investigate these without changing. Old conceptualizations are no longer useful: theory needs to be transformed to better grasp these changes (see e.g. Urry 2000; 2003; Sassen 2007; Castells 2000a). In Castells' view "we are in a new world and need new understanding" (Castells 2000a, acknowledgements). Urry (2003, 95) argues that since the global is in fundamental ways unique as a system, old conceptualizations cannot capture it: "... since the global is like nothing else, the social sciences have to start more or less from scratch."

Finally, some authors are not satisfied with the grand generalizations and waves of new concepts and catchphrases that seem typical to some of the writings on globalization. They call for more complexity in the discussion on globalization (e.g. Sassen 2007; Urry 2003). For example, Urry (2003, 10-11), while recognizing Castells' treatise as important for ”breaking with the idea that the global is a finished and completed totality” nevertheless criticizes Castells for not really advancing any systematic understanding or offering ”a set of interrelated concepts” that would lead to one.

The ideas of a radical change and fundamental transformation are also present in the discussions that focus specifically on the meaning of locality and distance in the global world. We will turn to these next.

2.2 <u>Local Place and Distance</u>

Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that in the modern era the level of time-space distanciation is higher than ever before. Time and space are separated from each other, being in a specific place does not automatically mean being bound by a specific time. According to Giddens, attention should be directed to the "complex relations between *local involvements* (circumstances of co-presence) and *interaction across distance* (the connections of presence and absence)" (Ibid., 64, italics in the original). Giddens uses the term *disembedding* to describe the "'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (Ibid., 21.)

Beck (2000) writes of how in the "second, reflexive modernity" globalization not only changes the relations between territorially bound nation states, but the very nature of the social relationship itself. According to Beck, questions of place and distance are central in the discussion on globalization. Beck (Ibid.) uses the expressions "deterriorialization of the social" and "collapse of distance" to describe these changes.

> "The core of globalization is here seen as deterritorialization of the social. Economics, politics and lifestyles do not only push their way across the old national frontiers; they change their position within them too. More and more things happen not just

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> simultaneously but in the same place, without any preparation in our thinking and action for the collapse of distance." (Beck 2000, 26.)

Beck sees distance as losing its meaning particularly in economic competition: the world no longer faces issues of distance when it comes to competing with other locations. In organizing the labor process, the world becomes one place.

> "The global economy rests upon the capacity to eat up distance and to organize in real time a fragmented labor process into a planetary whole… Economic processes lose their fixed spatial attachment… Geographical distance thus loses much of its significance as a 'natural' limit to competition between different production sites. In the 'distanceless' space of computer technology, every location in the world now potentially competes with all others for scarce capital investment and cheap supplies of labour." (Beck 2000, 27.)

Both Giddens (1990) and Beck (2000) have discussed how society, state, time and space used to be *contained*. All these used to correspond and have practically the same boundaries. Society fitted within the boundaries of the state, and time and space were limited to the same boundaries again: time shared the boundaries of the physical space, e.g. a specific locality. In particular, time and space were "contained" in the post World War II era of national economies and bureaucratic hierarchical corporations (O'Riain 2006). Conversely, when time and space are not contained, as they often are not in today's world of work, the time of the particular locality is not the only one relevant to define one's life or working day. Today we get news around the clock from all over the world and interact regularly with people located in different time zones. In fact, Hutton (Hutton & Giddens 2000) observes a "new conception of time", the 24-hour day.

Castells (2000a) goes further in conceptualizing the fundamental transformations related to place and time in the ”information age”. He introduces the concepts of ”space of flows” and ”timeless time” to capture the transformed nature of place, space and distance.

> ”... [T]he new communication system radically transforms space and time, the fundamental dimensions of human life. Localities become disembodied from their cultural, historical, geographical meaning, and reintegrated into functional networks, or into image collages, inducing a space of flows that substitutes for the space of places. Time is erased in the new communication system when past, present, and future can be programmed to interact with each other in the same message." (Castells 2000a, 406.)

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Thus, according to Castells (2000a), the meanings of place and time are radically transformed in the current era. Not only transformed, but diminished, even disappearing. Instead of localities with histories and specific cultures and meanings we have nodes in global networks. Instead of the world consisting of places, (or the "space of places") it consists of the "space of flows" in which time is erased. Castells furthermore posits that

> "The *space of flows* and *timeless time* are the material foundations of a new culture that transcends and includes the diversity of historically transmitted systems of representation: the culture of real virtuality where make-believe is belief in the making." (Ibid., 406., italics in original.)

While this theorization is intriguing, the challenge here is to make sense of what this "new culture of real virtuality" means in concrete terms. In some ways, at least, it could be interpreted as referring to virtual connectedness and the ways in which meanings created in virtual spaces can be considered just as real as those created in physical spaces. Yet while the terms are appealing, the message suffers from what now seems like an overemphasis on change – a point to which I will return to again below. What is clear, however, is that Castells understands the changes involved as radical and fundamental. The meanings of place and time are profoundly transformed. Still, while making these rather general claims about the radical transformations in the meanings of place and distance, Castells nevertheless offers, at least occasionally, more grounded observations on the changes involved, noting, for instance, that because of the continuing importance of face-to-face interaction in learning, schools and universities are unlikely to become completely virtual any time soon. He also discusses the meaning of locality and points out that even in the network society characterized by the space of flows, people still live in places, not in abstract space: "Indeed, the overwhelming majority of people, in advanced and traditional societies alike, live in places, and so perceive their space as place-based." (Castells 2000a, 453.).

Another important theorist, Bauman (1998; 2000), also emphasizes the diminished meaning of distance in the current age, referring to "the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances" (Bauman 1998, 18). He specifically argues that while erasing physical distances, technology deepens inequalities between the privileged and the less

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privileged, freeing some from the boundaries of place while holding others captive in localities that nevertheless lose their meaning in a distanceless world.

> ”With ’distances no longer meaning anything’, localities, separated by distances, also lose their meanings. This, however, augurs freedom for meaning-creation for some, but portends ascription to meaninglessness for others. Some can now move out of the locality – any locality – at will. Others watch helplessly the sole locality they inhabit moving away from under their feet.” (Bauman 1998, 18.)

In the literature discussed above, the image that emerges is clear: locality, place and distance are largely meaningless, or at least their meaning is dramatically diminished in the global world. According to this literature, globalization and information technology have transformed the world into a single, distanceless entity where things happen simultaneously and are connected in real time. People, markets, social interaction and meanings are not tied to physical places, but exist in virtual – or some abstract global – space. Localities, connected electronically, become part of the global network and start to lose their local, distinct characters.

This is, of course, an ideal typical image of the global world, a caricature even. Some theorists have called attention to the local nature of global processes, arguing for more complexity and reflection in approaches to globalization.

2.3 The Globalization Discourse and Glocalization

Certain theorists take a more critical view on the discussions on globalization. They have drawn attention to how globalization as a phenomenon is socially constructed and represents a particular, Western viewpoint at a specific period in time. The discourse of globalization typically paints a picture of the phenomenon as something inevitable; an aspect some authors contest (Massey 2005; Swyngedouw 2004). In particular, Massey (2005, 5) has noted that globalization is not a force of nature, but a “project”. Although Massey’s angle is different from that of the present study – showing how the discourse of geography and globalization has implications for the inequalities related to global processes – her insights concerning the framing of space are useful here. She has examined the understanding of space in the global era and called for new, alternative images.

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Like Giddens, Massey acknowledges connectedness – what happens in one place has consequences in other, distant places – but she stresses that global is also something put into practice in everyday lives and in local places. Yet global is often talked about as something that is far away, in another place.

> "'The global' so often is imagined, implicitly, as somehow always out there, or even up there, but as always somewhere else in its origins. In fact it exists in very concrete forms in local places. And some places more than others are home-bases for the organization of the current form of globalization." (Massey 2007, 16.)

Compared to theorists emphasizing disembeddedness and "space of flows", Massey offers a more nuanced and grounded perspective on the dynamics of connectedness and the meaning of locality/place. Instead of drawing the conclusion that global connectedness translates into the diminished significance of place, Massey (2007, 20-21) suggests an image of geography in which the characteristics of a locality, or its economic success, is not only a result of what happens within the place but also of how it interacts with other places. She notes that although such a shift in emphasis may not appear considerable, it would fundamentally question the judgmental idea that when places succeed or fail, it is solely due to their own essential characteristics. In a way then, Massey says that geography and locations matter, but so does connectedness. Thus, the extreme view that geography is dead is avoided, without denying that changes have taken place. Furthermore, to take Massey's point to an even more concrete level, it should not be forgotten that places are connected through people (Saxenian 2006); through their personal ties or through the entities (firms, organizations) they are part of.

Massey (2005; 2007) thus draws attention to the subtle meanings and framings related to global, local, place and space. Her analysis is helpful in considering globalization as a discourse, a *pensée unique* (Swyngedouw 2004). As Massey (Ibid.) stresses, it is often not recognized as such: accordingly, space is rarely thought about explicitly in discussions on globalization, and geographical assumptions are often taken for granted. "Geographical imaginations are most often implicit. When deftly mobilized they pass us as self-evident, barely recognized as being the framing assumptions as they are (Massey 2007, 23)."

As a result, no alternatives are proposed. Yet how we think about space and place has consequences. Massey (2007) thus argues that we need to "take place seriously". In the

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globalization discourse, the natural spatiality of the world is commonly portrayed as a problem that needs to be solved, and, as Massey observes, "… [s]pace is equally lively and equally challenging… far from being dead and fixed, the very enormity of its challenges has meant that the strategies for taming it have been many, varied and persistent (Massey 2005, 14)." Yet a more fruitful approach would be to consider alternative images of space and examine how globalization is practiced and created in actual places.

Another author to draw attention to globalization as a discourse who emphasizes the continuing importance of spatialization is Swyngedouw (1997; 2004). He, too, takes a critical stance towards the presumed degree and novelty of change. Swyngedouw (2004) observes that a significant discursive shift has occurred since the 1990s, where internationalization and globalization are portrayed as processes that are distinctly novel and which fundamentally change the "power geometries" of the world economy. Yet he stresses that the culture and economy of the late 19th and early 20th century worlds were, albeit in different ways, just as interconnected as they are today, and in some senses even more so. Swyngedouw (Ibid.) maintains that this is evident in the cultural, economic and geographical records and narratives from those times.

Much like Massey, Swyngedouw (1997; 2004) therefore calls for more attention and sensitivity to be paid to the spatial processes and struggles that continue to take place today. He proposes *glocalization* as a concept that better captures the shift in spatial scales that global connectedness involves. Glocalization refers to two simultaneous processes: on one hand, to the shift from the national scale upwards to global scales and on the other, downwards to individual actors or local entities.

These new scalar processes concern both institutional/regulatory issues and economic activities and inter-firm networks. Swyngedouw (1997) claims that glocalizing economic production cannot be separated from glocalizing levels of governance. He refers to the "re-scaling of regulation of wage and working conditions or denationalization of important companies throughout Europe, [which] simultaneously opens up international competition and necessitates a greater sensitivity to subnational conditions" (Ibid., 159).

Local and global are thus mutually constituted and deeply intertwined: global processes affect local actions, but a competitive advantage on the global scale depends on local economic governance and the specific (local) characteristics of places (Swyngedouw 1997; 2004).

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Swyngedouw (1997) recommends abandoning the local-global discourse (see also Sassen 2007), because such a dichotomy is not useful for capturing the "profound rearticulation of scales or the production of an altogether new gestalt of scale" (Ibid., 159).

Finally, Massey (2007,166) has pointed out that when the local is one-sidedly portrayed as a product of the global, it is consequently put in the position of victim; locality becomes the casualty of globalization. This, in turn, easily leads to “defense politics”. Although we are not primarily concerned about politics here, this idea is useful in that it highlights how, on the discursive level, global has apparently caused the diminished meaning of local, and if we want to maintain it, we need to protect it somehow – as if it were no longer important in its own right, let alone a crucial part in the constitution of the global.

Sassen (see e.g. 1998; 2006; 2007) is one of the key authors calling for more complexity and, in a similar vein to Massey and Swyngedouw, for the ”recovery of place” in approaches to globalization. While recognizing, in line with e.g. Castells and Giddens, a fundamental change – she calls globalization ”an epochal transformation” (2006, 1) – Sassen’s tone is in some ways distinct. She has a self-proclaimed “long-standing determination to raise the level of complexity in the study of globalization” (2007, vii) and she explicitly argues for expanding the analytical terrain of globalization and embracing its complexity. Sassen also sees work that is not explicitly about globalization as relevant to its understanding, claiming that we can use many existing tools and empirical evidence, as long as we use more fruitful conceptualizations than, for example, the customary “local/global” dichotomy (Sassen 2007, 9). According to Sassen (2007, 8) the dualities of the typical categories of national/global and local/global are not particularly useful, and we should not presume them at the outset. Even when using existing research, we should situate our work in different conceptual frames for a better understanding. Categories Sassen finds to be more useful, for example, are transnational communities, global cities, commodity chains and space-time compression.

Sassen thus calls our attention to the local embeddedness of virtual spaces, and emphasizes that markets are still located in cities, not in computers. In particular, she warns against confusing the global with the electronic/virtual world: ”global is both more and less than the new electronic world” (Sassen 2006, 325). Therefore, it could be argued that it is not particularly useful to conceive of local and global as mutually exclusive categories when

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approaching phenomena in the global era. Perhaps a better way to capture global phenomena is to focus on dynamics and connectedness rather than simple, clear categorizations.

Accordingly, while emphasizing the particular nature of the current era in line with other theorists mentioned above, such as Giddens and Beck, Sassen – much like Swyngedouw and Massey – explicitly brings a focus on the local back in to the discussion, thereby shifting from an emphasis on the changes in the meaning of locality and distance back to one on the local, pointing out that global phenomena actually continue to happen locally. ”Studying the global, then, entails a focus not only on that which is explicitly global in scale but also on locally scaled practices and conditions that are articulated with global dynamics.” (Sassen, 2007, 18.)

Sassen (1998, 2007) therefore argues that place is key to understanding the constitution of economic globalization. “Recovering place” (Sassen 1998) is important because it allows us to see the concrete processes that make globalization exist, reveals the diversity of economies and work cultures in which the global information economy is embedded, and specifies the geography of strategic places of globalization. In practice, then, Sassen dedicates much of her work to investigating and discussing global cities, seeing them as ”heuristic spaces” that are ”capable of producing knowledge about some of the major transformations of an epoch” (Ibid., 100.)

In a similar vein, it can be posited that Silicon Valley – although not a city but a key area for innovation – is a locality whose dynamics can reveal something essential about the social processes of the current era. In the present work I aim to show that the meaning of locality, place and distance, and the dynamics of these, *materialize*, or become in some way emphasized in the lives and work of Silicon Valley professionals.

It is important to note that, both Sassen and Castells, for example, note the presence of a global network of key places. The difference between them lies in the fact that Sassen’s attention is directed towards making the issue more concrete, investigating global cities as physical locations; calling for more complexity and concreteness, and emphasizing locality and place rather than the world as an abstract space of flows.

Finally, another theorist explicitly calling for more complexity in the study of the global is Urry (2000, 2003). Both Sassen and Urry argue for a more complex approach to the global, yet Urry (Ibid.) takes this call further, dedicating an entire book (Global Complexity, 2003) specifically to the subject. He argues that even though vast amounts of writings have been

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dedicated to the global, it has nonetheless remained insufficiently theorized (Urry 2003, 12). While Sassen emphasizes locality/place, Urry emphasizes *mobility* as the key feature of the global era. In his view, “mobilities rather than societies should be at the heart of a reconstituted sociology…” (Urry 2000, 210.) Specifically, Urry posits that a new paradigm for sociology is needed, one that centers on mobility:

> ”I seek to present a manifesto for a sociology that examines the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and wastes; and of the complex interdepencencies between, and social consequences of, these diverse mobilities.” (Urry 2000, 1.)

Urry notes that the local and the global exist in a dynamic relationship and could not exist without each other. They are tied together in a process in which they deepen one another: “globalization-deepens-localization-deepens-globalization and so on” (Ibid., 15). Urry sees globalization as at the same time inevitable and unpredictable. He argues that existing social theories will no longer work and calls for an urgent investigation into the particular characteristics of the global system that in his view are not yet sufficiently understood (Ibid.).

While the call for more complexity is justified, the discussion nevertheless lacks concreteness. The vagueness that diverts our attention from real-life, concrete experiences and issues remains. In the discussions reviewed so far, there seems to be a tendency to rename everything. One wonders if, even with fundamental change and the need for new approaches, perhaps not everything is new. It could also be imagined that many experiences in people’s everyday lives, the things that matter to them, continue to be fundamentally the same. Perhaps people are still in certain ways tied to physical places and other people? And even with more mobility (e.g. travel) and virtual connectedness (new ways of communicating, of getting information and interacting), these may well remain. As Favell (2001) notes in his critique of Urry, even when studying mobility in the global world we still need to study things that stand still – and in Urry’s world nothing stands still.

In light of the discussion thus far, it can be concluded that what is common to many of these authors is their perception of fundamental change (“global is like nothing else”) and accordingly, in many cases, an attempt to produce new concepts.

While also recognizing the distinctive character of globalization, some authors (see. e.g. Massey & Jess 1995; Swyngedouw 2004) have pointed out that it is not a completely new

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phenomenon. Massey and Jess (1995) see globalization as part of continuing processes of social change that have encouraged important conceptual questions. Importantly, they employ a more sober tone when it comes to place and distance, explicitly saying that "globalization has not resulted in places all becoming the same but rather in greater permeability, openness and hybridity in terms of place and culture." (Ibid., 217). Furthermore, Favell (2001) has reasonably criticized leading texts on globalization as being too speculative, empirically largely unfounded and "top heavy in theory".

Still, no matter how we understand the meaning of locality to have changed, these nevertheless seem to be among the most fundamental issues of the contemporary era. Whether implicitly or explicitly, globalization is largely about the changes in time and space. I argue that despite the growing amount of useful empirical literature (reviewed in detail in the next chapter), academic discussions thus far remain too implicit, abstract and uneven to allow a full understanding. More explicit, empirically founded, grassroots level, and less hasty treatises are needed.

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3 LITERATURE REVIEW: The Transnational Experience

Focusing on the actual experiences of people who move across localities, the literature on transnationalism brings a considerable degree of concreteness to the issues so far discussed on an abstract level (see, e.g. Smith & Guarnizo 1998; Smith & Bender 2001; Smith & Favell 2006; Smith & Eade 2008; Favell 2008).

In the following I will discuss a series of studies, mostly within the literature of transnationalism that have dealt empirically with some of the issues discussed in the theoretical literature reviewed above. According to Conradson and Latham (2005a) “transnationalism enables us to consider what it means to live in a interconnected, topologically complex world without resorting to overly abstract or grand narratives of global transformation to describe that connectivity.” Within this field, the aim is typically to stay attentive to the continuing importance of locality, avoid the assumption that people move in a tension-free world and rather study in detail the physical and locally embedded aspects of mobile lives.

It should be noted that while some of the empirical studies address the questions of location and distance explicitly many do not, typically focusing on more specific questions related to the lived experiences of highly skilled migrants, such as the construction of home in mobile lives (Nowicka 2007), knowledge access in global and local networks (Beaverstock 2002) or how moving to a distant location is a part of a project of self development and identity (Conradson & Latham 2007). Nevertheless, they are key to the understanding of what is already known about the real-life experiences of the globally mobile people.

To begin with, Portes and his co-authors (Portes et al. 1999) note that an increased number of ties now link people across national boundaries and that there is a “fluidity and diversity” to these ties that did not exist before. Similarly to debates on globalization, there are different ways of characterizing this activity: Portes and his colleagues (Ibid.) observe that in some writings the phenomenon is described as novel and emergent, whereas in others it is seen to be as old as labor and immigration themselves. They argue that there is something novel both in the scale and the characteristics of these movements that deserve the identification of a new field of research, namely transnationalism. At the center of transnationalism are people who

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“live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders.” (Portes et al. 1999.)

Indeed, Portes and his co-authors (Ibid.) conclude that there is something within the activities of these “transnational entrepreneurs” that no existing concept can capture; they thus propose that transnationalism be established as a specific object of research and define its criteria. They recommend transnationalism be limited to “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation.” They emphasize that what makes the phenomenon essentially original and a new topic for research are “the high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis.”

Yet it is important to note that Portes and his colleagues (Ibid.) treat transnationalism as an activity that takes place between less developed and more advanced countries. They see transnationalism as primarily related to immigration, specifically as “a distinct form of immigrant adaptation” that offers immigrants opportunities that were not available on a similar scale before. Transnationalism, for them, is about a community connecting immigrants in developed countries with their sending localities.

The present research, however, is concerned with the transnational or global activities of highly skilled people, and specifically between developed locations. In that sense, it is not traditional immigration research, but rather explicitly research on highly skilled global mobility, along the lines of the agenda outlined by Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006), in particular concerning the assumptions about diminishing meaning of time and space and the unproblematic mobility of more privileged movers. These authors note that transnationalism studies typically focus on unskilled migration (from the global South to the global North or the global East to the global West, i.e. from developing to more advanced countries). They furthermore observe that highly skilled mobility remains little understood and often seems to be considered a non-issue, because more privileged people presumably have the most freedom to be globally mobile. These assumptions related to highly skilled mobility have yet to be empirically investigated, however (for example, is their experience of freedom as unlimited as assumed?). Moreover, as Favell et al (Ibid.) argue, exploring those who are supposed to have the most freedom would highlight the possible limitations and issues that may still remain in global mobility and migration more generally.

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Some of the existing empirical findings in the "transnationalism-from-below" literature (Smith & Guarnizo 1998; Smith & Bender 2001; Smith & Favell 2006; Smith & Eade 2008; Favell 2008) are particularly interesting when contrasted with the image of locality and distance in the theoretical literature reviewed above. As we have seen, the theoretical discussions draw an image of the world as a distanceless place where specific localities become part of a global network. Yet empirical findings remind us of the limits of connectedness and the reality of distance even in the virtually connected world. Focusing on Polish migrants in Britain, Kathy Burrell (2008) found that simultaneity, quickness and real-time connectedness have limitations: connecting virtually across localities and time-zones requires considerable planning and arrangements and these as such are time-consuming. The same goes for travel: it still takes time to move from one physical place to another and one "cannot physically be in two places at the same time" (Burrell 2008, 35). Thus, virtual connectedness does not mean that it is possible to be connected all the time: because of time differences, preparation is required to make the connection, agree about the time and be in the place where virtual access is available. Burrell also observes that there are "limits of simultaneity": time is not purely simultaneous in different places, and there is a difference between "measured" time and "experienced" time (Burrell 2008, refers to Gosden 1994).

In a similar vein, Geoghegan (2008, 41) notes that "[g]rand claims such as Castells' (2000a) notion of the globe as a 'space of flows' have limited utility for empirical studies and risk ignoring the grounded, material sites in which global processes take place. Global conditions are made relevant in specific times and places…" Furthermore, Sinatti (2008, 61) points out that in its assumptions, transnational theory often exaggerates the liberty migrants have to move and break free from the boundaries of the places where they live their everyday lives. Next, let us examine further what is already known about the motivations and experiences of globally mobile professionals.

3.1 <u>Why Move in a Global World?</u>

If distance is dead, what are the motivations for highly skilled people to travel or relocate? Are the reasons mainly work-related or more personal? Firstly, traveling or relocation due to work

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among the highly skilled is often viewed as a matter of choice rather than as an economic necessity, as is the case for global migration flows in general where the direction is typically from developing areas to developed ones. Thus, the highly skilled appear to have a say in whether they want to be mobile in the first place; often, they actively seek opportunities for work travel. This is especially true of young professionals who often do not have spouses or families. Bozkurt (2006) analyzed the global movements of workers within a multinational company and found that younger professionals without families in particular want to see the world and experience different cultures and places that are not destinations one would normally visit. Work travel and relocation holds a certain glamour and prestige in the eyes of others and within a multinational there may be some material benefits involved as well (e.g. in the form of travel allowances). Bozkurt (Ibid.) studied workers in two companies, one with its headquarters in Sweden and the other in Finland, and also noted that, besides the internal channels within the company, there were diverse ways of ending up working in the two different headquarters. Some had first arrived in Sweden or Finland from abroad and then applied for a job in the headquarters. Some had first come to study in Finland or Sweden or had followed their spouse there. They had wanted to leave their home countries for different reasons and felt attracted to the Nordic people/mentality and way of living. Thus, some had first chosen the location and then looked for work there.

In other studies too the desire to experience new cultures and places, learning about different ways of life and seeing how one can survive in an unfamiliar environment have been reported as reasons for moving for work (Yeoh & Willis 2005; Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007; Nowicka 2007). These are interesting motivations considering the arguments that geography has supposedly lost its meaning, reminding us that human desires and motivations are often ignored in the grand theorizations. Furthermore, they show that the so-called global flows of people are not only about rational motivations in the economic sense (considering where life would be more prosperous), but that economic or career incentives often intertwine in subtle ways with more personal aspirations. This, as will be reported in detail in the empirical chapters, was found in the present study as well: often, the rational, economic motivations intertwine with the wish to fulfill more personal dreams or self-development goals in a certain location.

Furthermore, Conradson and Latham (2005b) found that informal friendship networks may play an important role in global skilled mobility: at least in their empirical case of young professionals who moved from New Zealand to London after finishing university studies, many of the professionals had friends who had already relocated and who invited them to join them. This apparently made the move to London smoother for the professionals, as their friends were able to provide assistance and advice on practical matters. Other kinds of personal reasons to relocate to a distant place have to do with the perceived attributes of the specific location (dubbed "affective possibilities" by Conradson & Latham 2007) and the opportunities these may offer for self-development and self-realization. The affective possibilities of locations are discussed in more detail below in section 3.4.

When it comes to work and careers, some empirical studies have found that the globally mobile consider physical relocation, having worked for a period of time in another location, as advantageous for their professional career too (Bozkurt 2006, Beaverstock 2002; 2005). Thus, they often relocate for various reasons, both personal and professional: and geographical mobility is seen as key for both personal and professional development.

3.2 Virtual vs. Physical Migration

The finding that physical mobility is deemed advantageous for both personal and career development is worthy of note considering the idea that virtual technology greatly diminishes the need to be in a place physically or meet other people face-to-face. In the book Virtual Migration, Aneesh (2006) makes an intriguing distinction between virtual migration ("migration of skills but not bodies") and "body shopping" ("migration of both bodies and skills"). Aneesh (2006, 3) seeks to "free the discussion of labor mobility from the confines of the body, and to place the flows of labor at the level of global capital flows". He therefore argues that since labor can now move virtually but physically stay put, the need for actual physical migration is diminished (Ibid., 33).

Aneesh (2006) examines both virtual and physical migration empirically, focusing on Indian programmers who work for U.S. companies. He found the experiences of the Indian programmers who relocated temporarily to the U.S. to be somewhat negative. While the skilled

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Indian migrants were happy with certain aspects of the affluent American way of life, such as driving fancy cars, shopping in plush malls or being exposed to the widespread everyday use of technology, for many the fantasy became a more grim reality soon after arrival. Often, expectations before relocating were very high and, according to Aneesh, fuelled by the images that the companies recruiting the programmers promoted: "… [B]ody shopping firms incite fantasies of the West, tapping into desires produced by the earlier colonial system as well as an almost innate fascination with the unknown, the uncharted and the unfamiliar…" (Aneesh 2006, 51). Thus, Aneesh found that many experienced disappointment and disillusionment after moving to the U.S. Cultural alienation and the inaccessibility of many aspects of local life were the main causes of disappointment: even when living there, the Indian programmers felt they were treated as outsiders (it was not specified where exactly in the U.S. they lived). They also faced unexpected cultural differences that contributed to the feeling of alienation. Aneesh describes, for example, how one Indian informant was struck by how in the American culture it is not common or appropriate to spontaneously go to a friend's house without calling first, which from the perspective of Indian culture seemed rather cold, "like making an appointment". This experience highlights the different nature of close relationships in India and the U.S.

Although other empirical studies on skilled migration report negative experiences as well – for example, unexpected cultural differences or obstacles in handling practical issues in the destination country (see e.g. Beaverstock 2005) – I wonder if the findings Aneesh reports are closely related to the nature and direction of the migration (East-West, or South-North, i.e. from a non-Western country to a Western, developed one). When examining the experiences of migrants (and the highly skilled appear to be no exception in this sense), it seems to matter a great deal where one comes from and where one goes. Besides the geographical distance, it makes a difference how great the cultural differences between the departure and destination locations are. It is perhaps easier to sustain unrealistic, ideal images of the "wealthy West" in a non-Western country and, consequently, to be more easily disappointed by actual everyday life there.

Then again, Aneesh's (2006) findings on *virtual* migration, that is, on the experiences of Indian programmers who were working for U.S. companies without leaving India, offer an illuminating perspective on both the flexibility and the challenges that virtual work involves. Aneesh argues, on one hand, that like money, programming code is virtual and travels

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effortlessly across physical distances. Yet, in a balanced way, he also reports the difficulties of understanding and communication related to virtual interaction documented in other empirical literature (e.g. Bradner & Mark 2002; Hinds & Kiesler 2002). (These challenges also emerged in the present study concerning Finns in Silicon Valley and are reported in the empirical part of the thesis in chapters 6 and 7) Therefore, Aneesh (Ibid.) clearly states that he does not suggest that geographical migration will disappear, that virtual can replace physical presence or that territory will lose its importance. Aneesh positions his treatise largely in discussions concerning the ability of the modern nation-state to control the material mobility of labor by opening and closing borders according to needs, and to the general debates related to globalization and its uneven effects in different parts of the world. Virtual migration – which the nation-state cannot control in the way it can regulate physical migration – is one answer to these issues. Thus, it is useful to keep in mind that Aneesh's discussion, in practice, centers on migration from less developed to developed countries.

Nevertheless, Aneesh's emphasis on virtual connectedness and labor mobility without physical movement provides useful insights for the present study on West-West professional mobility. Above all, it is a well thought-out and sophisticated treatise compared to most "geography is dead" arguments, which tend to remain on a rather abstract and superficial level.

3.3 Dynamics of Mobile Lives

Let us further consider the experiences of mobility and the dynamics of local embeddedness and global connectedness that have emerged in relevant empirical studies. Existing findings suggest that people's experiences of relocating and traveling are often complex: characterizing these realities as living detached in the "space of flows" (Castells 2000a) would undoubtedly be too one-sided – although at the same time, despite being embedded locally, these people's daily lives often include participation in global networks. Furthermore, local presence does not necessarily or automatically mean embeddedness or inclusion (Nowicka 2007) and mobile professionals may in some ways be locally embedded (e.g. in the workplace) and in other ways detached from local life (e.g. in the home sphere) (Beaverstock 2002).

Nowicka's work (2006; 2007) offers tools for better understanding the dynamics of common dualities associated with the global world, for example, global-local, proximity-distance, embeddedness-disembeddedness, and presence-absence. Her studies suggest that the most central questions concerning the experiences of location and distance are not about clear, mutually exclusive categories, but more complex dynamics.

In a study about professionals working for an international organization, Nowicka (2007) poses a relevant question about how homes are created in conditions of excessive mobility. She notes that mobility defies the notion of home and asks whether mobile professionals feel at home anywhere or whether they feel detached, i.e. that they no longer have a home. Generally, home is understood as a location in space. From this viewpoint mobility can be seen as a threat to personal wellbeing: it takes people away from their roots and makes them disconnected. On the other hand mobility can represent freedom from local constraints. Nowicka (Ibid.) approaches the issue without taking the idea that home must be a fixed location or closed territory for granted, extending the analysis to consider the relationship between mobility and place.

Nowicka (Ibid.) found that mobile people had a need to build a home wherever they went. Yet, rather than a particular place, Nowicka argues that in the case of these professionals, home is best understood as a *focal point* for specific kinds of social relationships. Besides important people, home consists of relationships to certain objects that have meaning for personal identity. The home as such is not necessarily a source of identity, as it might be for people who stay more permanently in one place. Instead, for mobile professionals home is a point for organizing life: to come back to from travels, to be close to important people (spouse, children) and objects (pictures, clothes – which, therefore, appear to serve as sources of identity more than any particular place). For those who have children, home is crucial, because it brings the stability that children need in an otherwise uncommonly mobile life. It is also a shared point of reference for the family. In addition to people and objects, for these mobile professionals home also refers to *doing* things together; family rituals such as cooking that are sustained no matter where they move or are located.

So, an interesting dynamic of proximity, mobility and distance emerges from the study. Firstly, proximity seems to play an important role in the construction of home.

> "Both people and objects need to be in proximity, and need directly to surround the mobile people so that they feel at home. It is the spatial gap, the distance that decides where home is – the distance from people and objects, the fact that they are separated. This is the exclusive aspect of home construction – homes are defined by excluding distant elements. In this respect, there is nothing transnational or border-crossing about the homes of transnationally mobile people, who perceive their home as centers of family as any other people do." (Nowicka 2006.)

Still, Nowicka (Ibid.) also suggests that to some extent, mobile professionals manage to feel at home anywhere, including when they are traveling. This is due to two aspects in particular: bringing physical objects along and following routines. The professionals talked about carrying familiar objects with them when traveling, the same they would have at their home location during any given (working) day: pictures of close family, clothes, cell phone, laptop. They also had routines, mundane activities that they tried to maintain even when traveling, such as walking to meetings instead of using transportation or eating in favorite types of restaurants.

In addition, familiarity is key to feeling at home in new places. In Nowicka's (Ibid.) study the informants said that for them to feel at home locations needed to have a certain infrastructure and amenities, such as restaurants, parks, and places to practice hobbies. This is in line with, for example, Florida's (2002) research on the attractiveness of locations and the level of diversity, cultural and other amenities they need to offer in order for the skilled ("creative") class to find them appealing.

Finally, Nowicka (2007) argues that larger networks of friends constitute a home besides close family, objects and infrastructure. Yet these networks are typically global, and not tied to one particular location. The physical element of home – the focal point – is localized in particular places. But, according to Nowicka (Ibid.) having a global network of friends, some of whom may be in the same location and others in distant places, plays a part in constituting a home. Nowicka (Ibid.) maintains that rather than territorially, homes are primarily socially defined: "… relationships in proximity and in distance are not opposed to one another, they are both important and necessary elements of home." For globally mobile people, home is localized in a network and can be physically located anywhere. The "elements that constitute home – people, objects and relationships – are movable, though they have their spatial extension." (Ibid.)

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Having a home thus means that family and important objects are physically close – yet Nowicka (Ibid.) writes that in a network, proximity and distance are not (only) measured in kilometers but also refer to identity and relations between the elements: similarity brings closeness and difference enhances the feeling of distance. In a similar vein, in studies of distant collaboration and knowledge transfer it has been noted that there are other kinds of proximity besides geographical, such as cultural, social, and cognitive, and if these are high, it may diminish the challenges related to physical distance (e.g. Boschma 2005).

Thus, physical distance does not always indicate a feeling of distance – and, conversely, physical presence/proximity does not automatically lead to local embeddedness. In an empirical study by Beaverstock (2002) on financial professionals who relocated from London to Singapore one of the main findings was that they were embedded locally from the work perspective but not in their home spheres. In the work context, business and socializing were closely intertwined and the professionals also met their colleagues outside work at specific local meeting places (at the golf course; in bars, social clubs, and restaurants). These interactions were crucial in maintaining networks and obtaining important knowledge for their business. Yet this local interaction was limited to other expatriate colleagues and "Western educated/experienced locals", excluding other locals.

According to Beaverstock (2002) "[t]he close interaction between social and business life was accounted for by the regional specificity of the 'east-Asian' way of doing business coupled with the 'nature of expatriate life' and the city-state's claustrophobic compactness." Thus, there was both a cultural and a spatial/geographical reason for mixing business and leisure: Singapore is a small, compact locality with a high number of expatriates. The Singaporean business culture, at least as presented in this study, seemed to be a mix of local and global practices. As the study (Ibid.) indicates, in Singapore, the expatriate culture of socializing around drinking alcohol and watching sporting events was different from the social practices of local Singaporeans. Thus, the professionals were embedded in the expatriate/business culture but not the local Singaporean culture. (Yet their purpose was both to transfer their specific knowledge to Singapore and to localize that knowledge in that specific context; learn the 'tricks of the trade' locally. The financial professionals emphasized the importance of the knowledge obtained by being there, which was not so much technical, legal knowledge but about knowing the market, the people and how they operated.)

However, in another study about financial professionals, this time those who had relocated from London to New York City, Beaverstock (2005) found that they were locally embedded. Apparently, no major difference between local embeddedness at home or at work was found. Still, even in this study of mobility from the U.K. to the U.S., in which there was evidently great cultural similarity at the outset and where the interviewees did not expect to find cultural differences, the relocation was not entirely smooth. Although entry into the country was uncomplicated concerning most practical issues (where it often is not for lower skilled migrants from non-Western countries), all of the professionals found it stressful at the beginning and encountered some challenges, such as difficulties in getting a U.S. credit card (due to a lack of credit history in the country) or form friendships outside the workplace. Moreover, they met some challenges in adjusting to the culture of their company's New York office. Perhaps surprisingly, they experienced cultural differences between British and American office behavior (regarding, for example, what was considered appropriate physical contact with colleagues and telling jokes), different ways of thinking and even language barriers (concerning the use of technical language).

Interestingly, as these findings imply, sometimes the very expectation that there are no barriers may help to enhance them. In the case of the British managers in New York City, for example, they were expected to adjust immediately and effortlessly and were not assigned local mentors at the office. Considering the larger picture, one of the potential dangers in the discourse emphasizing the diminishing meaning of distance is precisely that it obscures the everyday challenges that still remain even in the lives of apparently global elites.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the specific characteristics of departure and destination locations probably matter for the everyday experiences of migrants, as well as the experience of distance. In current empirical studies the nationalities of the informants and the directions of migration vary greatly from study to study even if we limit ourselves to research on highly skilled mobility. Furthermore, the specific role and characteristics of the home (departure) location for experiences in the destination location are considered in some studies (see e.g. Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007), but not in most. It is not therefore possible to evaluate clearly how the two locations (e.g. their specific historical relationship or cultural similarities/differences) matter for the experiences of the movers. Nevertheless, we can expect a number of factors to make a difference – although we do not currently know what kind – in the

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experiences of highly skilled migrants. Whether, for instance, they move from a non-Western country to a Western one or vice versa; whether they move from one continent to another or within the same continent; whether the language of the departure and destination countries is the same; or the historical relationship of the two locations (e.g. colonial history, wars, or no major historical events linking them).

Based on present findings, changing locations is always a significant event, and not without practical or mental/emotional challenges – even in the so-called global world. Thus, although many authors see globalization as a major transformation, some things evidently have not completely changed. These aspects of the realities of so-called elites are not considered in more abstract theorizations about the global era. Yet, as Beaverstock (2005) stresses, even the managerial elite is embedded in the local and does not solely live in virtual networks.

Moreover, although embedded locally in new destination locations and in global networks (that consist of people who are often similarly mobile), the highly skilled also remain connected to specific places, in particular their country of origin. For example, Favell (2006; 2008) found in the study of highly skilled mobility within EU countries that medical services (family doctor, dentist) are often maintained in the home country even after years of living and working elsewhere.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, many of the dichotomies associated with the globalizing world, such as proximity-distance, embeddedness-disembeddedness and presence-absence seem inadequate for capturing the realities of mobile lives. Nowicka (2006) astutely observes that theoretical models typically follow these dualisms "instead of analyzing the dynamics of socio-spatial structuration as a whole, integrating the scientific and public reflection with practices of individuals and institutions." She furthermore questions the often taken-for-granted claim that geographical mobility has significantly increased, noting that while average distances traveled during a journey have become longer, the number of trips per person per day has remained constant, and that most people continue to remain immobile.

Nowicka (2006) considered two dualisms in particular in order to see whether they apply to the lives of mobile professionals – inclusion-exclusion and embeddedness and disembeddedness. She concludes that while these continue to be relevant, they are also highly ambivalent. She found that in the actual experiences of mobile individuals, "each of these pairs becomes uncoupled and re-connected in new configurations… presence and proximity do not

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necessarily relate to inclusion, and absence to exclusion…" Presence, for example, means participating in the "stories" of a local place (e.g. the home country); yet continuity, visiting regularly while no longer living there, may in the long run ensure participation even with great mobility and physical absence. Nowicka (2006) notes that the "moral claims of attachment" to a place may be more important to mobile individuals than being continuously present as such. These kinds of observations, while promising, still remain too few; yet they highlight the potential in contrasting theoretical assumptions with the actual experienced realities of globally mobile people.

3.4 Identity and Emotions in Relation to Place

One issue relevant to the relationship understanding geographically mobile lives is how personal identities are related to locations. Some authors see identity as becoming more detached from place in the global world, while others see place to be just as essential to personal identity as ever.

According to Beck (2000b), the shift from the first to the second modernity is also a transition from "place monogamy" to "place polygamy". "Whether voluntarily or compulsorily or both, people spread their lives out across separate worlds. Globalization of biography means place polygamy; people are wedded to several places at once." (Ibid.) In general, in the global era people's lives are no longer immobile or tied to one particular place. Thus, personal biographies have become global too. "It is a traveling life, both literally and metaphorically, a nomadic life, a life spent in cars, aeroplanes and trains, on the telephone or on the Internet, a transnational life stretching across frontiers (Beck 2000b, 168)."

Beck (2000b, 168) observes that the context of the national state has become at once too big and too small. Worldwide influences and challenges have become a part of people's personal lives, be the influences positive or negative. Individual lives have also become "experimental": traditional, inherited ways of living and old roles no longer have the same relevance. There are no existing models for living, and new models have to be developed (Beck 2000b, 169). Similarly, Sennett (2000, 176) notes that personal identities that are strongly tied to a particular place can no longer be sustained so easily. "The new capitalism has also disturbed

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identities based on place – that sense of 'home', of belonging somewhere particular in the world. The disturbance occurs particularly in the places where the new sort of work gets done, cities which are increasingly homes to the global elite as well as lower-level migrants." (Sennett 2000, 176.)

Yet, while it may be true that for many individuals one particular place is no longer the *only one* relevant for identity, it does not mean that places and movements between them would not play a significant role in the constitution of identity. Our senses of self are formed by various events and people that are related to specific places (Conradson & McKay 2007). Rose (1995) argues that the feelings people have about places form one of the key dimensions where the apparent tension between the local and global can be addressed. She focuses on "a sense of place", emphasizing that places are critical precisely because they are the targets of strong personal feelings. These feelings are not insignificant: identity is about making sense of ourselves – and place can be an important part of this. People make sense of themselves and their lives through their everyday experiences and the people around them, and these are physically located. "[T]he meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them" (Rose 1995, 88). There are different ways of feeling a sense of place. One is simply identifying with a place, or having a feeling that you belong to a place. These can be physical spaces, such as rooms, houses, or gardens, as well as locations, such as cities or nations. A particular landscape may also reflect people's beliefs and meanings – Rose (1995) mentions the Midwestern, vast landscape and how it gave space to Newtonian physics and revivalist Christianity in the area. According to Rose, there can also be a "global" sense of place that is related to the spread of news and popular culture across the world. (Ibid., 89-92.)

Another way to experience a place is to not identify with it, by feeling that a place is very different from oneself. For example, when a foreign or a distant place is defined as exotic, different, corrupt or decadent, one is at the same time defining another place (the one a person identifies with) as the opposite. Rose characterizes this as "explicitly referring to a place but at the same time implicitly also making arguments about another place." (Ibid., 96). Then again, a sense of place can of course be lacking entirely; one simply may not have feelings related to a specific place. Naturally, the same location may be interpreted in different ways and arouse different kinds of senses of place by different people. Nevertheless, Rose points out that identity and sense of place must be understood in a wider context: while senses of place may be personal, they are also influenced by the social, cultural and economic context. (Ibid.)

The emotional relationship to places (Conradson & McKay 2007; Conradson & Latham 2007) is thus a relevant issue emerging in empirical research that aims to address the current dynamics of local and global. Concerning mobile people, in particular, the key question becomes how the geographical movement and at the same time, the relationship to the particular places they move between, plays a part in the shaping of their identity and sense of self. Moreover, an equally important question is how their feelings about places influence their mobility.

When people move globally, opportunities for new kinds of identities and feelings appear (Conradson and McKay 2007). Similarly to many other authors focusing on the experiences of mobile people, Conradson and McKay (2007) take a more critical position towards treatises that portray global mobility as smooth and uncomplicated, recognizing instead that most migrants continue to feel attachment and loyalty to people and communities in specific locations. They maintain that "…localities continue to be important as sources of meaning and identity for mobile subjects; at the level of human experience, the *distinctiveness of place is retained rather than eroded by global migration flows* (Ibid., italics added)." They also note that emotional and affective states linked to geographical mobility are crucial dimensions of a person's subjectivity.

Conradson and Latham (2007) have studied the opportunities a city offers for skilled migrants on an emotional level. They focused on professionals from New Zealand who moved to London and examined the "affective possibilities" their interviewees associated with this city. By affective possibilities the authors refer to "opportunities that certain places offer, or are perceived to offer, for new modes of feeling and being (Ibid.)". They note that the experience of mobility includes an aspect of transforming the self. Mobility thus gives a person the chance to discover oneself as well as the world: the experience is not intended to leave the individual the same.

At the outset, then, moving to another (distant) country is meant to be a journey both into a new location and into oneself. Distance is significant and has a special meaning in the process of self-discovery and self-development: the distance from home gives room and stimuli for the self to develop. The specific location also matters. Conradson and Latham (2007) note that some locations are more favorable for awakening certain affective-emotional states then others – and although images like that are stereotypical they are nevertheless in some ways real. According to the authors, the affective possibilities are related to local ecologies of place, although not accessible to all. “They reflect… the coming together of people, buildings, technologies and various forms of non-human life in particular geographic settings (Ibid.).”

London as a world city was found to offer the professionals from New Zealand possibilities for experimentation and exploration both from personal and career perspective that they did not have at home. The place had aspects such as cosmopolitanism, buzz and intensity that the skilled migrants had not experienced before. The authors (Ibid.) observe that many of the skilled migrants considered the affective possibilities of a location together with the labor market opportunities; the latter are often not the only or even the main reason for moving. The professional and personal (emotional) opportunities are intertwined when a location is assessed.

Conradson and Latham (2007) identified three main aspects about the urban dynamics of London that were important in the affective experience of the professionals from New Zealand. The first element was cultural and ethnic diversity; hearing languages and experiencing practices the skilled migrants had not been exposed to before in their relatively homogeneous home country. This encouraged them to reframe their own identities and gave a sense of freedom. The second area of affective experience concerned the wide range of lifestyle and leisure possibilities and the feeling of ‘being in the center of things’ (which was an experience strikingly similar to what I found in the case of my Finnish informants in Silicon Valley, as reported in Chapter 7). London was experienced as a place that offers something for everyone, no matter what one’s background, interests or preferences are. Furthermore, this ‘buzz’ made the professionals feel more energized and stimulated. The third element significant for the emotional experience of London was lack of social restrictions. London was experienced as a place where one can remain anonymous and choose their degree of involvement in the community; the distance and loosening of social ties to people and places in the home country freed the skilled migrants from social expectations they were used to in New Zealand.

Finally, the authors (Ibid.) stress that they do not wish to promote one-dimensional ideas about places and affect. They note that places are never characterized by singular affective aspects but offer a diversity of possibilities. Mere physical presence is also not sufficient to experience the emotional opportunities: a person may travel to a place and entirely miss them –

some sort of more permanent stay may be essential from the viewpoint of self-discovery and self-development.

It seems, therefore, that while many people's lives have become more "traveling lives" and not tied to only one location (for example, where they were born), the personal relationship to place still matters, although differently perhaps than in the past. Today, it may be a matter of identifying with several places rather than just one, or even of having more freedom over which places to identify with. However, it would be too hasty to conclude that identities are no longer based on place. Instead, as for example Conradson and Latham's (2007) study indicates, it is essential to understand further what kinds of personal and affective relationships people have to places in the current era.

3.5 Mobility for the Privileged and Rootedness for the Poor?

> " … [I]mmobility is not a realistic option in a world of permanent change… Some of us become fully and truly 'global'; some are fixed in their 'locality' – a predicament neither pleasurable nor endurable in the world in which the 'globals' set the tone and compose the rules of the life-game… Being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation." (Bauman 1998, 2.)

The relationship between geographical mobility and eliteness is an interesting issue that emerges from many of the discussions on transnationalism. It is also relevant considering the issue of identity and emotions in relation to place discussed above. Many authors (see e.g. Florida 2008; Castells 2004b, Bauman 1998; 2007; Sennett 2008, 59; Appadurai 1996) link mobility to a privileged position and vice versa: immobility is linked to being underprivileged. This is an interesting subplot in today's story of the meaning of place and distance: mobility across distance as such seems, in the eyes of these authors, to make a person part of an elite, or indicate that they are somehow privileged. Consequently, immobility indicates disadvantage; not having the freedom to move, and being trapped in a locality.

To Bauman (1998; 2007) the distinction between the mobile elites and the immobile poor is sharp. While the poor remain trapped in specific places, elites are not tied to places at all - indeed, according to Bauman, they are not interested in what happens in their physical surroundings. Furthermore, he argues that the real home of the privileged is the virtual world:

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"…the present-day urban elites are *unconcerned* with the affairs or 'their' city, just one locality among many, all such localities being small and insignificant from the vantage point of cyberspace – their genuine, even if virtual, home." (Bauman 2007, 75, italics in original). Thus, due to their self-centered nature, which means that they mostly want to be left alone in their own comfortable spaces, elites do not truly belong to the places where their residences happen to be located (Ibid., 74-75). Similarly, Appadurai (1996, 9-10) and Castells (2004b, 11) have argued that globalization has diminished distance and the meaning of place specifically for elites, who inhabit the "timeless space of flows of global networks and their ancillary locales" (Castells 2004b, 11.)

This viewpoint is noteworthy considering the empirical focus of the present research focusing on Finnish highly skilled professionals in Silicon Valley. These are highly skilled people from an advanced, Western economy that have moved for their work. Based on the ideas about the relationship between mobility, eliteness and the erased meaning of locality, it could be assumed that if distance is dead to someone, these are the people for whom it is so. On the other hand, if reports of the demise of distance turn out to have been exaggerated for highly skilled professionals (e.g. if they are still tied to places emotionally or because of other people), there is good reason to assume that it is not dead for other groups of people either. If locality and distance matter for them, it probably matters for others too. These professionals fall into the category of people who should be the freest from constraints of locality and distance, and have the highest levels of access to diverse forms of virtual connectedness.

Florida (2008, 79-80) speaks explicitly of a new social division based on mobility. He identifies two class categories: the mobile and the rooted. The mobile are those who have understood that the pursuit of the best opportunities often involves moving to new locations. They are not necessarily born elites but they do have the resources and the drive to move to places where they can make the best use of their talents. What separates them from the rooted, then, is the understanding of the role of location in one's life and for one's success. The mobile would appear to be the modern elites in that they have the ability and the flexibility to move to the locations where they can best prosper.

The rooted, in contrast, are "people who are tied to place. Some, of course, have the good fortune to be rooted in places with thriving economies and optimistic futures. But many others are essentially trapped in areas with limited resources, moribund economies, and

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declining financial opportunities. Of course, many are born poor and do not possess the resources to move." (Ibid., 79-80.) Florida notes that not all of those who are 'rooted' are 'stuck', and can of course be tied to a locality by choice, for example, by the wish to stay close to family and friends, which is an important aspect of personal happiness. Nevertheless, the implication is that mobile is the desired category (who would want to be "trapped"?). Mobility rings of freedom, opportunity, and even glamour, while rootedness is mainly equated with being stuck. In a similar vein, Sennett (2008, 59) notes that modern economic migrants tend to be entrepreneurial, while those that stay home are considered passive. So, besides eliteness, mobility also signifies entrepreneurship.

This implied link is also interesting because of the image a locality portrays. Locality is uncool, and mobility is cool. It is, therefore, not only that immobility is seen as indicative of a lack of opportunities, but the very idea of being tied to a locality also signals some kind of disadvantage. Thus, locality matters only for the unprivileged, and the elites are free from its constraints. At this level of discussion the specific locality does not matter; it is not about particular localities, but being tied to localities in general that is implied to be a negative thing.

Yet as the findings, for instance, from Conradson and Latham's (2007) study on the affective possibilities of places suggest there is at least a possibility that one can be *both* tied to a locality and geographically mobile; an option that is not really considered in these discussions. It is as if the freedom to move geographically automatically results in the diminishing meaning of locality – not simply the freedom to move while remaining tied to place(s). Yet, as some empirical findings suggest, in reality, it is also – or particularly – for elites a dynamic relationship, not an either-or issue. It is perhaps worth considering that no-one may be completely free from the constraints of place or completely free to be mobile; and perhaps those who are freer than others have a more complex, dynamic relationship to place(s) than what the literature is currently able to capture.

There seems to be a curious hidden logic in the current discussions, which runs as follows: if distance is dead for you and locality does not constrain you, it means that you are privileged and free; but if distance is still real to you and you are tied to locality, you are underprivileged and trapped. I would like to question the usefulness of this logic in the present research.

It is important to note that even if this logic is unintended (i.e. even if the authors cited here were not to explicitly argue or accept this), it nevertheless seems to be the underlying logic behind many of the discussions, a conclusion that can be logically drawn. The obvious point, of course, in many of the arguments concerning eliteness and mobility is to emphasize the *inequalities* related to globalization. Clear inequalities exist in mobility and global connectedness: it is well known that globalization does not mean the same things to everyone. However, the extent to which locality and distance have lost their meaning to people that seem to be privileged could be contested. It might be worthwhile to examine further whether the relationship to place and distance really has diminished among elites. Finally, it is not clear who exactly these elites are: they are not defined in the current discussions. There may be some circular reasoning going on here: the elites are elites because they are mobile, and because they are mobile (and apparently free) they are elites.

3.6 The Global Work(place) and Knowledge Transfer

Thus far the experiences of highly skilled mobility have been discussed without explicitly distinguishing between personal and work contexts. In this last section before the concluding discussion and research questions I will focus on how location and distance matter in the specific context of work and knowledge transfer.

3.6.1 Work in the global era

Many prominent authors stress that work and employment have been fundamentally transformed in the new global information economy (Beck 2000; Castells 2000a&b; Sennett 1998; 2000). In terms of employment patterns and working arrangements, globalization has introduced a requirement for flexibility like never before, where part-time, temporary work and self-employment have become relevant forms of employment instead of traditional career employment (Castells 2000a&b; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005). Today, work is more about short-term projects than life-long careers, and employers are changed frequently: "a lifetime

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employment in a firm is a thing of the past" (Sennett 2000, 176.) Sennett also notes that where there used to be careers, there are now merely jobs in today's work world (Sennett 2000, 183).

The other major change is that the organizational form of firms has shifted from hierarchy to networks: the traditional vertically organized corporation has largely ceased to exist (Castells 2000b; Sennett 2000; O'Riain 2006). Sennett (2000, 184) further observes the shortening of the institutional life of employers: firms are merging and restructuring at a much faster pace than ever before.

Changes in work are closely tied to the other changes leading theorists have identified in relation to globalization: the increased use of travel and virtual communication, the meaning of place, locality, time and the organizational form of social networks. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) critically observe various features related to the "casualization of employment" in the new capitalism. While the increase in flexible arrangements, such as temporary work, fixed-term contracts and part-time or variable hours has given firms more freedom, this has meant growing job insecurity among the working population. In France, their empirical case, the trend has been that the average working day has become shorter for some (the percentage of people working less than six hours a day has increased) and longer for others (the percentage of people working more than ten hours a day also increased during the same period). (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005, 225.)

The role of new technologies is significant in these changes in work: they have made work cleaner and less taxing physically, but have also increased the pressure of demand and deadlines; there is a "greater degree of psychological obligation" (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005, 247). The control exercised over employees has become more subtle and at the same time more diffuse. New technologies make the control of workers possible from a distance, over longer periods of time and without a manager having to be present. (Ibid., 248.) Thus, the control of work and workers is less obvious, but has not disappeared (Ibid.; see also O'Riain 2000; 2006).

Information technology and travel have also changed the meaning of space and place in work. Not all the details of these changes are yet clear however, and, again, contrasting views exist. O'Riain (2006) observes that for neoclassical economists, the global workplace is essentially a virtual place where the limitations of space, social organization and local institutional arrangements have largely lost their meaning. From this perspective, the boundaries between the virtual and the real are blurred; virtual ties are as real as "actual" ones and knowledge is created and shared in interaction in the virtual space.

There is also contradicting evidence: the more activity becomes global or virtual, the more physical proximity and time are emphasized. Beunza & Stark (2003) found in their study of a Wall Street trading room that the organization of the physical surroundings and the opportunity for quick, immediate face-to-face communication between traders were crucial to the successful carrying out of work. "We found that the more that trading becomes virtual, the more it heightens the salience of physical proximity…" (Beunza & Stark 2003.)

3.6.2 Time-space intensification in the global workplace

O'Riain's (2000; 2006) notion of time-space intensification is useful for considering in depth the changes and struggles that globalization and virtual communication have brought to the work of globally operating professionals. As proposed by O'Riain (Ibid.), the idea of time-space intensification suggests that, instead of losing their meaning, as some authors have hypothesized, *time and space have become more explicit elements of human experience*. O'Riain (Ibid.) writes that prior to time-space intensification, three concepts have attempted to capture the restructuring of time and space: *time-space distanciation* (citing Giddens 1984 and Reich 1991), *time-space compression* (citing Harvey 1989) and *time-space embedding* (citing economic geographers, such as Piore & Sabel 1984; Saxenian 1994; Storper 1997). As O'Riain demonstrates, all these highlight important aspects of the changing meaning of time and space today, but without being able to fully capture the phenomenon. As also discussed earlier in the present text, *time-space distanciation* refers to the "lifting out of social relations from immediate context" (Giddens 1991), apparently in line with the understanding of globalization as a process that makes the world one single place. Time-space distanciation represents the perspective according to which time and space have become less meaningful and less constraining in the global era.

Time-space compression illustrates the penetration of time in the global workplace and stresses how intense time pressures dominate the space of global workers. This critical perspective emphasizes how global processes have come to dominate the space of the worker that once was autonomous and brings attention to the less positive, even exploitative, aspects of the global economy in which the ideology of competitiveness rules.

Thirdly, *time-space embedding* reminds us how the local context and face-to-face interaction continue to matter, or have even become more crucial for competitive advantage in the global era. This idea is prominent in the work of economic geographers. It emphasizes how even the global workplace (being connected to different distant areas in the world) is still located somewhere and how this location can become a crucial element in the sharing of information and in keeping up the flexibility and rapid innovation the global economy requires.

Finally, O'Riain proposes the concept of *time-space intensification* to capture both the way today's global knowledge economy is re-embedded in time and space and how it is based on exploitation and domination rather than free exchange, as the more positive conceptualizations of time-space distanciation or embedding imply. Therefore, time-space intensification means that local place and face-to-face interactions continue to have significant importance in the competitive global economy. Furthermore, unlike the other conceptualizations, it includes the idea of space as a resource:

> "The intensification of space is not just a matter of the increased importance of face-to-face interaction or of competition between places but of the increasing importance of the ability to mobilize space as a resource in social relations in the face of pressures from the capitalist market." (O'Riain 2006.)

With his ethnographic data from the Irish software industry, O'Riain (2000; 2006) analyses how all of the conceptualizations (time-space distanciation, embedding, compression, and intensification) can be identified in the empirical case. O'Riain participated in the work of a globally-operating team of software developers located in an office in Ireland, but with collaborators and management in Silicon Valley and other locations.

Time-space distanciation is illustrated by the Irish economy's connectedness to the global markets, in the form of attracting foreign direct investment, professional emigration, and local firms with increasingly global ties and flows of business and research information through both personal-level and institutional linkages. All this blurs the boundaries between the Irish nation-state and the global economy and cracks open the traditional containers of time and space.

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Time-space compression, on the other hand, is evident in the Irish case in the surrendering of the national economy to the demands of the global economy. In order to attract foreign multinationals, the industrial policy was largely shaped by their "perceived and stated needs". This resulted in a series of transformations in the structure of state finances, the education system (that oriented towards business and technology) and the general dominance of the goal of being globally competitive in a way that all other policy considerations were to be shaped to support this goal. At the level of the workplace, time-space compression is illustrated by the direct contact of the global economy (providing services very close to demand) and the pressures it brings, especially time pressures and expectations of enormous flexibility.

Time-space embedding materializes in the emergence of local capabilities in Ireland, as a result of national policies aiming at increased global competitiveness. A new highly skilled population of knowledge workers emerged, and consequently their local, informal networks, groups and forums that provided "infrastructure for information-sharing, cooperation and innovation". Being present in the same locality and space makes possible frequent and smooth communication and a common identity, which further facilitates knowledge sharing and innovation. O'Riain describes how the five members of the team were located in the same office in Ireland, in the very same cubicle. Thus, physically they were very close to each other and shared the same space. The team members discussed work-related issues and exchanged information on the way to breakfast and lunch, during meals and on the way back. In contrast, information flows from the Ireland-based team and their U.S. based collaborators were limited to broad strategic decisions. The time difference was significant and became evident in everyday work: if there was a minor misunderstanding with a collaborator in Silicon Valley, the worker in Ireland had to sit inactive and wait an entire morning or afternoon until the colleague on the U.S. West Coast became available. As O'Riain (2006) stresses: "…spaces defined by face-to-face interaction remain a critical component of the global workplace, even as virtual spaces proliferate."

Finally, in the Irish case the intensification of time and space is evidenced by the software developers' greater *awareness* of spatial and temporal differences. The awareness of collaborators in different localities brings about stronger emphasis on the local culture too, creating an informal "us vs. them" mentality. Accordingly, the team members saw themselves – who were located in the same office – as much more homogeneous as a group than they saw

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themselves in respect to others located elsewhere – even though the local team was ethnically diverse too. Furthermore, O'Riain (2000; 2006) identifies *the project deadline* as the main mechanism that brings the intensification of time into the heart of the local workplace. In a team that is scattered over a number of localities globally, the possibilities for direct control of the team member's work are limited. Moreover, the nature of today's highly skilled, professional, information technology work is such that, at least on the level of appearance, it emphasizes independence and autonomy rather than direct managerial control in the form of, e.g. specific work hours or punch cards. Furthermore, the workers expertise is so specific that the managers do not have all the necessary knowledge to directly tell them how to organize their work tasks. These aspects, therefore - the geographical distance, the work culture that values autonomy and the specific nature of the knowledge and skills the professionals have - together support the independence and freedom from control of the workers.

However, the deadline is the mechanism that undermines all these, because in practice it makes the professional committed to work long hours and do what is necessary to meet the deadline. The deadline is so efficient, because essentially it activates/ awakens the workers internal control, and other means of control become largely unnecessary.

Finally, there is a potentially political yet subdued element to time-space intensification too: the workers frequently complained about time pressures and long hours, but any political action against these was rare. O'Riain (2006) observes that "the knowledge economy is driven by a deep tension between the social relations necessary to generate knowledge (and knowledge as a constituent element of social relations) and the reach of markets into social relations to extract that knowledge, codify it, and commercialize it."

According to O'Riain (2000), out of the intensification of time and space emerges "cooperation, innovation, and career success, but also burnout, individualism, inequality, and pressures on family. It is these dilemmas and tradeoffs that constitute the 'contested terrain' of the global informational workplace."

3.6.3 Location, distance and knowledge transfer

The issue of knowledge sharing has already been touched upon above in the discussion of some empirical studies of global professionals (e.g. Aneesh 2006; Beaverstock 2002; O'Riain 2000).

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As it is one of the essential aspects in the experience of the dynamics of location and distance for the Silicon Valley Finns, I will consider it further here.

When concerned with the experiences of individuals working in micro-level innovation activity, one of the key questions is, how (and how far) knowledge travels and what is needed for it to be shared. The issue can be approached from several perspectives. Literatures on regional innovation, on one hand, and virtual work on the other address in different ways the question of knowledge, proximity and distance. As we have seen above, theories of globalization that discuss the diminishing meaning of location assume that knowledge travels smoothly as long as there is a communication technology available. Conversely, literature on industrial districts and innovation clusters (e.g. Saxenian 1994; Storper 2000) emphasizes proximity and shared culture, interdependencies and trust in innovation and knowledge transfer. Studies on distributed/virtual work (Hinds & Kiesler 2002) document challenges related to interaction at a distance, but also attempt to identify successes and ways to overcome the challenges.

Location and distance are central for the issue of knowledge transfer because in today's "information economy", access to relevant knowledge is crucial for innovation and competitiveness. Information is thus a key ingredient for innovation. According to the current understanding there is so much information available today that no single individual or organization can keep up on their own: interaction with others is needed. Furthermore, the pace of innovation is so fast that interaction is crucial – it is hard for any firm or actor to be innovative alone (see e.g. Chesbrough 2003; Chesbrough et al. 2006). As the complexity of the information/knowledge increases, social networks become ever more important for knowledge sharing (Sorenson 2004). It is commonly agreed that networks are important for knowledge transfer (e.g. Powell & Grodal 2005). But when discussing networks often no distinction is made between local and global networks. Both obviously matter, but they have different implications for knowledge sharing.

Locally, access to networks is often identified as one of the main reasons why high technology industries still cluster (Porter 2000; Storper 2000). Porter (2000, 260) has argued that on a firm level, access to information and knowledge is one of the mechanisms through which location contributes to competitiveness. Yet there is a tension between the observation that, on one hand, today's communication technologies have made information available anywhere and on the other, organizations and individuals still gather to be in close physical proximity to other relevant actors. In Storper's (2000, 151) words "…firms suggest that they use proximity to help with the flow of ideas or negotiations, even though – as we know – information is cheap and easy to transport. What are we to make, analytically speaking, of this evidence?"

The distinction between information and knowledge helps understand why locality, being present and face-to-face interaction are still considered crucial by many authors concerned with innovation. *Information* is something that is relatively simple to codify, store in databases and share or access virtually. The nature of information is such that it does not require extensive interpretation and it is relatively simple to understand, once a basic expertise is acquired. *Knowledge*, or *tacit knowledge*, is more subtle in nature and difficult to fully codify, store in databases or share virtually. It is commonly understood that tacit knowledge requires a shared context and understanding and often face-to-face interaction to be transferred. Thus, it appears that while information is not dependent on location and 'travels' effortlessly across distances, knowledge is closely tied to people and locations and does not travel easily. (See, e.g. Brown & Duguid 2000; Nonaka 1994; Leamer & Storper 2001; Storper 2000; Cook et al. 2007).

Thus the vast literature on regional economies has emphasized how close proximity and shared culture, values and social ties are crucial for tacit knowledge transfer. The benefits of social ties for innovation and entrepreneurship particularly at the local or regional level are well documented (e.g. Becattini 2004; Becattini et al. 2003; Kenney 2000; Saxenian 1994; Powell & Grodal 2005; Crouch et al. 2004; Dei Ottati 2003b). Industrial districts as discussed, for example in the literature on Italian local/regional economies (see, e.g. Burroni & Trigilia 2001; Becattini 2004; Becattini et al. 2003; Dei Ottati 2003a&b; Sforzi 2003) are local systems characterised by the active involvement of a community of people and small firms specialised in different parts of the production process. The firms in an industrial district are typically numerous, small and specialised sharing a common culture (language, meanings, values) and implicit rules of behaviour. Their location within close proximity to each other and shared context facilitates trust and accountability and contributes to tacit knowledge transfer.

Considering the benefits of local clustering, Storper (2000) criticizes the theorizations on the information age (such as Castells') as "fundamentally inadequate" because of treating knowledge as disembodied bits of information. Storper (2000, 151) notes that firms continue to cluster where other firms in their business are in order to be 'close to the action'; that is, be in the place where they can access the most up-to-date ideas and knowledge related to their products and markets. Thus there are interdependencies among firms related to knowledge spillovers that are considered crucial in order to remain competitive. Storper furthermore points out that when it comes to knowledge sharing and distance, the nature of the knowledge is essential; if it is complex and difficult to codify, direct human relations are required for successful exchange. In a similar vein, Porter (2000) argues that knowledge "can be accessed better or at lower cost from within the cluster…" both between firms and within a firm (different units) in the same location. Personal relations that promote trust and thus facilitate knowledge flows are essential at the local level.

Finally, in her research on global brain circulation Saxenian (2006) has studied the movement of entrepreneurs/innovators who are culturally and socially embedded in more than one location. They have originally left their home countries to pursue university degrees in the U.S. and have worked often many years in the Silicon Valley innovation system. At some point they have returned to their countries of origin to advance innovation activity there, at the same time maintaining close business links to Silicon Valley. Thus with their intimate knowledge of the people, language, culture and norms of interaction in both these distant locations, they have been able to transfer knowledge and practices between them in a way that fosters the economies of both. This is something that probably could not have been achieved only through virtual interaction. Connecting the businesses in the distant locations required physical presence and lengthy stays in both – yet it is not to be denied that once the links were created, virtual connectedness may have been crucial in maintaining them in everyday work.

3.6.4 Distributed work

Studies on virtual and distributed work commonly document the challenges related to distant collaboration and but also include important attempts to identify successes and analyze what can be learned from them (Järvenpää & Leidner 1998; Bradner & Mark 2002; Nardi & Whitaker 2002; Moon & Sproul 2002).

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Even in this literature it is commonly recognized that face-to-face interaction continues to be important for collaboration. Yet Nardi and Whitaker (2002) note that both face-to-face and virtual interaction have their disadvantages as well as benefits. The benefits of face-to-face interaction are, for example, that it fosters social bonding and enables touching (handshakes, both for initiating a new contact and maintaining one). Moreover, activities such as eating and drinking together and sharing a common space have been found to benefit collaboration and knowledge sharing. Showing up in person demonstrates commitment, which, in turn, facilitates trust and collaboration. There are, however, problems associated with face-to-face interaction as well. Working in the same physical space makes one subject to constant interruptions by other people. Meetings are costly and resource consuming, and may be experienced as waste of time – important information is not always transmitted or social bonds deepened in face-to-face contact. Productivity may also be considerably lower when working face-to-face than alone. (Nardi & Whitaker 2002.) There are examples of highly productive and successful virtual communities in which many of the participants have never met each other (one of the most notable ones being the community that developed the Linux operating system, see e.g. Moon & Sproul 2002). Thus, there is potential for virtual, distant collaboration to succeed, but it seems that often it is a matter of finding the appropriate mix and rhythm of face-to-face and virtual interaction in the work process (Nardi & Whitaker 2002).

The quality of the social relationship between the participants appears to be one important factor in how smooth or successful distant communication is. Nardi and Whitaker (2002, 104) note that "[s]hared personal history and social bonds often make it possible to overcome the limitations of mediated communication." They further found that it is problematic to handle more emotional communication – such as argue a court case – virtually. According to them the key issues to consider when designing virtual collaboration (and the role of face-to-face in it) are the nature of the work task itself, the quality of the relationship between the participants and the temporal scope of the work. It is commonly observed that face-to-face meetings often seem to be necessary for establishing relationships even if the collaboration is continued virtually.

Furthermore, the experience of distance is interesting in distributed work, because in principle, there should be no distances in virtual worlds. Yet the way distance is perceived clearly matters for virtual collaboration. Bradner and Mark (2002) found in their experimental

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study that people were less likely to be persuaded, less willing to cooperate and more likely to deceive collaborators they believed were geographically far away (in a distant city instead of where they were), although in the same country. Thus it was a situation where there was shared language and cultural context but geographical distance. With cultural factors held constant, the believed geographical distance nevertheless mattered in virtual collaboration. In the same study, it was also found that subjects perceived collaborators in same city as being very near whereas those located in a city on the other side of the country were experienced as being far away. This was related to, for example, the thought that they might run into someone who is in the same city but it would be unlikely they would ever meet the virtual collaborator in the distant location. The same location is thus a meaningful category to people that automatically seems to evoke attributions of similarity and closeness. This in turn may be crucial for knowledge transfer. When the collaborator was believed to be geographically far away, she was also perceived to be more different and the perception changed how the subjects cooperated, deceived and were persuaded by her. The technology was exactly the same in the two experimental conditions. Thus, proximity appears to increase collaboration, but also the quality of the communication. Finally, it has been found that trust is often more difficult to create virtually than face-to-face. A quick type of trust may be achieved (termed "swift trust" by Järvenpää & Leidner 1998) in virtual interaction, but it appears that it is often relatively weak in nature and does not last.

To conclude, virtual interaction is a critical element in the dynamic of local presence and global connectedness. Specifically, knowledge transfer is a relevant issue considering the dynamics of virtual and local, because also in the present study it was identified as one of the main work-related benefits of being located in Silicon Valley. All in all, the studies discussed in this section tell us that the experience of time and space have been intensified in the global workplace and distance can be used as a way to handle time pressures and managerial control. They also reveal that being in the same location is still considered to be crucial for knowledge transfer and innovation and that the specific challenges related to virtual collaboration concern, for example, the awareness of distance and its consequences for persuasion and willingness to cooperate. Yet today virtual communication is part of the everyday work of skilled professionals and much of the dynamics of local presence and global interaction continue to remain insufficiently understood.

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3.7 Discussing the Literature

In the above we have seen that depending on the literature we get very different – occasionally strikingly different – images of the meaning of locality and distance in the global era. If we look at sociological theorizations, locality and distance seem to have largely lost their meaning. This literature is characterized by an emphasis on ideas of the world becoming one place and distance losing its meaning, at least for some. Indeed, many prominent authors seem to argue that, particularly for the privileged, the elites, place and distance have no meaning because they are free to choose where they live and are to move geographically.

In some ways the social theorizations of the early 1990s and early 2000s already seem overly enthusiastic and to overestimate the change today. In addition, the sheer amount of these "hyped" writings, by both serious scholars and more popular authors, is notable. (I agree with Mann, cited in Favell [2001; 2008, 256-257], who refers to the overload of theoretical treatises on globalization as "globaloney".) So, in general the literature on globalization suffers, in my view, both from the excess and the hype related to the presumed transformations involved.

Nevertheless, these theorizations are useful here. Firstly, they are serious attempts to systematize and explicitly discuss the key issues (in particular locality and distance) of our time and, secondly, these theorizations matter for how the idea of globalization is generally framed and understood, i.e. they influence how we perceive these issues.

The empirical studies are much more careful in estimating the degree and rapidity of the changes associated with globalization and virtual technology on the human level. Bozkurt (2006) and Nowicka (2006), for example, have noted that the changes are much more gradual, uneven and complex than what the abstract theorizations assume. New and old patterns appear simultaneously. Others, such as Aneesh (2006), opt for the language of change, but nevertheless point out that geography is not disappearing and that virtual migration could not completely replace physical migration.

Indeed, when we read the more empirically grounded literature on transnationalism, global ties and global work, the image becomes more complex. The actual experiences of people indicate that although significant changes have been brought about by information and communication technologies, and globalization more generally, localities still matter and the connectedness between distances is not as straightforward as may seem when observed from the theoretician's chair. On the basis of the empirical literature, it can be postulated that, at the very least, places and distances continue to matter, although perhaps not exactly in the same ways as they used to. For example, when it comes to the specific issue of knowledge transfer, the current understanding is that while codified information travels easily across distance, tacit knowledge is "sticky" and tied to localities. This is one indication that the issues here are more complex than the "fast" theorizations (Favell 2001) of the current era are able to grasp.

I argue that we will obtain a clearer image by combining empirical evidence close to real-life experiences with insights from both theoretical and empirical literature, as has been done in some of the recent empirical studies discussed above. Sociological theory has the advantage of explicitly attempting to advance our understanding of some of the key issues of the current era, yet runs the risk of remaining detached from reality. In contrast, empirical literature brings a much-needed concreteness to the discussion, but systematic and explicit attempts to understand empirically the issues of locality and distance still remain relatively scarce and further understanding, e.g. concerning specific groups such as skilled people is needed. Furthermore, I would maintain that it is useful not to document only major changes but also what has remained; what are the new and old patterns that exist simultaneously (Nowicka 2006).

3.7.1 Overview of empirical studies

Here I will briefly summarize the empirical studies considered most relevant and illustrative of what is currently known about the experiences of highly skilled mobile professionals. These studies were selected because they are based on empirical data, focus on the highly skilled and tell us something about the meaning of location and distance to them. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list but an illustrative one, documenting for the purposes of the present study what kind of empirical research has been done related to the issues discussed in grand theorizations on globalization and what is empirically known about the lives and work of the highly skilled globally mobile.

The basic characteristics of the studies, such as the main research issue, the direction of the mobility and the main findings are summarized in Table 3.1. In the bottom row these are also identifed for the present study to illustrate its position among the previous empirical studies.

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Table 3.1. Summary of relevant empirical studies on highly skilled mobility and work (illustrative, not exhaustive).

AUTHOR & REFERENCE	ISSUE/ QUESTION	NUMBER & TYPE OF PEOPLE STUDIED	FROM WHERE TO WHERE	TYPE OF MOBILITY	FINDINGS
Aneesh 2006	Transformation of global organization of work: virtual vs. physical migration	Over 100 interviews: Indian workers in diverse professions (programmers, analysts, managers, etc.)	From India To United States *East-West*	Virtual work & relocation	Reduced relevance of physical movement because of virtual migration; also somewhat negative experiences of those who relocated and challenges in virtual work
Beaverstock 2002	Knowledge in local-global professional networks	24 men working in finance (lawyers, bankers, accountants)	From London To Singapore *West-East*	Relocation	Professionals locally embedded at work but disembedded at home sphere; important knowledge networking done in local meeting places
Beaverstock 2005	Transnational networking of managerial elites, mobility in careers	30 professionals working in finance, men & women	From London To New York City *West-West*	Relocation	Professionals both locally embedded and virtually connected to global networks
Bozkurt 2006	Role of multinationals (MNCs) in human mobility (careers, motivations, direction of mobility)	72 workers in MNCs, different professions (R&D, marketing, engineering), men & women	From many countries of origin To Sweden & Finland (& Turkey)	Relocation & work travel	Various: motivations and purpose of mobility different according to direction of mobility (to/from MNC headquarters); value and desire of mobility highly contextual; mobility seen as beneficial for career within the MNC
Conradson & Latham 2005b	Global mobility as self-realization, role of friendship networks	10 New Zealanders, men & women working e.g. in education, local government, engineering	From New Zealand To London *West-West*	Relocation	Mobility as self-realization, part of culture of individualization, self-development, career secondary; friendship networks play crucial role in global mobility (also discuss specific New Zealand culture of mobility)
Conradson & Latham 2007	Affective possibilities of location	30 professionals (15 men, 15 women) working e.g. in finance, law, education, engineering	From New Zealand To London *West-West*	Relocation	Affective possibilities of cities essential in attracting globally mobile (diversity, sense of freedom, opportunities, challenges, distance from familiar)

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AUTHOR & REFERENCE	ISSUE/ QUESTION	NUMBER & TYPE OF PEOPLE STUDIED	FROM WHERE TO WHERE	TYPE OF MOBILITY	FINDINGS
Nowicka 2006	Space & time in reflexive modernization	Sample size not mentioned: employees of an international organization	Not mentioned	Frequent travel & relocation	Spatial dualisms (presence-absence; embeddedness-disembeddedness) relevant yet limited for investigating contemporary spatialization; presence does not always relate to inclusion or absence to exclusion New and old patterns of socio-spatial processes appear simultaneously
Nowicka 2007	Construction of home in geographically mobile lives	13 interviews (6 women, 7 men), employees of a UN organization	Not specified (from various countries to diverse developing or transition countries)	Relocation	Home not a fixed location but a set of relationships to both humans and physical objects
O'Riain 2006	Restructuring of time and space in contemporary capitalism	An Irish workteam in a multinational company	No physical migration	Virtual work	Experience of time and space intensified and local embeddedness more crucial in the global era; mobilizing time and space as a resource in individual and corporate action, e.g. distance utilized to subtly resist managerial control
Saxenian 2006	Brain circulation: bottom-up individual level business ties between Silicon Valley and distant locations	Hundreds (exact number not mentioned)	Initially From: India, Israel, Taiwan & China To U.S. (Silicon Valley)	Initially relocation to U.S. then travel/return to home country	Immigrant entrepreneurs with intimate knowledge of local practices, language and culture crucial in creating business ties between their countries of origin and Silicon Valley in a way that benefits both locations (virtual interaction not enough)
This study	Meaning & experience of locality & distance for highly-skilled; West-West mobility	55 interviews, highly skilled men & women working in innovation (entrepreneurs, engineers, academics, public officials)	From Finland To Silicon Valley *West-West*	Relocation	Places as ways to fulfill personal goals/aspirations, but also evoke new identities (pioneer, mediator) Virtual connectedness structures local workday (flexibility & mobility) Nature of social tie (trust) matters for knowledge transfer across distance Challenges & myths related to virtual interaction: mutual understanding, persuasion, experienced distance Presence in location important for inspiration & self-development

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To summarize the aspects of the studies included in the table, let us start with the topics and questions asked in them. All concern highly skilled mobility but the specific issues and focuses vary. Some of the studies more explicitly deal with the meaning, dynamics and transformations related to locality and distance (Aneesh 2006, O'Riain 2006, Nowicka 2006). Others have more specific topics such as knowledge transfer in local and global networks (Beaverstock 2002), the role of geographical mobility in careers within a multinational company (Bozkurt 2006), mobility as self-development (Conradson & Latham 2005b), affective possibilities of a location (Conradson & Latham 2007), friendship networks and other networking (Conradson & Latham 2005b; Beaverstock 2002; 2005), and the construction of home in mobile lives (Nowicka 2007).

The methodology and approach in all these studies is qualitative (except for Saxenian's (2006) which was a combination of surveys and interviews). Qualitative studies were not purposely chosen, but it thus far appears to be the common approach for investigating the experiences of highly skilled mobile people. Since empirical research on highly skilled mobility is still relatively scarce the questions need to remain rather open in order to lead to genuinely new insights (as noted, despite many assumptions, their real-life experiences are not so well understood yet) and thus a qualitative approach is often deemed the best choice (for a recent notable example of a larger-scale quantitative study on highly skilled mobility, see Recchi & Favell 2009).

Nevertheless, the number and type of people investigated in different studies varies considerably. The size of the group/population of informants varies between 10 (Conradson & Latham 2005b) and over 100 (Aneesh 2006; Saxenian 2006). Yet it is clear that many of the studies with smaller "sample" sizes often manage to say a lot with little and the size of the group does not directly indicate what kinds of insights can be acquired. As Wolcott (1994) has observed, increasing the scale of the study may compromise the depth of the understanding achieved and currently, shedding light on the phenomenon of skilled mobility is needed. Even so, as the understanding develops and we know what the most fruitful questions to ask are, it is useful to conduct quantitative studies with carefully formulated questions to see how these findings turn out in larger statistical samples.

Furthermore, some of the studies focus on one clearly defined group of people who either move from one location to another (Aneesh 2006; Beaverstock 2002; 2005; Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007) or work virtually in one place (O'Riain 2006). Others include more than

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one country of origin (Saxenian 2006; Bozkurt 2006) and destination (Bozkurt 2006; Nowicka 2006) but all do not mention what the specific countries of origin of the interviewees are (Nowicka 2006; 2007). Nevertheless, even with several nationalities included within a study, explicit comparative aspects are rarely included. That is, even with people from different departure locations comparisons within this population of skilled people are not made but they are investigated as a single group when it comes to their experiences. Considering the types of questions asked (aiming at illuminating the experiences of skilled mobile in general) and the number of the people included in the studies, comparisons are perhaps more appropriate for larger statistical studies with more specific causality-seeking questions defined at the outset.

These studies also include different ways or contexts of mobility. Some focus on work travel or migration between different units of a multinational company (Bozkurt 2006, Beaverstock 2002; 2005) or an international organization (Nowicka 2006; 2007). Others focus on individuals in a specific location who have arrived there in diverse ways on their own (Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007; Saxenian 2006). Furthermore, while all the studies focus on skilled people, there is variation in the professions and positions they employ both within and between studies, from more middle-level migration (Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007) to managerial elites working in finance (Beaverstock 2002; 2005).

An important dimension to consider is the geographical direction of mobility. As noted earlier, most traditional migration studies (which have been defined outside the scope of the present study because they tend to focus on lower skilled people) investigate people who move from the global South/East to the global North/West. The studies discussed here are chosen because they focus on highly skilled people, but there is nevertheless variation in the direction of mobility. Obviously the most relevant for the present study in this respect are those that focus on West-West mobility (Beaverstock 2005; Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007). In this sense, they are closest to the research setting of Finns moving to Silicon Valley. As I have noted above, I think this aspect is essential when comparing the findings of different studies with each other: it matters where the skilled people examined come from and where they move to. In the studies discussed here, besides West-West migration, there is one clearly East-West (Aneesh 2006) and one West-East (Beaverstock 2002) research setting whereas in some of the studies it is not entirely clear where the migrants come from and it appears there is migration from diverse departure locations to diverse destinations (Bozkurt 2006; Nowicka 2006; 2007) or brain

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circulation (Saxenian 2006) between various countries of origin and one destination, Silicon Valley. Finally, O'Riain's (2006) study is the exception here in that it does not include physical migration at all but focuses on the dynamics of distance and proximity in a global work team (nonetheless selected in this overview because it explicitly discusses the experience and dynamic of distance for the team of skilled professionals).

Finally, an important distinction that needs to be made – that is always not explicitly made in studies of skilled mobility – is whether the focus is specifically on relocation, virtual work/migration (without relocation) or work travel (without relocation). As well as the geographical direction of mobility, this is an aspect that influences how findings of different studies can be contrasted with each other. I think migration or relocation is a very different phenomenon from virtual/global work as such, and it is important to keep this distinction in mind when considering different findings. Migration is a centuries-old phenomenon while virtual work and connectedness is a recent one of the past two decades or less, especially in its widespread form. Yet today, virtual interaction is part of almost all highly skilled work while migration is by any means not, but concerns a relatively small number of people. Migration involves a physical relocation and an overall change, including all aspects of life, not only work; virtual work and connectedness are major changes also, but they do not as such involve a transfer to another (distant) town or country, a physical relocation to another cultural environment or change of home. Consequently, virtual connectedness is part of practically every highly skilled migrant's life today but the opposite does not apply: migration is not necessarily at all relevant for people who do virtual work.

Mobility - understood here as physical/geographical mobility - is by definition a part of a migrant's life and often a part of a highly skilled worker's life as well, in the form of work travel or tourism, yet it is not the same as migration either. One can be mobile while only ever having lived in one location, but a migrant has at least attempted to settle and make a home in a new, often geographically distant and very different location from the original home.

In this study I have chosen to investigate those who have relocated for their work and this was the main criterion for selecting informants. Yet I will also attempt to gain new insight into the everyday mobility of their lives; I examine virtual interaction and connectedness in their daily work and the dynamics of physically being in a location and at the same time being connected virtually to distant places. My general aim is to continue in line of these empirical studies, to develop the questions asked, and to find new dynamics and more detailed understandings of how locality and distance matter for their motivations, identities and everyday work. This way, I also aim to contribute to the related theorizations. Next, I will identify the specific research questions of this study.

3.8 Research Questions

This study will address the following issues regarding highly skilled professionals:

1. Identity, emotions and motivations in relation to place

Does place matter for the professionals personally? How? What does place mean to them? How is place related to motivations and identities?

The current understanding on this issue is somewhat paradoxical. Major social theorizations (Giddens 1990; Beck 2000b; Castells 2000a; Bauman 1998) generally emphasize the mobility and detached nature of the lives of more privileged people and imply that identities are no longer so much tied to places. Yet recent empirical findings (e.g. Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007) suggest that personal and career motivations are related to places and that also for skilled professionals, geographical mobility and particular places offer opportunities for new affective states and self-development.

I assume that the existing empirical studies point to promising issues that need to be understood further. In particular, I assume that also highly skilled people's motivations and identities are tied to places in some ways, but we need to better understand the details of this.

To address the issue of how places/locations matter for highly skilled people's identities and motivations I need to investigate professionals who have experienced moving from their home location to another (distant) location. Then I need to investigate why they moved in the first place and what kinds of, if any, emotional and identity aspects are related to this experience.

What kind of evidence would undermine my assumptions (and contradict the previous empirical findings) and strengthen the theoretical assumptions of detachment from place? If I found highly skilled people who have moved but do not feel it matters where they are located or

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do not feel any emotional attachment to locations. Besides strengthening or challenging earlier findings and theoretical assumptions, I aim to offer a more in depth and detailed understanding of the specific ways highly skilled are motivated by places and the kinds of identities locations can evoke. This issue is addressed in the empirical chapter 5 and, concerning the inspirational aspects of being in a location, in chapter 7.

2. Locality and distance in everyday work and knowledge transfer

How does being present in a locality and interacting across distance matter for everyday work? How is knowledge shared locally and in virtual interaction?

In the existing literature relevant for this question, there is, again, a tension between more abstract theorizations and diverse empirical studies. Grand theorizations – along with more popular treatises (Cairncross 1997; Friedman 2005) – assume that location has become meaningless or significantly less important because of virtual connectedness (Giddens 1990; Castells 2000a; Bauman 1998; Beck 2000). Yet there is vast empirical literature that reports the continuing benefits of regional clustering for innovation and knowledge sharing, particularly emphasizing that more tacit knowledge is locally 'sticky' (Saxenian 1994; Leamer & Storper 2001; Porter 2000; Brown & Duguid 2000). Furthermore, though widely used, challenges in virtual communication have been found compared to face-to-face interaction (Aneesh 2006; Bradner & Mark 2002; O'Riain 2000; 2006). Still, new kinds of conceptualizations that manage to avoid the trap of oversimplifying the issue, notably *time-space intensification* in global work have emerged in empirical research (O'Riain 2000; 2006).

My assumption is, therefore, that despite the apparently contradictory nature of some of these views, both general claims have truth to them: virtual connectedness does change highly skilled work and innovation activity yet location will not lose its meaning and virtual is not without challenges. We need to make further sense of this, however. The relevant questions concern, for instance, the specific ways virtual connectedness plays a role in everyday skilled work, how proximity matters in micro-level innovation activity and how knowledge transfer is experienced virtually and face-to-face.

To answer this question, I must examine people who have experience in both virtual work and relocation to another place for their work. Two kinds of findings would prove my assumptions wrong: If I found people who have moved to another location and say that they did

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not get any new kinds of knowledge there. Or, alternatively, if I found people who have worked virtually without problems and say that it does not matter whether you meet face-to-face or virtually. Another extreme would be if I found highly skilled people working in innovation who do not use virtual communication/collaboration at all.

Besides contributing to earlier findings and theoretical assumptions, I hope to understand better the specific ways both local presence and virtual collaboration play a role in the everyday work of skilled professionals and what their experience of distance in the work context consists of. I also hope to shed light on the question of what kind of knowledge travels (or does not travel) across distance and what matters for the possible challenges in knowledge sharing virtually. This issue is examined in the empirical chapters 6 and 7.

3. The dynamics of locality and distance

How are distance and proximity experienced? What is the role of physical distance and other dimensions of distance/proximity in the experience of distance? What are the limitations to virtual communication? What aspects are important in the experience of being in a location?

Existing literature suggests that typical dualisms related to the global world, such as presence-absence or embeddedness-disembeddedness, may not be that useful for capturing actual human experiences which tend to be more complex and dynamic (Nowicka 2006; 2007; O'Riain 2000; 2006). The most fruitful questions therefore may not concern whether people are *either* embedded in localities *or* detached from them, or *either* present *or* absent locally or virtually. Instead, it is useful to ask, what constitutes the experience of locality, distance and proximity and deconstruct what kinds of dynamics are involved in it.

In line with emerging empirical findings I assume that people can be both present and absent locally and virtually and that virtual communication introduces a dynamic experience of location, both intensifying the physical presence and highlighting different aspects (such as the nature of the social relationship and different practical concerns, such as travel time) that can make a distant place feel close or far. By analyzing the experiences of the highly skilled Finns who have moved to Silicon Valley, I aim to shed additional light on the details of these dynamics. Based on the findings reported in chapters 5 and 6, the dynamic experience is examined further in chapter 7.

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4. Locality and distance as cultural frames

What is the current image of locality and distance in the literature? What would an alternative, more empirically grounded frame look like? What has changed and what has not when it comes to the meaning of locality and distance in the global world?

Locality and distance are framed differently depending on the bodies and pieces of literature. In general, as noted, abstract theorizations since the early 1990s emphasize great change while empirical studies on the real-life experiences of people imply in diverse ways how they remain connected to places and experience distance. For (de)constructing frames, I assume that all these literatures are useful and matter for the cultural framing of locality and distance; importantly, it needs to be explicitly scrutinized what aspects of the apparent changes are experienced as real and what are unfounded. Therefore, based on both the critical reading of the literature and the analysis of the empirical data I will consider explicitly what has changed and what has not in the current era. I will present a summary of the existing frame and propose an alternative one in chapter 8.

As mentioned, empirically these questions are explored through the case of Finnish highly skilled professionals who have moved to Silicon Valley. The purpose was to choose a group of people who would provide insight into the issues of concern here. Obviously, Finns in Silicon Valley are not the only possible population for investigating these questions; any group of globally mobile highly skilled people from a Western, developed country (to minimize the apparent cultural differences and highlight the experience of location and distance regardless of cultural distances) might have been as useful. Nevertheless, besides the decisive reason to focus on Finns – namely, access – they are a useful case also because of moving from one successful innovation location to another. Thus investigating their motivations and identities arguably provides an even more direct access to the personal and experienced reasons and meanings for relocating besides the obvious economic ones that are typically associated with migration. The empirical context if the research is innovation activity: these professionals are all working in positions that are in one way or another related to innovation. This is mid-level research, focusing on these professionals as a group/population, but looking at the meanings emerging from personal experience. The last research question shifts the level of discussion towards more

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general cultural understandings. The methodology and the empirical case of Finns are discussed further in the next chapter.

4 METHOD AND EMPIRICS: Studying Finns in Silicon Valley

4.1 Qualitative Methods with Ethnographic Features

The research method used in this study is qualitative. ‘Qualitative methods’ is an “umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the *meaning, not the frequency*, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Van Maanen 1979a, 520, emphasis added.)

According to Van Maanen (1982, 16) some of the principles of qualitative research are analytic induction, proximity, a focus on ordinary behavior and a descriptive focus; the main goal is not explanation or prediction.

The raw materials of qualitative studies are created close to the point of origin. The data “originate when a researcher figuratively puts brackets around a temporal and spatial domain of the social world. These brackets define the territory about which descriptions are fashioned.” (Van Maanen 1979a, 520.) Qualitative researchers seek to provide maps of a particular territory of the social world. As Van Maanen (1979a) notes, these maps vary in quality, and the way to achieve a good map is to avoid as far as is possible such “artificial distancing mechanisms as analytic labels, abstract hypotheses, and preformulated research strategies (Ibid.).”

Qualitative data are appealing for several reasons: they are rich, holistic and have strong face validity (Miles 1979). Furthermore, they allow for the emergence of serendipitous findings and make significant theoretical advances possible (Ibid.) They also tend to reduce researcher bias and superiority: the researcher does not claim to know the meaning of observations before they are made (Van Maanen 1979).

> “Qualitative researchers in contrast to their quantitative colleagues claim forcefully to know relatively little about what a given piece of observed behavior means until they have developed a description of the context in which the behavior takes place and attempted to see that behavior from the position of its originator.” (Van Maanen 1979a, 520.)

The fundamental criteria in qualitative research are whether the methods have been properly selected and applied to the issue of interest. It is also important that findings are based on empirical material and that investigations are carried out with constant reflection on the

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procedures (Flick 1998, 6). Weber's principle of openness is crucial: "[I]t is necessary to regard the understanding of the object of research as preliminary until the end of the research, because the object 'will present itself in its true colours only at the end'" (Kleining 1982, 233, quoted in Flick 1998, 8).

The present study looks at the topic of interest – the meaning of locality and distance - in the actual world, by meeting the people who are considered relevant sources of understanding and information and by gathering data in a way that allows a lot of room for their own views, words and constructions, rather than, say, by gathering information through survey questionnaires. Indeed, the specific focus was not strictly defined beforehand, and room was left for what would emerge from the data.

This study is inductive in nature. Whereas deductive research derives research questions and hypotheses from theory and then tests them against empirical evidence, in inductive research theories are developed from empirical evidence and "sensitising concepts" are used to approach the social objects studied. These concepts are however influenced by prior theoretical knowledge (Flick 1998, 2). This research aims at an idiographic understanding of the phenomenon of interest: while nomothetic understanding is a generalized understanding of a given case and includes efforts to derive laws that explain objective phenomena, idiographic research offers a full description of a given case and attempts to understand a phenomenon through the deep analysis of a particular case.

In practice this study is close to an ethnographic approach, although it does not include lengthy periods of (participant) observation in the field in the usual sense. The main data are interviews conducted in the field (in the environment of the informants). The context and location of this study is Silicon Valley, where I have lived altogether for 12 months during fieldwork. I have not therefore spent significant amounts of time with most of the informants, yet I have myself experienced a temporary relocation to Silicon Valley (that exceeded the time needed only for conducting interviews, i.e. the visits were not merely interview/research missions) and have lived and spent time there. I thus share the experience of relocation to Silicon Valley as a Finn with my informants. I have also spent time informally among Finns in Silicon Valley. There would be no point in trying to exclude these experiences and the time I spent in Silicon Valley as something "outside" the research process. I also consider myself in some ways a subject in this research (for a very similar methodology, see Favell 2008, 236-239).

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I have many things in common with the people I interviewed and observed for this research: I could be characterized as a mobile, educated Finn, having spent the last 4-5 years as a Ph.D. candidate dividing my time between Florence, Berkeley and Helsinki, communicating and collaborating across distance. During this study, I started to reflect on my own relationship to place: it would indeed have been strange not to ask myself how I experience place and distance, and what my answers to the questions I asked my informants would be. I also made notes about these and wrote down more personal reflections. Nevertheless, there are also sufficient and clear differences that put me in a position where I am able distance myself from the research subjects. I am not an engineer and do not work in high technology, and was thus able to ask the kinds of basic, open questions about their work and lives that are essential for advancing understanding.

Finally, this study also has a constructivist underpinning, although this may not be immediately apparent. It starts as a realist study, reporting "actual", "real-life" meanings and experiences as described mainly in the interview accounts of the informants. Yet on closer inspection, it could be characterized as a combination of realist and constructivist approaches. Typically, these are considered mutually exclusive, but as Favell (2007) observes, this is a rather rigid and unsophisticated approach. All social sciences have, at least on a very basic level, a constructivist element, in that they recognize that humans participate in creating the social world around them and that interpretations matter.

> "Realism is often opposed in epistemological terms to constructivism, but this is in fact an unsophisticated view. On some very basic level, *all* social sciences since at least Durkheim have or at least should be constructivist in their self-understanding (see also Hacking 2000). That is, accept the idea that the social world is a humanly constructed (i.e. not naturally or essentially given) reality, that our very methods of data gathering, categorization, and representation themselves construct in a certain way. It accepts that social scientists are a part of the social world they are constructing knowledge – and techniques of knowledge gathering – about. But it is no less *real* for that, and no less *true* when successful, especially if these techniques are embedded in a socially shared habitus of scientific practice (as opposed to literary, journalistic, political practice, etc.), that sustain the autonomous social power of recognized academic work (see Bourdieu et al. 1977)." (Favell, 2007, 268-269, italics original)

In the present study, the main method and findings, that is analyzing meanings and experiences as reported in interviews, can be considered, at least in some ways, to be realist. However, the interpretive/constructivist aspect becomes more explicit towards the end, when locality and distance are considered as cultural frames, (and the specific framings are identified) based on the meanings and experiences found in this study.

Furthermore, Favell (2007, 269) makes an important point regarding methodology in studies of migration and mobility: "… we do not want to endorse procedures or methods that remove for us the very material 'fact' that migration is something that happens when a real (physical) person moves in real (physical) space." This study is explicitly about people moving in "real" space and between "actual" locations, and about the meaning of those places and distances between them. Thus, the starting points of the study are real places and real distances, which are not, however, considered (as) real in certain bodies of literature anymore. The basic question of this study – are they real to people and if so, how, and what are their meanings? – can be considered to be at the very intersection of realism and constructivism. Reality "out there" (as in the form of physical locations and geographical distances) is not denied, but it is the meaning and construction of that reality that matters, that is contested and that needs to be better understood. The literature and the meanings/experiences of real people (skilled professionals in this case) are both constructions, but this makes them no less real. Measurable distances and physical places are just as real as experiences or constructions of them.

Since the focus here is on one particular population in one particular location (Finns in Silicon Valley), this is also a case study.

> "Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case. We could study it analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods – but we concentrate, at least for the time being, on the case." (Stake 2000, 435.)

In particular, this is an instrumental case study, which by researching a particular case aspires to provide insights into a wider issue, and aims at analytical generalization (Stake 2000, 437-438).[1] A typical criticism of case studies is that they do not offer results that can be generalized to a wider population. Yet even single case studies can generate theoretical ideas, and indeed test

[1] Besides *instrumental*, the other two types of case studies Stake (437-438) identifies are *intrinsic* and *collective* case studies. An intrinsic case study aims at a better understanding of one particular case, whereas a collective case study is an instrumental study extended to several cases that may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic, aiming at better understanding and theorizing an even larger collection of cases.

theoretical propositions and offer causal explanations. Skepticism about this is often due to the "mistaken identification of a single case with a single observation." (Rueschemeyer 2003, 318.) Thus, within cases there are typically numerous observations (i.e. individuals, firms, interactions, instances, events). "[C]ase studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and in doing a case study, your goal will be to *expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation)* and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation)." (Yin 2003, 10, emphasis added.)

As noted above, Finland is an interesting case for studying global ties and mobility, because unlike many other nationalities or ethnic groups, Finns do not have significant diaspora or professional migration to Silicon Valley (or any other technologically significant area outside Finland) that would clearly facilitate the global connections of today's innovators. Finland is a technologically advanced, successful economy, yet small and geographically relatively peripheral. It is in many ways a relevant area for global high technology markets, but in many ways marginal. Because of the absence of large professional immigrant groups of Finns in the most important high technology areas, in particular Silicon Valley, the ties between Finnish and other actors are novel, crossing boundaries and connecting previously unconnected – or only weakly connected – areas. Furthermore, highly skilled Finns apparently fall into the category of people – the privileged – for whom distance and location are assumed to be less meaningful.

The basic criteria for selecting the informants were:

- Finnish nationality.

- Working and being based in Silicon Valley either at the time of data collection or at some point during the past decade.

- Working in a position relevant for innovation activity.

In practice this last criterion meant Finns working in the field of information and communication technologies and different professions related to this: entrepreneurs, employees in firms, academic researchers, public officials whose job was to promote Finnish innovation and entrepreneurship, venture capitalists, and other experts. This criterion excludes, for example, non-working spouses, schoolteachers, housewives, coffee shop or store clerks, au pairs, undergraduate students, and craftsmen. In this case it was not crucial to focus on any particular profession (e.g. only entrepreneurs or academics) because the objective was to understand the meaning of locality and distance for highly skilled people; those who in the literature are considered as the most privileged, with the most freedom to move and the most detached from place.

4.1.1 Insider – outsider perspective

Van Maanen (1982, 16) makes an important distinction between insider and outsider perspectives in qualitative research. The researcher who employs an *insider perspective* enters the world of those studied and tries to produce a close reading of that world by using the interpretive standards found within it. Research that has an insider perspective results in rich, thick descriptions that move from fact to detail; its authenticity is judged by the accuracy of the description in which the social world of the subjects studied is more or less brought alive for the reader.

An *outsider perspective* describes aspects of the studied world in which its members are largely unaware, and the framework selected to interpret what is going on is not one that would be thought obvious, natural or even very interesting by those studied. There may or may not be participation in the world of the studied. Authenticity in this case is judged not by verisimilitude but by logic, fit, and current standards for what constitutes good and proper research as established in the relevant but external disciplinary communities.

Thus, as mentioned, I consider myself in some ways a subject (an insider) in this research, because I share some of the informants' experiences – yet not others. During the fieldwork I shared the experience of being a Finn in Silicon Valley and being a part of the Finnish community there. On the other hand, as a social scientist I had some theoretical ideas in mind that undoubtedly influenced both what I observed and how I interpreted my observations in the field. Thus my position as a researcher in relation to the informants is somewhere in between the outsider and the insider, perhaps leaning a little more towards an insider perspective.

In this particular study, many of the key concepts are both close to the informants' world and usable/used in the literature, such as location and distance. Nevertheless, the interesting aspect is of course whether they are used in the same ways or have the same meanings.

Furthermore, during the analysis and in the resulting research report, the perspective is at times clearly that of an outsider, a distant researcher. This is a typical aspect of the research process: in the field, more room is given to the informants' perspective, and the researcher keeps an open mind in order to find out something meaningful and "true" to the informants. Yet later in the process, theory and scientific interpretive frames come into play. Thus, in the present case concepts such as identity or framing that were introduced in the analytical process as tools to make further sense of the findings and arrive at analytical generalizations are obviously not naturally used by the informants in their everyday talk.

Van Maanen (ibid.) also points out that entirely pure insider or outsider perspectives are practically non-existent: some prior expectations inevitably influence "insider" research, and even an outsider researcher is likely to use some of the concepts gathered from the members of the world being studied.

4.1.2 The Interview method

The main data consist of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Finns who have worked in Silicon Valley in the past 10 years. The great strength of this method is that it produces a fair amount of textual data that is close to the informants' world, language and vocabulary, instead of data where what is important or relevant has been decided in advance by the researcher(s), as is the case for surveys, or laboratory experiments. Yet the collection of interview data is less time and resource consuming than, for instance, gathering full ethnographic data, which would include lengthy periods of observing the informants and spending time with them in their everyday settings.

Sometimes – particularly in more positivist-oriented approaches – the fact that the researcher cannot fully, or can only partially, control the content of the data is considered as one of the shortcomings of the interview method. However, when the research is inductive and the aim is to gain a better understanding of a topic from the relevant people and to study their understandings and experiences, this is not a disadvantage but the very strength of the interview method. A possible weakness in this case may be that the interviewer, in asking questions in a specific way and using specific words, terms, or concepts may nevertheless influence the

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informant and their answers. As reported further in the next section, I consciously tried to minimize the interviewer effect, for example by carefully considering the phrasing of questions (as open as possible), their order (from easy, open questions to more challenging, specific ones), and by emphasizing explicitly that I was interested in personal views and experiences and that there were no “right or wrong” answers in this interview, beforehand. (I will also discuss interview data as access to “real”-life experiences in Chapter 8 when considering locality and distance as cultural frames.)

Considering practical aspects, in the present study interview data was the best option, offering the kind of material necessary for a study concerned with meaning and experience as well as possible to obtain in the particular circumstances (one researcher with limited resources working within a relatively strict timeframe).

4.2 Data Collection

The fieldwork took place between October 2006 and December 2008 in Silicon Valley and in Helsinki, Finland. During this time I spent altogether about twelve months in Silicon Valley, on three separate occasions (August 2006-January 2007, June-August 2007, October-December 2008). I was based at the University of California, Berkeley as a visiting researcher on these occasions, and at the same time conducted interviews and participated in the activities of Finns (both formal and informal) in the Silicon Valley area. Between February and May 2007 I was in Helsinki, carrying out interviews with Finns who had been working in Silicon Valley during the past decade but had returned home.

The four phases of interview data collection were:

Phase 1: Preliminary interviews in Silicon Valley (October-December 2006)

Phase 2: Interviews in Helsinki (February-May 2007)

Phase 3: Interviews in Silicon Valley (June-August 2007)

Phase 4: Concluding interviews in Silicon Valley (October-December 2008)

Most of the interviews were carried out during Phases 2 and 3: Phase 1 one was important in identifying the preliminary research topic and designing the in-depth interviews, while Phase 4 was crucial for completing the data collection, checking my initial interpretations of the data generated in the previous phases.

The number of interviews with Finns used in this study is 55. The number of Finnish people considered informants (with whom I discussed the topics detailed in the interview topic guide, see Appendix 1) is 50; some informants were interviewed twice during separate phases of the fieldwork. Most of the interviews (42) were recorded; some meetings were more informal and/or conducted in a place or a situation where recording was not possible: however in all of the interviews I made handwritten notes throughout. In addition to the interviews with Finns, I also interviewed some non-Finns who had worked with Finns in Silicon Valley in order to get an idea of how they experienced working with Finns, and to get an outsider perspective on possible cultural differences, as well as the strengths, weaknesses and the general reputation of Finns.

Furthermore, in addition to the interviews, other data are also used: notes from other interviews and meetings with informants, as well as observations and insights from the months I stayed in the Silicon Valley area and spent time with locals and Finns there, at the same time keeping in touch with my own colleagues and friends in Finland and Italy. I also followed both Finnish and Silicon Valley news concerning the activities of Finns in Silicon Valley. Thus, diverse sources of information were used.

There is no official (or unofficial) list or record of Finns located in Silicon Valley. Therefore, I used the snowball method for finding informants. This means that I started by contacting the Finnish public officers in Silicon Valley (representatives of Tekes, VTT, Sitra, and Finpro) who all turned out to be very helpful, and asked them to recommend further interviewees. Then, as I started the interviews, I asked each informant if they could think of other suitable people, according to the basic criteria described above (i.e. Finns working in Silicon Valley in a field relevant for innovative activity in the past 10 years). This worked well: all the informants recommended at least one new person. Naturally, as I began to gather more interviews, the same names began to come up again and again, and I got a sense of the networks within the small Finnish community in the area.

I first contacted potential informants via e-mail (on a few occasions first by phone), briefly introducing the research and myself. All of the interviews were face-to-face. The interviews lasted on average about 1 hour and 30 minutes; the shortest were 45 minutes and the

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longest 2 hours and 15 minutes. (It should be noted that the meetings often lasted longer than the actual or recorded interviews, including some small talk in the beginning and additional conversation after the recorder was turned off; during these relevant information often came up, and I made written notes of everything.)

All of the interviews took place in Finnish, with one exception where the informant preferred to speak English as a result of having spent so many years in Silicon Valley and being used to talking, especially about work-related topics, in English. The interviews were usually carried out at the informant's office or workplace, or at a coffee shop or a restaurant, wherever the informant preferred. In Helsinki, it was more common to meet in an office, while in Silicon Valley a coffee shop or a restaurant was more often the meeting place of choice. Specifically, the locations where the interviews were conducted in Silicon Valley were: Palo Alto or Stanford University campus, Mountain View, Redwood City, San Jose, Berkeley campus, City of San Francisco and one in Oakland.

Some informants were interviewed more than once, and some I also met on informal occasions such as parties or other gatherings of Finns in the area (barbeques, Finnish Independence Day celebration, etc.). I also met many other Finns on these occasions whom I did not count as informants in this study but with whom I had informal discussions about their experiences in Silicon Valley. Some of the interviewees turned out to be exceptionally helpful, with specific expertise or information (e.g. on Finnish firms or the activity of the public offices in the area), and I was in contact with them on several occasions during the fieldwork, both via e-mail and in face-to-face meetings. Thus, some became "key informants" and helped access several other people or information. This was usually due, besides their personal helpfulness, to their positions: either it was part of their work (e.g. in a public agency) to help researchers like me or they were simply very well connected in Silicon Valley (often both).

The fieldwork, although perhaps more time and resource consuming than expected, was a rewarding experience. In general, the interviews were pleasant occasions. The informants were very positive about the research and seemed pleased to talk about their experiences of moving to Silicon Valley. Since the professionals often had extremely busy schedules, and many traveled a lot, it sometimes took extra planning to arrange interviews, but in general the fieldwork proceeded without any major difficulties. In this case the snowball method was also a good choice because almost every time I contacted a new potential informant I was able to mention

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the name of someone they knew. When meeting them, many informants noted that mentioning a familiar name makes a real difference, as a lot of people contact them daily and they need to screen e-mails or phone calls. Thus, in this way I was probably more successful in convincing the informants to grant me an interview than if I had used a list of names and contacted them "cold".

When conducting the interviews, after first introducing the research and myself, I tried to talk as little as possible and let the informants speak freely. The aim was to avoid influencing the informants' answers and to encourage them to express their thoughts and views openly. I emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in personal experiences and views. My hope was to make the informants feel comfortable to speak as freely as possible. I also guaranteed anonymity if they so wished. I furthermore stressed that I was interviewing many people and that the data would be used in such a way as to render their identification from specific quotes or details mentioned impossible.

As the interview topics as such were not particularly sensitive, it was not especially challenging to ensure that the situation was comfortable. I also stressed to the informants that I was not directly interested in confidential matters concerning, for example, their business operations, and that should that kind of information come up during the interviews, it would remain confidential. While making sure that all the main questions were covered in every interview, I also let the informants talk freely, and brought up new topics in an order that followed what they had mentioned. To minimize the interviewer effect, I thought carefully about how to pose questions openly, in such a way that did not imply certain types of answers, and would encourage free and ample pondering on the part of the informants. I had also thought about the order of questions, trying to pose more open ones early in the interview and more specific ones towards the end. Often the interviewees commented that there was no straightforward or single answer to a particular question, and then went on to consider it very elaborately. This is exactly the aim when gathering interview data in a study concerned with meaning. These kinds of questions do not, however, work for all kinds of informants or topics: in this case they were possible because the informants were at the outset highly skilled and experienced, and used to interacting in diverse situations and environments; in short, they were more than capable of pondering even the most open questions. A more standardized survey questionnaire, for example, would have been largely wasted on these informants, because they were able to provide much richer and more sophisticated data.

Two main themes were covered in the interviews. The first theme, which occupied the majority of the interview, concerned the informant's personal experience of moving to Silicon Valley: motivations, expectations, starting out in the new locality, social ties, everyday work, information access and ties and interaction with Finland. The second theme focused on the informant's personal views on Finland and Finns in general when operating globally: their strengths and challenges, reputation, innovation and work culture. (See also Appendix: Interview themes.)

4.2.1 The Informants

All of the informants were Finnish by nationality and were at the time of data collection based in Silicon Valley or had been worked there in the past 10 years. With a few exceptions, they were born, raised and educated in Finland, and only left Finland for Silicon Valley as adults because of their work (the exceptions are as follows: one informant had lived for some time outside Finland as a child, a few had completed their university studies or undertaken a significant part of them outside Finland). The vast majority of the informants had a higher university degree (Master's or a Ph.D.) in engineering or a related area from a Finnish university, although I was not specifically looking for engineers. Other educational backgrounds included degrees in economics, management, computer science, and physics.

I did not specifically ask the informants for their age, but some mentioned it. A large majority of the informants were men in their 30s and 40s: the youngest appeared to be in their late 20s, and the most senior was 62. Of the 50 main informants – those who were interviewed face-to-face at least once – 6 were women and 44 were men. 19 were entrepreneurs managing their own businesses (including venture capital firms) or other independent actors; 16 were employees in firms; 10 were academics or scientists; and 5 worked at one of the Finnish public offices[2].

[2] When describing the informants and their backgrounds, sometimes an illustrative table with diverse information on the interviewees is presented, for example, identifying their employer (naming the organizations included in the

However, it is important to note that about a half of the informants had multiple roles, a combination of two or even three of the above categories. The classification mentioned is based on their primary activity at the time the fieldwork was carried out. Those with multiple roles worked, for example, for a public office, but with prior or additional careers as entrepreneurs, or the other way around: former public officers who had started their own firms in Silicon Valley; academics who had started their own firm; academics employed by large firms because of their expertise, etc. In general, many of the informants had wide-ranging career paths (or perhaps a career in the traditional sense is not the appropriate way to describe the work paths of these professionals). They were clearly in many ways "the best and the brightest" of their home country, in the sense that Saxenian (2006) describes the new Argonauts in her research.

More than half of the informants went to Silicon Valley with their spouses and many of those with spouses also had children. About half of the informants had lived abroad (either in the US or elsewhere) at some point in their lives before moving to Silicon Valley.

4.2.2 Data analysis

Miles (1979, 593) describes qualitative data analysis as "a mysterious, half-formulated art". It is certainly a circular process that involves a lot of creative movement between the data and theoretical ideas. The exact steps of qualitative data analysis can be challenging to articulate, as typically there are simultaneous processes involved: the analysis of the textual data intertwines

research), position/occupation, age, marital status, etc. As I guaranteed my informants anonymity, I considered it important to be cautious about what kind of information and how systematically to include here. My discretion is due to the fact that the population of Finns working in Silicon Valley innovation is so small that they could easily be identified in some cases only from one piece of background information, e.g. by naming an employer. Some of the organizations from which people were interviewed had only one or two Finns working in Silicon Valley. So, in these cases, if only the name of the company is mentioned, it is very easy to identify the specific person. It would be even easier if several pieces of information were grouped together about an informant, even if omitting their identity, such as marital status, time lived in Silicon Valley, or profession. Although it should not be possible to directly link specific people to the interview quotations used in the text, the issue it is still potentially delicate, because some informants stressed that they cannot participate in the research as employees of their company but only privately and anonymously. That is, they did not want their employer to know about their participation and insisted on anonymity. So, although the research topic or the issues discussed in the interviews were not particularly sensitive or confidential, I respect the informants' wish for anonymity and take its protection seriously. Although I regret this may occasionally give a sense of obscurity to the text (not being able to relate the informants/quotations e.g. to specific occupations or organizations), the benefit is that by not presenting background information in a systematic way gives freedom to report and discuss the central issues - the findings - without concern about whether the anonymity of some informants might be compromised.

with the reading of literature and ongoing fieldwork (Miles 1979; Miles & Huberman 1994). However, as Miles (1979) also notes, there are common identifiable procedures specifically related to the handling of the textual material, such as data reduction, the formulation of classes or categories, and the identification of themes in the data. "The ultimate goal is to produce a coherent, focused analysis of some aspect of the social life that has been observed and recorded, an analysis that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world at issue." (Emerson et al., 1995, 142.)

During the fieldwork, the researcher produces write-ups and makes notes of observations and possible interpretations, at this stage in an unorganized manner. As the data begin to accumulate, they need to be reduced somehow in order to make them more manageable and allow a more sophisticated analysis. "Data reduction is a form of preliminary analysis, which refines, iterates and revises frameworks, suggests new leads for further data collection, and makes data more available for final assembly…" (Miles 1979, 593.)

Emerson and colleagues (1995, 143) identify two main phases in the coding of the data. In the first phase, open coding, the reading is as open as possible and the purpose is to identify interesting, relevant themes. The second phase, focused coding, involves going through the data again bearing in mind specific, previously identified themes in order to pick excerpts that fit the themes. In practice, then, in order for the formal analysis to begin, the researcher needs to take a different position in relation to her field notes and interview data, as they become textual objects.

> "Ethnographic coding involves line-by-line categorization of specific notes. In this process, the researcher's stance toward the notes changes: the notes, and the persons and events they recount, become textual objects (although linked to personal memories and intuitions) to be considered and examined with a series of analytic and presentational possibilities in mind." (Emerson et al. 1995, 143.)

The analytic procedures used in this study also draw on the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990), in which a particularly strong emphasis is placed on what emerges from the data, as opposed to hypothesis testing. Yet I agree with Emerson et al. (1995), who identify some limitations to this approach. Most importantly, the idea of theory "discovery" is perhaps too rigid or idealistic for grounded theory. In line with Emerson et al. (Ibid.) I prefer to describe the process as creating rather than discovering theory. I do not believe that some

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theory lies latent in the data simply waiting to be discovered. The researcher analyses and codes the data purposefully, influenced by the understanding and conceptualizations of her academic field, even when she is not aiming at hypothesis testing and consciously remaining sensitive to the informants' (insider) perspective. Indeed, as Emerson and colleagues (1995) note,

> "The grounded theory approach depicts analysis as a clearcut, almost autonomous activity. In emphasizing 'discovering' theory in fieldnotes and other qualitative data, practitioners of grounded theory treat sets of already collected fieldnotes as unproblematic starting points; they implicitly assume that such fieldnotes can be analyzed independently of the analytic processes and theoretical commitments of the ethnographer who wrote them. In contrast, we insist that data do not stand alone; rather analysis pervades all phases of the research enterprise…" (Emerson et al. 1995, 143-144.)

Therefore, it may be more accurate to view data analysis as at the same time inductive and deductive, "simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle" or "like a carpenter alternately changing the shape of a door and then the shape of the door frame to obtain a better fit" (Ibid., 144). For the sake of simplicity, I generally characterize this research as "inductive" in order to make the immediate distinction from deductive, hypothesis driven research. This applies to the research design in general, yet, particularly concerning the data analysis process, a more accurate description would characterize this study as simultaneously inductive and deductive, i.e. moving back and forth between the data and theoretical ideas, and trying to achieve the best fit between the two – a fit between how to look at the data in the most fruitful way and address relevant issues in the literature. Indeed, in this kind of approach, coding is "… a matter not simply of 'discovering' what is in the data but more creatively linking up specific events and observations to more general analytic categories and issues." (Emerson et al. 1995, 154.)

In practice, three levels of analysis that intertwined throughout the process can be defined. The first is the concrete, manual coding; the reading of the textual data, identifying themes and topics and grouping them into categories. The second is the implicit evolution of the focus, the development of the specific research questions that happened during the study, both through reading and fieldwork. The third is the identification of significant stories or events: things that seemed surprising, counterintuitive, or particularly meaningful during the fieldwork and when reading the textual data.

The main analytical categories that became the focus of the study, because they were the most widely shared and strongest in the data, were:

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Expectations
Motivations: why relocated
Identity: mediator
Identity: pioneer
Identity: atypical Finn
Identity: typical Finn (in Silicon Valley)
Identity: spontaneous
Everyday work (the typical workday)
Where gets most important information
Is Finland close or far: close
Is Finland close or far: far
Could you do your work anywhere: yes, but…,
Could you do your work anywhere: no, because…

The findings reported in the following empirical chapters are thus based on these categories. Furthermore, based on these categorizations, I also identified the following more interpretive issues, discussed in particular in chapters 7, 8 and 9:

Is distance dead?
Why is it important to be there? The experience of locality and distance
Framing locality and distance: locality and distance as cultural frames
The mobile (privileged?) and the rooted (poor?)

4.2.3 On Validation

Before proceeding to the findings chapters, I would like to add a note on validity regarding the fieldwork and data analysis process. In general, qualitative research designs include a variety of approaches with diverse methods and procedures. Some are more positivist-oriented conducted in such a way that the basic criteria (validity, realiability, generalizability) used within the

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positivist framework for evaluating the methodology can easily be applied to the qualitative study as well. Others are done explicitly within the constructivist and/or ethnographic framework, which is based on hermeneutic, anthropological traditions that have their own criteria for evaluation (such as "thick description") and in which the logic is that of discovery rather than proof of preformulated hypotheses.

Different views exist, therefore, on what the concept of validity means in qualitative research and on its usefulness altogether. Kvale (1996; 2007), for instance, accepts the usefulness of the concept in qualitative research but defines it as the "quality of craftsmanship" and notes that in the qualitative context, to validate means to check, question and theorize when dealing with the data. These procedures will then lead to transparent and strong findings. Others are more critical towards using the concept of validity in qualitative research, proposing alternative conceptualizations as more appropriate, such as understanding (Wolcott 1994) or authenticity (Guba & Lincoln 1989). Maxwell (2002) argues that both qualitative and quantitative approaches need to be understood in their own terms. He nevertheless maintains that validity is useful and has similarities in both approaches. Yet the kinds of validity Maxwell (Ibid.) proposes refer above all to qualitative research accounts, not to the data themselves. The types of validity Maxwell identifies as most central in qualitative research are descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity and internal and external generalizability.

As noted, this study is done in the constructivist and ethnographic framework rather than the positivist one. Yet it is crucial to note that while statistical generalizations were not the aim of the analysis, the observations and categorizations on which the findings are based on are those who were *widely shared throughout the interviews* and/or *appeared particularly significant*. That is, they came up often in different situations during the fieldwork, were talked about at length or spontaneously stressed by the informants or brought up at the initiative of the informants (without me asking about the issue) or explicitly identified as significant by the informants. Therefore the categories presented were strong in the data and not unique or random observations. In other words, if something is presented as a finding here, it is a given that the observation appeared strongly in the data.

On more concrete terms, in the literature on qualitative (ethnographic) methodology, various techniques have been identified for ensuring validity. Many of these were used in my study, as indicated below. Importantly, these can be implicit or explicit or more or less conscious; in either case, they are strategies that qualitative researchers typically use when wanting to guarantee the strength of the study, avoid bias and conduct methodical and rigorous research.

These techniques include, for example, checking for representativeness, checking for researcher effects, triangulating, checking the meaning of outliers, looking for negative evidence, checking out rival explanations, and getting feedback from informants (Miles & Huberman 1994). In addition, more rooted on the anthropological tradition, Wolcott (1994) has identified the strategies of "talking little and listening a lot" when doing fieldwork, recording observations accurately, beginning writing early, reporting fully (letting readers "see" for themselves), being candid about points of weakness or uncertainty, seeking feedback from colleagues, and writing accurately.

How validity was ensured in this research

Throughout the research process, I used various strategies for testing or confirming findings.

Checking for representativeness was ensured in the analysis phase, as mentioned, after initial coding in forming the main categories only for those observations that were widely shared throughout the data: i.e. the observations were mentioned by all (or almost all) informants and/or noted also in my own field observations outside interviews during different occasions. (The shared by "almost all informants" is considered a reasonable criterion here because, despite using the same topic guide, the interview situations were not all identical, and occasionally some topics did not get as much attention than they did in other interviews. This is not uncommon in empirical field research.)

Checking for researcher effects was considered in the wording of the questions in the interviews, in the framing of the interview situation (telling the informants that there were no right or wrong answers, that I did not expect any specific kinds of answers and that I'm interested in their views and experiences as they are) and in the careful ordering of the questions so that the most open ones were posed first and more specific ones at the end of the interview (in the case of those interviewed twice, the more specific ones in the second interviews). Furthermore, I followed Wolcott's (1994) strategy of talking little and listening a lot during fieldwork. Besides short introductions (who I was, where I did my research) I did not talk about myself before the interviews and generally restricted myself to posing the questions and then letting the informants do the talking.

Outliers or negative evidence were noted in various ways during the analysis and the categories were honed accordingly. If I felt unable to make further sense of the outliers I have explicitly mentioned in the reporting of the findings that there was also a contradicting story or observations (e.g. in the case of the pioneer identity in section 5.2.3 by noting that some informants reported a contradicting story that everything was ready). Doing this, my purpose is to offer my own (tentative) interpretation of what the particular outlier might mean but will leave it to the reader to judge whether my interpretation is accurate or what the alternative ones might be. The point is to be open so that the reader can decide and be attentive to the differing observations and can judge the strength of the main findings (pioneering identity) accordingly. Thus, in general, I have tried to present the findings in such a way that possible negative evidence or paradoxical observations are apparent to the reader and again, open to judgment.

I have also checked my own interpretations and explanations by *getting feedback from informants*: this was done in various ways and occasions during the data collection and analysis processes. Firstly, when I interviewed the same informants twice, I presented some more specific questions already based on initial interpretations of the data, e.g. specifically asking what they had meant when said Finland is close/far or presenting them with direct statements such as “distance is dead” and asking them to comment on those. As the fieldwork was done over the period of about two years I had the chance to get feedback at the later stages of the data collection when participating in more informal events with Finns. I talked about my research and emerging findings and interpretations and got their reactions, and made notes of them. I also sent early shorter versions of my empirical chapters to a few informants asking for them to comment on whether they felt the findings and interpretations were accurate and applied to them.

Furthermore, besides these strategies, the analysis categories as such were formed such a way that in some cases they *explicitly included the apparently paradoxical findings*, such as “Yes but…” or “No, because…” (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2) when talking about the possibility of working somewhere else than Silicon Valley or documenting both how Finland is experienced to be close and far (in sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2). This was done precisely because in constructivist oriented-research it is not considered a problem that people speak in incoherent,

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self-contradicting ways; in fact, on the contrary, findings like this are particularly the ones that reveal the complex meanings and experiences related to locality and distance (as for example, discussed in section 6.4.3, where the discourses of different, partly contradicting, time-space dynamics could all be found in the data). Thus they highlight the weaknesses of one-sided conceptualizations and theorizations and show how realities are not constituted by simple, dichotomous categories (distance is either dead or alive). Nevertheless, when illustrating or discussing a finding by referring to a more specific experience of a single informant, I explicitly mention that "one informant" reported this.

As for Wolcott's (1994) strategies mentioned above, besides talking little and listening a lot during fieldwork I sought feedback for earlier versions from other academics, and in writing up and reporting the research process and findings, I have aimed for utmost accuracy and openness, and have not hesitated to include issues I have struggled with in the discussion.

4.3 The Case and Context: Finns in Silicon Valley

The following sections introduce Finland and Silicon Valley as locations (two distinct innovation contexts) and give an overall, broad view of Finns who operate in Silicon Valley.

4.3.1 Finland

During the late 1990s, Finland emerged as one of the most successful information societies in the world. As recently as three decades ago, Finland was still a relatively poor country, with 50% of its population working in the primary sector (agriculture and forestry). The transformation from a traditional resource-based economy into a knowledge-based economy is one of the remarkable features of the Finnish success story (Dahlman et al. 2006).

In recent years, Finland has been considered one of the world's most competitive and innovative countries: in both 2005 and 2006 it was ranked second in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index (in 2006 Switzerland was first and the US was ranked sixth) (World Economic Forum 2006). Finland was also ranked top in the OECD's 2003 Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) studies on learning skills and

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educational attainment. The PISA assessment covered four areas, and Finland's ranking was top in reading, literacy and science, second in mathematics, and third in problem solving (www.pisa.oecd.org).

Finland has also been regarded the most ICT specialized country in the world (Ylä-Anttila 2006) and a trendsetter in some key technologies, such as mobile telecommunications (Nokia is the global market leader) and open-source software (the Linux operating system). Nokia is by far the largest Finnish information technology company, forming the core of the Finnish ICT industry.

Multiple factors are behind the success of the past decade, some intended and others unintended but lucky events. Undoubtedly, one important contributor was the government's long-term policies and concrete actions, taken to foster research and development. Most notably, the government actively enhanced the collaboration and networking of different actors within Finland, including universities, public actors and businesses, and thus nurtured the creation of a successful national innovation system.

Although Finland is the leader in global rankings in terms of technological development and economic competitiveness, the country has a low level of poverty and income inequality: in other words, the level of social inclusion is high. Manuel Castells and Pekka Himanen's work (Castells & Himanen 2002; Himanen & Castells 2004) highlights the distinctive character of Finnish innovation and economic growth. Finland has succeeded in combining the information society with the welfare state. This is obviously a different "model" of innovation to that of Silicon Valley.

According to Himanen and Castells (2004), at the core of the Finnish model is a virtuous cycle between the welfare state and the information economy. The welfare state produces skilled people who create growth in business, which in turn makes the continued financing of the welfare state possible. Moreover, the welfare state makes development more socially inclusive, and when people feel more protected, they are more open to the structural changes the information economy requires.

Unlike many others in Europe and elsewhere, the Finnish welfare state enjoys legitimacy: it is maintained by high taxation, but high taxation is widely supported because of the benefits most people receive from the state. These include, free, public high-quality education with student grants from the state. There is also a high-quality public health care

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system which is almost free and in which everyone is included regardless of employment status. Unemployment and pension protection are universal.

One contributing factor to success seems to be an exceptionally positive attitude among Finns towards new technologies, and their acceptance and adaptability to change that is perhaps typical of small countries (Ylä-Anttila 2006). Finland is a young country with a long history of survival in harsh climate conditions. Thus, the Finnish attitude has always been very pragmatic, and there is a general interest in trying out any technologies that may help alleviate life in such conditions, without the skepticism that has been stronger in older, more favorably located European cultures (Castells & Himanen 2002).

According to Maliranta & Ylä-Anttila (2007) Finland is moving into a new phase in its economic growth: the objectives of investing in research and education have largely been attained, and growth will from now on be based on the intensive increase of knowledge and skills. At least in part, this view echoes the idea of open innovation and accessing knowledge that is available outside Finland. The acknowledgement that Finland needs a high skilled workforce from outside as its population ages also lies behind this.

Challenges

In Finland today it is widely recognized that the current competitiveness and success do not necessarily guarantee future growth or success (e.g. Dahlman et al. 2006; Sabel & Saxenian 2008). On the national level, one of the key policy issues is whether Finland can keep its Nordic welfare state model and at the same time compete successfully in global markets (e.g. Castells & Himanen 2002; Dahlman et al. 2006).

From the perspective of global competitiveness, the challenge is to open up the national innovation system enough to access the best, most up-to-date knowledge that may be located anywhere in the world. Finns seem to have been successful in creating a relatively functional and efficient national innovation system; yet the challenge lies in open innovation. This is an activity that is carried out mostly on the micro-level, in the bottom up practices of (small) firms, individual entrepreneurs, and representatives of public organizations /institutions.

Is Finland open to outside ideas or not? Contradictory evidence and views on this seem to exist. The World Bank Institute report (Dahlman et al. 2006) states openness to outside ideas

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as one of the contributing factors in Finland's success. On the other hand, Castells and Himanen (2002) identify the lack of openness to other cultures as one of the main problems of the Finnish system as it stands. The strong national identity and homogeneity of the Finnish population, which has helped to make Finland successful and has fostered the networking of different actors *within* the Finnish innovation system, may turn out to be a serious hindrance in the near future. It seems clear that the closed innovation model will not work forever; Finland will not be self-sufficient and will need both knowledge and a workforce from outside its borders.

Based on the views of the informants who operate in Silicon Valley, Finns in general may be open to receiving and considering – even adopting - outside ideas, yet perhaps more reluctant to actually *share* their own knowledge and ideas and *engage in true collaboration* with "outsiders". At least by the way Finns in Silicon Valley perceive the typical Finnish way of operating, it means being secretive and protective of the innovation process, and following the traditional closed innovation model (as opposed to the open model, see Chesbrough 2003; 2006), in which products are developed in isolation and secrecy within firms, and are only "revealed" late in the innovation process. Yet today technological development is more rapid than ever, and the role of the user in developing technologies is important. Thus, the idea of open innovation means genuine interaction and the sharing of information in order to create new innovative knowledge, rather than the mere acquisition of relevant information and skills.

On the public level at least it is explicitly recognized that Finland needs more global collaboration and interaction; the public players are dynamic in this sense and actively initiate actions to foster global interaction (such as establishing representative offices in key areas to help Finnish firms internationalize, and starting and investing in researcher exchange programs). Yet in practice their actual delivery seems to be a challenge. In an interview from 2006, the Director of Innovation at the government-owned Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) states that Finland is "the promised land of preliminary reports", yet concrete actions remain a serious challenge. In a similar vein, Sabel and Saxenian (2008) have observed that despite the growing awareness of the need to develop new kinds of collaboration and seek skills outside the country, most firms and public actors seem to continue to pursue familiar courses of action. "So far as we can see, both in the leading firms and in the public institutions which support and surround them, the efforts at reorganization needed to bridge the gap between the kinds of

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collaboration that make for success today and the kinds needed to flourish tomorrow are hesitant and uncertain (Ibid., 14)”.

Moreover, despite its top international rankings in innovation and competitiveness, the welfare state model and free, high quality education, Finland has not thus far attracted significant numbers of highly skilled, educated and talented people from other countries. The Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA) published a report (Raunio 2005) on the challenges of attracting a talented workforce from outside Finland. One of the main findings was that structures remain that hinder both the attraction of a foreign, highly skilled workforce and the return of Finns who have obtained higher education degrees or valuable work experience outside Finland.

The income level is relatively low, particularly for highly educated and skilled people (according to a proverb, compared to the US “in Finland you get two engineers for the price of one”). Furthermore, high taxation is perceived as particularly unfair for foreign-born, highly skilled people who were not educated in Finland and do not intend to stay forever (i.e. people who do not directly benefit from the welfare state financed by the taxes they pay). Currently, there is also a lack of top quality international schools and universities, and a lack of employment opportunities for spouses that accompany foreign-born high skilled people to Finland. Other negative factors from the perspective of non-Finns are harsh climate conditions and relative geographical distance (especially for people who come from outside Europe).

One issue may be the image of Finland as a country. Firstly, Finland is relatively little known, in particular outside Europe. Even those who do know Finland may still consider it to be a small and relatively peripheral country, not a global hot spot.

The homogeneity of the Finnish population, to which success has been attributed, is also an issue: the dark side of this is that Finns are generally not very open towards foreigners, in particular to people from very different ethnic groups to their own (non-white, non-protestant). In other words, there are still strong prejudices towards foreigners. At the same time, it is widely recognized that as the Finnish population ages, the country will become increasingly dependent on a foreign workforce, both low and high-skilled.

4.3.2 *Silicon Valley*

According to Himanen and Castells (2004) the Silicon Valley model is based on "unfettered capitalism". Silicon Valley has certainly been at the forefront of entrepreneurial and technological innovation in recent decades: the microelectronics revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the development of personal computers and recombinant DNA technology in the 1970s, the adoption and development of UNIX and open-source software (with MIT) in the 1980s, the explosion of Internet applications and businesses in the 1990s, and in the early 21st century nanotechnology, advanced genetic engineering, and the convergence between microelectronics, computing and biological technologies (Ibid., 50).

The beginnings of Silicon Valley are usually correlated with the founding of Hewlett-Packard by university students Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard in a garage in Palo Alto in 1938. Both were students of the "Father of Silicon Valley", Stanford professor Frederick Terman, who was perhaps the single most influential person in the early days of Silicon Valley, actively advancing the commercial use of technological discoveries and bringing together university, business and other institutional actors in the region (Saxenian 1995). Yet, as Kenney (2000) and Sturgeon (2000) point out, Silicon Valley was not created in a vacuum by a single heroic individual; its origins go deeper. There had already been a lively electronics industry in the San Francisco Bay area before, since the earliest days of radio, television and military electronics experimentation at the beginning of the 20th century. Many of the elements that characterize Silicon Valley today were already present in the social organization of the early Bay Area electronics companies: close ties between universities and firms, strong venture capital firms, a remarkable level of inter-firm cooperation and spin-offs. Thus, Terman was as much a catalyst as a pioneer: in addition to his unquestionable visionary qualities, he was able to utilize and develop the resources that were already there. (Sturgeon 2000, 16.)

The military also played a role in the development of the early Silicon Valley information technology industry that cannot be overlooked. The importance of the military was twofold. Firstly, it provided protection from foreign competition by excluding foreign firms from competition for contracts. Secondly, the military was a major early customer of the information technology firms (Leslie 2000).

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Today, Silicon Valley is the world's leading information technology cluster, and has diversified from semiconductors to computers, data storage, networking (Internet), and a whole range of information and communication technologies. The close links between universities and firms lie at the core of the Silicon Valley model. In the early days especially, it was the scientists themselves who started and managed firms (e.g. Saxenian 1994). Other key actors in Silicon Valley are the venture capital and law firms, which Kenney and Von Burg (2000) describe as Silicon Valley's "Economy Two". "Economy One" consists of the established firms, research universities and laboratories that form the core of entrepreneurial and innovative activity. The second economy is the fabric of institutions whose purpose is to nurture and support innovation and the foundation of new firms: the venture capitalists and law firms (Ibid.). Yet, in the Silicon Valley model, the organisations of Economy Two play a major role that far exceeds financial and legal assistance. The venture capitalists are often former successful engineers and entrepreneurs themselves, who bring their expertise and experience to the start-ups they finance. They often participate closely in the activities of new firms, sitting on their boards, being involved in recruitment (Kenney 2000), giving advice and helping to find customers (Kenney and Florida 2000). The venture capitalists are highly networked themselves and often act as "knowledge brokers", connecting start-up firms to other crucial actors – indeed, the major importance of venture capitalists may well be more in their network connections than in their money (Seely-Brown 2000). In a similar way, the lawyers of Silicon Valley also play a far more significant role than that of simply dispensing legal advice. As "high technology law" (patent, copyright, trade secret doctrines) remained rather underdeveloped in the early days of Silicon Valley, its lawyers grew accustomed to interacting closely with the firms, and developed a more general business counseling function. According to Suchman (2000), Silicon Valley lawyers are "dealmakers and counselors" who bring together different actors and mediate flows of operational resources and constitutive information.

Highly skilled immigrants have also been central to the success of Silicon Valley's high tech sectors (see, e.g. Saxenian & Edulbehram 1998; Saxenian 1999) - not only immigrants from outside the U.S. but also those from other U.S. regions (Himanen & Castells 2004). Crouch (2005) observes that the specific characteristics of the US education system may be less relevant for the ICT success of Silicon Valley than the gathering of highly skilled people, both

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U.S. nationals and immigrants from diverse backgrounds (Chinese, Indian, German), and the consequent combination and mutual accessibility of different kinds of approaches to knowledge.

Finally, there is another, more gloomy side to the story of Silicon Valley. As Himanen and Castells (2004) point out, the social environment in Silicon Valley is also characterized by high social exclusion, i.e. high levels of inequality and poverty. Silicon Valley is dependent on its highly educated immigrants from both other parts of the U.S. and abroad: the quality of the public education system in California is lower than those of most advanced countries, and could not provide the human capital needed to sustain high technology innovation. Moreover, the flip side of the fierce competition in Silicon Valley is that there are also those who do not survive in such an environment: there are a lot of social problems among its engineers, such as substance abuse, high divorce rates and suicide. The "dark side" of Silicon Valley's entrepreneurial and successful atmosphere is that at its margins it accumulates an increasing number of people who have lost in the competition (Himanen & Castells 2004).

4.3.3 Finns in Silicon Valley

Considering the multiethnic and diverse character of the population in Silicon Valley, Finns are not a large or particularly visible population in the area. As Silicon Valley is not a specific location as such, there are no official statistics on the number of Finns living there[3]. According

[3] Silicon Valley is not a location with specific, official boundaries; it typically refers to the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California known as Santa Clara Valley. There are several towns or cities in this area, for example Palo Alto, Santa Clara, Mountain View, and San Jose (see, for example Saxenian 1994). Brown and Duguid (2002) define Silicon Valley as the "ill-defined area that stretches from north of San Francisco to south of San Jose, California." They further note that "[S]ilicon Valley is still, if not the absolute center, then one of the most significant nodes in the 'wired', the 'digital', the 'networked', or most simply the 'new' economy – a concentration of inspired ideas, astounding wealth, and the means to turn the former into the latter." For the purposes of the present research, the rigid geographical delimitation of the area was not considered useful. The idea was to study Finns who work in the most important high technology region in the world. Thus, in addition to Santa Clara Valley, in this study Silicon Valley refers also to the wider San Francisco Bay Area, including the City of San Francisco. This extended definition of Silicon Valley was based above all on the observation made early in the fieldwork that, considering the topic and population at the focus of the study, it would be somewhat arbitrary to leave out Finns in San Francisco or Berkeley. Importantly, Finns working in innovation are altogether a small population and there was no logical way of defining their location within the Bay Area. Would it be the location of their workplace (employer) or their home? The informants typically lived in a different town or county from where they worked. In several cases an informant's home was in the City (because of the amenities) while the work was located in South Bay or in Berkeley. Others lived outside Silicon Valley but worked there. Moreover, many informants typically moved within the Bay Area during their everyday work. So, their daily environment consisted

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to different estimates, the number of Finns in Silicon Valley ranges from a few hundred to a few thousand. The wide range in estimates is probably due to the fact that there are different kinds of Finns in the area. The two most distinct groups are (1) "older-generation Finns" who arrived in the San Francisco Bay area during the first half of the 20th century and (2) Finns who have come to the area in the past 10-15 years. It seems that there has not been any significant interaction between the two groups, or interaction is limited to occasional and rather formal events, such as the traditional Finnish Independence Day celebration. The latter group – Finns who came to the Silicon Valley area in the past 10-15 years – is the natural focus of the present study, since it is the population most relevant for today's innovation, entrepreneurial activity, and brain circulation.

As mentioned above, the number of such Finns in Silicon Valley is probably a few hundred (200-300). This estimate includes both entrepreneurs and academics, and their spouses. Without spouses – some of whom also work in relevant fields – the population of interest for the present study is roughly one to two hundred individuals.

Based on the interviews and observations (made when interacting with Finns in the area and participating in Finnish meetings and gatherings), it is clear that there is a constant, albeit relatively small-scale (in terms of the number of people involved), activity by Finns in the area, in particular in the form of academic visits (researcher exchanges) and temporary assignment for Finns from Finnish companies in the area. These typically last between six months and three years. In addition, there are Finns, entrepreneurs and others involved in entrepreneurial or innovative activity, such as venture capitalists and consultants, who are more permanently located in the area.

Considering brain circulation, knowledge transfer and innovation, there are two main groups of Finns who have recently arrived or lived for a certain period in the Bay Area during the past ten or so years: entrepreneurs and academics. Another way of classifying the Finns is to distinguish between public (publicly-funded) and private (privately funded) activities. Generally speaking it may be said that entrepreneurs fall into the private activity category, while

of the entire Bay Area and that is what they talked about in the interviews. It would have been quite artificial and useless to try to limit the research within the "boundaries" (which are moving and porous and no official ones exist in any case) of Silicon Valley (i.e. South San Francisco Bay). That would have indicated lack of sensitivity to location in a study of location.

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academics make up the public activity category, yet this is partly misleading. Many of the visiting academics work in engineering or related fields, and are often directly or indirectly (through the department they are visiting) involved in projects with Silicon Valley companies. Also, many of the people working for public offices could also be categorized as entrepreneurs, as they have previous or additional careers as entrepreneurs and have indeed been employed by public offices whose goal is to promote Finnish entrepreneurship and innovation in Silicon Valley because of their expertise and experience. Moreover, many of the publicly funded offices (such as Tekes[4] and Finpro[5]) offer financial or consultation support to Finnish firms in the Silicon Valley area.

No comprehensive list of Finnish firms in Silicon Valley exists. During the fieldwork I learned that in the past ten years, and particularly before the IT-bubble burst at the turn of the millennium, a number of Finnish firms had tried and failed to flourish in Silicon Valley. At the time of the fieldwork, the number of Finnish firms in the area was approximately 20, although the exact number continued to change as some firms folded and new ones were started. I considered a firm Finnish if it had been started by a Finn: location in Silicon Valley means having an office (a local address) and at least one person working (being located) there.

Considering the Finnish actors and activities in the Silicon Valley area, the lines between public and private seem to be blurred in many ways in this case. Some of the individuals working for publicly funded offices have had, or still have, careers as entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, or consultants for start-ups. Most have an educational background in engineering.

[4] Founded in 1983, Tekes is the main public financing and expert organization for research and development in Finland. Its objective is to promote the competitiveness of the Finnish industry by fostering the creation of world-class technology and know-how. Tekes claims to promote innovative, risky projects. Tekes' funds come from the state budget via the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Its yearly budget is 500 million euros which are used to fund some 2000 projects. Tekes encourages cooperation between universities, research institutes and companies (and in practice funds projects in all these) and between different fields of technology. It offers expert services for both firms and research institutions. Tekes also funds and actively fosters the internationalization of Finnish projects and firms and has an office in Silicon Valley.

[5] Finpro is an organization providing internationalization services for Finnish companies. It has over 50 offices in over 40 countries worldwide. It was founded in 1919 as the Finnish Export Association by a Finnish businessman. Today, it receives half of its funding from the public and half from the private sector. It offers internationalization services while minimizing the risks involved by using both internal expertise and collaborating with other Finnish actors, such as Tekes and Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund. Finpro has had an office in Silicon Valley since 1999. At the time of the fieldwork for this study, there was one person working full-time for Finpro in Silicon Valley (a few years ago there were more). Finpro has offered consultancy and other services to many of the Finnish firms who have tried to enter the US market in Silicon Valley.

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Furthermore, Finnish public and private actors seem to interact with each other in Silicon Valley either formally or informally through personal ties. Many Finnish start-ups, for instance, use Finpro's services to help them establish themselves in Silicon Valley[6].

In general, it could be said that the Finns – both as individuals and regarding their activities – in Silicon Valley are clearly more entrepreneurial than the average Finns in Finland. This is, in a way, obvious: Silicon Valley is arguably the most entrepreneurial location on the globe, and it is thus natural that the most entrepreneurial individuals and actors find their way there from Finland, or, in the case of public organizations, it is natural that they send or hire the most entrepreneurial individuals to work there. The personal qualities needed in Silicon Valley are in some ways different to the qualities needed for success in Finland.

There appear to be different types of Finnish professionals in Silicon Valley according to the kind of work they do, how they operate and how permanently or temporarily they are located in Silicon Valley. The following are the four main ideal types and are thus intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. (These are presented here only for descriptive purposes, as they did not appear relevant for further analysis, i.e. no significant differences were found between these types in the aspects studied in the research questions.)

1) *The global entrepreneur*. The global entrepreneur is not necessarily an entrepreneur, but may also be an employee in a firm, an academic or even a public servant. What makes him or her an entrepreneur is attitude. S/he is well networked locally with many different groups (business, hobbies, neighborhood, charity, other Finns), and explicitly recognizes the importance of networking, spontaneously stating it to be one of the most important objectives or requirements for functioning in Silicon Valley. S/he is based locally in Silicon Valley, but

[6] In January 2007, a new Finnish office called FinNode was established in Santa Clara. The idea behind FinNode was to bring Finnish public actors in Silicon Valley under the same roof (in the same office) and thus make their activities both better known and more efficient. So, in a way FinNode is not a new actor, but brings together the public or semi-public actors that had already been in the area. FinNode's slogan is "Accelerating innovation"; the self-described purpose of FinNode is to act as a match-maker between Finnish and U.S. companies and universities. FinNode is funded by the Finnish government, yet it distinguishes itself from more traditional government actors, such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry by acting more on the micro-level, and locally in Silicon Valley, with entrepreneurs, university actors and firms. Its office is located in the very heart of Silicon Valley. FinNode's objective is to make both Finland better known in Silicon Valley as a market and the other way around: to make the Silicon Valley/US market more accessible to Finnish start-ups. In sum, it aims to foster the two-way movement of knowledge and capital between Silicon Valley and Finland. There is also a Finnish business incubator operating in the FinNode office.

travels and is experienced in living and working abroad, and has excellent social skills. When asked, the global entrepreneur says that s/he will probably eventually return to Finland.

2) *The global professional/expert*. S/he is an employee of a firm sent to Silicon Valley for an assignment for a specific period of time (they often know the exact date they will leave). S/he works in different time zones and places, both virtually and by physically traveling, and usually has daily work contact at least with people within the corporation in Finland, and often also with colleagues based elsewhere (e.g. in Asia). The global professional travels a lot, but locality as such doesn't matter, because he/she is there only to complete a specific task and for a determined period of time (from a few weeks to two years): home and important ties (both personal and professional) remain in Finland. The global professional/expert never really left Finland and does not have many local social ties in Silicon Valley: most of their "local" ties are with other Finns in similar situations.

3) *The integrated academic*. The integrated academic works or studies at a university (Berkeley or Stanford), is locally based and does not travel extensively. Their main social group of reference is other academics within the same university, many of whom are other international students or faculty. They know some other Finns in Silicon Valley but are not extensively networked with them, they meet every now and then at social gatherings or events organized by Finns for Finns in the area. They are not sure whether they will eventually return to Finland or not.

4) *The visiting academic.* S/he is visiting Silicon Valley for one or two semesters, does not travel much for academic work, is networked at the university with immediate colleagues (knows other students in the same class or colleagues in his/her research group), but also often spends his/her free time with other Finns who are located in the same university or town. Will return to Finland and knows the return date.

To conclude, an interesting point to note about Finns in Silicon Valley is that in a way the Finnish individuals and actors who collaborate unite two successful but very different models of regional innovation. They thus create (or at least attempt to create) ties between different successful yet distant areas. Despite the common denominator, success in innovation, there are obvious and considerable distances between the two, both in terms of geography and the cultural and institutional context within which Finns and Silicon Valley actors are used to operate.

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The Finnish success story would not have been possible without the strong role played by its government in creating long-term policies aiming to foster innovation, in investing heavily in research and development and in establishing new actors to advance technological innovation (such as the National Technology Agency, today known as The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, in 1983, and the Science and Technology Policy Council in 1987). Furthermore, these government-funded agencies were active in creating ties between different actors in the Finnish innovation system (firms, universities and public actors).

In Silicon Valley, the links between universities, businesses, and other institutional actors has been an essential feature of the innovation ecosystem. Yet, in contrast to the Finnish case, in Silicon Valley it is other important actors, namely the venture capital firms and law firms of "Economy Two" that make the region unique in terms of its available talent and expertise. This kind of organic, bottom-up activity, and indeed the actors themselves, are largely missing in the Finnish innovation system. Thus, the interesting thing about Finns in Silicon Valley is that they act as links between two essentially different models or systems of innovation. As the present research shows, this is also reflected in their personal experiences. The next chapter will begin with the analysis of the empirical findings, and focus on the expectations, motivations and identities of Finnish professionals concerning their move to Silicon Valley.

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5 FINDINGS: Motivations and Identities in Relation to Place

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore how personal motivations and identities are tied to a place. It shows how the relationship between personal motivations/identities and geographical locations is two-way. On one hand, places can be the targets or means of realizing both personal and professional goals; on the other, changing places can awaken new kinds of identities, such as the pioneer or the mediator. Furthermore, identities are related to both the home country (the departure location) and the new, destination location; the characteristics of both matter.

The chapter thus paints a portrait of the global professional from the viewpoint of place and geographical mobility. It focuses on the reasons for and expectations from relocating to Silicon Valley, and on the specific ways identities and aspirations are tied to place(s). I argue that understanding these is crucial for the more general purpose of analyzing the meaning of local place and distance in the global era. Quite simply, the chapter aims to illustrate how where one comes from and where one is going still matter.

The analysis shows that the motivations to go to Silicon Valley are both personal and work-related, although work or business-related reasons are apparently more obvious and easier to articulate. Yet personal motivations seem to be at least as important in the decision to leave: for these professionals, significant reasons are not purely work-related, but broader. Many times the initial trigger is external: an employer wants to send the professional, or there is an ongoing collaboration in Silicon Valley making relocation necessary. Yet it is also common that a professional actively sought an opportunity to be relocated abroad, either because they had already lived abroad and wanted to go again or, conversely, because they had missed the opportunity to go earlier and felt a strong desire to go.

The professionals contrast themselves with both Finns in general (with the stereotype of the average Finn) and non-Finns in Silicon Valley. The three categories of people in places that the interviewees speak of are therefore: 1) Finns in general (in Finland) 2) Finns in Silicon Valley and 3) non-Finns ("others") in Silicon Valley. The professionals sketch an image of these three groups as different in terms of levels of talkativeness, sociability, adventurousness and risk-taking. All of these characteristics are seen by the professionals as being the lowest among

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Finns in Finland and the highest among the people in Silicon Valley in general, while the informants place Finns in Silicon Valley (themselves) as somewhere in between.

5.1 Motivations

5.1.1 The Decision to go

As discussed in the literature chapter, the motivations for highly-skilled professionals' relocation found in empirical studies are varied, and personal and professional reasons are often intertwined (Bozkurt 2006; Nowicka 2007; Conradson & Latham 2005b). The main reason is often related to studies or work but more personal considerations matter too. Nowicka (2007) has noted a "mixture of career development and personal preference", which was also found in the case of Finns examined here. Nowicka further found that in the case of the skilled professionals in her study, one important motive was "curiosity about new places, people and cultures". She notes that mobility and relocation are about taking opportunities. In a similar vein, the desire to see the world, experience cultures and places one would otherwise not visit have been found to be among the reasons for highly skilled mobility (Bozkurt 2006). Sometimes the expectations can be very high and the highly skilled mobile experience disappointments in the destination (Aneesh 2006).

My findings shed further light on the motivations of the professionals to relocate. In particular, I found that while the work-related reasons seem to be easier to articulate, the personal reasons are strong and closely intertwined with professional ones. Practically all informants had an "official", rational, work-related reason to move to Silicon Valley: for example, their employer sent them, they had to go and set up their firm's office, their small firm was bought by a Silicon Valley company, or they needed to go for academic research. This was typically mentioned first when the topic of reasons for going was brought up. But the informants had choice in the matter too, and when the subject was discussed further, it became evident that they also had personal motivations for going. Sometimes personal motivation came first, and the "official" reason only after.

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CK: What was the official reason for your going, and was there any discussion about it [in the company]?
A1: No. I wanted to develop myself and found a way to do it, and the company of course benefited from it afterwards.

Some informants state that they actively sought the opportunity to be relocated abroad. They had mentioned their readiness to go to their boss and colleagues, or had taken the initiative by seeking academic collaboration at a U.S. university. Some who were employees in a company (such as the informant quoted above) participated in creating new forms of collaboration in Silicon Valley, and in the process also created a new local position for themselves. Some had visited Silicon Valley for work or traveled there before, and decided they wanted to try and live there. This finding is similar to what Beaverstock (2005) reported in the case of financial professionals who relocated from London to New York City: for most of them, it was a match between a personal preference to be placed in New York City and the organization's wish to assign them there. Thus a situation very similar to that of many of my interviewees who had expressed their availability and eagerness to be relocated abroad and a suitable opportunity became available at the company.

Amongst those who took the personal initiative to relocate, the common denominator is a strong desire to go abroad. Yet their personal motivations seem to have two different and curiously opposite origins. Some wanted to go to Silicon Valley, *because they had lived abroad before*, and wanted to go again. They had already experienced what it was like and what the rewards and positive aspects of going to another place to live are. They missed living abroad and/or wanted more similar experiences. The other group of people wanted to go for the opposite reason: *because they had never lived abroad* before. Many mentioned that they had always desired the experience of living outside Finland but had never done it; some felt it was a now or never situation.

B19: I had **long** planned [to go abroad] during my studies, but then there were things keeping me in Finland and I never left. And later I regretted that a little, but then at some point the **desire** to go to the world and specifically to the USA became strong enough for me not to have to think about what to do anymore.

B26: ... it felt like, ”hey, let's go now, when will we [the family] go if not now?”

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Perhaps those who had already lived abroad had the *confidence* to go: those who had not had the *curiosity* to go – in any case, both had the desire to go. In general, both confidence and curiosity seem to characterize globally mobile professionals. All of the informants certainly had some degree of drive, of a spirit of survival. This is in line with the pioneer metaphor described below: it seems to apply widely to the informants, even though not all explicitly use the term.

It seems that wherever an informant took the initiative, that is they actively made it clear and sought the opportunity to be relocated to Silicon Valley or abroad in general, that their wishes were met rather effortlessly by their employers. This may suggest that in general not many Finns want to be relocated. Therefore, if someone takes the personal initiative and asks or makes their readiness to relocate abroad clear to an employer, the request is well received and their wish is often met. In the official rhetoric in Finland the need to be international or global is explicitly recognized. Many public actors and, in particular, funding agencies explicitly promote global collaboration and researcher and entrepreneur mobility (e.g. Tekes, Academy of Finland, and also many large private funding organizations). This makes one wonder if such an explicit recognition is necessary because there are still not enough Finns who actually want to relocate.

The timing of relocation is important, and the desire to go depends on what stage the professional is at in his/her career and studies: these informants were usually either at the early or middle stages of their careers. It is important to note that in Finland, in highly skilled technical professions it is more common than not to already have a "real", even a full time, job during undergraduate studies: engineers and others in similar fields quite typically finish their Master's or Ph.D. degrees while working full time.

> B42: I had just got my Ph.D. in engineering and I was looking for, or at that point it was good to start looking for, firstly, a position abroad and secondly, in a place with a good reputation. And we [the company] had contacts here and that way a suitable job was found. So it kind of fell into place like that.

Besides career stage, family situation obviously matters too. Some younger informants who went to Silicon Valley by themselves, without a spouse or children, said that they wanted to have this experience before starting a family, when it was still easy to leave. But many went with their families (a spouse and small children). Often in these cases the dream was a shared one: both spouses wanted the adventure and welcomed the opportunity when it arose. (Still, my

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impression is that in general, it is rather the opposite for professionals with families or spouses: even if the individual wants to go or is offered the opportunity, they have to decline because of the spouse's work situation or the children's schools etc. It is common that the spouse does not want to relocate or that it is difficult to find an interesting position for both working spouses in the new location.)

Some informants contrast themselves with their Finnish friends or colleagues in Finland, who have not lived or worked abroad. The willingness to take risks, which is often mentioned in the interviews to be exceptionally low in Finland, seems to be one of the defining factors here: according to the informants, Finns in general (those who stay home) are averse to taking risks and appreciate stability in both their personal lives and careers. From this perspective, moving to Silicon Valley (or any far away place) is simply too risky a step and requires too much effort or too many changes.

The personal reasons and motivations to go to Silicon Valley are closely related with business, or rational reasons: it is often not easy, or perhaps even useful to try to separate the two. The "official" reasons – such as establishing the firm's Silicon Valley office or new research collaboration – are often mentioned first, but it becomes clear over the course of the interview that a deeply personal aspect to going also exists. This is in a way obvious, and yet it has received surprisingly little attention in the existing literature on professional, elite migration. The existing research often focuses on the economic, professional reasons and aspects of geographical mobility – and even where the personal motivations are documented, the reasons for leaving are often seen as mainly professional. Important exceptions to this are Conradson and Latham's (2005b; 2007) studies on global mobility as self-realization and Favell and Recchi's (forthcoming) recent research on highly skilled European mobility, where it was found that economic or professional reasons are frequently less important for relocation than more personal ones. "It is often not rational economic motives that caused people to move, so much as ideas about adventure, quality of life or… romance with a European of another nationality" (Ibid, 31). Furthermore, Florida (e.g. 2008) has also explicitly discussed how choice of location is a wholesome decision based on values such as diversity and quality of life for today's creative class (including not just those commonly considered as "creative", such as artists and writers, but also highly skilled people in general, such as engineers, lawyers and doctors).

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Thus, based on my data and the empirical findings mentioned, I would argue that it is important to separate activity (what the professionals go to the new location to do) from motivations (why the person truly wanted to go). The obvious activity (e.g. academic research, doing business) is different from the actual motivations, which are clearly broader, more complex and personal. So, the underlying motivation may be, for example, the fulfillment of a long held dream or personal development, even if the activity is establishing a firm's satellite office in the new location.

Personal reasons are thus varied, and often implicit. They are not as easily articulated as the "official" or business reasons. The personal motivations include aspects such as developing oneself as a person, seeking adventure, seeking experiences and learning how to survive in a new place and in another language, and broadening one's horizons (see also Conradson & Latham 2005b; 2007; Nowicka 2007; Bozkurt 2006). Many professionals also seek challenges: some mention this, implying that the Finnish environment was not stimulating enough.

There are some place-specific reasons for relocating as well; both are related to how the home country of Finland is experienced, and to the (expected) characteristics of the destination location. The willingness to escape from the Finnish climate is often mentioned: this has both a concrete and a more metaphorical meaning. Climate often refers to both the long, dark winters and a certain mental or cultural climate. Even if the weather is not the primary motivation, it is certainly an additional one. The mental climate is perhaps more important: some had begun to feel the atmosphere as too restrictive or discouraging (this is discussed further below). In the following quote, the informant states that the "ceiling started to feel low", which implies a feeling of claustrophobia or even suffocation.

> B36: … Like, you had been about 25 years pretty much in the same city and the same country. And you hadn't really had the chance to live anywhere else. So I was rather fed up, rather ready to go already. Finland is, after all, such a small place and the ceiling started to feel a little low. And when the opportunity came, I was like, I didn't even have to think about whether to go or not.

Personal reasons are not therefore always clearly separable from work-related or business reasons for moving. Among the business or work reasons given are, for example, collaboration or the aim of starting a research collaboration; establishing a firm's office in Silicon Valley in order to enter the U.S. market and be closer to customers (in particular in the case of business-to-business firms); carrying out doctoral or post-doctoral or senior research (visiting researcher or sabbatical); and in the case of employers in public offices such as Tekes, Finpro, or VTT (Technical Research Centre of Finland), sometimes explicitly to act as a facilitator or connector of networks between Finland and Silicon Valley innovators and businesses.

But even if there is a position to be filled or a clearly business-related reason to go (for example, to establish a firm's office), the question of who will ultimately fill that position is also a matter for personal interests and aspirations. None of the informants seems to have left reluctantly, against his or her wishes, or, for example, without consulting spouses or family members. Many explicitly say that the desire to go was both personal and professional: personal in the sense that it was the right time to go, the desire was strong, or there was some more specific wish for personal development or to expand horizons.

> B42: Two reasons, one is professional, creating contacts here in the USA, that is, after all, pretty important. That is not achievable just like that from Finland. And then to see what it's like here in a more famous place.

Although all of these skilled professionals left according to their own wishes, either a strong desire or, in some cases, with the feeling of "why not take the opportunity", this is not to say that they have complete choice in how and when they can be globally mobile. As already seen, in reality they are restricted by many aspects, such as family situation, career stage, the lack of suitable opportunities, or timing in general.

However, it seems that when there is a wish to live abroad, it is not so much a matter of going to a specific place (in this case Silicon Valley): as long as they satisfy certain criteria, a number of places would be acceptable. Again, this does not mean that *any* place will do: the specific location is not crucial as long as it is one on a shortlist of places. This "list" is usually more or less implicit – no one actually mentioned having made lists of all their relevant choices, but implied that there was a group of possible locations. The exact places on the list depended on the person in question and, particularly, on his/her field (academic research, business, etc.). The shortlists were specific to each professional. In any event, it seems that the lists were not typically very long. Intuitively, it seems to be a given where these places are. So, for a certain kind of a professional and a specific field there are a handful of places in the world that are relevant and attractive, and everyone seems to instinctively know where they are.

This is clearly contradictory to the idea of the world being flat; conversely, it is in line with Sassen's (1991) observations on global cities. Certain locations are on the map for these professionals while many others – indeed, most places in the world – are completely irrelevant and thus ignored. Florida (2008) also emphasizes that what makes a city or a location attractive cannot be defined in absolute or objective terms, but is highly dependent on a person's overall situation (age, profession, career stage, hobbies, family situation, even sexual orientation). So, what the globe looks like is highly dependent on perspective (both that of the individual and the physical/geographical) – this is, again, self-evident yet surprisingly often ignored.

In addition to the specific criteria related to the individual's situation (e.g. hobbies, personal tastes) and business-related reasons (where the most important people, markets, venture capitalists, etc. are), there are some general reasons such as language and weather which also matter. Language continues to be a factor in the global world: global professionals simply want to go to places whose languages they speak or at least feel they can or wish to learn better. In this sense, many Finns mention that language was not an issue when going to Silicon Valley, because in general educated Finns are used to operating in English. On the other hand, many mention that they were surprised when they first arrived in Silicon Valley; they were not actually as fluent in the language as they had thought, and managing both everyday life and work in an English-speaking place was much harder than using English for work in Finland. Thus, many said that after the initial surprise it actually took them a while to really become fluent and confident in English. Language, as common an element it might be in everyday experience, is not typically mentioned as any kind of an issue in the previous studies on global professionals.

5.1.2 Expectations for Silicon Valley

Aneesh (2006) reported that in his study of Indian skilled migrants who relocated to the U.S., had very high and perhaps unrealistic expectations, fuelled by the images that the recruiting companies provided of the U.S. In the case of Finns in Silicon Valley, there were typically many

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positive expectations but no significant disappointments were reported. It is not always easy to remember or later articulate (after moving to Silicon Valley) what the expectations of the place and the relocation were. Yet motivations and expectations are obviously linked, and many who specifically wanted to go to Silicon Valley had a more or less clear idea of what they thought life would be like there and what they wanted to get and learn from their stay.

> B24: I knew I was going to meet a number of interesting and brilliant people who work like crazy.

Those who had traveled in Silicon Valley for work before moving there, or who had already participated in collaborations there were well aware of its reputation as one where the work ethic is tremendously high. They therefore knew to expect a lot of hard work and were prepared for it. The positive side is the area's dynamism (as implied in the quote above): there is hard work to be expected, but in return one gets to work among the best and the brightest in the field (this seems to apply equally to academics, employed professionals and entrepreneurs). Indeed, many informants say that they wanted to experience the dynamic atmosphere that Silicon Valley is famous for. Even those who had traveled there extensively mention this reason. It seems that during their travels they got the feeling that that merely visiting was not enough, and has its limits when it comes to understanding what really goes on in the area and fully participating. They wanted to see what it would be like to live and work in a "famous", almost mythical place, and how it was different from Finland.

The fact that Silicon Valley is in California, a place often associated with sun, palm trees, warm weather and leisure, also evoked some positive and not purely work-related expectations.

> B19: It seemed that there are lots of stimuli here. And there was a kind of maybe glamour too. Like, California, wow! Like Boston, well, that may not sound so cool, but California sounds nice.

Yet this image is also explicitly rejected, and some strongly pointed out that even though California sounded great, the purpose of going there was very serious.

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A11: I'm not sure if I knew what to expect much. But well, first by definition I wanted somehow to understand how that place [Silicon Valley] works. And I didn't go with the idea of having fun there, I had a rather serious mental orientation towards it. And I was probably fascinated by the idea that you get to see how these trendy companies like Google and others, how they communicate with the media and the local [media], when you are yourself close [to them].

Despite having some ideas or vague expectations, most informants stated that they did not know exactly what to expect, or indeed consciously tried not to expect too much, but to go with an open mind. Generally getting a deeper understanding of the place, and having a learning experience, were often the only expectations articulated.

One informant explicitly said that one of the main purposes for going to Silicon Valley in the first place is to *expect the unexpected*, to give a chance to all those things that cannot be defined or anticipated beforehand. This informant had lived in Silicon Valley himself, and had later created important forms of collaboration between local universities and his Finnish organization. He was now sending several Finnish professionals to Silicon Valley for a year in the framework of this program, and emphasized how important it was, firstly to go there, and secondly, to go there for a sufficiently long period of time.

A4: ... it is better that they are there a little longer and have time to settle and on the other hand build the network. And learn something that we **didn't** send them for. So that there would be unexpected added value. We expect the unexpected, in a way.

Thus, one advantage of being located in a place is that you learn and experience things you did not expect. From a distance, you can access what you know you are looking for, but when living in the locality, you can access what you did not know you needed.

It is well documented in the current literature that the process of innovation is by definition unpredictable, what kind of information is needed or what you are looking for is not known at the outset (see, e.g. Chesbrough 2003; Chesbrough et al. 2006). When the purpose is to arrive somewhere, at an end product or idea that cannot be defined at the outset, what information to look for from a distance, or what questions to ask, cannot be previously defined. From this perspective, it is wise to expect the unexpected: this director who sends younger professionals to Silicon Valley, and says that it requires a certain amount of time for them to get anything out of it (a few months is not enough for someone who is in Silicon Valley for the first

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time), holds the view that gaining access to more subtle, tacit knowledge and to people who hold it, is a time-consuming process (I will return to the issue of access to knowledge in Chapter 6, which explores the experience of working in Silicon Valley).

Finally, while most professionals had mainly positive expectations, some had not initially sought to go to Silicon Valley, and had not been interested in living in the USA: they were offered the chance to go there. They stated that before making the decision to go, they had been prejudiced against "Americans" and had doubts about whether or not they would like it there. Yet they quickly found out from friends or colleagues that the Silicon Valley/San Francisco area is not the "average America" they had thought, and thus accepted the offer to go.

As mentioned, disappointments have been reported in some studies of skilled migration (Aneesh 2006). Among the Finns, no one mentioned having experienced great disappointments, but some had met with some initial surprises. Some informants were surprised that "it wasn't that different" work-wise. The people were not perhaps as brilliant or dynamic as expected, and there were disappointing office politics at larger companies that were not experienced positively. Conversely, others said that moving to Silicon Valley was initially a humbling experience: if one had, for example, worked for a highly reputable organization in Finland, it was surprising to learn that in Silicon Valley, the same employer did not enjoy the same status.

To conclude, those expectations that are mentioned in the interviews are more often work-related than personal. When the informants were directly asked about their reasons for moving to Silicon Valley, and on the other hand about their expectations of the place, they talked about work. Yet personal motivations also became very clear in the interviews, albeit in more subtle ways: not necessarily when asked, but when the decision to go was described or discussed further, and sometimes in the context of other topics. Similarly, expectations related to work are perhaps easier to articulate: they are the most "obvious" ones and were probably also much discussed with employers or collaborators before leaving. As emphasized, however, personal motivations and expectations play important roles too, and examining them helps us obtain a deeper understanding of the aspects that matter in the decision to change locations.

5.2 Identities

Let us next move on from motivations to personal identities. This section discusses the identities of the professionals specifically from the viewpoint of place, both of their home country and of the new location, Silicon Valley. The aim is to illustrate the specific ways in which identity can still be tied to places in the global era.

5.2.1 Atypical Finns?

> B22: Hmmm… my life is a little like. I'm like a perch that swims upstream in the stream of life. I usually do things others don't do. I don't know if it is insanity or ambitiousness or what.

Many global professionals talk about themselves as atypical or different in one way or another. Some present themselves as different in general, as in the quote above. Often being different is not explicitly discussed, but implied when the interviewees talk about their experience of moving to Silicon Valley and working there, emphasizing, for instance, that they have done various different things in their life (different kinds of work, started many businesses, traveled), and thus conveying the image of being exceptionally active. Some mention in passing the people they grew up with, or their old friends back in Finland that they have known since childhood or university, and implicitly contrast their own lives with theirs, constructing an image of "those who stayed and I who left". Thus they are not quite like the people they grew up with or went to school with, people who have steady, relatively predictable lives and work paths in Finland. This aspect has also been mentioned in some previous empirical studies, in which the interviewees have mentioned friends back home who do not easily understand some aspects of their mobile lives (e.g. Nowicka 2007).

One particular self-presentation that emerged in the interviews was that of the *atypical Finn*. According to the popular stereotype (which seems to be well-known among both non-Finns and Finns alike) the typical Finn is shy, quiet, reserved, serious, and timid. Small talk does not come easily or naturally to a Finn: it can indeed be a serious challenge. Finns are used to – and known for – getting straight to the point and avoiding talking "nonsense", i.e. talking just

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for the sake of making conversation. Finns are also known for their lack of facial expression, of not smiling excessively, or not being particularly lively, sociable or open, unless they know the other person well. (Some non-Finns have told me stories about Finns as tough negotiators, because they are naturally so inexpressive, and this makes the other party nervous and uncomfortable until they give in. This is not a planned strategy, but unintentional, as it is simply not common to show strong emotions or facial expressions in Finland.)

Contrasting themselves with this stereotype, some of the informants made a spontaneous joke, saying that they had always been too talkative for Finland, and so they had to leave. From this perspective, going to Silicon Valley meant going to a place where others would be more like them. These informants also made it appear that is was easy for them to be sociable and build networks in Silicon Valley; at the same time they said that this was a common problem for many Finns. This is certainly in line with my own observations while doing fieldwork and interacting with informants: many of them are exceptionally confident and talkative Finns, or exceptionally reflective, giving elaborate answers to my open questions. This is not to say that all were similar, but in these respects (sociability, talkativeness, easiness in social interaction), they did seem to differ from the typical Finn. It is hard to say whether this is more because they have lived in Silicon Valley, or because they were already like this before leaving Finland. But perhaps this is not the most relevant question: what is interesting is their self-presentation as different, and in particular as different from other Finns.

Another way of presenting oneself as an atypical Finn is by talking about being adventurous and entrepreneurial. Finns are known for being hard-working, reliable and honest (again according to the cultural stereotype) but not entrepreneurial in the sense of thriving on money and success. In fact, even if the cultural environment may slowly be changing in this respect, actively and openly pursuing wealth and success is still largely frowned upon in Finnish culture, in which humble hard work, egalitarianism and modesty are greatly valued. Outward signs of wealth, such as fancy cars, big houses or luxury accessories are still relatively exceptional in Finland among native Finns. Furthermore, Finland continues to be a very homogeneous country with respect to both income levels and ethnic diversity (immigration to Finland is among the lowest in the EU countries, see e.g. Eurostat 2008). Thus, being different or standing out in one way or another is not typically considered a positive thing in Finland. And being entrepreneurial by definition means assertiveness, and a willingness to do things differently to how they are normally done.

The same informant quoted at the beginning of this section (B22), who says s/he has always done things others won't, describes his/her decision to go to Silicon Valley by comparing it to playing in the Finnish Ice Hockey League (ice hockey is the most popular sport in Finland). According to the informant, if you play in the Finnish Hockey League, you are already quite successful, and most are happy with that. But if you really reach high and get the chance to go and play in the North-American National Hockey League (NHL), which is the best and most competitive in the world, then why not go? This means reaching high and dreaming big – and this informant, along with many others, says that in order to do that, one needs to go to Silicon Valley.

Being entrepreneurial also involves the ability and willingness to take risks. It has been documented in international comparisons that Finns are particularly risk averse (see, e.g. Hyrsky & Tuunanen 1999). When describing the differences between the Finnish and Silicon Valley innovation systems and work climates, the informants typically mention risk-taking as one of the most important. It seems that in risk-taking, these two locations are almost at opposite poles. Silicon Valley is a famously entrepreneurial environment, where risk-taking is an essential part of innovation and entrepreneurship. In contrast, in Finland risk-taking is generally not encouraged as much, and failure is considered to be a dramatic event. It is common to think that a person only has one chance, and if s/he fails, s/he is labeled as a failure, that is as unreliable and incapable of doing business.[7] Many of the Finns in Silicon Valley describe themselves as more willing to take risks than is typical in Finland.

> B26: My inclination towards risky things is considerably higher than other Finns' on average. But it is unfair to say only this, because in the same breath I have to add that those people who **came here** at all are also atypical Finns, because they represent a

[7] There is vast literature on entrepreneurship (e.g. Aldrich 2005; Swedberg 2000; Thornton 1999), which shows that risk-taking is only one aspect of being entrepreneurial. Other essential aspects of entrepreneurship are, for example, the ability to make new combinations from existing resources, taking initiative and innovativeness (Schumpeter 1934). Yet risk-taking was the element most frequently mentioned among the informants in this study, because it was the aspect that according to their experience was the most problematic in Finland whereas the Silicon Valley environment was experienced as much more favorable for risk-taking.

> small… I guess both of us [refers to me, the interviewer and him/herself] and all the other Finns here represent the more adventurous part of Finns.

This informant notes that he is clearly more willing to take risks than the average Finn, but hastens to add that Finns who live in Silicon Valley are by definition unusual, not typical, because by leaving Finland they show their adventurousness. Yet the same informant continues by observing that unlike him/her, most of the Finns who are in Silicon Valley nevertheless came through their work, often through internal transfer at a multinational company. The informant says that in this way the employer takes care of many of the practical things, and continues to note that even if these professionals change jobs while in Silicon Valley, it is usually between one company and another. The informant concludes that these professionals "don't make any jumps outside their safety net" and that a particular challenge for the Finnish mentality is to take full responsibility for one's own life.

The Finnish tendency to focus on the feared possibility of failure is also highlighted by the same informant's subsequent comment about what it is like to try out new ideas or try to develop new business ventures in Finland.

> B26: In Finland, when you tell your best friends that I have this idea, they very sincerely tell you, for your own best interest, ten reasons why it might fail. Just in the name of your interest they say, 'have you thought that someone else might have done it already?' or 'have you thought that this might be difficult to sell?' and so forth.

The next section looks at the future aspirations of professionals; it is in a way an extension of self-presentation as entrepreneurial and adventurous, because typically the global professional does not make specific, long-term plans for future.

5.2.2 Spontaneity and not planning

There seems to be a general attitude among the global professionals of "going with the flow" and being flexible, without the need for safety and permanence that was perhaps more common before in the era of the industrial corporation and life-long careers with the same employer. The global professional typically does not have specific, long-term future plans and they are willing

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to stay open to how things turn out (Nowicka 2007). This concerns both work (career) and the place they live. Many stressed that they don't like or feel the need to make long term-plans.

> B26: We have always made life's big decisions almost spontaneously and we are… If I dare evaluate myself, our tolerance for, both me and [my wife's] tolerance for uncertainty in the future is quite a lot higher than most of our Finnish friends'. Which means that we tend to make pretty big decisions at pretty short notice.

This attitude of not making plans is perhaps a reflection of the nature of work, and life in general, today. It may not be sensible to make plans, since circumstances can change quickly and unexpected things occur. There is a positive aspect to this in terms of taking things as they come, and it also involves and requires a certain confidence in oneself and the future. There is also a desire for regular change or evolution in life, but not in the sense of climbing the career-ladder as it was understood in the industrial economy. Future aspirations are considered more holistically, and life/career paths are varied rather than straightforward: indeed, although the global professional is highly work-oriented, s/he also puts great store on other things in life, and values are balanced between work and private life. Many stress that the reasons for going to Silicon Valley were obviously work-related, but other things, such as the general quality of life, personal and family interests were also important.

> CK: Well, could you imagine staying **here** permanently?
> B33: We have purposely **not decided** anything about the future. At this point it [staying] doesn't seem possible, we are here visiting. But at the same time realistically, you never know what the future brings. So the purpose is to be here as long as it feels good.

Not feeling the need to make specific plans may reflect the greater freedom and choice that highly skilled professionals are assumed have today. There seem to be more opportunities regarding both career mobility and geographical mobility, and it is possible to keep one's long-term options open. Lives are often not tied to specific employers or locations anymore, and there is the freedom to consider where one and one's family wants to live, taking into account various aspects, not only work. Although it is still the most typical thing for most people, settling down in one place is not the only available possibility. There may be more freedom to choose a location, and to change locations according to shifting personal interests, career aspirations or life stages. This brings a lot of uncertainty that the global professional, however, does not seem to mind. Nonetheless, this increased freedom does not mean complete freedom, and it may be to some extent be a “forced freedom” due to the much more volatile nature of work and economic life today, in which careers with the same employer are disappearing.

Where is the anchor for identity and important life decisions then, if not in work or the home country? Since work spans across places and the traditional career path is disappearing, other things become relevant as bases of identity, such as personal relations, spouses, children, and other interests outside work. In the following quotation the informant ponders which elements count in the decision over where to be located/based in the future.

> B22: Maybe the social [private] aspects of your life are the anchor then. So, okay if you have kids then many times they rule, you want to keep them in one school. But I have not decided at all yet. I like the area [Silicon Valley] tremendously. To live here, it is… like three hours you can go skiing or if you fly it’s one hour to [Lake] Tahoe. Or you have the ocean. The summer and the ocean.

This is not to say that work is no longer a significant source of identity: just that it is no longer the only or even the most important basis. Since situations related to work are more uncertain than they used to be, other sources are also needed. A consequence of this is that there seems to be more choice concerning the basis of personal identity: it may not be based only on work or place, or it may not be based on these at all, it is not exclusively tied to these aspects of life. As Nowicka’s (2007) study showed, even something like the home, which is typically considered a more stable part of everyday life can be mobile, so long as the key elements for personal identity, such as close family members and certain physical objects (such as photos) travel with you. The global professional may be freer to choose where to locate his or her identity, both metaphorically and concretely. It can be highly work-related or highly place-based, but perhaps not both of these at the same time anymore.

Finally, one other aspect of the opportunity of choice and of not being tied to a single place is that it makes the professional flexible, and flexibility seems to be one of the most desired features in the global economy/job market. Professionals are to some extent also expected to be ready and willing to relocate globally. Considering the job market for highly skilled professionals, the world certainly seems to have lost its boundaries. The job market is not only local anymore, there is an unavoidable global dimension.

Yet there are subplots to the lives of the global professionals that do not fit easily into the imagery of the world as one place. Let us look now at the professionals as they identify themselves with pioneers.

5.2.3 Pioneers

> B22: I didn't have anything here, I practically left with a backpack and a flight ticket, without a single friend, or an acquaintance or business contacts here. So my network was completely built from scratch over the past three years --

If one thinks about the ideas of the collapse of distance and the world as one place, self-presentation as a pioneer or lonely soldier is one of the most counterintuitive storylines found in the data. When describing their move to Silicon Valley, some informants characterized themselves as pioneers or something similar, telling the story of how they left Finland alone and went out into the unknown, with practically no or very few material belongings, and how they arrived in California with only a backpack, or a suitcase. This story emphasizes the romantic nature of the relocation, as embarking on a new, exciting, but largely unknown endeavor.

> A3: I went to establish [The Firm's] office in Silicon Valley. [The Firm] didn't have any operations there then. We had the financing then and I went there a bit like a lonely soldier. We landed the last week of May in 1998.[8]

The following quote further highlights the romantic nature of relocation, characterizing the pioneer as someone going with just enough food to get by and something to protect themselves with (a machine gun, no less!) and describing Silicon Valley as a "wilderness".

[8] Curiously, this informant (A3) nevertheless told me that during the first months s/he was actually in Silicon Valley with two close people from Finland: his/her spouse and the founder of the firm whose Silicon Valley office the informant was to establish. All three, including the spouse, worked in the firm's Silicon Valley office for the first months they spent there.

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> A1: It was a little like pioneering work, you put crispbread and a machine gun in your backpack and go there to see what it's all about. I like it of course. To go to a thicket like that, it's really fun.

The metaphor of the adventurous, bold pioneer deserves further attention, because this narrative does not fit neatly with the image of the world as one place. It hints at a past era, in which pioneers were individuals who went to genuinely unknown places, and explored truly novel territory in a concrete sense. If the world has become one place and distance is dead, how can there be pioneers? What are we to make of the fact that the professionals use this metaphor when describing a move to Silicon Valley, which can hardly be justified as new, unexplored territory?

It is also worth considering the fact that this metaphor is used here in the context of Western, developed economies. It illustrates a relocation from one Western developed economy to another. In this case it is not a question of moving from a distant, less economically developed location to one that is more developed, or from a developed location to a less developed one – both scenarios in which the new location could understandably be seen as relatively unexplored. Silicon Valley is hardly an unexplored territory today. It is present in different ways in the lives of professionals working in the sectors of high technology and innovation. It is still, despite the emergence of many other dynamic locations, generally considered to be the most important place for cutting-edge technological know-how, innovation and entrepreneurship. Much of the relevant industry information comes from there, and many of the most important firms and actors are based there. Furthermore, despite using this metaphor, most of the informants actually knew someone in Silicon Valley before their move, and many had traveled there extensively and had done business or had some collaboration with people there before their actual relocation.

Perhaps the informants see themselves as pioneers because for their specific firm/organization Silicon Valley was largely uncharted territory. They were the first from their organization to establish a presence there. Moreover, they did not have anything ready-made there, but had to restart their life in a way: find a home, rent an office, get a phone number and a car, a local social security number, etc. It is common to mention that "I only had a suitcase". This initial lack of material possessions emphasizes the pioneering nature of the move, the building of everything from scratch.

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This makes for an intriguing story. Yet this is not the whole story even for those that explicitly use the metaphor of the pioneer. As we have seen, almost everyone interviewed knew someone before they went, and all had some local connection in Silicon Valley, either a Finn or another local person. Some had hired a consulting firm (often a Finnish one located in Silicon Valley) to help with relocating. Perhaps, then, pioneering refers to the distance, the unknown, the work ahead in building new local connections, creating collaborations, finding customers and financiers. Considering these aspects, talking about pioneering is not that surprising. As Massey (2005, 4) has noted, even with global connectedness, we imagine and experience space as something to be "crossed and conquered… an expense we travel across" and continue to tell stories as voyages of discovery.

Yet in the data there is also a contrasting story to the pioneer narrative: that everything was ready. Those informants who relocated to Silicon Valley while working for a multinational company in particular tell this story. Typically, multinational firms provide relocation services that help with all the practical aspects of the move, finding housing, paperwork and bureaucracy, getting a phone number and offering local cultural training on how to operate in the Silicon Valley business culture. Nevertheless, this narrative, although possibly not as exciting, also highlights distance: moving one's home to another location and starting work in an environment different in many ways to that at home continues to be a significant change that requires adjustment and support on many levels.

Also, even with all the assistance provided by the employer as well as lack of apparent cultural differences or language barriers, highly skilled professionals often were surprised to encounter some difficulties nevertheless, for example, in getting certain local documents or credit cards in the U.S. without prior credit history (Beaverstock 2005).

5.2.4 *Mediators: Being in-between*

> B16: So basically my role has been, I've tried to work as a mediator between different cultures. And I mean also in the professional sense, trying to understand journalistic culture, understand the world of research, understand the academic world, understand the PR world, the perspective of businesses. And also the perspective of public policy and that profession and how all these different professions can be in interaction…

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After arriving in Silicon Valley, the informants typically found themselves in the role of mediator between colleagues, collaborators or customers in Silicon Valley and Finland. Living – or having lived – in Silicon Valley, and having an intimate knowledge of the culture and ways of operating there seems to place them naturally in this position. A mediator has a deep understanding of both localities (Saxenian 2006). Usually s/he is someone who has met all the people involved in a collaborative or other type of project, and knows them personally. S/he thus knows the most fruitful ways to interact with them. The mediator has access to both localities and to the people in both localities. As noted in earlier studies (Beaverstock 2005), also from the employer's perspective the very purpose might be to send employees to another country to acquire the cultural and other skills to act as mediators besides transferring specific skills and knowledge.

There is also a downside to being a mediator, that of being in between two places and business cultures. While being a mediator is positive, being in between highlights the personally demanding, sometimes lonely and even draining aspects of being located in one place whilst coming from another, and working in one place whilst collaborating with people in a distant location. The informants describe situations in which, despite the common language, English, they very concretely have to "translate" to colleagues in Finland what potential customers or collaborators in Silicon Valley want – and the other way around. This is not always easy. They talk about how it is sometimes difficult to convince the people located in Finland why a specific course of action is desirable or necessary from the perspective of those operating in Silicon Valley. For instance, according to the informants' accounts, the pace of doing business, working and innovating is faster in Silicon Valley, and there are challenges to be faced in "activating" the people in Finland to keep up as needed.

Sometimes the in between person even faces suspicion from the parties involved: even if officially a part of one of the groups, s/he is not a full member of either. For instance, some informants mention that after having lived in Silicon Valley and having become skilled in operating in that environment, they return to Finland or collaborate with Finns in Finland, and receive comments such as "you have become like an American", which in this context is ambiguous, implying that the Finn has become "the other", more like a stranger, and thus not as trustworthy or worth listening to as a "normal" Finn – although they are still considered to be more trustworthy than a true "foreigner". As mentioned earlier, being "different", for instance, more talkative or self-confident, is not often considered a positive thing in Finland.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Pioneers and mediators

Let us consider further the above discussion of the self-presentation and identity of the global professionals in light of the overall topic of the present research, that is, the meaning of local place and distance. Why is looking at these individuals – their self-presentation as atypical Finns or pioneers, their avoidance of making specific future plans, and descriptions of being in the position of mediator – important for understanding the meaning of place and distance globally? What can we learn about the meaning of local place and distance by looking at these professionals?

First, the finding that Finns spontaneously present themselves as atypical with reference to their national stereotype implies that where you come from still matters a great deal for personal identity. Although no one has explicitly said that national culture and identity do not matter, they are conspicuous by their absence from discussions of the meaning of local place and distance. The observation that the latter continue to be relevant in the global era means that identities based on national culture and/or local place need to be integrated into theories and conceptualizations concerning global interaction. However, it seems that old understandings of identity cannot be imported as they stand, and more work is needed to capture what exactly the role of the home country or location is in the global world. In short, it is clear that it has a role, but it is also clear that there are fundamental changes that have presumably altered it (the meaning of where one comes from is different) from what it was in the era of the nation state.

Second, by talking about themselves as pioneers, the global professionals emphasize the remoteness and unknown aspects of distant places. Distant places are in many ways virtually accessible today (through local news, information) and by travel. There is also clearly more connectedness (made possible by virtual communication, the Internet) between distant places than ever before. However, they are not by any means fully accessible: this is highlighted in the metaphor of the pioneer, who is someone who goes to conquer new, unknown places.

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According to the Encarta World English Dictionary, a pioneer is

1) “a person or group that is the first to do something or that is a forerunner in creating or developing something new”;

2) “somebody who goes into previously uncharted or unclaimed territory with the purpose of exploring it and possibly colonizing or settling it”;

3) “a foot soldier whose duties include going ahead of the main company to pave the way for them by building roads, ditches, bridges, and other constructions”;

4) “the first species of plant or animal life to begin living in a previously unoccupied site, for example, a moss beginning to grow on otherwise bare rock”.

The metaphor of the pioneer draws attention to what is *not* accessible from a distance. Despite all the local information one can access on the Internet while physically far away, and all the possibilities of interacting with people in other localities, there are significant amounts of relevant knowledge that cannot be obtained in these manners. Without actually going to Silicon Valley, one can certainly imagine and have a rather accurate idea of what it is like there, but will still be surprised by many things on arrival. Interestingly, even informants who had visited Silicon Valley before their relocation, or who had meetings at firms there and had met potential customers and collaborators, used the metaphor of a pioneer when talking about their relocation. This reminds us that one cannot really know a place before living or spending a fair amount of time there, and that many aspects of a locality remain distant even to those who visit.

Perhaps, then, the most important insight to be drawn here is that despite all the access to virtual communication and the global connectedness between places, some things have remained the same. The metaphor of the pioneer is still accurate in describing some essential aspects of the relocation of Finnish professionals to Silicon Valley, in particular when they go there to establish the first office of a firm, or go in search of collaboration or partnership opportunities which they have not had there before. Although Silicon Valley has become more accessible from a distance with virtual communication and travel, distance still matters and it is still a significant event both personally and at the level of the firm to move there from Finland. Indeed, on a more personal level many of the informants describe moving to Silicon Valley as a “big thing”, even when they also said at other times that it was not a difficult decision.

(There is an apparent paradox here in that the informants say, on the one hand, that the decision to leave was spontaneous, or that moving to Silicon Valley is not much different to

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moving from one town to another in Finland, yet on the other imply or say elsewhere in the interview that it was a major event in their life. So, basically they say that it is both a big event and an insignificant one. I think this has to do with the increased global connectedness that the current literature all too often seems to confuse with the decreased meaning of distance. This literature seems to focus only, or mainly, on change, and forgets to pay attention to what has stayed the same. I believe that my data show that there is indeed increased connectedness between distant places: this is why moving to Silicon Valley may not seem so dramatic from a certain perspective. Global professionals do not have to leave places behind in the same ways as before, even when moving to a faraway location: they can always stay connected in many ways. Yet a faraway place is still just as far geographically, there is no escaping this fact. Even with the connectedness, there is the time difference, and people are mostly not awake at the same time. So, *more connectedness does not mean the death of distance.* Increased connectedness is real, but so is distance. I will discuss this further in the following chapters.)

Finally, the feeling of being in between described by the professionals further shows how real distance is and how different the localities under consideration are; there is distance both culturally and geographically. The position of mediator highlights how important physical presence is to avoid misunderstandings and capture more subtle messages, to understand in greater detail how things work locally. If locality or distance did not matter, mediators or "translators" between local cultures would not be needed.

Being a mediator or 'in between' can also be a fruitful position: these global professionals can act as connecting ties between Silicon Valley and Finland, much in the way Saxenian's (2006) New Argonauts did when they returned to develop business and innovation activities in their home countries while at the same time maintaining business ties in Silicon Valley. These are people intimately familiar with both locations and their ways of operating. They are connecting ties between two localities, and have access to both; thus many local actors in Finland or Silicon Valley may need or be dependent on their in-depth knowledge for crossing the distance in business culture.

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5.3.2 *Conclusions on identities*

In the interviews, three categories of people, defined in relation to place, can be distinguished:

- Finns in general (or stereotypical Finns)
- Finns in Silicon Valley
- Non-Finns in Silicon Valley

When the informants talk about Finns in general, the popular stereotype is strong. Finns in general are shy, timid, secretive in their innovation process, bad at marketing and networking, honest, reliable, and have a good reputation which helps, for example, when house-hunting in Silicon Valley. The technological skills and knowledge of Finnish engineers are of a high level, although some say that it is not as high as Finns themselves like to think, whereas other informants say that their skills are just as high as those educated at top U.S. universities: the Finns have “nothing to be ashamed of” (this exact phrase was used more than once, and perhaps says something else about the Finnish mentality). Yet even if skills levels are generally high, problems nevertheless emerge when it comes to marketing and networking; aspects that are crucial in obtaining venture capital and building a commercial success.

(It is not easy to conclude whether Finns are open to outside ideas or not. In some ways they are, their willingness to try new things is relatively high. But Finns do not like to be told what to do: they like to discover new things for themselves and then decide whether to adopt them or not.)

The portrait of the informants themselves is partly different from the Finnish stereotype. Many informants distance themselves from the stereotypical Finn in at least some respects. The most common differences they highlight are talkativeness or openness and risk-taking. Some say they were always “too talkative for Finland” and clearly less socially introverted than the average Finn. Others say that they are typical Finns in that they are relatively shy and timid (at least in the context of Silicon Valley), but atypical in that their willingness to take risks is clearly higher than the average.

Many informants also mentioned that they value personal initiative and responsibility more than is generally found in the Finnish welfare society. They talk about the sense of community and the voluntary community activities they experienced in Finland: paradoxically,

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a weaker public welfare system seems to bring people together more than a strong one. They mention the isolation that sometimes follows in Finland, where the rule is that everyone should mind their own business and not meddle in the private affairs of others. In Finland, if someone is in trouble, responsibility lies with the public services or immediate family, not with neighbors or the community.

Finally, the Silicon Valley Finns also contrast themselves with other “locals” or professionals in Silicon Valley, or the Silicon Valley “natives” (although these would be challenging to define, since most of the people in Silicon Valley come from somewhere else, either in the US or the world). From the Finnish perspective, Silicon Valley people (or Americans in general) sometimes seem superficial and overly confident: again, the popular stereotype emerges. The “Americans” are confident and fluent speakers, and often exaggerate or make much bigger promises than what they can or will actually deliver. This sometimes bothers the “honest” Finns, who are very literal: one means exactly what one says. The informants say that it takes time to learn how to “read” the Americans and understand what can actually be expected from them. On one hand, the Silicon Valley Finns criticize the average Finns for being timid, awkward and inarticulate, on the other they criticize the Americans for being superficial and sometimes unreliable. They themselves seem to be located somewhere in between, adapting to both cultures. As seen above, they often truly are caught in the middle, as a local (Silicon Valley) contact person or representative for a Finnish firm or agency. Where this is the case, it can be frustrating to juggle between the two cultures, trying to get the parties on the same wavelength.

The Silicon Valley Finns also greatly appreciate some characteristics of the ‘locals’. They appreciate their sociability and openness: even if many of the Finns regard themselves as relatively shy compared to people in general in Silicon Valley, they enjoy the local atmosphere and the fact that it is so easy to get to know people there. Thus, even if they themselves do not take the initiative and talk to strangers as often as the locals, they like it when they do. They also appreciate the dynamism and fast-paced nature of the locals, and while some mention that it (the pace of Silicon Valley) can be exhausting, it is also energizing, and one gets sucked into it.

One of the things the Finns appreciate most – and many interviewees mentioned this explicitly and on their own initiative – is the encouraging atmosphere and mentality of the people in Silicon Valley. From the Finnish perspective, there is a lack of envy and jealousy: if

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someone succeeds, it is taken as a positive inspiration, not as something taken away from others. Many Finns mention how liberating it is when people in Silicon Valley say “good for you!” and mean it. This does not often happen in Finland, where one of the stereotypical negative national characteristics is envy. The Finnish mentality is seen as one where one wishes that a neighbor will not be successful, because it will make one look less successful in comparison.

The following figure illustrates the categorizations made by the informants. It attempts to capture how the degree of sociability, adventurousness, and risk-taking increases when one “moves away” from Finns in Finland (relatively low degree of sociability, risk-taking, etc.) towards Finns in Silicon Valley (higher degrees than Finns in Finland, but lower than people in general in Silicon Valley) and finally Silicon Valley in general, with the highest degrees of sociability, adventurousness and risk-taking.

DEGREES OF SOCIABILITY, ADVENTUROUSNESS AND RISK-TAKING

TIMID, RESERVED, RISK-AVERSE | OPEN,SOCIABLE,RISK-TAKERS

Finns in general | Finns in Silicon Valley | Silicon Valley in general

The main purpose of this chapter was to explore how personal motivations and identities are tied to a place and thus to address research question 1. In chapter 3 (section 3.8.) I asked if place matters to the informants personally and what place means to them. I also asked how place is related to their motivations and identities. As shown above, I found that place represents opportunities for new experiences and self-development, challenging oneself and breaking free from the familiar. The work-related motivations to move to another location are closely intertwined with personal motivations and it is not easy to tell which ones dominate. The relationship between place and identity is dynamic: places can represent opportunities for self-

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development and when changing locations, new identities emerge. The identities found here were the atypical (Finn), the pioneer and the mediator. Furthermore, the informants talked about themselves as people who do not tend to make very long-term plans.

Besides confirming some earlier empirical findings on motivations to relocate, such as Conradson and Latham's (2005b) research on global mobility as self-realization and the desire to see and experience new locations and cultures (Bozkurt 2006; Nowicka 2007; Conradson & Latham 2005b), this research advances the existing understanding in important ways. First, the present findings further stress the role of personal aspirations and motivations in the decision to relocate and indicate that it is useful to analytically separate the apparent activity and official reason to move (e.g. reassignment within the company or establishing a new office) from the individual motivations that are often much deeper and related to personal preferences and desires. Secondly, the research discovered particular kinds of identities related to locations – specifically, the identities of being different/atypical and a pioneer – that have not been explicitly documented thus far. Finally, this study highlights the dynamic, two-way relationship between personal expectations (what locations represent) and the new identities geographical mobility evokes (what moving and being in a new location does on a personal level). It thus both confirms the usefulness and contributes to Conradson and Latham's (2007) idea of the affective possibilities of places. The new identities would not emerge without the mobility (the actual move to another place), but the image or possibilities a location represents is crucial in the mobility to happen in the first place. (The inspirational aspect of being in a location, which is also closely related to the affective possibilities, is documented in chapter 7.)

These findings put the "death of distance" idea to test: the personal experiences of those who move are not grasped by this idea. Distance is in many ways a reality, even with increased connectedness between places. We have seen that identities are still related to locations, both the home country and the new destination. No matter how connected places are, the physical distances and characteristics tied to localities are essential to both the everyday experiences and the personal identities of the global professionals. This will be discussed further in the next chapter, which focuses on everyday work and the dynamics of local and global interaction.

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6 FINDINGS: The Dynamics of Everyday Work

This chapter explores the dynamics of locality and distance in the everyday work of the professionals studied. First, the essential elements of the professionals' work are discussed and an image of their ideal typical working day sketched. Then, access to information and knowledge are examined, because this is an essential part of work for people involved in innovation activities. Lastly, the professionals' views on whether they could do their work anywhere are considered.

One of the main findings of the chapter is that the everyday work is remarkably mobile and flexible, yet at the same time, according to the experiences of the professionals, strongly tied to locality. Locally, work can be (and is) done in various places: the office, at home, and in public places such as coffee shops or restaurants. Because of virtual communication and colleagues based in distant locations, work is also done at different times, including very late at night or early in the morning. Time differences, and the awareness of them, also structures work locally: a part of the day is spent mainly attending to local matters, while others are mainly dedicated to global interaction (e.g. video conferences or phone calls to distant localities). There are also struggles related to this: while the professionals can work practically anywhere - and at anytime - they are also often expected to do so. The working day is not a single, continuous section of their day, but is fragmented and penetrates places and hours that belonged to the private domain before the information age.

Furthermore, the professionals get the most important information for their work from two main sources: virtually (Internet and e-mail) and in face-to-face interactions with relevant people locally. The distinction between information and knowledge helps understand how easy or difficult these are to access. According to current understandings, information is easily codified and travels well across distances, while knowledge is locally "sticky" and shared mainly in face-to-face communication. However, the findings suggest that there are some types of information that could in principle be easily codified, but that nevertheless are not often shared across distance. The nature of social ties may play a role in this; close ties that include trust may be better suited for transmitting these types of information across distance. Finally, the professionals either think they need to be in Silicon Valley (they could not do their work in just

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any location) or they say that in principle they could, but that it is nevertheless better for them to be there.

6.1 **Everyday Work**

6.1.1 Elements of global work

In the present study, I use the term "global work" to denote the *contemporary work of highly skilled professionals, which spans the globe*. My assumption, based on the literature, was that global work is different to normal work, and that the nature of work has changed and is changing in a globalized economy. The exact question is just how is it different? The objective is to explore what global work is about today in more depth.

If we think about the characteristics that have altered today's world with respect to before the so-called information age, we can identify some features that are directly relevant to work. The broad definition for global work is that:

1) It utilizes information and communication technology, these are an essential part of its everyday activities and without these the work could not be done.

2) It is not limited to a specific locality in the sense that there is an element of being in contact with, or the direct relevance of what is happening in, another locality (or localities). In practice, this means having collaborators, colleagues or other relevant people who are not in the same place and who one is in regular contact with. It often, although not always, also means traveling for work.

The following analysis will look at the nature of global work more closely, and provide a more detailed image of its essential features.

In a nutshell, global work is about:

- Operating in different time zones simultaneously
- Operating in many (at least two) different localities; working with colleagues in distant localities

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- Operating in different languages
- Traveling frequently
- Using virtual communication as a crucial part of everyday work
- Dependent on access to virtual communication, carry mobile phones and laptops constantly
- Being available practically 24/7
- Interacting with people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- Being sensitive and adjusting to the specific rules and ways of operating in different places

Global work means that one must deal with multiple tasks in multiple places simultaneously. Traveling, being available and dealing with different people can be demanding. Freedom is relative: control is internal rather than external (as in the era of the hierarchical corporation). Working hours are long, and the worker has to be available almost around-the-clock. The global professionals seem to operate independently – no one immediate is breathing down their necks – but are constrained by time pressures and expectations of results. They *can* work anywhere and are not obliged to sit in the office every day, yet they are also often *obliged or expected to* work everywhere. Therefore, changing locations does not free them from their work.

6.1.2 Ideal typical working day

The typical workday of the global professional is structured according to several different time zones, not only local time. It starts in the morning, when the professional opens his/her e-mail, often even before drinking a cup of coffee. The global worker eats breakfast in front of the computer, answering the most urgent e-mails or attending to long distance phone or conference calls to places that are several time zones away. Some phone calls are particularly urgent, because the colleagues eight or ten time zones away are finishing their working days, and if the global worker is too slow, s/he will miss that colleague ten time zones away and will have to wait until the next morning to move the matter in question forward.

After a few hours of attending to urgent issues in distant places at the computer at home, the global professional shifts their attention to what is happening locally. S/he might take a closer look at the most recent news online; there was not much time to do this earlier in the morning. At this point, the global professional changes location and goes to the office, if there is one. If s/he has a home office, s/he might go to a coffee shop, with laptop and mobile phone, and work there for a few hours. If part of his/her work is contacting local collaborators or customers, the global professional will make contact with them by phone or e-mail. There may also be face-to-face meetings that take place at the customer's office or at the local coffee shop.

Lunch may be spent meeting local colleagues or contacts. It is also a good time for practicing sports – the local soccer club has lunchtime practice sessions several times a week.

In the afternoon, the global professional continues to attend to local matters, which means meeting people face-to-face and spending time on the phone and reading and writing e-mails. If the global professional's work is more independent, or if s/he is for example an academic researcher, they may go again to work at a coffee shop for a few hours, writing and reading relevant literature or local newspapers, while at the same time being connected to colleagues via e-mail and mobile phone, or instant messaging or Skype.

When dinnertime arrives, if the global professional has a family s/he returns home to eat with them. If not, s/he might dedicate an hour or two to hobbies or meeting friends. S/he often has work related events on weekday evenings, such as local networking events or dinners with collaborators or clients.

Later in the evening, when most people are already in bed sleeping, the last stretch of the workday starts for the global professional. This is the time when his/her colleagues several time zones away are starting their working days. The global professional may have a conference call scheduled at midnight, or if s/he is unlucky, at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, in which case s/he tries to get a few hours sleep beforehand. After all the nocturnal virtual meetings are complete and the most urgent matters have been attended to, the global worker goes to sleep. At this point, the time is anywhere between 11pm and 4am.

The following table identifies the main sections of the global professional's working day.

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Table 6.1. The main elements of the ideal typical working day of the global professional.

Section	Local time slot	Geographic emphasis	Work-private emphasis	Main interaction mode	Main activity
1	6am-10am	Global	Work	Virtual, Phone	E-mails, phone & conference calls to distant localities
2	10am-12am	Local	Work	Face-to-face meetings, phone e-mail	Local phone calls & meetings, Local news, information gathering, independent or team work
3	12am-6pm	Local	Work (also private)	Face-to-face meetings, phone, e-mail	As in the previous section Also: 1-2 hours for hobbies or taking care of private matters
4	6pm-10pm	Local	Private (also work)	Face-to-face meetings (also phone, e-mail)	Family, friends, hobbies Also: Work events, networking events, work dinners
5	10pm-(6am)	Global / Local (if not working)	Work/ Private	Virtual, Phone	Conference & phone calls to distant localities, e-mail (sleep)

This is an ideal typical working day, reconstructed according to the *essential elements found in the data in different people's accounts*. Most importantly, it captures the fundamental essence of the global professional's daily work routine. The time slots are indicative rather than absolute; the "work-private emphasis" column describes the *main function* of that particular section of the working day. This may vary according to the person and the particular day, for instance, some people may be able to squeeze in a regular private task in the morning (sections 1 or 2), such as taking the children to school. The "main interaction mode" column describes the *primary mode of keeping in contact* with colleagues or customers in that particular section of the day. In general, it may be said that phone and e-mail are used throughout the day, almost constantly, except when the global professional is sleeping. In a similar vein, the "main activity" column describes *where the emphasis is* in that section of the day; there is again variation according to the professional in question's actual job. An entrepreneur with a product to sell spends a lot of time on the phone and meeting (potential) clients face-to-face, whereas a researcher who is a

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part of a team does not spend the "local" part of the workday on the phone, but in doing the actual research either independently or with local colleagues.

It is important to note that the general dynamic of shifting the emphasis between local and global connectedness that the table aims to illustrate was generally shared among the global professionals. Thus, the aim of the table is to highlight how these professionals, regardless of e.g. their particular profession, are *present both locally and globally* (virtually) during their typical day and how the local-global emphasis varies according to time zones. During local business hours, face-to-face meetings are held and local events are attended whereas when the working day starts at a different time zone (e.g. in Finland), the attention – and the concrete activity – shifts to virtual interaction with distant colleagues. Thus, this general dynamic applied to all of them, although the exact hours or time slots or the specific daily rhythm may vary according to people and their particular job demands.

Most importantly, this ideal typical working day illustrates the *changes* that are involved in global work and what they mean in practice.

Perhaps the most notable change is the powerful penetration of information and communication technologies, and the scattering of colleagues in different localities. In the following quote the informant, who works for a Finnish multinational in Silicon Valley, describes how a part of the work team is scattered across different places.

> B19: So me for example, my boss is now, when I joined [Division X], my boss was, I was under the same roof with my boss for a year and a half, which was exceptional. And last year he moved, my boss is in Finland again and I'm the boss of a person who lives in Michigan.
> CK: Okay, so your boss is Finnish?
> B19: Yeah, a Finn who lives in Finland.
> CK: Okay, and then you are overseeing someone, a Finn who…?
> B19: No, that person is local [US].
> CK: Okay, so you are the boss of a local person who is in Michigan.
> B19: Yes.

This was very common throughout the data, indeed it seemed to be such an ordinary part of the work that the informants did not in any way emphasize it; the scattering of colleagues only came up as a matter of fact, while talking about other things. In general, it is quite typical that some of

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a worker's closest colleagues, or indeed the boss, are located on another continent. Regular contact is maintained via e-mail and phone.

> B30: My boss [John] is the one I'm most in contact with.
> CK: In what way..?
> B30: E-mail or Skype. We have a kind of a relaxed relationship in that there is really no stiffness at all. But then again you have to keep it in check, if you see that in Finland it's not the office hour, you don't contact them with Skype. But then I do it a lot myself that in the evening, when it's ten in the evening here it's eight in the morning in Finland. And [John] comes to work around eight nine. So sometimes it's like, I have sent [John] an e-mail before and then [John] replies in the morning [Finnish time]. And then I see that [John] is online on Skype. So then if I have something more to discuss about it we might continue on Skype.

Furthermore, it is immediately obvious that time difference is the main structuring element of the day of the global professional, who travels virtually across various time zones during the day, even while remaining in the same physical locality (in one time zone) the whole time. The global professional commonly works with people who are several time zones away, which means that there are often no shared business hours[9]. This requires an exceptional amount of awareness and sensitivity not only to what is happening in the local, immediate environment at any particular moment, but also to what is happening in another relevant location, from what time it is there to what colleagues there are working on.

Collaborating with people in different time zones relates to what is perhaps one of the most remarkable changes with respect to the industrial age: the fragmentation of the workday. The workday used to be continuous and basically uninterrupted, even for those working shifts. It began at a definite time and ended at a definite time, work formed a continuous section within a day. Following from this, private/leisure time also had its own section: indeed the work section lasted only about eight continuous hours, therefore a third of the 24-hour day. The rest of the time, two thirds of the day, was by definition private time dedicated to rest and recreation.

For the global highly skilled professional, meanwhile, the working day stretches out over 24 hours and is not limited to one 8-hour section of the day. Table 6.1 illustrates how work

[9] The time difference between Silicon Valley and New York is +3h, London +8h, Helsinki and Jerusalem +10h, Bangalore +14h, Singapore +16h.

actually penetrates the entire 24-hour day. There is no single section that remains completely dedicated to private time; in the past, this section used to be nighttime at the very least. Naturally, most nights (Section 5 in Table 6.1) remain work-free, but it is not uncommon for the global professional to have work-related phone or conference calls as late as midnight every week. And it seems to be very common for the global worker to have to make phone calls at 10pm or 11pm on a daily basis. So, the main change to note is that work has invaded these times of the day that used to be private. Similar observations have been made in passing in other empirical studies, but not reported in detail. For example, in Beaverstock's (2005) study on financial professionals working in New York City a daily routine of working 18-hour days to maintain real-time dialogue with Paris and London and to start the day when the Asian market closes and end it when the Asian market opens was mentioned.

In the following excerpt, the informant describes at length the struggles related to this kind of daily rhythm.

> CK: Okay so how was your typical workday in practice when you had your boss and colleagues in Finland? How were you in contact with them and-?
>
> B19: Well, e-mail quite a lot but then often… I'm, I'm not, I have a kind of a problem in that if I have to get up early in the morning I stress about it already in the evening and can't sleep very well. And I'm altogether more an evening person, so I phoned at eleven o'clock in the evening which is nine in the morning [in Finland]. I figured that if I call at nine then nobody could complain that it's too early and then people are anyway, they have their day ahead of them and maybe they still have the energy to listen to what I say. But if I called them at five pm [Finnish time], which would mean at seven [in the morning in Silicon Valley] I would already have to be awake enough to talk. So then people are already leaving the office.

The informant went on to describe how the work culture in Finland is much more of a nine-to-five culture as compared to Silicon Valley: people typically arrive at work at nine, and it is often socially acceptable to leave at five pm. This is especially true when one works for a large company. He makes this clear because colleagues located in Finland tend not to be very flexible when it comes to their working hours. This, in turn, means that Finns in Silicon Valley who have part of their work teams or some collaborators in Finland often have to participate in meetings at nighttime (local time) because meetings are held during Finnish business hours. This informant notes that if the majority of people involved in a meeting are located in Finland,

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then of course adjustments will not be made for just one person. He concludes that he himself nevertheless prefers, since this is the case, that virtual meetings be held in the morning in Finnish time, because he feels more alert and focused late in the evening local time as opposed to early in the morning.

The aspect worth noting here is that in this case, the distant colleagues and their hours dominate, perhaps because they outnumber the local (Silicon Valley) members of the team, or – more implicitly – because the company is Finnish and although multinational, operates largely according to Finnish work norms and culture. In this case, the choice for the employee located in Silicon Valley is mainly whether to hold meetings in the morning or in the evening according to *Finnish*, not local time: the relevant norms/rules of operation in this case are not local, although he naturally lives according to local time. This instance highlights the dynamics of the local and global in everyday work, and in particular how the distant time zone and distant colleagues and their working hours and culture (inflexibility) penetrates and very concretely influences the local working hours of the global professional. Furthermore, it influences where the professional works locally: if the meeting is held at 11 pm or at midnight local time, the professional is practically obliged to work at home (to participate in the meeting at home). Although the exact consequences of this mixture of work and private spaces and time lie mainly outside the scope of the present study, it is important to note how this takes place in practice.

It is also obvious that there is no such thing as the 40-hour working week for the global professional. Some informants mentioned that they try to take weekends off, or at least one day a week off. Some are always available by phone or e-mail. Being available almost 24/7, even if not directly working, is thus also a typical aspect of the global professional's work.

> B33: Hmm, the division between work and leisure is not clear in the sense that I'm online, phones and e-mails, you use them 24 hours [a day].
>
> B29: It is, although the work is basically easy, yeah, I'm pretty much available, like all the time.

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6.1.3 *Flexibility and mobility*

Contemporary highly skilled work is flexible in many ways. Often it is not strictly tied to any one place. Communication technology has made it possible for the professional to work from practically anywhere. Neither is it tied to certain hours: it is not nine-to-five work, there are no timecards and the global worker can often decide at what hour s/he starts work in the morning, when to take their lunch break and when to leave the office – if there is one.

Thus, global highly skilled work is flexible when it comes to the workplace: the workplace is not just the office, it can be home, a coffee shop, even the local park. Even where the workplace is the office, it need not be so in the traditional way. The office may be a garage (in the famous Silicon Valley style) or something equally modest. What seems to matter more today are other things, the things one has to sell or to say, the ideas one has. Everything happens much faster than before: if you have an innovative product or idea you start to sell it, no need or time for establishing offices.

We have also seen that work is flexible when it comes to the working day: you can go and play golf or football in the middle of the working day. You can go to work in the morning according to when there is less traffic, or to the children's school hours. You can spend a part of your working day at a coffee shop with your laptop.

Flexibility is also relevant when it comes to employers: they are changed more often, and even with the same employer projects may change often. Firms change their ownership and shape, they merge, are sold or bought, make acquisitions, grow fast, or have massive layoffs. In a similar vein, colleagues change according to projects, and can quickly become competitors or vice versa.

Today's global professional is more mobile in various senses. S/he moves during the workday, between all the places where s/he can and does work: home, employer's offices, and public places. Work is not limited to the workplace, and meetings can take place not only in the professional's or their collaborator's offices, but also at coffee shops or restaurants, or even on the golf course. The global professional also travels more between localities, often several thousand miles a year. And finally, s/he moves between projects and employers. Considered from this perspective, it is a nomadic life, as Beck (2000) has noted.

The flexibility of the worker is also a crucial part of today's highly skilled work. The global professional is expected to be available, and to work from anywhere. S/he is expected to adjust to situations that change quickly, and to work long hours. Perhaps most notably, s/he is expected to allow work to penetrate both places and hours that traditionally belong to the private domain: recreation, leisure and free time.

O'Riain (2000) reports how the knowledge workers he observed used physical distance in order to prevent work demands from completely dominating them. The Ireland-based software development team purposefully kept information from their boss who was located on the other side of the Atlantic in Silicon Valley: for instance, on one occasion they did not tell their boss that a product was ready before the deadline set, because this would only have meant more work demands. Thus, physical distance becomes one of the means, the terrain, where personal space is defended. Therefore the meaning of physical distance today is not only practical, it is also important in defending and fighting over other, more abstract spaces that have been invaded or threatened by today's style of working, where work has entered personal spaces and time.

Another point that follows from this is that defending personal space has become more the responsibility of the individual. Before, in traditional industrial economies, this responsibility was as much that of the employer as that of the employee. It is hard to imagine a 1970s manager being called to a work meeting at four o'clock in the morning unless there was an exceptional emergency – yet today it is common for global highly skilled professionals to sit in on video-conferences in the middle of the night. This may or may not make it feel less like work, less demanding that you can do it on your living room couch. In any event, there is not much choice. If one's collaborators or work team is scattered around the globe, it is always the middle of the night for someone.

On one hand global work is mobile, it is not tied to one place, and because of information and communication technologies it can often be carried out wherever there is Internet access. On the other hand, the meaning of place becomes emphasized in that when a person can in many respects work from anywhere, the awareness of what working in different places means increases. The very fact that where you work, the place, is not self-evident emphasizes its importance: before, there was no question of where one worked, now there is.

While there is also some degree of choice that did not always exist, there is also a flipside. Working from practically anywhere entails being unable to escape work, and one is often expected to work – or at least be available to work – from anywhere at any time.

Another way of looking at freedom in contemporary global highly skilled work is to consider what the empirical data tell us about what the professional is free from and what they are not free from. The global highly skilled professional is often free from the immediate physical presence of the boss/manager, immediate physical control, strict working hours, and the immediate surroundings of the workplace as well as being tied to a particular workplace. However, s/he is constrained by the hold that work has over their lives; work can reach him/her anywhere.

Finally, it is important to note that in general there is a highly positive feeling about work: the global professionals like what they do and consider it meaningful and fulfilling. There is also flexibility for one's personal needs and activities, and in general there is a sense of independence, of being your own boss. Therefore, although it is stressful and demanding, work is generally experienced very positively.

6.2 Accessing Information and Knowledge

6.2.1 Sources of information

The informants need various types of information for their work, and they derive the most important information from diverse sources. The types of information the professionals need depend on their specific field and position.

For an entrepreneur or small-business owner relevant information includes news about novel products in their market sector (and often in other sectors that do not seem relevant but may turn out to be). In a similar vein, an entrepreneur needs to know how successful their closest competitors and collaborators are. For a person working for a large global company, much relevant work-related information concerns the company itself and the different locations it operates in, including the company's other departments and what happens in them, local operations and events in different parts of the world, customers records in different localities, and how the board of directors define both short- and long-term goals. For a researcher or a scientist, the most important information concerns what others are doing: colleagues' research, and advances in science. For entrepreneurs, employees and scientists alike, direct information from the field can be crucial: this includes, for instance, how technologies are used and how their use is shaped by customers or end-users, what needs are not being met, etc.

Information about Finland is often relevant for the Finns in Silicon Valley. They may need to be updated on what is happening in the Finnish market and economy, and on how certain Finnish firms and actors are faring.

Furthermore, regardless of their actual content, it is important for the global professionals to pick up on weak signals, to understand what is relevant and what is not and sense the atmosphere of the market. This, as will be discussed in the next section, is perhaps more accurately labeled as knowledge instead of information.

As the types of information global professionals need are so diverse, there is no one source of information. Roughly speaking, there are two information sources, virtual and local/face-to-face. In other words, information is typically accessed either via the Internet or in conversations with people. Not surprisingly, probably the single most common source mentioned is the Internet and related virtual sources, such as Internet news services, newspapers' websites, and e-mail. Other virtual sources are mailing lists (especially for information on local events, talks, etc.) and possibly the company or university's Intranet. In addition, scientists and researchers use various databases to find specific information related to their research and field of expertise.

The local and face-to-face sources of information are colleagues, customers, and other people working in the same or related fields. These people meet at professional networking events, conferences and talks. They also meet informally at local restaurants, bars and during their leisure time, even in contexts that are clearly not work-related, such as church (perhaps not so common in Silicon Valley, but some do mention this) and at children's school events or hobbies. A few informants mention that sometimes they access crucial information simple by chatting with someone in the queue for the checkout at the supermarket.

It has also been reported in previous studies of highly skilled professionals that the sources of information are multiple, and local presence and global, real-time connectedness are equally crucial for accessing the most recent and relevant information. Thus, for keeping up with the latest developments, highly skilled professionals meet colleagues and competitors

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locally in specific meeting places, that may be restaurants, bars or sports clubs, depending on the local customs – lunchtime is a common occasion to network and share information locally (Beaverstock 2002). At the same time they maintain daily contact with key people across the globe. Furthermore, accessing informal information (rumors, gossip) is considered as important as more official news (Beaverstock 2002; 2005).

Let us look now at the distinction between knowledge and information. This distinction is relevant in this study because it captures the difference in how knowledge and information can be transferred, also including their transfer across distance.

6.2.2 Knowledge and information

Many contemporary authors have discussed different types of information and knowledge (Brown & Duguid 2000; Leamer & Storper 2001; Nonaka 1994). Although exact conceptualizations vary, the distinction is useful, because it illustrates how easy or difficult information and knowledge are to share, and in particular how they travel across distance.

In distinguishing between information and knowledge, perhaps the most fundamental difference is codification. Basically, information is codified while knowledge is only partly codifiable, since it includes some elements that are difficult to capture. Codification, in turn, plays a role in how easy it is to share knowledge or information.

Other expressions that are more or less synonymously used for information are *explicit information* and *codified information*. Even the terms *explicit knowledge* and *codified knowledge* are in fact closer in meaning to information, as I maintain that one of the essential differences between information and knowledge is codification. The expression most often used as a synonym for knowledge is *tacit knowledge*: here I will simply use the term knowledge, because knowledge by definition includes the tacit dimension – this is what distinguishes it from information.

It is widely agreed that knowledge has characteristics that make it hard to transmit across distances. Indeed, knowledge is largely local, context-specific, and hard to detach from the person who who holds it. It is possible to ask someone to send you a piece of information, but it would be difficult to send the knowledge someone possesses (Brown & Duguid 2000). At a

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fundamental level, having tacit knowledge often means knowing more than you can say. "'Tacit' knowledge has a personal quality, which makes it hard to formalize and communicate. Tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in action, commitment, and involvement in a specific context" (Nonaka 1994). Often, those who have knowledge cannot fully articulate it or express exactly what they know; yet they can do those things for which the knowledge is required.

Furthermore, knowledge is typically shared in face-to-face interaction, usually over time and between people who have developed a relationship of mutual trust and common understandings. It is widely accepted that knowledge is "sticky": it resides in people and places. There is also an essential element of action in knowledge; it is tied to doing things.

Conversely, information is understood to be explicit and simple to codify, and because of this it is believed to travel well across distance. According to Nonaka (1994), "explicit, or codified knowledge refers to knowledge that is transmittable in formal, systematic language." Nonaka uses the term "explicit knowledge" to refer to what I understand here as information. Therefore, to access information, mastering the relevant symbol system is the only requisite – information is relatively independent in nature, and does not rely on further sense-making. "Codifiable information has a stable meaning which is associated in a determinate way with the symbol system in which it is expressed, whether it be linguistic, mathematical, or visual." (Leamer & Storper 2001).

The most common words used to describe information and knowledge "traveling" between people are transmission, transfer, sharing, and exchange. For the present purpose I use all these terms interchangeably. However, it is useful to bear in mind that *transfer* and *transmission* have a more passive, one-way, technical, and impersonal tone, while *exchange* and *sharing* are more active, reciprocal activities that imply that there are two parties involved in the exchange/sharing, and perhaps even that the content, that is what is being shared, is not completely independent of the people doing the sharing. Some of the main differences between information and knowledge are summarized in table 6.2.

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Table 6.2. Characteristics of information and knowledge.

	INFORMATION	KNOWLEDGE
Other terms used	Explicit information, codified information, explicit knowledge, codified knowledge	Tacit knowledge
Main characteristics	Codified	Difficult/impossible to codify fully
	Explicit	Tacit
	Independent, self-explanatory	Hard to detach from people and places
	Travels across distance	Sticky, does not travel easily
	Stable meaning	Context-specific (non-fixed) meaning
	Understanding the relevant code system (e.g. language, mathematics) is sufficient to receive it	Requires trust, shared understandings, sense-making, social interaction
Examples (tentative)	Train timetables, job announcements, minutes of meetings, textbooks, company structures, local news	How to start a company, how to develop a software application, how to design a political science course, who to contact with a specific industry-related question, how to fix a photocopier

A point worthy of note here is that information forms an essential part of knowledge. Nonaka (1994) maintains that "Information is a necessary medium or material for initiating and formalizing knowledge." Implicit to this is the idea is that over time, knowledge (at least certain kinds of knowledge) becomes more codified and starts to resemble information. The process is circular, because codified information is also one of the building blocks of knowledge in the first place. "Information is a flow of messages, while knowledge is created and organized by the very flow of information, anchored on the commitment and beliefs of its holder" (Ibid.)

Local, tacit knowledge includes know-how, skills and practices, but also information codified in textbooks, newspapers, and the like. Alone, as such, codified information is "mere" information, but combined with more tacit elements and activity, it becomes knowledge. Information, therefore, is a necessary part of knowledge, but alone is not enough. Nonaka (Ibid.) posits that there is a "continual dialogue between explicit and tacit knowledge which drives the creation of new ideas and concepts." Both information and knowledge are therefore crucial for innovation.

6.2.3 Information that does not travel

Let us now turn to the empirical data. One of the questions in the data analysis concerns how and where the global professionals obtain the most important information regarding their work. Another central question is the meaning of local place; the question of (why) is it important to be in a particular place? This analysis forms the basis for further theorization on how and what kinds of information and knowledge travel across distance.

To begin with, and in line with the literature, the empirical findings show that certain kinds of easily codified information do travel across distance, or can easily be accessed virtually. For this kind of information, location is not crucial: the information is available on the Internet, or easily accessed via e-mail or phone. Secondly, also in line with existing literature, knowledge, that is the kind of tacit, context-specific, non-codifiable know-how that is necessary for innovation, does not travel easily. As found in previous studies, a shared context, repeated face-to-face interaction, trust, and common understandings are needed for accessing and acquiring knowledge.

Another more curious finding, however, is that there seem to be certain kinds of information that could *in principle* easily be codified and transferred across distance but that for some reason do not travel well. There is nothing in the nature of the information as such that would make it difficult to codify and send in an e-mail or share on the phone. It is not highly specified knowledge nor technical information that would require extensive background or previous knowledge or expertise; nor is it clearly tied to people and places in the sense that only locals would understand it or only face-to-face interaction (where there are visual cues, not only words, present) could convey it. It is indeed local knowledge in the sense that in the first instance it may only be observed and accessed locally. Yet it is also easily codifiable, and thus in theory could be passed on in a straightforward manner virtually, by phone or e-mail.

More specifically, types of information that do not seem to travel easily, even if in theory simple to codify, that emerged in the research are information on *what is relevant* and *unofficial* information.

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> A6: And of course afterwards we have discovered that it is clear that nowadays you get all the information on the Internet immediately so that is not the issue. But then whether something is important or not important. The feeling on that you just can't get only by reading on the Internet. You just sort of sense it when you are there in the locality.

Here the informant describes the difficulty of making sense of what is relevant and what is noise and argues that in order to be able to do this effectively *one has to be in the locality*. This is in line with existing understandings of knowledge: it is local and tacit. However, if we further consider this type of information, we see that the information as such is not complex; once it is observed, it is not particularly challenging to codify and say, for instance, that "here everyone believes that mobile phone games are the next big thing and everyone is working on them" or that "people (here) say that Conference X will be much more useful than Seminar Y". So, instead of the informant having to be there him or herself, someone local they know could in theory pass on that information. Yet the informant maintains that a physical presence is necessary.

In the following quotation, the informant answers my question of whether s/he would get all the same information s/he gets when in Silicon Valley, if s/he were in Finland and had access to the Internet.

> B18: I would, yeah yeah. But here **in addition to that** I can participate in various events. And then comes the, like the unofficial information that does not travel electronically. Now, about three weeks ago we had a beer bash, we just invited all the people we know in this quite modest pub to drink beer together. And it was really fun. You always hear something then. And you see from the behavior of people how they are doing and what's in right now and what's out. And so on. But quite a lot does happen electronically.

The informant maintains that although a lot of information is easily accessible on the Internet, there is also unofficial information that one can only access locally on a face-to-face basis. Again, the information is not particularly complex as such (how people are doing, what is in and what is out): yet there seems to be something in its nature that makes it difficult to access from a distance. Even if in principle it could be mentioned in an e-mail, or by a local colleague ("I was at this beer bash yesterday and heard that the lead engineer in Company X is going to quit"), for some reason this does not seem to happen.

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These empirical observations raise further questions about the nature of information that travels and about the ways of transmitting different kinds of information. If information transfer across distance is not always directly, or uniquely, dependent on the nature of the information itself (codifiable, non-codifiable), then there is some other factor that also matters. Under what circumstances does the sort of information which is normally only shared in face-to-face meetings or locally travel?

Distance and trust

Trust may be one of the factors that facilitates information sharing, including sharing across distance. According to many accounts, however, trust and proximity (the opposite of distance) seem to go hand in hand. Trust relationships are close relationships, with closeness referring not only to emotional aspects but often to physical proximity as well.

Trust – or trust building – may indeed be one of the more implicit reasons for why companies continue to appoint their employees to work in distant locations and why travel between a multinational company's different sites is still common (Beaverstock 2005; Bozkurt 2006). As documented in Beaverstock's (2005) study, from the British employer's perspective it was important to have someone with deep knowledge and understanding of both local markets (London and New York) and the British managers were trusted to handle the overseas operations (as opposed to someone local in New York City). So, from the part of the employer, it was necessary to have someone they already trusted to be the contact person in a distant location. Visits between a company's different local sites has also been reported as important to ensure that people in distant sites get to know and trust each other (Beaverstock 2005; Bozkurt 2006).

Indeed, trust seems notoriously difficult to build in any other way than through face-to-face meetings. Leamer and Storper (2001) argue that face-to-face contact leads to trust that, in turn, leads to tacit knowledge transfer. These authors refer to "complex uncodifiable messages" which can be understood as tacit knowledge. They maintain that "many messages can be communicated effectively if the parties 'know' each other." This clearly refers to close ties. Leamer and Storper (Ibid.) further note that "it is the complex, context-dependent messages that require the greatest investments in relationships"

Therefore, trust relationships make more complex, tacit information/knowledge sharing possible. And proximity makes trust possible. However, it could be assumed that once trust is created (face-to-face), the relationship is also maintained across distance.

In effect, the relationship between distance and trust seems to be a two-way one. If face-to-face interactions are crucial for creating trust, distance is an obstacle to creating trust. Therefore it may be hypothesized that distance weakens trust.

However, once trust is created in face-to-face situations, more frequent and emotionally involved contact is normally maintained, even across distance. More time and energy is invested in trust relationships than arms-length ties (which are more for utility maximizing). That is, once you “know” a person, the trust relationship can and often will be sustained even across distance. There is an emotional element that makes the relationship and the contact a reward as such: the tie is not only maintained for “selfish” purposes, that is not only because it might be useful. Therefore: trust weakens distance.

This means that where there is trust, there is more frequent contact across distance, and more diverse types of information will be shared. Perhaps in close, trust-based relationships people talk more on the phone, for a relatively long periods of time, and on more diverse subjects. The same could be assumed for e-mails: more frequent contact, and a lower threshold to mention random or more sensitive things.

Some research findings support this. Uzzi (1997) discovered that the strength of the social tie does indeed play a role in what kind of information is shared and what is not. His study explored the ties between entrepreneurs in the fashion industry. According to his findings, in weak ties (with low trust), information exchange was limited to simple price and quantity data. Conversely, in close (strong) ties with high trust, the information exchange was more proprietary and tacit: “Relative to price data, fine-grained information transfer is not only more detailed and tacit but has a holistic rather than divisible structure that is difficult to communicate through market ties.” (Uzzi 1997, 45).

Furthermore, Uzzi (Ibid.) suggests that the *nature of communication* in strong ties is different, and facilitates more tacit information sharing. Because of the closeness and shared understandings involved in strong ties, more things can be communicated with no additional effort to that taken to exchange simple information in weak ties.

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Uzzi's empirical research was limited to entrepreneurs in the same locality, and thus we may only speculate about whether the kind of information exchanges he found in strong ties would occur across distance. Yet there is no apparent reason to believe it would not: although tacit information sharing is clearly more difficult across distance, strong ties that include trust and shared understandings are nevertheless better suited to allow this than weak ties are.

To sum up, trust seems important for certain kinds of information and knowledge. Strong or close ties include trust by definition. Thus we can tentatively conclude that while locally weak ties are useful for accessing knowledge and gaining deeper understandings, it could be assumed that strong ties are important for information/knowledge transfer across distance. They may make the sharing of certain types of information or knowledge that would otherwise be difficult to share over great distances possible.

Next, the meaning of locality and distance are considered from the perspective of whether the professionals think they could do their work anywhere.

6.3 Could You Do This Work Anywhere?

One of the specific themes discussed in the interviews was whether the informants could do their current jobs somewhere else than in Silicon Valley. The exact question asked was as follows: "Could you work from somewhere else or do you have to be here in order to do the work that you are doing now?"

In general, the various considerations related to this topic can be divided into two broad categories. The first category is "Yes, but…" and the second is "No, because…". Interestingly, there was no simple "Yes" category at all, in the sense of the straightforward answer of "Yes, I could work from anywhere". This is counterintuitive to the idea of global, highly skilled knowledge work not being tied to place. In the following I will describe the two categories further.

6.3.1 "Yes, but…"

The "Yes, but.." category consists of answers in which the informants typically say that they could work anywhere *at first*. They say that there is no need to be in Silicon Valley as such to

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complete their work, but then continue (as everyone answering yes inevitably did) to describe reasons why working somewhere else would nevertheless be problematic, difficult, impossible or generally not a good idea.

Many informants, for example software developers, do everyday work that could be located anywhere there is a computer with the necessary software and virtual connectivity. The nature of their work does not require a specific location, and in itself is not tied to any particular place. Besides computers, no other machinery is needed, at least for their everyday work, nor any other physical resources that might only be available in a particular place. The work ostensibly consists of the person (software developer or similar) sitting at a computer (or a laptop) and occasionally talking on the (mobile) phone.

To some extent this also applies to different types of work, such as sales, where this is mostly done by e-mail or phone, and indeed customer support in the case of business-to-business firms is similar in that it is predominantly done by phone. (Yet many mention, that even if where the customer support centre is located is of no importance in principle, the customers themselves, who for most of my informants are located in Silicon Valley or elsewhere in North America, are unsure what to do if there is no local [US] phone number to call. Or perhaps worse, in the case of e-mail support, but the helpdesk is located in Finland with its 10-hour time difference and the e-mail is not answered within an hour – one informant described how customers "go crazy" if they have an emergency and have to wait until the next day until they get a reply.)

The "yes, but.." answer thus means that in principle the work could be done from anywhere, and occasionally, for example, when the professional is traveling, it is done from anywhere. But in practice, one has to be, or it is better to be, located in Silicon Valley for several reasons. One of the most persistent is that most professionals, no matter what their specific job description, need to interact with various people in the contexts of their daily work. And by interacting, in this case, they mean meeting face-to-face.

The reasons for the importance of face-to-face contact are numerous: it is simply faster when one can go to the next cubicle to talk about an urgent issue or resolve a problem over a lunch meeting. Many informants emphasize that while they could work from anywhere, if they were in a distant location everything would take much more time. Things would not move forward, problems would not be solved and information could not be accessed as quickly.

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Everything would progress much more slowly. In short, they could not work *as efficiently* as they can by being in Silicon Valley. There also seems to be a more implicit motivational factor related to this: the professionals say that it would be odd or start to feel strange in the long run to be isolated from colleagues. (The motivational and inspirational aspect of being in a certain location is discussed in Chapter 7.)

Some informants also say that yes, they could work somewhere else, but not just anywhere. Even in this case Silicon Valley seems to be the relevant reference point, not, for example, Finland. Places that are a short flight away from Silicon Valley, such as San Diego or Seattle, could be possible, but not Finland, because "if it is 5000 miles, it just doesn't work".

One informant, an independent entrepreneur and software programmer, takes a more critical stance and notes that Silicon Valley is "not the only place in the world": this informant maintains that the reasons for being located there are not primarily business reasons but lifestyle reasons. S/he says that they are in Silicon Valley because the whole family wants to be there, and that if you are an entrepreneur, you should be able to be one no matter where you are located. Yet elsewhere in the interview this informant also talks at length about the positive aspects of the entrepreneurial climate in Silicon Valley as opposed to Finland. This supports the findings on personal motivations and identities discussed in Chapter 5, and shows how deeply these are intertwined with work-related reasons for choosing a locality.

6.3.2 "No, because…"

The "no, because" category includes answers that describe the reasons why it would be difficult or impossible to work from somewhere else at length. The reasons are partly, of course, similar to those discussed above, detailing why it would be challenging, even though the work itself does not pose any major obstacles. The informants say they could not be located anywhere other than Silicon Valley because the latter is the global center of technological development, and if you want to be where the most important things happen, you have to be there. Comments such as "Silicon Valley is not Silicon Valley by accident", and "Silicon Valley is at the top of a very short list of places" are common. The most important market is there and it is "a good concentration of people who know everyone else". Although competition in Silicon Valley is fierce, it is good because one gets negative feedback quickly, and the feedback comes from the

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best people (the best customers and the best industry experts). Feedback is also direct, and many times one can see literally from the user's or customer's face if something is wrong.

Then, as implied above, it is easiest and fastest to access people, money and information when you are physically located where these are best available in your field. Because of this, many mention that *when you are in Silicon Valley, people from the rest of the world come to you*: this is what being at the center of things means, and does not have much to do with actual geographical location. When you are in the "right" place, you don't have to go to other places so much (even though traveling is a typical part of the global professional's life). Many mention that although they do have to travel, they don't have to travel as much as they would have to if they were somewhere else when they are located in Silicon Valley.

Finally, location is a matter of prestige and reputation. Some mention that talented people and interesting events can be located anywhere in the world, but when you or your firm are located in Silicon Valley, it almost automatically "puts you on the map". The location brings credibility, and although it does not guarantee success, you are taken more seriously among in the industry if you are located in Silicon Valley. This is perhaps a result of the other aspects mentioned above: others are aware that your location in Silicon Valley gives you the best opportunities, and access to the best knowledge and people, and so the location itself becomes a merit. The discussion on the meaning of being in the "right" location is continued in Chapter 7.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 Dynamics of daily work

Locally everyday work is organized according to global time zones, that is, according to where relevant colleagues or collaborators are located. Everyday work is characterized by an intensified awareness of distance and time differences. Virtual communication has changed the organization of everyday work globally, by allowing work to spread into local times and places that used to belong to the private sphere.

Everyday work is also particularly flexible and mobile; this is true both of the work as such and the people doing it. Work is not tied to place or hours – but workers are expected to be flexible and work anywhere.

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Thus, one of the main changes or features of the work of the global professional is the *stretching of the times and places of work*. Work has invaded times and spaces that used to be private. Personal space and time have become available for work time, work has expanded its scope to what used to be personal space and time. Professionals have always worked long hours and taken work home: what makes today's situation fundamentally different is the way that work can reach you, it has stealthily invaded personal space and time without really asking for permission. It can do this because the global worker is reached through communication technology. It is certainly less radical and more subtle to oblige the global professional to take part in a conference call in the middle of the night on his living room couch than to ask him to come to a meeting at the office in the middle of the night.

Another major feature is the *discontinuity and fragmentation of the working day*. The main consequence or manifestation of the stretching of work into private times and spaces is the fragmentation of the working day. The working day is no longer concentrated in one section of the day, but is spread across the 24-hour day (Hutton & Giddens 2000) in several sections and according to several time zones. Naturally, this means that free time is not continuous either, not even the night for sleeping, but is limited to smaller periods in between work tasks – and even then work can often reach you via e-mail or phone.

These observations raise further questions about the context of global work. The relevant context (the physical location or the norms applied) is not necessarily that of the immediate physical location/place. Thus, for an employee of a Finnish firm in Silicon Valley the main context for his/her work may actually be Finland, not Silicon Valley. In practice this means that although there is a 10-hour time difference, s/he adjusts to Finnish time and, for instance, participates in conference calls in the middle of the night Pacific time. This also means that the principles (norms) according to which s/he operates are mainly those operating in Finland, not those of Silicon Valley.

Can context be chosen or not? It seems that it is not always a conscious thing nor is there always a choice. Much depends on the individual situation: if one's boss or close colleagues, or people working for them, are in Finland, the Finnish context becomes the most relevant. If, instead, the most relevant people to the job are also in Silicon Valley, then that is the relevant context. In many cases it is a combination of these. The question of context highlights the complex meaning of space and locality in global work.

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6.4.2 *Accessing information and knowledge*

Information access and knowledge sharing are crucial when considering the meaning of place/locality in the work of professionals involved in innovation activity. The current understanding is that information/knowledge is essential for innovation. But today innovation happens quickly and no individual actor (organization or innovator) can possess or develop all the information necessary to innovate independently. However, relevant information may be located anywhere, the challenge is to find and access it.

My findings show that the professionals studied require diverse information/knowledge for their work. Both virtual and face-to-face interaction is essential for finding information. As the existing literature predicts, certain kinds of information are more easily accessible on the Internet, and travel easily across distance; this is true for information that does not require specific skills or expertise to be understood.

However, there are also some kinds of information and knowledge that do not travel easily. This is also in line with literature: yet curiously enough the nature of the information as such does not make codification – and consequently passing on the information – difficult. For some reason however, these kinds of information still do not travel well. I argue that this has to do with a) distance and b) the nature of the social tie/interaction. Certain kinds of information do not easily travel across distance, although they are not in principle difficult to codify. We can speculate – and some existing research does support this – that when the social tie is close and there is trust, the nature of communication is different and information is shared more widely. It may be assumed that this also holds true for ties across distance. If this is the case, then weak ties are important for accessing knowledge locally (face-to-face), while strong ties are needed for sharing information/knowledge globally that would not otherwise travel. The following chapter further examines the experience of being present in a locality while at the same time being connected across distance.

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6.4.3 *Time-space dynamics in the case of Finns*

By way of concluding the chapter, I will apply O'Riain's (2006) analysis on the different conceptualizations of time and space discussed in Chapter 3 to the empirical findings on Finns. As we have seen, while the availability of virtual communication makes the global workplace in many ways apparently unproblematic (i.e. one works in one place at the same time being in smooth, real time virtual contact with people in another), in line with O'Riain's findings, my data also show that there are ongoing, everyday, private and shared struggles in the workplace of the global professional. What consists of the workplace as such is not even always a given, the workplace may not be one specific place, but it might be several places, either during the same day or over a period of days or weeks, when the professional travels and changes localities.

All the conceptualizations of time and space that O'Riain discusses (embeddedness, compression, distanciation and intensification) can be identified in the interview data with Finns. The global era is characterized by different imageries or sets of ideas related to time, space, place and distance. These all exist simultaneously, and although they might first seem mutually exclusive, they are not. Globalization has not made the world a simpler place; rather, it has brought more complexity, and more paradoxes. So, it could be argued that one of the paradoxes is that the world has at the same time become smaller and the meaning of distance and local place has intensified.

Time-space distanciation. The idea of time-space distanciation in the interviews with Finns looks like this: World has become more like a one place, the boundaries of old nation-states have been largely erased by virtual space, which is unproblematic and where no boundaries exist. Because of the Internet, e-mail, videoconferencing, chat-rooms, and social networking sites, communication across distance is quick, smooth, easy, and cheap. The location or the physical context does not really matter.

This idea is in a way illustrated in the following quote, in which the informant says it does not make a great difference, whether one moves from one town to another in Finland, or from Finland to Silicon Valley.

CK: When you came did you have an idea of how long you will be here?
B18: We made a conscious decision just to come [here].
CK: Yes, so without any…

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> B18: Without any decision [for how long]. No one asked when we moved from Espoo to Kirkkonummi [two Finnish towns] whether it is permanent. And now everyone asks. I'm like, what's the difference. A little farther away but.

Interestingly, in the quote the informant describes two different views clashing: the traditional, in which it was a big issue to move from one side of the world to another, and the implication that this represents a fundamental life change, and that this is not something that people do many times in a short period of time (hence people asking whether it is permanent or not). In contrast, there is the informant's own view that it is fundamentally the same thing to move to the next town or to another continent: the informant does not think that there needs to be a significant difference. In this short quote then, are present both the idea of the world as one place and the idea that locality and distance still matter.

Time-space embeddedness. The imagery of time-space embeddedness is also very visible in the interview data, in particular in the way the informants talk about local place and face-to-face interaction as crucial, and the distance to Finland and other places as very real. Furthermore, a concrete aspect of local embeddedness is that communication across distance is many times challenging, even with virtual communication – this is because of global time differences. This is something that is not part of the idea of time-space distanciation described above.

One of the most important ways the meaning of place is important is that it makes possible face-to-face interaction. Despite the availability of virtual communication face-to-face interaction continues to be important for many things: for creating trust, and for getting information that is not transferred electronically. Local presence also makes possible chance encounters, meetings that may unexpectedly turn out to be fruitful or in which crucial and relevant information, that one does necessarily even know to look for, is accessed. The very nature of innovation activity is unpredictability, and there needs to be room for unexpected things to happen. The limit of virtual communication is that it is suitable for communicating and discussing relatively simple issues; however, in virtual interaction there is much less chance for the kind of small talk that may turn out to be crucial information after all.

Time-space compression is evident in the challenges of the Finns in organizing their everyday work both with colleagues locally and those located thousands of kilometers and several time zones away. One of the noteworthy things is that virtual communication, together

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with globally scattered work teams, has resulted in work penetrating times and spaces that traditionally used to belong to the private domain. Today, the global professional often works at home in addition to the workplace, and during hours that are clearly outside the typical/normal workday.

As discussed above, there are struggles related to working globally, across different locations and time zones. The typical workday consists not only of time spent at the workplace, but also of working at home, often during hours that traditionally would clearly have belonged to private time. Because of the time differences, the global professional has to participate in videoconferences that can be scheduled any time, also at night (local time), when most people are sleeping.

This is a dramatic shift from how work was organized across time and space in the industrial era: even then people may have worked night shifts, but the workday was nevertheless a clear continuous part of the 24-hour day, and when it was over, the worker could go to the private place (home) and start their private time. Because of virtual communication, this is not the case with the contemporary global professional, who can – and is expected to – work also from the home, and at hours that make the workday span across the entire 24-hour day. There are no clear work-times and workplaces anymore, and the boundaries of these have blurred. Even if there is free time, it is scattered through the 24-hour day in smaller sections, a few hours here and a moment there. Free time consists of much smaller amounts of time between work, and it is not the largest part of the day like it used to be.

A part of all this is the implicit expectation that the global professional is available around the clock. It seems that *because they can* work also from home, and be available via e-mail and videoconferencing, *they are also expected to be*. When it comes to work, an enormous amount of flexibility is expected from the global worker.

Time-space intensification. As a result, O'Riain's (2000; 2006) finding that time and space have become more explicit elements of human experience was also confirmed in my data. This means, then, that the work of the global professional is characterized by the dynamic between being strongly embedded locally (face-to-face interaction, locally available information) and being intensely connected to colleagues globally. Essentially, the idea of time-space intensification attempts to capture both these aspects of today's professional work and activity that has a global dimension. Because of the connectedness (via virtual communication),

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world has in a way become smaller, and there is a new space that does not seem to be located anywhere (or that is located everywhere): the virtual space. But also because of the global connectedness, the meaning of local activity and local interactions has become much more emphasized. Curiously, even paradoxically, then, global connectedness has made people aware of their immediate surroundings and has emphasized the characteristics of face-to-face communication that virtual communication cannot replace. This dynamic is discussed further in the next chapter 7.

The other side of the coin of smooth, easy, fast virtual communication is precisely what virtual lacks; the features of face-to-face that cannot be reproduced in the virtual world. It is much more difficult to create trust virtually, or simply just to get to know the person – which is crucial in innovative collaboration or business relations. There are limits to what kinds of things can and are communicated virtually; in general, virtual communication is suitable for simple, straightforward, easily codified messages, but not in situations in which there is mistrust, misunderstandings, or the issue is somehow delicate. Misinterpretations are common in virtual communication, and perhaps even more common is that many things are just never communicated.

The difficulties of communication across distance bring about *frustration* – many of the interviewees described this. For sharing certain kind of information or making important decisions, distance is a reality hard to overcome and this causes frustration.

Being located in close physical proximity also increases accountability and loyalty. According to O'Riain (2006), "There are also significant local accountabilities among team members, which are much more easily sustained in face-to-face interactions than in 'virtual' communications. This can happen even in the most 'flat' and non-hierarchical of organizations." So, even if the organization as such is not hierarchical, the workers are much more loyal to those who are physically close to them than to those who are located far away.

As discussed above, globalization has also brought changes in the meaning of time: this is evident in two ways 1) the longer work hours and 2) the penetration of work into hours that used to clearly belong to private domain, e.g. very late in the evening, night, and early morning. O'Riain (2006) describes that in his case of Irish professionals "…workers are able to restrict hours in many cases through shaping and imposing local norms, but there is no industry-wide set of norms around the right to limit hours or the demands of the workplace."

Finns working for Finnish firms in Silicon Valley sometimes mention resisting the local demanding work culture (i.e. long hours, free time or holidays not socially acceptable) by choosing to operate according to Finnish norms. In Finland, it is more acceptable to leave work when enough hours to complete the regular workday (eight hours) are reached, than in Silicon Valley. According to the unwritten social norms, the very earliest hour in Finland when it is acceptable to leave work is 4pm while in Silicon Valley it is 6pm. The Finnish informants also openly criticize the unofficial/informal norm of being present in the workplace until a certain hour or for a certain number of hours a day for appearance: they say that in Silicon Valley, people actually do not get more work done than their colleagues in Finland who put in shorter hours, but they just appear to work more. Actually they surf the Internet, run personal errands during the workday or chitchat with colleagues.

So, some informants report working according to Finnish norms while in Silicon Valley: they strategically choose the norm that is most favorable to them. This is one way of protecting oneself from the penetration of time pressures in the global workplace.

Therefore, the deadline (which O'Riain identified) is not the only mechanism of control in the global workplace. Also the informal norm of working long hours – as long as is needed to get the work done – is a form of control related to the deadline. The workers do not stay in the workplace until the hour comes when they are allowed to punch out, but they actually stay much longer hours. The unofficial norm of what is considered as the appropriate length of the workday is much longer than in the industrial era. It also varies according to both local culture and the corporate culture (but especially local culture). This is evident in the Finns' accounts describing how they can partly defend themselves against the local Silicon Valley norm of extremely long hours by referring to the Finnish rules and the fact that they are working for a Finnish company (although multinational), many times with people located in Finland. So, if a colleague in Finland can say that they are not available after a certain hour (Finnish time), in a way from that perspective, it is acceptable for the Silicon Valley based Finn to say the same - even though in Silicon Valley, that would be less the norm.

This also illustrates how locality, and where one comes from, still matters. A non-Finn in Silicon Valley would hardly refer to Finnish norms of acceptable work hours to defend themselves against the pressures of time and the penetration of the global economy in their personal time, even when working with Finns in Finland. This person would probably operate according to Silicon Valley norms, and possibly the norms of some other context they are familiar with, if not originally from Silicon Valley (as few are).

Thus, the global era is marked by the sense of being present in many places at the same time; yet physically, one can be in only one place at a time. Still, being aware of what happens in a distant place, what time it is there, what the colleagues there are working on, what the important things happening are – is part of the everyday work of the global professional.

Even if connections are geographically distant, they are deeper than before because of virtual communication. Physical distance continues to be real: this is evident, for instance, in the great time differences between places. At the same time, the connections are much more intense than before, because e-mails travel fast and frequently: people are simply much more and much more often in contact with others in distant places, and it is common to be in contact with friends, colleagues or acquaintances in different localities. This is at the core of the idea of time-space intensification: even when distant places continue to be physically just as distant, the connections to them are much more intense and one is simply aware of the existence and happenings of another locality than before.

Being connected to many places at once brings both satisfaction and struggles. It is extremely time-consuming too: sometimes one can wonder, whether virtual communication actually saves time, or demands more of it.

> B30: I've experienced it as a problem that you basically have **two** places where you, eventually where you should try to keep up contact pretty constantly. So in Finland you have friends and then the work people you should keep in touch with so that they wouldn't totally forget. And here [in Silicon Valley] you have your people too that you should try to keep active, friends and work colleagues. So sometimes it feels that you spend terribly lot of time only in that kind of, like, communication. Sending e-mails and stuff like that.

Finally, the idea of time-space intensification raises further relevant questions. One concerns virtual space, specifically, what kind of space/place is virtual space? Even if it is not physical or concrete, with walls or furniture you can touch, it is a social space: as all social spaces, it has some norms of operating and some informal or formal rules. The people who interact in a virtual place are located somewhere and come from somewhere, and they have a certain cultural background and a set of norms according to which they interact. Based on my data, it is clear that this is relevant: virtual space is not a vacuum.

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This is a simple observation, and nevertheless significant, because it complicates the image of virtual world as somehow neutral or free from the cultural or normative constraints or actual locations. Even in the virtual world, where you come from still matters. Furthermore, in the virtual world, the relevant context, the norms of interaction are created by those who interact. But they are not created out of nothing: first and foremost, we all interact based on our (local, cultural) understanding of what the appropriate way to communicate and to interpret the other is. Therefore, even virtual space is in many ways anchored in actual locations; if not physically, then in the form of shared understandings and cultural backgrounds that form the basis of interaction also virtually. As the concept of time-space intensification illustrates, the interaction is intensified, because it brings different local contexts together in actual time and in a space that is being created in the interaction itself.

To conclude, this chapter addressed research issue 2, everyday work and knowledge transfer. In chapter 3 (section 3.8.) I asked, firstly, how being present in a locality and interaction across distance matter for everyday work and, secondly, how knowledge is shared locally and in virtual interaction. To sum up the main findings discussed above, virtual connectedness structures the workday and makes possible work-related flexibility and mobility locally. Moreover, I found that the nature of the social tie appears to matter for how certain kinds of information is shared across distance.

While the findings confirm the importance of location for knowledge transfer (e.g. Brown & Duguid 2000; Porter 2000; Storper 2000; Leamer & Storper 2001; Storper & Venables 2004) found in existing literature, this research also advances the understanding of global work and knowledge transfer in useful ways. Firstly, it documents the dynamics of virtual and local presence during the workday and shows how virtual connectedness influences the organization of the work locally, which has not been done in earlier studies. Secondly, it discusses the reasons for why the informants think working in a specific location (in this case, Silicon Valley) is experienced as important in more detail than what has been reported before. Thirdly, the finding that the codifiability of information as such does not necessarily determine how well it travels, but what matters is the nature of the social relationship and, consequently, the interaction across distance, sheds light on the specific mechanisms of knowledge sharing between distant places. Although it has been noted on a general level that the quality of the

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relationship is a factor in virtual communication (e.g. Nardi & Whitaker 2002), the nature of the information/knowledge and the type of social tied have not been examined together in studies of knowledge sharing across distance. Finally, in a modest way, this study tests O'Riain's (2000; 2006) concept of time-space intensification and finds it applicable also to the work of mobile Finns, also indicating aspects in the experience of time-space intensification (such as choosing to work according to local or Finnish norms regarding work hours) that are potentially fruitful for closer examination in future studies. The dynamic experience of distance and locality and the limitations of virtual interaction are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

7 FINDINGS: The Experience of Distance and Locality: Physical vs. Virtual Presence

In the previous chapters I examined the informants' personal relationship to place (the motivations and expectations surrounding relocation, the identities related to both the departure and destination locations) and how the everyday work of the global professionals is at the same time local yet connected to distant places. This chapter attempts to bring together the findings of Chapters 5 and 6 and consider further the experience of distance and location. For both, the experience is dynamic. Perceived or experienced distance has different dimensions, such as physical, cognitive and institutional distance. Thus, physical distance is only one part of the experience of distance: the awareness of great physical distance may increase the experienced distance – that is the experience that a location is far away. On the other hand, smooth virtual communication, including cognitive or social proximity, seems to diminish experienced distance. Nevertheless, despite the many obvious advantages related to virtual interaction, there are limitations too, for example, when it comes to information access, building trust and participating in informal communication. Finally, I will also explore the experience of location on a personal level, that is what it feels like to be in Silicon Valley and, in particular, what the inspirational aspect of being in the "right" place involves.

As we have already seen, there is a global dimension to the skilled professionals' lives that is novel, characteristic of the current era and represents a genuine change compared to the past. It is now possible to be connected to almost any place in the world, which is something that did not exist in such a way before. Then, as many of the informants point out, there is the dimension of global (popular) culture: the same television shows, films, music, social networking sites – although these are partially different depending on the country or continent. At some level, there is a global, virtual dimension that can reach many lives, a global culture and connectedness that almost anyone can tap into just by using the Internet.

Yet this remains just one dimension. It is not the same as distance being dead or the world being one place. Connectedness may not entail the all-encompassing changes that some authors imply. There is a new dimension of connectedness, and yet at the same time many

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things have not changed. People still want to meet each other face-to-face and need to do this for many reasons; for work, friendship, innovation, pleasure, and meaningfulness in life.

Indeed, to be accurate, most of the "global" professionals are not connected to the entire globe, but to specific places. Global connectedness may refer to the possibility of being virtually connected to almost anywhere. Yet in practice there are just a few specific locations that are relevant for the professionals: not all locations matter. These professionals are connected to specific people or organizations in specific places. They are not interested in just any location. Besides their current locations, they want information about specific places, people or organizations elsewhere. Most locations in the world are not relevant for their identity, not the targets of their dreams, or do not offer the possibility of personal development. They are specific locations with specific characteristics and reputations. And, of course, what particular locations matter depends on each person, where they come from, and what they do.

This chapter proceeds in the following way. I will start by examining the experience of distance from the viewpoint of whether Finland is close or far from Silicon Valley. Then, I will consider the different dimensions of proximity/distance and offer a tentative analysis of how these influence the experience of distance. I will then go on to discuss some of the limitations and myths related to virtual communication. The last part of the chapter focuses on the experience of being present in a location, particularly concerning the aspect of inspiration.

The dynamic relationship of being present and connected is not only liberating (giving the apparent freedom of mobility, of working anywhere, of choosing a location), it is also a struggle. Virtual connectedness to distant localities not only makes the local working day easier or more efficient: it also disrupts it. It is not perhaps common to consider virtual communication as a challenge. Yet this dynamic is at the core of the changes brought about by virtual connectedness: it is both a blessing and, if not a curse, to some extent a challenge.

7.1 The Experience of Distance: Is Finland Close or Far

One of the questions discussed with the professionals was whether Finland is close or far when one is in Silicon Valley. As might be guessed, there is no simple answer to this question in the era of virtual connectedness. From the viewpoint of Silicon Valley, Finland is neither close nor far, but close in some ways and far in others. In general the informants considered this question very thoroughly, and did not give one clear answer. It was pointed out that whether some place/locality is close or far depends on perspective and no one location has the freedom to decide it, it is relative: From the perspective of Finland, Finland is the center or the world, but for India, the center is India, and so on. This simple reality has not apparently changed; even in the global world, geographical position matters.

7.1.1 Why is Finland far?

> CK: Do you think Finland is close or far?
> B26: It is mentally close but, but it would be nice if it were from the financial perspective so close that you could just get up and go there to visit, for a vacation, without a particular reason. But we are not in a situation in which there would be so much money and time that you could just impulsively go and visit Finland.

Finland is far because it takes a long time to go there and the travel expenses are still relatively high: at the time of the data collection no direct flights existed to go there from California, travel time was typically 15-20 hours, and at least one change of flights necessary. Most informants mention being aware of the geographical distance; it feels very real. The one thing that makes it especially real is the 10-hour time difference: the Finnish professionals in Silicon Valley are acutely aware that people in Finland are not awake at the same time as them. A practical concern is that there are no shared business hours (and as we saw in Chapter 6, this leads to a 24-hour working day in which the professionals are expected to participate in virtual meetings when it is nighttime in Silicon Valley). The time difference is an essential part of the global professional’s everyday life, as we saw above when examining the typical working day.

Time difference and the acute awareness of it permeates the professional’s local day and night in different ways and on many levels. It is a practical concern: one has to take the time difference into account when contacting colleagues or friends in a distant location. It is also a mental issue: when one is in contact with people in distant locations, the time difference also matters to the interaction itself. It is more challenging to understand each other perfectly and be on the same wavelength when it is a different time of day for the people involved.

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> B29: When you are here, whether it feels close or far… you are aware, you are conscious of the physical distance. And the fact that often people are not awake at the same time. So in that sense [it feels] far, a little far. If I could choose so that everything else would stay the same, if you could keep everything else the same but move to Europe that would be better.

Many informants reflected on these different aspects of time difference throughout the interviews. Time difference is not "just" about the different hours, not only about someone being in bed in the middle of the night while the other is working. It is a reminder of the distance and the role that a shared context plays in social interaction. When locations and the time of day is clearly different (morning-evening; night-day), interactions become less smooth and more challenging. One informant described how he would talk on the phone with a collaborator in Silicon Valley when he was in Finland. It was difficult to understand what the collaborator was saying and be on the same wavelength. The Silicon Valley collaborator developed a technique to overcome this difficulty: the collaborator told the Finland-based informant to close their eyes, breathe, and remember the client's office and how they had sat together outside after a meeting when the informant had visited Silicon Valley, and to feel the sunshine, and look at the palm trees. The informant said that this mental exercise helped him/her to understand the collaborator better so that they could make joint decisions even when in distant localities.

Besides long traveling times, geographical distance also means jet lag and other physical symptoms caused by long-distance travel. In particular, informants who have to travel between Finland and Silicon Valley frequently (e.g. once or even twice a month), talk about emerging health problems when this routine continues for a long time. The health problems mentioned include sleep difficulties and inconsistent sleeping patterns, stomach trouble and weight gain, and increased blood pressure. Besides health problems, there are also issues related to family and social life. Being away a lot obviously places a burden on family life. Also, when one travels a lot, one is not fully present in any place, always just there temporarily, in between the last and the next trip. This makes it more difficult to connect with people and tap into relevant local information, especially in terms of hearing weak signals and understanding information that is more tacit in nature. (One informant mentioned that after being away for 6 weeks, s/he really felt s/he had no idea what was happening in Silicon Valley, and it took time to catch up.)

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There are other practical reasons why Finland seems far away: as mentioned, one is simply that it is relatively expensive to travel there. The cost of travel is a concern especially for those informants who pay for their own tickets or who own a small firm rather than work for a multinational company. Traveling with family brings more practical considerations: one informant says it is a “significant logistical effort” to travel to Finland with small children, and this is why he does not do it more than once a year.

Many mention that Finland feels particularly far away when they receive invitations from friends for weekend getaways or parties: it is too far to go just for the weekend, as one could from other parts of Europe or even from the US east coast. The same issue has been observed in other studies of global professionals (Beaverstock 2005; Conradson & Latham 2007), who have reported the feeling of being far away from the home country when you cannot just go and have coffee with old friends or attend important family events. The fact that visiting Finland always takes at least several days (including travel times and jet lag) makes it a distant location from the perspective of Silicon Valley. This example highlights the dynamic of connectedness and distance: while everyone, regardless of location, receives the same e-mail invitation at the same time (although not the same local time), only those who are geographically close can actually go. So, increasing connectedness means being “closer” virtually, yet physical distance still makes a big difference.

Reasons other than practical ones (such as expense, actual geographical distance, travel time or time difference) also intervene to make Finland seem farther away. The informants talk a lot about mental and cultural distance. Communicating across 10 time zones means that it is a different time of day in the two locations and many experience this as a real challenge for communication. When one party to a conversation has just woken up and the other is reaching the end of the working day, for one the sun is shining and for the other it is dark, one is warm and the other is cold: all these factors make the context for each individual very different, and, according to the informants, the interaction more challenging. It seems that it is more difficult to understand each other across all these differences, when the context for each individual is so different.

Finally, there is a significant “mental” reason concerning the differences between Finland and Silicon Valley. This suggests that Finland is far not just in terms of physical distance, but also because it is so different to Silicon Valley. Some informants say that when

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they go to Finland, it seems like a very small place. Compared to Silicon Valley, Finland is very homogeneous; people generally look and act the same when considered from the perspective of Silicon Valley. Even for Finns who grew up in Finland, this is striking when coming from Silicon Valley. Finland sometimes does not seem diverse or multicultural enough; in some ways it is even too familiar, but in others it feels like a different world for someone living ten time zones away on a different continent. Especially when it comes to attitudes towards sociability, openness, entrepreneurialism, and risk-taking, Finland seems like another world. Some informants describe how their achievements in Silicon Valley are met with silence or envy in Finland. People are either uninterested or envious, and this can make the Finn based in Silicon Valley feel like it their home country is an environment light years away from the Silicon Valley culture.

7.1.2 Why is Finland close?

> CK: Do you think Finland is, looking from here, does it feel close or far?
> B34: Maybe a little closer than I had thought. Like… the last time I visited Finland it felt just like before. Of course I hadn't been away that long, but still. Like you almost didn't remember that you now live somewhere else.

Despite the geographical and cultural distance, Finland can feel very close. The main reason and perhaps the most obvious one for this is virtual connectedness: Finland is close because it is so easy to be in real-time contact with people there. Even when it is not the same time of the day, one can be online and see if friends or colleagues in Finland are online on Skype, for example. Talking on Skype, e-mailing and using instant messengers is free; when one is online, there are practically no additional costs to being connected to people in Finland.

Web cameras enhance the feeling of physical closeness as people can see each other on screen. Video conferences are an everyday part of many global professionals' work. The simple fact of being able to have regular, cost-free contact with people in Finland makes it feel closer. This is the kind of aspect of global connectedness that applies almost no matter where one is or what the actual distances involved are: virtual connectedness brings people in different, distant localities closer together.

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Another similar issue (i.e. closeness regardless of where one is) is virtual access to local newspapers, discussions and other information. This is also crucial in bringing Finland closer. Many informants said that they follow Finnish newspapers online every day, others did not follow them quite so often, perhaps on weekly basis. This depends greatly on what kind of (local) news and information concerning Finland one finds relevant or useful in everyday life and work in Silicon Valley. Certain basic information to help one stay updated and generally informed about what is happening in Finland is easy to access on the Internet. Local mailing lists (for example, work-related) also bring information that one could not otherwise access from a distance.

An important aspect that brings Finland closer is visits from family, friends and colleagues. Some informants in particular said that they received visitors from Finland so often that it did not really feel distant. When people from Finland come to visit, they bring typical Finnish food: if you always have plenty of black rye bread (the special Finnish kind) in your kitchen in Silicon Valley, you feel closer to Finland. Many actively celebrate Finnish holidays, such as 1st of May, Independence Day and Christmas.

The informants also mention how their own visits to Finland help reduce the feeling of distance. Even though they may experience a certain kind of reverse culture shock, as described above, another common feeling when visiting is that it as if one never left. Finland feels cozy and familiar, and nothing fundamental has changed. Some mention in particular how small it is: visiting is like going from the big world back to cozy little Finland. It is like a safe haven, a home base that stays the same and which one can always return to from adventures in the big wide world.

There is also a mental and cultural closeness that one experiences with fellow Finns either when working with Finns in Finland or Finns in Silicon Valley. Many talk about how working and collaborating regularly with other Finns helps maintain the feeling that Finland is close. Here, of course, Finland is close in one's mind, meaning that it is not easily forgotten, or that one's own background as a Finn is somehow present even in the everyday life of Silicon Valley. Even in traveling (Beck 2000) one maintains an identity as a Finn and a special connection to other Finns. This is one reminder of how where one comes from still matters in the global world. Many interviewees also imply that these connections are important: even when being a Finn is not immediately relevant to one's everyday work, it is an important source of identity and pride. The informants describe how it is good to be a Finn in Silicon Valley, because Finns, where they have a reputation, are typically known as honest, trustworthy and skilled people.

Finally, there may be an important temporal dimension to the experience of distance: Finland is closer to those who have been in Silicon Valley for less time. So, time may increase distance, that is, the feeling that Finland is far away. Distance, therefore, is not only about distance in geographical space, but distance in time too.

7.1.3 Perceived distance

The findings above on the way the professionals experience distance, in this case to their country of origin, gives us reason to reflect further on what matters for the perception of distance.

Perceived distance refers to how distance is experienced. Geographical distance is a part of perceived distance and influences it, but it is not the only part. Boschma (2005) has identified different kinds of distances/proximities in addition to geographical distance, such as psychological, social and cultural distances. It appears that all these factors combined form the experience of distance. The findings suggest that there is a clear difference between actual measured, geographical distance, and perceived distance. In other words, how physical distance is experienced or perceived is determined not only by the actual number of miles between two locations. Distance or proximity in cultures and climates matter too. On a personal level, the nature of relationships, occupations, backgrounds and personalities influence the experience of distance.

Based on the data gathered for the present research it is clear that perceived distance, that is the way people experience distance, is complex and influenced by the various aspects mentioned. Geographical distance, while not the only factor, is nevertheless an essential part of perceived distance: actual miles matter too and, as we have seen, the professionals are very aware of physical distance. Physical distance becomes evident through certain specific things, such as the time difference and the time it takes to travel between the two places. These are concrete manifestations of physical distance. The informants' experiences suggest that despite the idea of the death of distance, physical distance is actually something that is very difficult to completely overcome or erase. Even when travel becomes faster and there is real time connectedness between the places in question it nevertheless takes a certain amount of hours to get from one place to another, and there will still be differences in local times. Thus, according to my data, physical distance manifests itself in travel times, time differences, and also differences in landscapes, weather, and the way places look.

Furthermore, we have seen that the global professionals are very aware of distance. This awareness of distance is worthy of note, because the theorists that discuss the diminishing meaning of distance often ignore whether people remain aware of it or they do not acknowledge whether we think about distance in our everyday lives and communications, whether it plays any role in reality, even if "only" in our minds. If distance were completely dead or meaningless, we would be free to ignore it. But strategies are needed to overcome physical distance in global communication: the fact that there are spontaneous, subtle strategies to diminish distance implies that distance still exists. The informants mentioned how conference calls or phone calls to distant locations typically start with small talk, asking how the weather is in the different places and what time it is in the different participants' locations. These seemingly banal, everyday practices reveal that there are still obstacles that need to be overcome before the "real" business can be effectively discussed.

Awareness of distance is not always fully *conscious*. Often, we do not think consciously about how to overcome distances in global communication, we just do it. Which, of course, does not make it any less real.

On the other hand, when the subject was explicitly discussed in interviews (for example, when I brought up the question of whether Finland is close or far from Silicon Valley), many informants mentioned that in their communications from Silicon Valley to Finland – and often to other locations as well – they were very aware of the distances involved. In some ways, this is unavoidable. Time zones and differences must be taken into account in order to contact distant colleagues during business hours. Indeed, it is not only a matter of the awareness of distance, but of the awareness of what is happening in the other location, whether it is morning or evening or lunch time, whether there may be some significant local events that matter for doing business or collaborating or communicating on any given day, who the right people to contact in the other location are for different issues – in sum, a certain amount of local awareness is required.

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As Biggart and Guillen (1999, quoted in O'Riain 2006) have accurately observed, instead of making the world one place, globalization has brought about an increased awareness of difference.

Thus, perceived distance includes awareness – or a sense - of physical distance, and the concrete aspects related to it, such as time differences and travel times. Physical distance and its related aspects tend to increase perceived distance where they are long. Yet perceived distance also appears to be highly influenced by connectedness: that is by how much interaction takes place between the localities and how frequent and smooth these interactions are. If interaction across distance is easy, the perceived distance shrinks: that is, the other location (or the people there) are experienced as closer. Easy, effortless, frequent, and, importantly, inexpensive communication gives the feeling of closeness even across great physical distances.

Indeed, many of the informants mentioned that Finland feels close when they are in contact with friends and family members on Skype (or through other real-time, cost-free media), or when they visit frequently. This could be interpreted as suggesting that contact with friends and family is relatively smooth and effortless, and thus the distance feels shorter. In contrast, when describing how Finland seems very far away in some respects, informants mentioned examples of work-related communication that was difficult in one way or another. Perhaps work communication requires more effort on the part of the participants, and challenges become more pronounced across physical distance. Both individual personalities and, for example, how well the colleagues know each other seem to matter a lot. The informants mention that sometimes it is difficult to get on the same wavelength when communicating virtually, or to understand what another person is saying (despite speaking in Finnish) or indeed to get the other party to understand, or convince them of what you are saying.

(Could it be tentatively hypothesized, then, that smooth communications diminish the experienced distance, whereas challenges in communications emphasize distance or increase the experienced distance? Based on the experiences reported by the informants, this seems to be the case. Further tentative conclusions can be drawn from this observation: a) communication and connectedness do matter for the experience of distance, which is in some ways in line with the death of distance argument but contrasts with it in others; b) communication across distance continues to present challenges, which, in turn, make the experience of distance more real – this

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dynamic is not captured by simply concluding that as a result of virtual connectedness, distance is dead.)

Boschma (2005) has discussed learning and knowledge sharing across distance by considering different dimensions of proximity. The question he poses is whether other types of proximities, such as cognitive or institutional proximity can substitute the lack of geographical proximity - in other words, whether certain types of proximities other than physical proximity can help to overcome distance.

Boschma (2005) identifies the following five dimensions of proximity:

Geographical: spatial distance between actors.

Cognitive: sharing the same knowledge base in order to communicate, understand and process new knowledge successfully.

Organizational: "the extent to which relations are shared in an organizational arrangement, either within or between organizations". Involves some degree of autonomy and control.

Social: relations between agents at the micro-level, including trust based on friendship, kinship, experience (not including values, which is more macro-level and included in institutional proximity).

Institutional: shared framework at the macro-level, shared norms and values, common habits, rules, routines, practices or laws that regulate relations and interactions between individuals and groups. Shared formal (laws and rules) and informal (cultural norms and habits) institutions – this includes cultural habits and values as well as rules. A "common language", both in the literal and the metaphorical sense.

Boschma (Ibid.) maintains that physical (geographical) proximity as such is neither necessary nor sufficient for learning and innovation: other forms of proximity may act as substitutes for physical proximity. So, simply being in a place is not enough: this was also pointed out often in interviews. While being in a location matters and may be experienced as necessary – as will be seen in the next section that focuses on the experience of location – the mere presence in a place, or physical closeness to other relevant actors, is not enough it itself for things to happen (for knowledge access, collaboration, learning, innovation). While proximity clearly helps to gain access to many important things, one must make use of proximity and take the initiative in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

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Nevertheless, it seems that geographical proximity is needed where other forms of proximity are missing or do not yet exist. Thus, being physically close may be vital in order to create other forms of proximity. The professionals needed to relocate to Silicon Valley in order to construct networks (social proximity), to learn the rules of the game (institutional proximity), and to deepen their knowledge base (cognitive proximity). Even if Boschma (Ibid.) assumes geographical proximity to be neither necessary nor sufficient, in practice geographical proximity may be the most essential, especially when other kinds of proximity are lacking. I agree that geographical proximity is not alone sufficient for innovation, but to create other kinds of proximity it may be necessary at least at certain phases of the process.

7.2 Virtual, Distant Interaction: Limitations and Myths

Most of the informants seem to agree that virtual communication works fantastically for accessing all kinds of information no matter where you are, and also for doing one's work regardless of location, at a distance from the actual workplace or colleagues. The advantages of virtual communication are therefore clear and it truly seems to have changed the world and the nature of many kinds of (non-manual, non-physical) work.

To summarize, the advantages of virtual communication are clear when it comes to accessing information, working from any place (at least occasionally), and perhaps also in getting connected quickly and at little or no cost. So, if we think about the things that have changed in the global world compared to the past, these are among the most essential. And, at least at first glance, these are changes for the better, improvements. If we look more closely, however, the issue appears less straightforward.

7.2.1 Information access, distant work and connectedness

Let us start with the issue of accessing information. While access to information is easier and cheaper than ever before, there are limitations. Firstly, the sheer amount of information available, in principle, to everyone on the Internet is unimaginable and something that is not easy to grasp. In short, there is today an enormous amount of information available to everyone (every firm, entrepreneur, or scientist). No one person alone can keep up with it or make sense

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of it, and, needless to say, much of it is inaccurate or irrelevant, but this is impossible to know without studying it first.

So, the first problem stems from the fact that, precisely because information access is so easy for everyone, it becomes much more difficult to keep up and separate relevant information from noise. Certain strategies are needed to keep up to date with important information and make sense of the information that one has access to. Usually, these strategies have to do with other people and an existing knowledge base. And often these sense-making exercises and the building of knowledge bases happens during face-to-face contact, in local interactions.

Another aspect of accessing information is that, as discussed in Chapter 6, not all information is actually available virtually or from a distance. Much is, but not all. There are pieces of (local) information and knowledge that are simply never documented and stored in databases or articulated in virtual communications. Often, they are informal pieces of information that are, nevertheless, crucial for business or innovation. Or, it may be such novel information that it has not yet been articulated, but exists locally "in the air", in professional conversations or in local gossip. One consequence of this – the fact that not all information is available to be accessed from anywhere - is that the information that *is* available gives only a partial or incomplete picture of a phenomenon or issue. More information, knowledge and interaction is needed to complete the picture.

Let us look at the next important change effected by virtual communication, that is the possibility to work from anywhere there is a laptop and an internet connection. This, too, as true as it is, has some limitations, many of which are common to those identified in connection with accessing certain types of information and making sense of them. When one works from a distance, at home or traveling, perhaps in an isolated cottage somewhere, free from the distractions caused by colleagues or the buzz of the workplace, there are certain kinds of information, carried by those colleagues and the workplace buzz, that may never reach the happily isolated colleague. Water-cooler gossip should not be underestimated: even if a part of it focuses on last night's movie or making clumsy jokes, surprisingly important pieces of (informal) information are passed on, disguised as meaningless chatter. Some informants mention this as highly significant, and it seems that the value of this kind of seemingly meaningless small-talk is often recognized only when one stops having access to it.

There is the social interaction aspect to be considered too. Distance work surely has its advantages, and is wonderful in its flexibility. But in the long run, do most people want to work without ever seeing their colleagues or being around other people? Besides accessing certain kinds of uncodified information, there is a strong motivational and inspirational aspect to being physically close to colleagues. As Bradner and Mark's (2002) study showed, people were less eager to collaborate virtually with someone they were told is in a distant location. Some informants describe how they feel left out and forgotten when not physically in the same place as other team members or colleagues; they have to make an effort so that colleagues continue to remember them and include them in more informal discussions, including virtual ones. Curiously, although e-mail is not supposed to be tied to physical location, it is sometimes used in a very local way, i.e. more informal emails are sent only to those who are in the locality, especially if they include a topic that is tied to location, such as organizing an informal meeting at the pub after work. Nevertheless, the chatter in these kinds of e-mails often includes other information that will never reach those far away (for whom it is perhaps thought to be irrelevant).

Lastly, there is the important change of generally having the opportunity to be connected in real time and without cost. This is a significant transformation in that it allows a more frequent and intense connectedness, especially with family members far away. The informants with children describe how wonderful it is that they can stay in touch with grandparents in Finland on Skype and see them every week on the web-cam. Without denying the positive, important and authentic aspects of these changes, there are nevertheless some illusions related to connectedness as well. The main illusion is precisely in the idea of "real-time": both previous research (e.g. Burrell 2008) and the present findings remind us that time differences actually mean that it is complex and time consuming to organize real-time connections. The days and hours often need to be agreed on beforehand, in order to "meet" online – with a 10-hour time difference the chances of this happening spontaneously at a time convenient for both or all parties are slim. This reminds us that we still live in physical locations with their daily rhythms, instead of the virtual world (as some theorists have boldly suggested): with geographical time differences, it is more difficult to bump into each other in virtual spaces. Yet chance encounters are often identified as crucial for exchanging information and collegial networking locally. As for the costs, there are costs in terms of the time dedicated to arranging and organizing virtual connections. In sum, global virtual connectedness is not always as timesaving, smooth, and effortless as it may seem at first glance.

7.2.2 Distances in a virtual world

> "By decoupling work performance from the site of work, virtual integration overcomes distances, but only by losing the rich, multilayered, face-to-face interaction provided by place-based integration at work. Companies attempt to recover this loss of spatio-temporal immediacy by various mechanisms such as direct phone connections, video conferencing, electronic message boards, and instant messaging, as well as limited on-site visits." (Aneesh 2006, 79.)

As discussed, virtual communication reduces distance, but does not erase it completely. Although there should not be any real distance in the virtual world, e-mail seems more likely to reach and travel faster to those who are physically closer. If you send e-mail to someone in the same building, you are likely to receive a reply more quickly than if you send it to someone on another continent. Perhaps just knowing that the sender of the e-mail is in the same building, and that you may run into them on the way to lunch adds urgency. In general, local matters seem – and are – more urgent because they are physically closer. Conversely, if you receive e-mail from someone several time zones away, you immediately know that it cannot be that urgent, because the person who sent it is probably sleeping when you first read it.

There are of course other modes of virtual communication, such as instant messaging and conference calling, and these are used in the everyday work of the global professional. Perhaps these tools diminish distance in a truer sense than e-mail, because they are used in real time. But time nevertheless makes a difference: if there is a time difference of several hours, even these modes of communication may not be possible, and where the other person is and whether they are available at a certain hour must be considered.

One of the limitations of virtual communication is that trust is difficult or impossible to built uniquely through virtual contact. And trust seems to be necessary for doing business, collaborating and innovating.

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> A4: The face has to be familiar and the body language has to be familiar. Simply, you have to be able to recognize the person. That is really what has to be working. If you wouldn't recognize a person when they walk by in the street, there is no, there is absolutely no chance of creating the trust electronically.

Virtual communication is generally seen as the "maintenance mode" and face-to-face interaction as the "building mode" in business and other relationships. This succinctly summarizes the overall meaning and place of virtual and face-to-face communications. Virtual communication is absolutely crucial and enormously useful, but it has its limits. It is good for initiating contact and for maintaining it, and for getting simple pieces of information fast. But to create trust, true collaboration and knowledge sharing, face-to-face meetings and local presence are needed.

> A6: In these collaboration projects because this is a long distance, ten-hour time difference it is like a really big thing. So of course we used e-mail to communicate but then you meet every now and then, that brings a certain vigor to it.

The importance of face-to-face meetings for communicating what is 'really going on' is also reflected in Bozkurt's (2006) findings in the case of highly skilled workers in multinationals: "Various accounts of going to the headquarters to 'explain to them what (was) going on on site' communicate something of an ambassadorial spirit to these trips as they involved a sort of brokerage effort on the part of the local unit workers to negotiate a realistic solution between the headquarters and the current or potential customer in the market unit." (Ibid., 229.) Aneesh (2006, 80) also describes how face-to-face communication is crucial for solving problems swiftly. He notes that sociocultural differences cannot quickly be overcome in virtual interaction. One of his informants reported that programmers located in India had difficulties in understanding their American client's wishes, because they did not have enough knowledge of the United States in general and could not easily grasp American styles and speech. The programmers often depended on senior managers who had experience in working in the United States (and could thus act as mediators).

In the above we saw that there are challenges in reaching the same wavelength and mood (excitement, hesitation) as a partner. The same informant who described how he had to close his eyes and imagine being in Silicon Valley when talking with a collaborator on the phone from Finland also described why he moved to Silicon Valley. Previously, when he was based in

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Finland, he had to spend about two weeks every month in Silicon Valley for business. He said that each time the plane took off he felt immediately that he was beginning to lose touch with what was happening in Silicon Valley, that he could not "feel its pulse anymore".

Other informants' accounts support this view. Many talked about how it can be difficult to convince colleagues in Finland that a certain strategy or a decision is necessary for smooth progress in Silicon Valley. They said that the distance was often palpable, that colleagues in Finland are in a very different context and that what makes sense in Silicon Valley does not always seem sensible or understandable in Finland. This is not only about cultural differences, but also about the physical environment, because when these same people are in Silicon Valley and meet local contacts face-to-face, they understand why some decisions or strategies make sense and some do not.

There is also an "out of sight, out of mind" effect that increases with distance. In the following passage, the informant talks about the challenges related to distance when colleagues are located in Finland and the informant is in Silicon Valley.

> B19: There are difficulties, because if you are not active yourself, they will not remember you, you are not there to get a cup of coffee with them, chitchatting and telling them what movie you went to see on the weekend. So it is very easy to forget that there is someone on the other side of the globe who you should be in contact with. It requires being active in being in contact with Finland on the part of the one who is here [in Silicon Valley), especially in an organization like this where the major part of the operations are in Finland.

7.3 The Experience of Location: Why Being There Matters

Bozkurt (2006, 235) has noted that for professionals working in multinational companies, the work experience is different when working at the headquarters. As Bozkurt writes, "in the interviewees' words, one is simply 'closer to where it all gets done, ' where 'decisions are made,' and where 'you can see how it all begins.' Many who had worked in branch offices commented that the organizational depth is not comparable with the range of possiblitities the headquarters offers. 'You can only go up that far' in the branch offices and 'there are not that many different kinds of things to do'."

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This is interesting when reflected against my findings regarding Finns who left their home countries in diverse situations, most of whom not working for multinationals. Nevertheless, their experience in going to Silicon Valley was very similar to the professionals Bozkurt studied in this respect. In light of the distance is dead argument, there simply seem to be better and less advantageous places to be. For professionals in multinationals, the place to be may be wherever the company headquarters are located; and, as my research shows, for highly skilled more generally, the place to be depends on the specific situation, profession and aspirations: nevertheless, the experience is the same, being at the center of things, where it all gets done, where the most important things happen. Bozkurt also mentions that being at the headquarters of the MNC is so desirable for two additional reasons, establishing contacts and getting information. This, again, is fully in line with my findings about why the Finnish professionals see their presence in Silicon Valley as so beneficial and crucial.

What does being in Silicon Valley mean to the informants, besides being far away from Finland? When you are based somewhere, in this case in Silicon Valley, some things become accessible and possible that would otherwise be out of reach. In the following quote an informant describes what being located in Silicon Valley means.

> B30: Well, [it's just] that you get into the **physical** place. You live here like the locals live here. So I don't know if I can say it better but. That way you like **suck in** the information, the way of thinking, the model of thinking, the culture, like automatically. And just the face-to-face communication in creating social ties. It's not the same if you send e-mail to some researcher here like, how's it going. But if you go to **lunch** with them here and chat about how are things now, there is easily, there is a chance for a chain of events then. 'Oh, you have this kind of a thing going on, well who is in it, oh those people are, well could we work together or could we have some common interests to do together?' So I at least think that it is considerably more difficult to do it from a distance, for example, via e-mail. In Finland it would be like, well, here you are basically 24/7. You are here and you are taking in the information. But you can't be at the computer 24/7 in Finland and think now I'm going to find out what's happening in Silicon Valley.

The interviews include vivid descriptions and accounts of what it feels like to be present in Silicon Valley. As one informant put it, "tourism doesn't work", you need to be located where the most relevant things happen. When you are there, many things almost happen by themselves, without much effort. Although, as mentioned above, merely being present does not guarantee new collaborations, innovation or success, it does open up opportunities.

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B18: Because for our business this is the most important **market**place. Our most important customers, well not the most important, but a very high **number** of important customers, partners, competitors, financers. Here you'll find **more** leadership potential if you are recruiting. Here you have all the significant events, publications, journalists, opinion leaders. This is the most important as a marketplace. So my reason to come here was the same as it was for artists to move to Paris a hundred years ago.

B30: Here things happen by themselves a lot so you don't necessarily need to work for everything, it happens by itself.

A similar experience of being in the 'right place' was also reported in Beaverstock's (2005) research on financial professionals in New York City. For financial professionals, Wall Street was the place to be, just like for my Finnish informants working in innovation, it was Silicon Valley, with the largest financial markets, most influential players, clients and networks, and the most prized and crucial knowledge and expertise.

All in all, we have seen from different perspectives how the professionals experience being in a locality (in this case Silicon Valley) as crucial for their work. The experience of locality and interaction across distance are an integral part of their everyday work, both in the organization of the working day and in information access. Therefore, it is not only the meaning of place and distance that are of interest, but also their dynamics. Indeed, both are an essential part of work and everyday experiences. Any investigation aiming at a more detailed or deeper analysis would not be complete if it only focused on either of these two factors (locality and distance). While the global professionals are physically present in only one place at a time, their minds are typically in many locations during the working day, and, as we have seen, distant locations penetrate the local working day in many ways.

We have seen that despite virtual communication, the awareness of distance is strong, and distance is real. It still matters where and how far away collaborators are. It matters for communication, mutual understanding and what kind of information is shared and accessed. Conversely, it also matters where one is physically located. Being present in a location has many advantages: one of the most important is that face-to-face interaction is then possible, and this in turn helps in accessing information that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to acquire. This is not only a matter of face-to-face interaction, however. According to the

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informants, the mere presence of a person, just being there, can help make things happen. Chance encounters, observing people in a locality, or being in the same context facilitates activities that foster innovation.

To conclude, the everyday work of the highly skilled professional is about *information, interaction and inspiration.* Being in a particular location is needed for all these; in other words, being in the (right) location makes these possible. If we consider the question "why relocate?" or "what does one get from being in a location?", then these three factors form the main answer on the basis of the findings of the present and previous chapters on motivations and identities. It is, of course, possible to access all these from a distance as well, at least in theory. Yet, in the informants' experience, being in a place makes access easier, faster, and more likely. Being in a place also brings extra benefits: for example, it allows a person to understand what is relevant information and what is noise, offers the possibility of encounters with the most important people in one's field, and brings a dynamism to work that was not perhaps there before. The challenges involved in communicating across distance seem to tell the opposite story, that information access, interaction and inspiration become harder to achieve, despite their bringing distant places closer in many ways.

In the following quote, the interviewee, a visiting research fellow at Stanford University, describes the relationship to the place - both the university and the area - and what it feels like to be there.

> B16: This is quite a unique place. You even develop a kind of an emotional relationship to it. I am experiencing this for the first time, I have never had that with any place let alone with a school, the kind of emotional relationship I have with this place.
>
> CK: Well, what would you say, like… can you describe it at all, what is it about, what do you get from here or what is it that is so great here?
>
> B16: Well… It's on so many levels. Firstly… this is very inspiring as a milieu. It is good, easy to be here and this place gives freedom and air for your thoughts. But also every day so many interesting things are happening here, the best researchers, the best artists in the world visit here. You have very inspiring guest lectures, very inspiring courses and this is altogether a very active community, the students, the visiting researchers. […] There is the extra [aspect] that any day the Dalai Lama might come and give a talk or a world leading politician or the leading researcher in your field […] And then if you think of Silicon Valley more broadly and combine the amenities of San Francisco, you get a cornucopia where you have the feeling all the time that you are in the center of everything essential

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> and that this is The Place where things happen. And also here the future is being created every day. So this is the Florence of our time.

7.3.1 Being in Silicon Valley: The Inspirational element

In the above I examined the work-related and what might be called the rational or objective reasons to be in a place: getting information, being close to important customers and collaborators, creating and accessing networks where there are the best chances to do so, being in the most important marketplace, having an office in the right location for reasons of reputation and image[10]. Yet, as also noted above, there seem to be subtler, not irrational as such but not as clearly articulated or justified reasons to go and work in a certain place. Importantly, even if these reasons are not as clear or rational as those presented so far, they seem to be just as important both in the decision to go, and for overall motivation and dynamism when living and working in the new place.

Conradson and Latham's (2007) research on the affective possibilities of London has significant parallels to my findings on the inspiring aspects of being in Silicon Valley that the Finnish informants described. Many Finns spontaneously talked about having developed an emotional relationship to Silicon Valley, in some cases unlike anything they had experienced before in relation to a location.

Similarly, Conradson and Latham (Ibid.) describe the emotional states their New Zealand informants experienced when moving to London. In the case of London, they write that "…it enables a certain degree of experimentation and exploration, whether in career or personal terms. Within a place some distance from 'home', the self can be worked upon in modest but

[10] As a small detour, an observation about networks. Networks are often treated as if they are not tied to places, but it is clear that some locations, in particular Silicon Valley, offer better opportunities to access global networks. Although the actors in networks may be geographically mobile, to access networks, local, face-to-face contact is often needed. When one is already a part of a network, this membership is not necessarily bound to one place – although we should not forget the principle of "out of sight, out of mind", which still seems to apply to some extent – one can maintain membership and perhaps expand it globally and virtually. But often the initial access to certain networks happens through first contacts which require at the very least a superficial level of trust, which then allow people to move ahead in the networks. Creating this trust, in turn, typically involves at least one face-to-face contact where a potential new member is 'checked out' before making further references to other contacts in the network. Furthermore, the people that form networks are tied to places and move in and between physical places.

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nonetheless significant ways." In parallel to the Finns in Silicon Valley The New Zealand professionals experienced London as being in the center of things and this opened up possibilities for self-development they had not had before.

The authors link the experience of being in the heart of things to the colonial historical relationship between New Zealand and England. Yet the experience reported by my Finnish informants in Silicon Valley were strikingly similar (literally the same expressions were used in some cases). But the historical relationship between the two locations in the case of Finns in Silicon Valley is not at all the same; in short, there is no such colonial or otherwise significant history between Silicon Valley and Finland. Based on my findings, I wonder if the experience is related more – or at least to some extent – to the more general feeling of the home country being a peripheral location, distant from many other key places. After all, it could be sensed in Conradson and Latham's research that what New Zealand and Finland may have in common is their peoples' experience of being in a relatively small, peripheral location.

In general, despite all the possibilities offered by connectedness, at the end of the day, we should not ignore the fact that people seem to *want* to be in certain places and not others. They *prefer* specific places, both for personal and work-related reasons. As discussed, some of these reasons are fairly clear-cut (because there are more customers in that area or because the most important collaborators are there), but others are less easy to justify on a purely rational basis (because it feels good to be there, because I'm happy there, because the weather is nice). Indeed, it seems that the rational reasons are articulated as those behind the decision to relocate, while the other kinds of reasons are not always conscious – yet they emerge when the informants describe their work and lives in Silicon Valley.

> B18: One thing is fearlessness.
> CK: Hm, whose fearlessness?
> B18: Everyone's.
> CK: So it's like a general atmosphere?
> B18: Yeah, here you just do it. You don't fear that you don't know enough, you don't fear that you will fail or that you will succeed. You just go for it.

These kinds of reasons can be called the *inspirational element of the importance of place or location*: place plays an important part in fostering personal motivation and inspiration. What does the inspirational element include and how does it manifest itself?

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Energy

Inspiration manifests itself as enhanced energy and creativeness. One informant told me, when we met in Silicon Valley, that he had just gotten three weeks' worth of work done in one week: he said he was just so inspired and energized by everything there and that he had come up with so many ideas to develop. He also added that he had never had this energy in Finland: it was due to the surroundings. There seems to be an optimistic element in the environment, which is perhaps specific to Silicon Valley: people are encouraged and allowed to try anything. Many informants mention how failure is not frowned upon, and how motivating it is (for someone coming from the Finnish entrepreneurial culture) that the attitude is more one of '(s)he who does not try is a loser but (s)he who tries and fails is an entrepreneur'.

Effortlessness

In relation to energy, there is effortlessness to working in Silicon Valley that seems to be fostered by the environment: some things seem to happen almost by themselves, to fall into place when one is in the locality. This is obviously a stark contrast to the cruel competitiveness that is also typical to Silicon Valley. Yet the positive side of this competitiveness is that it takes place in a location with a high concentration of brilliant people, and when you interact with those people, it is inspiring.

Meeting fascinating people

An important part of inspiration is face-to-face encounters with interesting people. Who is interesting is naturally highly subjective: what matters is that you are in a place where there are people that *you* find fascinating and admire. Meeting brilliant people means that you can learn from them, and seeing how they do things helps you develop yourself. It is therefore also inspiring to have role models and to be in close proximity to them: to be able to attend when they give public talks, or even to get the chance to arrange individual meetings with them. Being in the right place thus means being closer to your idols, which is highly motivating.

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Being in the center of things

Many informants speak of how in Silicon Valley they feel that they are at the center of things. They are in the very place where the most important events take place, where the most brilliant people (from each individual's perspective) come to from all over the world. When you are in the center of things you do not have to move or travel so much in order to catch the important people and events: they come to where you are. It also means being able to participate fully, not merely follow the developments in your field from a distance, but contribute actively, participating in discussions and innovation activities. Being in the center of things means being on the cutting-edge – you can be sure of doing the most relevant, meaningful things.

Chance encounters

The possibility of crucial, influential chance encounters is also a vital aspect of being in the center of things, and, in turn, of inspiration. When one is in the right location, anything interesting can happen at any moment, and one can run into crucial people, or pieces of information, by accident. Silicon Valley represents such a concentration of (relevant) talent, that you never know who might sit next to you. One informant described how he was sitting on a plane from San Francisco to Seattle, and a young man sat next to him. They started talking, and it turned out that the man was the assistant to the chief technology officer of Company X, which is a global leader in its field and highly relevant for this informant's business. The informant said that if he had sat on a plane from Helsinki to Jyväskylä (a smaller university town in central Finland), something like this would never have happened. It was highly inspiring – and potentially fruitful for business – to be able to have an informal conversation with someone so influential (or someone so close to someone so influential).

Using one's capacities more fully

Inspiration means the chance to use one's talents and capacities more fully, to express and test one's ideas in discussions with other successful, intriguing people and to develop oneself professionally (and personally). It seems that the physical environment, the location, plays an important part in fostering inspiration. Certain places have the culture and other elements that encourage individuals to express themselves and fulfill their dreams. Again, where such a place is depends on a person's work and interests.

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The feeling of fitting in: diversity

An important aspect of Silicon Valley is the diversity of its population and their backgrounds. The informants say that in Silicon Valley, it does not matter who you are or what your background is, people are only interested in what ideas you have, what you have to say, and what you can create. Many informants mention that in Silicon Valley there is the feeling that everyone is welcome, that everyone fits in. As it is such a mixture of ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds, nobody is different or stands out. This can be very liberating. Besides Conradson and Latham (2007) this is also emphasized by Florida (2002): diversity is one factor that makes a location attractive to the highly skilled creative class. According to Florida, members of the creative class seek to live in places where diverse ideas and perspectives can coexist. Diversity in ideas and backgrounds is also understood to be beneficial for innovation, because truly novel things come from combining different kinds of existing knowledge and perspectives in a new way. People with different backgrounds can learn from each other. This seems to form a part of the inspiring culture of Silicon Valley: the freedom to be oneself and learn from people with different backgrounds.

To conclude, I will sum up the findings discussed in this chapter, which focused on addressing research issue 3: the dynamics of locality and distance. In chapter 3 (section 3.8.) I asked how distance and proximity are experienced and what the role of physical and other dimensions of proximity are in the experience of distance. I also asked what the limitations of virtual communication are and, on the other hand, what aspects are important in the experience of being in a location.

As reported above, I found that the experience and awareness of distance is strong for the professionals studied. The aspects that make Finland seem far include, for example, physical symptoms from travel and long travel time, the differences in context (weather, scenery), and receiving messages in real time but not being able to physically attend events in Finland. Conversely, the experience of closeness is enhanced for the professionals by real-time, inexpensive or cost-free communication, getting (local) information on the Internet, visits from family and their own visits to Finland. Furthermore, the limitations of virtual interaction include not being able to access all kinds of information and participate in gossiping or informal chat

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and, consequently, having the feeling of being left out from what happens in another location. In addition, building trust and solving problems quickly are challenging when the parties are in distant locations. Finally, I found that a crucial part of the experience of being present in a location is the inspirational aspect in which being close to important people and events (from both professional and personal perspectives) becomes emphasized.

The findings are in line with previous studies that have reported challenges in virtual collaboration such as understanding one another, solving problems quickly, persuasion and awareness/perception of distance that influences the willingness to collaborate (e.g. Aneesh 2006; Bradner & Mark 2002). In addition to these, some new challenges emerged in my study, such as access to informal interaction and the feeling of being left out. This research also provided new understanding by explicitly examining the aspects that make a location seem distant or close. Furthermore, by investigating the inspirational aspects of being in Silicon Valley, this study sheds further light on Conradson and Latham's (2007) notion of the affective possibilities of locations. I found many of the same experiences as Conradson and Latham (Ibid.) – most notably the experience of being in the center of things (also mentioned in Bozkurt 2006) and the feeling of fitting in because of the diversity of people in the location – but also new ones: heightened energy and effortlessness, using one's capacities more fully and the possibility of chance encounters with fascinating people.

Finally, this study supports and advances the approach pioneered by O'Riain (2000; 2006) and Nowicka (2006; 2007) that aims to empirically go beyond the dualisms and oversimplified conceptualizations related to place, time, and distance in the global world. My research is in line with the earlier work by these authors, supporting the notion that these are not either-or issues but the actual experiences of global work and mobility are more complex. My empirical findings also offer a modest step further along this path, for example by showing how the highly skilled professionals may have the experience of being strongly and closely connected to distant locations and at the same time have a strong awareness of physical distance and the challenges it poses for the interaction. In a similar vein, the finding that a location (in this case, Finland) may feel at the same time both close and far shows the limitations of simple dichotomies related to the experience of locality and distance.

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8 IMPLICATIONS: Re-Framing Locality and Distance

> "All of this is perfectly well known in principle, although not adequately explored in detail."
> Goffman 1974

This chapter focuses on the last research question and examines locality and distance as cultural frames. Here I will consider the findings reported in the previous chapters on a more abstract and interpretive level. I will discuss the approach of framing and looking at reality as discursive, and specifically focus on the mismatch between rhetoric and "real"-life experience and practices. I will describe the current cultural frame that portrays distance as dead and then offer an alternative, updated frame that includes the empirical findings on the dynamic experience of locality and distance.

8.1 Locality and Distance as Cultural Frames

One of the central observations of this research is that there appears to be a partial mismatch between how locality and distance are theorized, or written about in general, and how they are experienced. As Massey (2005) has noted, the way space is theorized and imagined has consequences. This section is based on the findings presented in the previous chapters, and considers their implications further by drawing on frame analysis (Goffman 1974; Entman 1993), as well as social constructionist, discourse analysis approaches (e.g. Burr 1995; Gill 2000).

Thus, based on the findings in the previous chapters, I would like to turn my attention to the idea of the death of distance and locality as cultural frames. This means shifting the level of analysis from concrete, real-life meanings and experiences to discourse and rhetoric: to the ways distance and locality are talked or written about. I argue that the current prevailing rhetoric does not fully capture the real experiences of people.

Still, discourse and experience also influence each other. From a social scientific, constructivist perspective, there is no such thing as an objective, pure reality: what we observe and experience is mediated by our interpretations, and interpretations, in turn, are influenced by the cultural tools available to us. Therefore, the meaning of distance, for example, whether it is seen as dead or alive, depends on the cultural tools (Swidler 1986) we have for describing and discussing it. Cultural tools are created in different ways and in different arenas where language and human communication take place: chats over coffee, academic publications, the mass media (newspaper articles, news broadcasts and television shows), popular books, and the Internet. No matter the forum, cultural tools are created in social interaction: in various direct and indirect conversations. Phenomena – such as the meaning of distance – are thus created together, socially. Different objects obtain meaning through social interaction: often it is possible to observe something (see an event, read a piece of information), but it is impossible to make full sense of it without discussing it with someone or seeking further, background information (getting a "perspective"). Or, it is possible to make sense of something to a certain extent, but its meaning then changes or evolves in social interaction.

Importantly, we as humans do not merely create the meaning of things socially, our creations also influence the way we, in turn, perceive them. Thus we are dealing with a circular relationship: we create social meanings that we attach to objects and issues (such as distance), but the meanings we create then influence how we see things (how we perceive distance as "dead"). This is, naturally, a continuous process. Meanings evolve constantly, or at least it is possible that they evolve. The way meanings are constructed is never finished or done, there is always some potential for further discussion and development. When new aspects or viewpoints are brought into the discussion, the shape of a meaning changes, and we make adjustments to the image. At times, some aspects of an object or a phenomenon come into focus while others fade into the background; some are emphasized while others are ignored.

Based on the literature and findings discussed in the previous chapters, it seems that when it comes to the meaning of locality and distance in the global world, the latter has indeed happened - some aspects have been highly emphasized (connectedness across distance) while others have been largely forgotten (the continuing experience/awareness and challenges of physical distances). They have not really been forgotten, since my findings indicate that they are part of many people's everyday experiences. But, curiously, many written formulations related to the phenomena of distance and locality ignore these aspects. These writings, of both prominent academics and more popular authors, nevertheless play an important role in shaping

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the understanding of locality and distance today. How meanings are discussed is not irrelevant, discourse is not simply description but doing as well. When talking or writing about the death of distance, we are also killing it. If distance was not dead before, it soon will be – in our minds that is, at least on the conscious level. And the consequence of this may be that we stop recognizing the signs that indicate that it is still alive and kicking.

8.2 Framing

Frame analysis - in Goffman's original sense - refers to the investigation of the principles that organize our experiences: the meaning of actions, events and items is dependent on the organizing principle or the label we attach to them (for example, framing something as "real" or as a performance) (Goffman 1974; Branaman 1997). Notably, the idea of framing draws attention to how powerful a communicating text can be (Entman 1993). The way things are framed is significant and brings consequences. "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (Entman 1993, 52.) Thus, as Entman (Ibid.) posits, framing includes not only assigning a meaning to specific actions or objects, but also defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments and suggesting remedies.

Actions or items do not, therefore, speak for themselves but are dependent on the meaning given to them (Goffman 1974, Branaman 1997). Considering our present topic, the same item can be understood as representing the death of distance or conversely it's importance depending on the framing. For example, the existence of virtual communication is typically seen as something that erases distance. Yet an alternative framing would emphasize that virtual communication is needed and useful precisely because great physical distances exist; it does not erase distance, but exists *because* of distances.

As actions or items as such do not speak for themselves, their meaning(s) have to be detected, construed, and made explicit. Goffman (1974) also stresses that people are not always free to select frames; the selection and use of frames may be conscious or completely unconscious and unintended (Entman 1993).

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While drawing on Goffman, the present discussion is not concerned with certain aspects that are essential to his work, although they are in themselves intriguing, for example the idea of looking at micro-level interaction as drama, ritual or game, or the manipulative or moral features of social life. Nor am I directly concerned with aspects of status or hierarchy. This research seeks to be above all about meaning: meaning as expressed in both rhetoric and in everyday experience and practice. Furthermore, while framing in Goffman's (1974) original work seems to apply mainly to micro-level social interactions – and, as Goffman emphasizes in Frame Analysis, to *situated* interactions and experiences – it is, with some adjustments, useful for understanding more general cultural ideas as well. Discourse analysis provides an additional tool for identifying the frames that organize our experience of locality and distance.

Next, I will briefly discuss what it means to approach reality as discursive and how to detect both discourses/frames and "real" experiences in interviews. I will then reconstruct the current cultural frame of locality and distance, and offer an alternative frame that takes into account the empirical findings of the study.

8.3 Reality as Discursive

Discourse analysis is not a single method of analysis, it includes many different styles that share the following principles (Gill 2000, 172):

1. The rejection of the realist notion that language is a neutral means of describing or reflecting the world.
2. A belief that discourse has a crucial importance in constructing social life.

The epistemological basis of discourse analysis is different from that of many other social science methodologies. It is not a positivistic methodology, resulting indeed from critiques of positivism (structuralism, post-structuralism, and post-modernism). This epistemological basis is called, depending on the specific field, social constructionism, constructivism, or constructionism (Burr 1995; Gill 2000).

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These perspectives take a critical stand on knowledge. Knowledge is not neutral and cannot be taken for granted, but is always context-specific, relative and historically bound. Our observations of the world do not simply reveal its 'true' nature to us; instead, knowledge is socially constructed and our understandings of the world are determined by social processes – knowledge is created socially. (Gill 2000.) Thus, the approaches that have emerged as critiques of positivism are committed to "exploring the ways that knowledges – the social construction of people, phenomena or problems – are linked to actions/practices" (Burr 1995).

Gill (2000) mentions three broad theoretical traditions that highlight the varieties of discourse analysis. The tradition of *critical linguistics, critical language studies and social semiotics* investigates the ways in which particular linguistic forms (such as agent deletion, passivization or nominalization) can have dramatic effects on how an event or phenomenon is understood. Another tradition of *speech act theory, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis* is concerned with the functional or action orientation of discourse: what textual accounts are designed to accomplish and the organization of social interaction. Thirdly, *poststructuralists* (such as Michel Foucault) look at discourses from a historical perspective, for instance the genealogies of discipline and sexuality.

Gill (2000) also discusses the four main themes of discourse analysis. First, there is the concern with discourse itself: discourse analysts are interested in "discourses in their own right, rather than seeing them as means of 'getting at' some reality which is deemed to lie behind the discourse – whether social, psychological or material (Gill 2000, 174)". This distinguishes discourse analysts from many other social scientists whose concern with language is often limited to finding out 'what really happened', or what an individual's 'real' attitude or behavior is. "Instead of seeing discourse as a pathway to some other reality, discourse analysts are interested in the content and organization of texts (Ibid., 175.)" This applies to the present research in terms of reading existing literature as "pure" texts, that is not making assumptions about the possible intentions or attitudes behind them (concerning the authors). However, as discussed below, I depart from this view when it comes to using interviews as access points to realities: I do believe that interview data can be used as sources of both experiences and the meanings given to these experiences (I will discuss this further in the next section).

The second essential feature identified by Gill (2000) is a view of language as constructive and constructed. Discourse analysis takes the standpoint that language is built from

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existing linguistic resources and emphasizes that the way an account (e.g. an account of the meaning of distance) is put together involves a *choice or a selection* from a number of different possibilities. Thus, even a simple phenomenon can be described in multiple ways and, importantly, the choice of a particular way of describing something, although not always conscious, is not random. This feature is also embraced in the present research.

Third, there is an emphasis upon discourse as a form of action: people use language and discourse to do things. The use of language is an action and not only a descriptive tool; for instance with language one can blame, make excuses, present oneself in a certain light, etc. Language is not used in a social vacuum – the context in which discourse occurs matters and as social actors we tailor our discourse to contexts. Discourse analysts thus examine both the *interpretive context* and the discourse itself. This aspect, although interesting, is not directly relevant for the present research: I will not focus on situational contexts – yet it could perhaps be said that the interpretive context is more widely the global context.

Fourth, discourse analysts share an interest in the rhetorical organization of discourse: "much discourse is involved in establishing one version of the world in the face of competing versions (Gill 2000, 176)." There are thus continuous – although often subtle – conflicts and struggles between different accounts of what is the 'truth' or 'reality'. "The emphasis on the rhetorical nature of texts directs our attention to the ways in which all discourse is organized to make itself persuasive (Ibid., 176.)"

The key point about discourse analysis is, therefore, that "there is nothing 'mere' or insubstantial about language: talk and text are social practices, and even the most seemingly trivial statements are involved in various kinds of activities" (Gill 2000, 176). This is at the core of why I see the examination of the discourse – or framing – of locality and distance as crucial: even if unintended or not carried out in any systematic way, the discourse of globalization (in particular in portraying locality and distance as less meaningful than before) matters and has consequences. Sometimes it is healthy to deconstruct and explicitly make sense of discourses as such, in order to update and make adjustments where needed.

Discourse analytic research asks questions different to those of more traditional (positivist) approaches. "The decision to use discourse analysis entails a radical epistemological shift" (Gill 2000, 177). As mentioned, discourse analysts are interested in language in its own right. Besides the centrality of language in constructing the social world there is also a historical

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dimension to discourse analysis that is relevant for the present study. The historical context and point in time is interesting because, as argued above, this particular point in time (the global world in which virtual communication and travel are more present than ever) is seen as different from any previous era, and thus the meaning of certain topics (local places, geographical distance) has presumably also been altered.

In the present project the general interest is in meaning, specifically in how the meaning of locality and geographical/physical distance has changed in the global era. Reality is understood as discursive, that is as partly constructed and shaped by, as well as reflected in, language. The key point when reality is understood as discursive is that language is not something that only reflects but also acts. Reality is enacted in language and the way things are constructed in language, even if not always direct images of "reality", is therefore important and consequential.

What follows from this ontology – reality as discursive – is that the best sources for exploring reality are textual. Textual data can take many forms, such as interviews, the published works of scholars and other writers, newspaper articles, transcriptions of meetings, informal discussions etc. To analyze the discursive framing of locality and distance, I have drawn on all available and relevant sources: the interviews, current scholarly and other writings, and my notes and observations from Silicon Valley. For the purpose of identifying frames, all these are considered as equally valid sources.

8.4 Interviews as Access to Rhetoric and Experience

Unlike the analysis presented in the previous chapters, here we are more explicitly concerned with the relationship between rhetoric/talk and action/experience. Thus, we make an analytic distinction between how things are talked about and how they are lived and experienced. Naturally, the tricky part here is that lived experience is examined mostly through talk, through the way the informants describe their experiences in the interviews.

How, then, do we separate talk from experience (as reported in talk)? According to purist constructionists, there is nothing outside the text. We can only analyze texts; we have no access to what goes on "beyond" the text, in people's minds or experiences for example. Furthermore, the interview is seen as a unique situation, a joint construction in which both the interviewer and the interviewee participate. Yet, according to Miller and Glassner (1997), the fact that the interview itself is a symbolic interaction does not exclude the possibility of obtaining information outside the interview situation. While interviews cannot provide direct access to experiences, we can learn about the meanings people give to their experiences. “To assume that realities beyond the interview context cannot be tapped into and explored is to grant narrative omnipotence. (Ibid.)” As an example, they mention the chronically ill: they undoubtedly experience sickness regardless of whether they participate in interviews about their illness or not. Moreover, qualitative interviewing “provides us with a means for exploring the points of view of our research subjects, while granting these points of view the culturally honored status of reality” (Ibid.).

Miller and Glassner (Ibid.) further point out that, if given the opportunity, interviewees will let researchers know if their assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation are incorrect. These authors make a useful distinction between cultural stories and collective stories. *Cultural stories* are mainstream frames of issues based on stereotypes. *Collective stories* are frames based on the point of view of the interview subjects, often contrasting or at least offering more nuances than are captured by the cultural stories. Importantly, both are present in the interviews. Thus, we may assume that both the cultural story - the mainstream framing - of locality and distance, and the collective story - actual meanings and experiences - are present in the interviews with the global professionals.

We have seen that there is mismatch between how locality and distance are theorized in the literature, and how they are reported in the interviews with the professionals. But there are also paradoxical ways of talking about these and reporting experiences of them in the interviews. It was not at all uncommon for an informant to talk about distance as dead and then go on to describe the problems involved in communication across distance in the same interview. Many explicitly said that this is not an either-or issue, but more complex: distance is dead in some ways and in others it is not. Discourse analysis and constructionist-oriented approaches recognize that natural speech is full of incoherencies, paradoxes, and contradictions. In contrast to more positivist approaches, this is not seen as a problem - these apparent incoherencies are taken as the very focus of the analysis.

In the present research the way the interviewees talk about their experiences reflects both the prevailing, shared cultural idea of the death of distance and locality (in line with theoretical and more popular literature) and their "real", everyday experiences, which partly contradict the cultural ideas. Of course, this is the nature of social meaning creation: most issues remain more or less unresolved. Even if there are general frames and alternative frames, most issues are constantly being socially created and re-created, negotiated and re-negotiated. That is, indeed, what the present study also aims to do: it seeks to contribute by offering a basis for better frames. It by no means claims to be "outside" the world it attempts to explore and analyze.

There is an apparent paradox in maintaining that people are still aware of distance (as the interview data show) and at the same time arguing that the mainstream rhetoric of the death of distance makes us less aware. It should be specified that the interviewees are aware of distance and locality in specific situations, but that these situations have not, apparently, significantly altered the mainstream cultural frame and therefore, in turn, our image of the issue in general. Even when our experiences tell us otherwise, the frame remains largely unchanged. Facing challenges in a virtual team meeting is part of everyday life, but these common experiences remain mostly undocumented and are not discussed from the perspective of the more general issue, and thus do not essentially change the frame. The thing about rhetoric is that ideas that are articulated in talk and documented in a written form (publications) are more influential: people can refer back to them. The real world is naturally always more complex than written or spoken articulations are able to capture, yet they are powerful in shaping our understanding of the real world. In particular, academic discussions and other published books by prominent writers are authoritative in creating and shaping cultural frames.

As noted, cultural framings – the way objects or issues are constructed in rhetoric/discourse – have consequences. Many times these are practical consequences, especially when it comes to researching phenomena or solving problems, paying attention to some things and ignoring others. In order to address the challenges that still exist in interacting across distance, we must start by acknowledging that there are still challenges in the first place, and find out what they are in this particular situation that is in some way new and different from the past.

Next, I will describe the two frames of locality and distance that I have identified based on this research. The first frame is the current dominant cultural frame that portrays distance and

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locality as dead. The second, alterative frame provides a more detailed and reality-based image, in which the changes brought about by virtual communication and global connectedness are recognized; yet what has not changed is also included.

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8.5 <u>The Current Cultural Frame: Distance is Dead</u>

Frame summary (main elements/assumptions of the frame)
- the world is fundamentally different, transformed
- distant places are close because of virtual connectedness
- virtual connectedness is unproblematic
- more privileged people are not attached to places (live in virtual space)
- information is accessible no matter where you are physically
- work can be done anywhere where there is virtual connectedness
- there are no time differences or distances in virtual space

The death of distance frame, as we have seen, conveys an image of a world that has been fundamentally transformed. Whereas the earth used to consist of locations and the geographical distances between them, it has now transformed into one place where distances do not matter. This is because of all kinds of connectedness (in particular economic, in the form of globalization), but the essential role in the transformation is played by information and communication technologies. They have made a new kind of world in which people can be instantly connected and "travel" across distances, no matter where they are, possible.

This world includes a completely new kind of space, the virtual space, in which there are no time differences or physical distances. Everyone can "go" to virtual space and interact there; physical locations as sites for personal communication and sources of information largely lose their meaning. More privileged people in particular, who do highly skilled knowledge work, or elites who do not have to work, inhabit this placeless, virtual space. These people become detached from localities, and they can choose where to be physically. Even when present in physical locations, these locations have only a superficial meaning to them, they do not fully participate in local life, nor are they concerned with it: their life is a mobile one spent traveling through physical places. Virtual space becomes the stable space, the home of these elites.

Virtual space is also where major economic events and transactions happen, and where real-time, constantly updated information is available. The global world, especially for privileged people, is fast-paced, physically mobile and virtual. Locations largely lose their

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personal meaning to people, because they can now choose and move according to their changing needs and desires. In this world, the virtual and the physical are not altered in any essential way, and the virtual largely replaces the physical. No distinction is made between face-to-face encounters and virtual encounters, between the occupation of physical locations and virtual spaces. Virtual connectedness is unproblematic, and since both interaction and gaining information is possible through the Internet, work can be done anywhere. It does not matter where a knowledge worker is, as long as there is a computer and connectivity available.

8.6 The Updated Frame: Distance is Dynamic

Frame summary (main elements/assumptions of the frame):
- location matters for identity - even people who are mobile are tied to places - time differences still pose challenges to collaboration and connectedness - "real-time" virtual communications are only partially so - certain kinds of knowledge and information cannot be accessed from a distance or virtually - besides new kinds of possibilities there are also new challenges involved in virtual interaction (trust, mutual understanding, convincing) that have not yet been overcome Yet these changes are real: - more connectedness; even when moving to another location, one never has to leave a place completely behind - virtual communication makes certain interactions and information access much easier

According to the new frame, some significant changes have been brought about by information and communication technologies: new ways of accessing information and connecting that we did not have in the past. These have meant further changes for work, especially highly skilled work, which is now more mobile and is often carried out in different places, even during the same working day: the office, public spaces, home, when traveling (in trains, planes, airports). Work can temporarily, or for certain periods of time, be carried out almost anywhere there is a computer and an Internet connection – yet in the long run, being in specific locations and engaging in face-to-face interaction continues to be highly important for the work of skilled professionals. This is because, firstly, there are certain kinds of information/knowledge that are not codified and thus not accessible virtually or through virtual interaction (which seems to be limited to specific types of exchanges). Secondly, face-to-face interaction continues to be crucial for deeper learning and the trust needed for collaborative relationships and innovation.

Furthermore, although mobile and in some ways free from the constraints of place, privileged professionals are often aware of physical distances and the differences between localities when it comes to access to knowledge, the entrepreneurial environment, and other elements not directly related to work, such as the weather and local people. Locations continue to matter for professionals on a personal level: specific locations can be sources of identity and means for fulfilling both personal and work goals, pursuing dreams and developing oneself as a person.

Two major changes related to connectedness are the following: first, it has restructured the working day locally and has made staying in touch with a place possible much more so than in the past – one does not have to leave a place behind when relocating, but can continue to stay in frequent touch with friends, family and colleagues, and follow news via Internet. Nevertheless, where one is physically located, and how great the physical distance between parties in a virtual interaction is, matters a great deal for both work and personal happiness. Ultimately, beside the more rational reasons that seem to point to the importance of local presence (knowledge sharing, trust), lies the simple observation that people still want to see each other face-to-face and be in close proximity, sharing the same physical context. Thus, the world is more connected in some ways, but physical locations and distances continue to matter even for those who could, in principle, work anywhere and have the freedom to choose where they are located.

8.7 Reflections on Frames

As I hope to have shown, the current cultural frame does not fully capture the range of meanings and experiences related to locality and distance today. I argue that the latter, updated frame is useful and more accurate than the first, because it is:

- Empirically grounded
- Addresses and captures complexity (not either-or)
- More realistic
- Explicitly addresses what has not changed (does not focus only on change)
- Discusses aspects that are ignored or treated as unproblematic in the death of distance frame, including but not limited to: personal relationship to place, identity, how place motivates, the everyday dynamics and challenges of connectedness, the meaning of distance and locality for innovation, business and knowledge creation and sharing.

Before concluding on frames, one last observation must be noted. There is an interesting dimension of *positive-negative* implicit in the ideas of distance being dead and the world being one place. In the current frame, distance is implicitly defined as a problem. Therefore its death is a positive thing. Distance is portrayed as an obstacle and a barrier – and presented this way, we want to see distance dead. But it remains unclear why exactly distance is such a negative thing. At least theoretically, it is possible to imagine distance in a more positive light: for example, distance helps us see things more clearly, or temporal distance from a painful experience can ease that pain. For innovation, distance can be beneficial in the sense of getting different perspectives and information that is diverse and novel (avoiding the problem of lock-in, e.g. Boschma 2005).

Finally, it should be noted that there is a vast body of research that documentd the challenges related to virtual teamwork and communication. Moreover, the social theorists' works discussed in this thesis (Appadurai 1996; Giddens 1990; Castells 2000a&b&c; 2004a; Beck 2000a&b;2002; Bauman 1998; 2000; 2007) are more nuanced and move far beyond the explicit conceptualizations of distance and locality that are addressed here. Yet the focus here is on the meaning of distance and locality; and the way these are portrayed in rhetoric matters. As already mentioned, this research is not concerned with intentions, but with language as such.

The fact that there is a great deal of research on virtual dispersed teams (see e.g. Hinds & Kiesler 2002; Hinds & Bailey 2003), and on the meaning of location for innovation (e.g. Leamer & Storper 2001; Storper & Venables 2004; Brown & Duguid 2002), makes it all the more surprising that distance has been declared dead. These fields of research deal precisely with how distance is not dead and recognize many of the issues that still remain. Yet it seems that these

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areas of study have a similar role to real-life experiences when it comes to frames: they are excluded from the cultural frame of the death of distance. They are also more specific areas of research, and have remained largely separate from the general theoretical claims about the diminishing meaning of distance in the global world. There is also a noteworthy temporal dimension: although the latest theorizations are fairly recent (Bauman 2007), most of those I maintain to have played a significant role in creating the death of distance frame date from the early 1990s to the early 2000's (Giddens 1990; Castells 2000a&b; Beck 2000). Thus, their authors had perhaps already started to reflect on the changes before the empirical research flourished.

The current cultural frame tends to focus on change and ignore what remains. I am sympathetic to focusing on change; it is natural to turn our attention to what is new and to explore it further. We owe much to these theorists' remarkable efforts to capture changes as they were happening. Yet change is only one side of the coin in this case, and to get a full understanding, we need to look at the other side as well.

9 CONCLUSIONS: Critical Thoughts

This concluding chapter reflects on the potential contributions and limitations of the study. I will start by considering the categorization of the mobile and the rooted (Florida 2008) and the implications of focusing on those who moved instead of those who stayed. I will then discuss what we can learn from studying Finns in Silicon Valley and what the limitations of this case selection are. The last section summarizes the findings and contributions of the study.

9.1 Reconsidering the Mobile and the Rooted

Florida (2008) identifies a new social dichotomy: the mobile and the rooted. "The mobile possess the means, resources, and inclination to seek out and move to locations where they can leverage their talents. They are not necessarily born mobile, nor are they inevitably rich. What the mobile understand is that the pursuit of economic opportunity often requires them to move." (Ibid., 79-80.) Thus, Florida argues that understanding the crucial role of place/location in one's life, happiness and success is what separates the mobile from the rooted. He stresses economic opportunity as the main factor for which location is crucial.

If the mobile are those who have understood the crucial meaning of location, who are the rooted? They are "people who are tied to place. Some, of course, have the good fortune to be rooted in places with thriving economies and optimistic futures. But many others are essentially trapped in areas with limited resources, moribund economies, and declining financial opportunities. Of course, many are born poor and do not possess the resources to move." (Ibid.)

While Florida notes that not all who are rooted are stuck and that they may also be rooted by choice (they may want to be close to family and friends, which is an important aspect of happiness), the tone nevertheless implies that mobile is the most attractive category. Mobility is suggested as something to aim for (after all, who would want to be stuck?). Mobility rings of freedom, glamour, opportunity, while rootedness is mainly equated with being trapped or stuck.

This classification, although appealing in its clarity, raises a number of questions and considerations. My research shows that even the mobile are somehow tied to place: you can

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move, but you are always tied to a place or places. Nor can the mobile be mobile all the time: they may move once or twice or every few years, but they are still in many ways rooted. It is also unclear to what extent rootedness or mobility is a matter of choice. Florida says there is more freedom to move voluntarily today; in the past, migration was largely involuntary. My informants had the choice of staying or going (being rooted or becoming mobile, at least temporarily). But choice is limited by the aspects reported above, that is by personal motivations in relation to place and work situations.

Therefore, I am not sure how useful or appropriate the mobile / rooted dichotomy really is. It can be problematic, first of all simply because there is the risk of creating another kind of class division: the mobile are successful, attractive, and happy and the rooted are static, unexciting, and unsuccessful. In emphasizing the importance of locality today (with which I agree), Florida may overstretch the argument in labeling people on the basis of mobility. Acknowledging the importance of locality does not directly imply that mobility is desirable or needed, it only means that we should continue to pay close attention to how place plays a role in diverse aspects of human, social, and economic life, and to what the dynamics between being located somewhere and connected to other places are. In many instances and for many purposes, it is important to *be there*: this what Florida (2002) writes, and my own empirical data also show this.

Second, it is far from simple to define who exactly the mobile and the rooted are. There are various aspects that need to be considered here, such as the number and nature of the moves from one location to another. Who is mobile and who rooted is relative. Is one mobile if one has moved once in their adult life? Does it make a difference if the other city is 50 or 5000 miles away? Or if it is in the same nation-state or a different one? If the language is the same? If one moved there to study or to work? With or without family? Is age a factor in being mobile or rooted?

Even limiting the discussion to skilled professionals does not solve this. Many are mobile at some point in their lives, but there is great variety in the extent of their mobility: length of time, timing, whether they live in several different places or just move once, how far the place is from home, etc. Returning is also an essential question: do the mobile eventually return to their original home country/city or not? And what are the implications of this? Whether one returns or stays away forever makes a difference and reminds us of the dimension of temporariness vs. permanence in mobility.

And who are the rooted, then? Are they those that have never moved in their lives? But what about all the other aspects of their lives and careers, when it comes to localities: what if they travel extensively (for leisure or work) while being rooted in one locality? What if they are still a part of global virtual communities or networks that also hold face-to-face meetings even if most of the communication/collaboration is virtual?

Instead of aiming at simple categorizations, it is perhaps more important to try to understand in detail and depth how the lives of people today are mobile or rooted. In its own way, this categorization shows that the questions of the meaning of place and the dynamics of place and distance are extremely relevant. Yet the most relevant or fruitful question (for social scientists) may not be a normative one, that is whether people should be globally mobile or not (although a decision to move or not to move is of course significant on a personal level). I think social scientists may have more to contribute in terms of helping us to understand better what it means to move or to stay, and in developing better roadmaps for the study of these themes.

Also, although beyond the scope of the present study, it would be important to understand better the meaning of place and of moving at different stages of life and career (Burrell 2008 has drawn attention to how important timing may be in relocating). My data show that soem things (both personally meaningful and important for work or business) that are not accessible from a distance or a visit to a locality. But the decision of whether to relocate or not is not made based solely on this. Even if there are important things in a new locality that are only accessible if one moves there (such as tacit knowledge or personal fulfillment), the decision is made by weighing the overall situation: family, one’s career stage, etc. It is a decision made on the basis of considering all the important aspects of life. At least in the case of skilled professionals, the usefulness of relocating is questionable if the person really does not want to go. Finally, as noted, even if some things are accessible only by living and working in a place, it does not mean that relocating automatically brings access: this is where the work begins.

9.1.1 *What about those who stay?*

The issue of the mobile and the rooted also draws us into a more methodological conundrum: why focus on those who moved, excluding those who stayed (in this case, the vast majority of the highly skilled Finns who continue to live in Finland)? Mostly, of course, the choice to focus on one group is due to practical limitations. Yet, it is worth considering this briefly from a purely methodological viewpoint – why is this not a comparative study, and what would change if it were?

It would certainly be interesting to study those who did not relocate, to gain an understanding of their experience and relationship to place, both personally and from the work/innovation perspective. But I also wonder if including those people – while perhaps satisfying more positivist-oriented readers – would teach us less than we might expect. The idea of including a comparative aspect (those who moved and those who stayed) implies the assumption that something needs to be *proved*. This line of thinking suggests that studying those who did not relocate, and were nevertheless happy and successful, might prove that distance is dead after all. But this would miss the point of the present study. Departing from starting assumptions based on more constructivist, hermeneutic tradition, this study sets out to explore how and in what ways distance and location still might matter in the global era. By showing how they matter for these people (who are mobile) it illustrates (some of) the specific ways in which distance is not dead. I do agree that it would be interesting to study those privileged professionals who did not relocate, but I suspect that the findings would not severely undermine the present ones: as discussed earlier, their relationship to place may be different in some specific ways, but generally, I believe that location and distance would still be very much alive for them.

Furthermore, there are the abovementioned questions of temporal vs. permanent relocation, travel, and different kinds of mobility. Just how are the people who stay different from those who relocate? Considering the informants in the present study, it quickly becomes clear that categorizing them as those who have temporarily or permanently relocated is by no means straightforward. There is heterogeneity among the informants. Some – typically those sent by their employer or visiting academic researchers – knew their relocation was only for a specific period of time, typically for 1-3 years, and they even knew exactly when they would

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return to Finland. Others went to start their firm or establish a satellite office in Silicon Valley without knowing how long they would be there (although typically in these cases those with a spouse had at least an informal idea of how long the relocation would last or whether it would be permanent or not). Some had sold their houses in Finland and had a "one-way ticket" attitude, others had promised their spouses that they could continue with their career in Finland after one or two years leave of absence. But I would maintain that heterogeneity as such is not the source of the problem. Does knowing one will return home at a certain point influence the informants' motivations, identities, etc.? In the dimensions I studied, whether the informant was a temporary or a permanent mover would not be significant for motivations, identities or everyday work in relation to locality and distance. But this remains a question to be investigated further. I also asked the informants where they felt their home was, and this too seemed unrelated to whether they knew they were going back (most said their home was in Silicon Valley, where they lived at the moment, or where their families were, also in Silicon Valley).

I also asked the informants whether they could see themselves staying permanently in Silicon Valley or not; naturally those who had a temporary assignment there mentioned that they knew they would return. Yet, when I asked them to consider the question anyway, many could in principle see themselves staying. Besides, there were individuals who had at first left for a determinate period of time, but had then stayed longer, either with the same employer or with a different one; thus even apparently specific initial planning (knowing the return date) does not exclude the possibility that the professionals eventually decide to stay – but for how long exactly is something no one can tell.

When studying highly skilled professionals there is no way of being certain that those who stayed will continue to do so. As discussed above, defining the mobile and the rooted may be more complicated than it seems. Even those who have never lived outside the location/country they were born in (which would appear to provide a criterion for a relatively clear-cut definition) may actually lead very mobile lives. Naturally, travel for work or leisure is a fundamentally different from relocating. Yet one of the things that makes these categories so vague is the fact that for skilled professionals *both* those who have and those who have not relocated to another (distant) country can be relatively mobile geographically. (If the questions are expanded to a more general level, beyond the highly skilled, then of course it becomes easier to find "truly" rooted people, but this is outside the scope of the present study.)

Therefore, the reasons I would provide for studying those highly skilled workers who have not relocated differ partially to what might be assumed by those who wish to see more "proof" of distance and locality still being alive. I am not sure if studying these subjects would prove or disprove this. The reasons for which I think they would be worth study are mostly the same as those presented to justify the study of globally mobile Finns here: I believe skilled professionals are a highly relevant and fruitful population for getting a better understanding of pressing issues concerning the global era, including, but not limited to: the meaning and use of information and communication technologies in everyday work, the meaning and dynamics of place, locality and distance for those to whom they should not matter according to some perspectives, personal identities and motivations in a more connected world, and to understand the everyday, micro-level dynamics and challenges involved in global collaboration, innovation and knowledge creation and sharing.

Based on the above, I would conclude that a) the mobile and the rooted, at least in the case of skilled professionals, is not as clear-cut a category as one might think when it comes to skilled people, since they are almost by definition mobile to some extent and b) nevertheless, this is a group worth studying both from the global mobility and the locality/distance perspectives, as I hope to have to some extent shown in the present study. The focus here is on meaning, not comparison or statistical representation: I would maintain that when it comes to changes in the dynamics of local-distant (or local-global), many of the most pressing questions have to do with meaning and changing practices. Qualitative, hermeneutic studies are also useful in order to discover which questions to ask in potential future studies that wish to say something at a statistically generalizable level.

9.2 Critical Considerations

As discussed earlier, Finns moving to Silicon Valley represent a case of West-West (or North-North) global mobility, i.e. from one Western, successful economic location to another. This is an interesting case to study for at least two reasons: firstly, as Favell and his colleagues (2008) point out, highly skilled mobility remains little understood and much less studied than unskilled migration; and secondly, studies on migration and mobility typically focus on global South-

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North or East-West mobility, when people move from less developed to more developed areas in pursuit of better lives and opportunities, either as unskilled migrants or highly skilled people moving from less developed locations to more developed ones (the so-called brain drain phenomenon). Yet studying the experiences, meanings and motivations of skilled individuals who move from one successful innovation location to another is important for a deeper and fuller understanding of global mobility. Furthermore, from the perspective of understanding the meaning of locality and distance, Finns represent a case of (presumably) privileged professionals, for whom these should have less meaning than in the past. They have wide access to the latest technologies, which offer possibilities to work, interact, collaborate and get information from anywhere. They also have the skills levels to be able to choose locations more freely than less skilled people. So, on the one hand they seem to have the freedom to choose locations and travel, and on the other they seem to be more detached from locations than less privileged individuals.

Therefore, one premise of this study was that we could learn a lot about highly skilled mobility and the meaning of location and distance by focusing on Finns in Silicon Valley. Still, focusing on one case or population of individuals naturally has its limitations. In this concluding section, I will consider some of the most crucial ones.

9.2.1 What can we learn from studying Finns?

Let us start by considering the question of generalizability. The main purpose of the study was to explore and show how a personal relationship to place still exists, and how location and distance matter for work and innovation at a time when prominent grand theories suggest they do not. A major part of this thesis is dedicated to showing how and in what specific ways distance and place still matter for the privileged mobile (for whom it is assumed not to matter). Thus, some of these may be specific to Finns (most obviously, for example, the identities of atypical Finns), but the general observations and the mechanisms through which the meaning of place and distance matters should be generalizable at least to other Western professionals. Furthermore, the findings about work and knowledge transfer do not appear to be specific to Finns; indeed, many of the informants, when describing interaction and collaboration across

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distance, also talked about or had experience of these in relation to other Finns and people of other nationalities. Perhaps it could be specified that the meaning of distance is not tied to particular places or nationalities: it may be hypothesized that the awareness of distance and the challenges related to it are present in all kinds of global interactions, no matter who the specific people involved are, nor where they are. Thus, on the general level, this study's finding that location and distance are not dead has wider implications. Naturally, it would be important and interesting for future studies to look at other locations and other populations, and see how the meaning of location and distance appears in those.

Thus, to sum up: the specific meanings and identities tied to location uncovered in this study may be specific to Finns, but the general finding that these matter for highly skilled people has wider implications. In contrast, the findings on distance and knowledge transfer etc. do not seem to be specific in any particular way to Finns alone: the findings that virtual communication has changed the organization of work locally, that time zones structure local working days, that a local presence is important for information, interaction and inspiration, can be assumed to apply to other innovators and professionals as well. Importantly, though, locations and distances matter here: in the case of Finns, the geographical distance is great, as is the time difference (10 hours). It may be that in the case of locations that are still distant, but not to the same extent, the challenges of interaction may not be as great. Here though the questions of different kinds of distance and proximity again become relevant: being physically close but cognitively/culturally distant, and so on.

So, the specifics may vary to some extent (specific identities, motivations, etc. because they depend partly on the culture, norms, and characteristics of both the departure and destination locations in question, that is they would be different if French professionals moved to Montreal or Tokyo). Yet the overall finding that the characteristics of locations matter to professionals' personal motivations, identities and their work can be generalized to other skilled professionals besides Finns.

9.2.2 *Finland and Silicon Valley as similar "global technopoles"*

A potential limitation of the study concerns the similarities between the departure and destination locations, Silicon Valley and Finland, and brings the "mental" distance between the two into question. Could it not be assumed that in some important ways, since both are successful, Western, innovative, economically prosperous locations, that they are actually much closer to each other than, for example, to a small town that geographically only a few hundred miles away? What can we learn about the meaning of distance and locality from studying two locations that are similar in so many ways, that could perhaps both be seen as among the key nodes in the networks of global cities? What about the great number of locations and spaces in between these, that are usually left out of the discussions, and where most highly skilled professionals would not think of relocating?[11]

Yet, as we have seen, Finland is in some ways a very particular case: it is successful in innovation and competitiveness, but it is nevertheless marginal and peripheral as a location. It does not attract significant numbers of elite migrants and it is certainly debatable whether it really is one of the global technopoles that form the core of networks of important global locations. Silicon Valley, on the other hand, continues to be a Mecca for the highly skilled, especially in technological innovation.

If anything, the finding that distance was nevertheless experienced in the case of Finns in Silicon Valley highlights how much distances still matter. Thus, in spite of all the apparent cultural or mental similarities, Silicon Valley still feels like a distant location to Finnish professionals. Therefore, precisely because we might expect no significant cultural or social distances between these two locations, but we have found that there are, it can be concluded that focusing on apparently similar cases is useful for discovering whether differences and distances still matter.

[11] I am grateful to Paul Duguid for drawing my attention to this potential criticism.

9.2.3 Practical and theoretical implications

This study touches upon a number of issues and has implications for diverse practical and theoretical perspectives. Its practical implications concern global work and knowledge transfer, in that it confirms many previous findings (e.g. O'Riain 2000; 2006; Bradner & Mark 2002; Storper & Venables 2004) but also offers new and more detailed ones. When organizing global work and collaboration, virtual technology does not fully replace face-to-face interaction. The same applies for knowledge transfer: when it comes to certain kinds of knowledge and information, the importance of being present in a place cannot be underestimated. Thus, this study highlights the challenges in everyday work and connectedness across distance, and shows how place matters for professionals in both personal and work perspectives. The findings suggest that when planning global innovation activity and collaboration, it is better to start out with the awareness that distance still matters, rather than treating it as a non-issue.

From the theoretical perspective, the main implications are related to both motivations/identities and the work context. Regarding motivations and identities, this research emphasizes the significance of personal motivations and how they are not easily separable from professional ones when it comes to global mobility. Furthermore, this research has discovered identities related to location (such as the pioneer) that are counterintuitive considering the death of distance idea. The study has also specified the two-way, dynamic relationship between motivations/identities and places: locations on one hand represent personally relevant opportunities (chances for self-development and self-discovery) while moving between locations evokes new kinds of identities (the pioneer, being atypical, or a mediator). Regarding global work and knowledge sharing, this study documented how virtual connectedness structures the local workday: the professionals are present both globally and locally during their everyday work and communication across distance influences what they do during their typical (local) day. Furthermore, the research shed light on the possible mechanisms behind knowledge sharing (or lack thereof) across distance. The main finding related to the issue was that the codifiability of information as such does not necessarily determine how well it travels but the nature of the social tie and the interaction matters how certain information is shared across distance.

The findings also add to the literature on highly skilled migration and mobility, questioning the assumptions that the privileged are free from ties to places. They are perhaps freer in the sense that they are not forced to move, but often can if they choose to. Yet new questions about how to consider the mobile have also been raised, and it may not be straightforward to define the mobile and the rooted. Recent research (Favell 2008; Recchi & Favell 2009) has also found that true integration is not easy, even for the elites in the Western context. My research suggests that the mobile are surprisingly rooted both in their home countries and the destination location. This applies both on the level of personal identities and motivations (what is important and inspiring) and on a practical level: a permanent stay may not be as simple as expected even if desired (e.g. settling in the U.S. would mean paying for children's schooling and healthcare, which one does not, thus far, have to do in Finland). Location matters even to these people, and even when there is the choice to move there are still limitations.

Finally, the study contributes to theory by challenging some of the assumptions related to globalization in general, and location and distance in particular. Specifically, this research shows that distance is not dead and that location still matters, and offers a more grounded way to theorize about these.

As for future research issues, the most important general implication of this study is precisely that when studying issues related to locality and distance, it is useful to depart from the assumption that these are still real. This is not to say that their meaning has not changed, or that it is not changing still. Yet, when analyzing change, it is useful to pay attention also to what has remained.

9.3 Concluding Words

This research shows that personal motivations and identities are tied to place in diverse ways. Places/locations can be the targets of personal goals or represent the means for fulfilling dreams or achieving personal development. Changing places evokes new identities, such as the pioneer or the mediator. Rather than being free from place, "placeless", the global professionals' motivations, identities and everyday work are tied to several places. Increased connectedness, therefore, does not mean the death of distance or locality.

The working day of the professional is structured according to different time zones, not only local time. Virtual communication has changed the structure of the working day locally, and has made the penetration of work into places and times that used to be private possible. Yet locality matters too: face-to-face meetings and being in a place allow access to information that does not travel well across distance. Furthermore, just by being in a place means that chance encounters may take place, and opens up new possibilities for collaboration.

The ways locality still matters can be summarized as the three I's: information, interaction and inspiration. Information is crucial for the work of highly skilled professionals working in innovation. While certain kinds of easily codified, simple information are readily available on the Internet no matter where one is located, the findings also show that other kinds of information or knowledge, e.g. relevant but unofficial information, do not travel well across distance. Interaction, in particular face-to-face contact, is essential for accessing this type of information. Inspiration is something necessary for both work and happiness in general: the informants experience being in the "right place" as highly inspiring and motivating. It seems that just being there and breathing the air is almost enough for things to fall into place and happen by themselves.

Based on the empirical findings above, it may be concluded that while the current era is in many ways different to previous ones, many things have remained the same. The clear changes are related to connectedness and the local structuring of the working day. Connectedness to distant locations is something that is characteristic of both personal and professional lives. It is generally easy to exchange messages with people regardless of location, to get in touch and maintain contact across distance. The working day is structured according to several time zones, not only local time; it is not one continuous section of the day (eight hours) but is fragmented in shorter sections throughout the 24-hour day. During different sections, the emphasis on local and global activities varies. In contrast to what the theories suggest, awareness of distance also seems to be stronger than before. Global connectedness highlights the differences in hours and contexts that remind us of distance. Therefore, it is misleading to consider increased connectedness as paramount to the death of distance. Indeed, virtual

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connectedness also highlights physical distance: you can be connected in real time, but you cannot be in the same physical place.

What has remained, then, is related to the experienced importance of physical and local places. Where one is physically still seems to matter for personal happiness as well as innovation and knowledge sharing. Even globally mobile professionals have meaningful relationships to places; in other words, their identities and motivations are tied to physical locations, not virtual spaces. Even if they could in principle send certain kinds of information to other locations, this does not happen. According to their experience, it matters where you are and people want to be in the "right" place – which, of course, can be defined both subjectively (e.g. "where I feel happy") and objectively (e.g. where the most important customers are).

Finally, based on the discussions above, it seems clear that the way locality and distance are framed in contemporary theoretical discussions does not do justice to actual meanings and practices. Their dynamics are not fully captured (e.g. how people can be both mobile and tied to place during the working day and, more generally, how their identities and motivations can be tied to many places at once), and by focusing on change, discussions often ignore what has remained (e.g. the meanings of physical places and locations, the importance of face-to-face interaction, the issue of knowledge that does not travel). Interestingly, while we live the realities of location and distance in our everyday practices, it seems that these realities are not much discussed: the belief in the death of distance seems strong. Ideas matter: powerful framings influence what we see and what we ignore, and that is why paying attention to framings is essential.

I propose that more grounded approaches and less hyped discussions will be more fruitful for understanding the meaning of locality and distance, concerning both personal identities and work or innovation activity. Recognizing that distances are still real and that people continue to have strong personal relationships to locations helps us build more useful theories and, in turn, apply them in an appropriate manner. Understanding the meaning and experience of locality and distance is relevant for a range of practical issues, from city planning to individual career paths to managing virtual collaboration and innovation activities. The understandings behind theories are crucial: their consequences are quite different if they are based on an image of people detached from places, and of a world that has no locations or distances, than they would be if based on an understanding of people whose personal identities

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are related to places and of a world that is virtually connected, yet where physical distances and locations continue to matter.

To conclude, the strengths of this work lie in explicitly examining the issue of locality and distance today and providing new understandings based on both empirical findings and novel combinations of literature. Furthermore, looking at the issue using the framing/discursive approach hopefully offers a fresh perspective and fruitful ideas for further study. As for its limitations, we have seen that the focus is on only one empirical case, and that in order to keep the scope of the work manageable and reasonable in consideration of practical limitations, I have had to leave some interesting and potentially fruitful pieces of work and areas of study out: I have tried to include those most relevant for the investigation, and have found consolation in the thought that the present piece is the beginning of a series of works on the topic, not an exhaustive treatise.

Summing up, the main contributions of this study can be considered to be the following:

1) Explicitly addressing the issue of the meaning of locality and distance, and bringing together strands of work that have remained largely separate until now.

2) Showing the specific ways distance and locality still matter (for identity, for knowledge transfer, for inspiration), and their specific dynamics (distant connectedness changing the local working day, how experienced distance is diminished or increased depending on the smoothness of virtual interaction) with empirical data,.

3) Focusing on a case of highly skilled, privileged people, who as a group remain less studied than unskilled workers in the context of global migration and mobility studies.

4) Identifying a number of potentially fruitful questions and issues for further study: the rhetorical aspect of globalization, place and distance; the relationship between mobility and eliteness; and the complex meaning of virtual interaction across distance, treating this not only as a solution to the "problem" of distance, but as both a blessing and the bearer of new kinds of challenges.

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Appendix 1: Interview themes

Part I. Personal experiences

1. Personal background and the story of how, when and why the interviewee went to Silicon Valley

Profession and education, what they are currently doing.

When did you move to Silicon Valley? Why, under what circumstances?

Had you lived abroad in the US or elsewhere before?

What expectations did you have?

How was it in the beginning, how did you experience it?

2. Social ties and interaction

Did you know anyone in Silicon Valley before you went?

How did you meet/contact people related to work in the beginning?

Who do/did you spend your free time with in Silicon Valley?

Do you see the people you work with outside work?

Who are your closest friends outside immediate family?

How and how often are you in contact with Finns in Finland? Do you need to be in contact with people in Finland for work?

How often do you visit Finland?

3. Work

What is your typical working day like? Could you describe it in detail?

Who are your closest colleagues/collaborators/customers, where are they located? In what ways do you communicate/keep in contact with them?

Where do you get the most important information related to your work?

How is working here (in Silicon Valley) different from working in Finland?

4. Future plans etc.

Kiriakos, Carol Marie (2010), The World Is My Workplace? The Meaning of Locality and Distance for Finnish Professionals in Silicon Valley
European University Institute DOI: 10.2870/21771

Where is home for you?

For informants based in Silicon Valley: Are you going to return to Finland? Could you imagine staying here?

For informants based in Finland: Could you imagine returning to live in Silicon Valley? Are you going to stay in Finland?

Part II: Views on Finland and Finns in general

Is Finland far from or close to Silicon Valley?

What do you think about Finns in general abroad:

How are they perceived, what kind of a reputation do Finns have?

What are their strengths? What are the challenges for Finns?

Do you think it is important for Finns to go abroad, do Finns need interaction with non-Finns or not?

What do you think about Finland's future competitiveness?

What are the strengths and challenges for Finland?

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Appendix 2: Note on Interview Quotations

Throughout the thesis, the quotations from interviews are labeled according to the following system: the first letter (A or B) indicates whether the interview was carried out in Finland (A) or in Silicon Valley (B). Thus, the informants labeled with the letter A are those who were at the time of the fieldwork based in Finland but had been based in Silicon Valley at some point in the past 10 years. Accordingly, the informants labeled with the letter B are those based in Silicon Valley at the time of the fieldwork. The number indicates the order in which interviews were carried out. Thus, interview B11 took place in Silicon Valley with an informant currently based there and was the eleventh of all the interviews.

I translated the interview quotations from Finnish to English. Furthermore, where necessary I have slightly cleaned up speech (both mine and informants') in the quotations, because speech as it actually occurs is sometimes messy and may be difficult to follow. Thus I have edited the quotations in such a way that they still include word-for-word what was said and stay true to the style of the speaker, but are easier for the reader to follow.

In the interview quotations a **bolded** word or phrase means that the speaker stressed that word in his/her speech (tone of voice). Words or phrases in [square brackets] are my added explanations or comments if, for instance, names of individuals or companies have been changed to protect the anonymity of those involved, or some part of the quotation refers to something said earlier which is not directly clear from the immediate context.