A Heuristic Model of Organizational Boundaries as Contesting Spaces of Betweenness in International Management

Diana J. Wong-MingJi
Eastern Michigan University, dwong@emich.edu

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Cover Page Footnote

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Diana J. Wong-MingJi, *Eastern Michigan University*

Introduction

This paper examines organizational boundaries as contesting spaces of betweenness that incorporate constant negotiations of cross-cultural differences in international management. Developing a heuristic model of boundaries as contesting spaces extends recent research with a complex dynamic approach (Hernes, 2004; Lai, et. al., 2019; Oliver, 1993; Yan & Louis, 1999) that goes beyond previous notions of boundaries as an organizational phenomenon of open systems (Katz & Kahn, 1966), transactional exchanges between organizations and their environment (Evan, 1976; Lawrence & Lorch, 1967), and cognitive perspective of being a socially constructed phenomenon (Weick, 1977). Boundaries as a social construction provides an important contribution to recognize the dynamic fluidity of a taken for granted phenomenon. Parker & Vaughan-Williams (2012: 728) considers the nature of boundary as ". . .manifold and in a constant state of becoming." Hence, research over the last several years on boundary spanning addressed issues such as negotiation of cultural identity (Brannen & Salk, 2000; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), knowledge brokerage in global social networks (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Reiche, Harzing, & Kraimer, 2009), generative assets for inducing innovative learning (Wenger, 2000; Leung & Waters, 2017), and boundary and cultural brokering (Lai, et. al., 2019).

Leaders and boundary spanners seek to develop cross cultural relationships by establishing shared agendas based on common understanding and agreements. These generate a state of relative stability. What happens before and after periods of stability is most interesting because significant boundary work must be accomplished (Leung & Waters, 2017) to resolve

cultural differences in social information exchange processes (Ravlin, et. al., 2014). Boundaries as spaces of betweenness do not refer to the crossing over from one context to another but the encounters and engagement with members from different cultural groups. Contested spaces of betweenness center on the interactions and processes in the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of boundaries that take place between two or more cultural entities. In addition, this takes place within a global context that ebbs and flows.

Globalization includes the blurring of organizational boundaries which imply they are either diminishing in relevance or disappearing altogether. Ohmae's (1990) description of a "borderless world" considers boundaries as becoming meaningless, especially with the ability to work and connect as a global virtual team in managing language, culture, and collaboration boundaries (Goettsch, 2016). Convergence theories refer to declining trade barriers; free and rapid flows of peoples, goods, services, and ideas; integration of societies and economics; alliance network of new organizational forms, and rising tides of development to argue for the support and advancement of globalization (Dunning, 1995). From this perspective, boundaries are problematic obstacles to be resolved and eliminated.

In contrast, addressing organizational boundaries as contested spaces arises from controversies of globalization where its momentum is no longer taken for granted as being inevitable. Some current challenges seek to promote domestic priorities and needs with the ultimate symbol of building a wall between Mexico and US as promoted by President Trump. The current rhetoric concerning anti-immigration and Brexit is another overlapping layer added to a growing chorus, albeit fragmented, from different quarters which is questioning, resisting, and opposing globalization. This collection of voices come from a wide range of disparate perspectives that include trade unionists, environmentalists, farmers, blue collar industrial

workers, faith-based communities, human right advocates, intellectual thinkers and researchers, etc. (Cox & Jones, 1999; Ancelovici, 2002). Recently, a few more world leaders are also questioning the agenda of globalization. Their objections to globalization illustrate that boundaries are not dissolving and giving way to a borderless world. Boundaries play a critical and central role in the turbulence resulting from the crisis of a global pandemic with many international borders closed, global trade being stalled, and cancellation of various sports to minimize and prevent large crowd gatherings.

This heuristic model of organizational boundaries as dynamic spaces of betweenness with contestations seeks to unpack complexities embedded in creating, negotiating, and recreating boundaries in cross cultural communication processes. Organizational boundaries as spaces of chaotic contested terrains need to account for power relationships among different cross-cultural actors within various communication forums (e.g. Newman & Passi, 1998; Nicol & Townsend-Gault, 2004; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005). The dominant approach to cross cultural communications focuses on recognizing cultural differences (Hofstede, 1984; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000). Boundaries are spaces of struggles and tensions where global actors negotiate to draw and redraw distinctions between memberships and territories. Traditionally, boundaries are viewed as relatively static imaginary lines to be overcome or permeable membranes that facilitate flow of information and resource exchanges between organizations and their environments (Keegan, 1974; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

Questions about globalization are essentially questions about what is taking place in the space in organizational boundaries and the re-drawing of new ones. Questions such as how boundaries are established, who gets to determine the terms of the boundary, and what kind of boundaries to set up have important implications. Issues of power and identity surface as

significant factors (Brannen & Thomas, 2010; Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005; Callister & Wall, 2001) in dynamic spaces of betweenness. This research explores three interrelated contests of organizational boundaries with nation-state borders, intellectual capital, and e-commerce. Many other contests such as global workforce migration or environmental sustainability can be explored. But due to the limitation of space, the three major contests will serve the purpose to illustrate how different global actors engage in processes of negotiating and constructing organizational boundaries. This paper concludes with a pause in this dialogue of organizational boundary scholarship to create space for reflective learning.

Organizational Boundaries as Contested Spaces of in Betweenness

Betweenness is an opening of a space where boundary work is carried out to create and configure boundaries based on power dynamics between institutions and individuals. The betweenness of cross-cultural relationships is addressed in a multi-level framework to account for boundary brokering and cultural brokering on different levels (Lai, et. al., 2019). This is necessary to account for the complex dynamic nature of boundaries which can be both an obstacle to overcome and a generative space for innovative learning at the same time. For example, while one struggles to adapt and communicate in a new culture, there are opportunities for new relationships and insights about oneself in a new context. and interactions for global leaders and boundary spanners to consider. The following discussion considers boundaries as multiple spaces of 'in betweenness' to acknowledge there is an entry to be made into a different space while carrying one's own socialization and context into it.

An Economist (1997) article outlined some general characteristics symptomatic of globalization which included the proliferation of technological innovations; changes in national

border frontiers with the emergence of new countries in Eastern European and Central Asia; the ten wealthiest countries based on per capita GDP were "offshoots" of Europe or in Western Europe; remarkable growth of China's trade; Canada and US engaged in trade disputes over timber; economic growth of Japan; integration of Germany as a country; one undisputed superpower; and the image of a queen dressed in black to mark an untimely death. The interesting point was that the author referred to the state of globalization at two different points in time - 1897 and 1997. While there are marked differences between the late 19th and 20th centuries, a repeat of history appears to take place with globalization until the last 20 years.

A key point is not to take globalization for granted. During the late 19th century, the rise of globalization started to blur sovereign boundaries due to the spread of colonial powers, especially rule of the British Empire where '*the sun did not set on Britannia*' was a taken for granted notion. But challenges to boundaries and reconfiguration of new ones occurred as a result of two world wars and a cold war. They led to the redrawing of different geo-political boundaries and a decline of globalization with several decades of isolationism and protectionism. The inevitability of globalization comes into question with a long enough historical lens.

The rise and fall of globalization established a broad overarching context of sovereign boundaries creates an important context for cross cultural relationships at the organizational behavior level. The idea of organizational boundaries as static, natural, mutually acceptable, and objective barriers (Keegan, 1974; Thompson, 1962) becomes suspect. The economic interests in organizations act as a driver, through multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), to dismantle trade barriers and facilitate free trade to expand markets. In 1817, Ricardo's (1963) theory of comparative advantage, including its dynamic version (Klein, 1973), acts as a primary driver for globalization based on economic benefits. The theory and its

application neglected to account for political interests, the role of multinational organizations as global actors with powers that exceed some nation-states, intercultural dynamics between peoples, and a new economic space with e-commerce. Additional challenges arose with growing inequality in the standards of living between the rich and poor, a superimposition of Western (primarily US) cultural values and practices, and increasing disparities within economies (Hedley, 2002). As a result, globalization through the different historical shifts and the various stakeholders lead to contentions over boundaries and reconfiguration of boundaries.

Within the shifts of global dominance, US businesses enjoyed an increasing balance of power to negotiate their cross cultural relationships along with the growth of many powerful businesses. Kellner (2002) outlined a critical theory of globalization that has a dialectical framework to consider "globalization from below" and "globalization from above". Marginalized individuals organizing for social justice 'from below' leverage social institutions, new technologies, and instruments from globalization to further agendas of democracy. Impositions by capitalism in 'globalization from above' provide channels for the very political struggles against it. These struggles take place in a bounded space of globalization for multiple stakeholders. Thus, organizational boundaries become a much more complex phenomenon as dynamic spaces for global contests. In sum, boundaries are not static lines on maps or simple demarcations of open systems between organizations and their environments.

Boundaries are expressions of power in relationships regarding people, space, time, and resources (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005; Shamir & Melnik, 2002). The act of establishing organizational boundaries is an exercise of power in negotiations and conflict resolutions that could range from strategic collaborations to military aggressions. During most of the 20th century, globalization was about organizations shifting, redrawing, and redefining boundaries

between different actors in the international community. The following section examines boundaries in organization theory as a means to consider its historical development and its difficulties to explain boundaries in a globalizing context.

Three dimensions of organizational space refer to organizational boundaries (Spencer & Heinze, 1978) which result in considering organizations as open systems. Yet, not all open systems have the same degree of permeability. But organizing mechanisms in boundary making or how boundaries become more porous remain to be explained. Researchers began to examine organizational boundaries as intersections (Oliver, 1993) or demarcations (Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005) between organizations and their environments. Santos and Eisenhardt's (2005) examined boundaries with four distinct concepts – efficiency, power, competence, and identity which overlap with Oliver's (1993) comprehensive review that identified six dimensions of boundary drawn from five conceptual definitions. They are boundary as – 1) membership functions as jurisdiction and purpose building which relates to the identity concept; 2) roles and activities as monitoring and boundary spanning which relates to the competence concept; 3) sphere of influence as buffers and bridges to protect and connect the organization which relates to the power concept; 4) transaction cost dichotomy functions to assign transactions to hierarchies or arms length transactions which relates to the efficiency concept; and 5) institutional filter functions as isomorphic and image transmissions which relates to the power concept. Oliver (1993) outlines how different boundary functions impact three boundary properties such as openness, stability, and information accuracy in exchanges with the environment – depending on the organization-environment interface.

Organization theorists consider power, boundary spanners, and related activities by focusing on regulating and positioning the organization in its competitive context. Power in the

transaction cost definition employs boundary in a utilitarian function to control environmental factors. Organizational boundary based on membership and identity employ power through separation to elevate the status and legitimacy of insiders over outsider (Shamir & Melnik, 2002; Ravlin, et. al., 2014; Lai, et. al., 2019). But how members with shared identity accumulate power and deploy power to engage in boundary making entails a naturalness where the legitimating process generally ignored or assumed away questions about the boundary itself.

Future directions for organizational boundary research point to the importance of a temporal dimension to address dynamic processes and multi-theoretical perspectives. After developing the four boundary concepts, Santos & Eisenhardt (2005: 504) identified the importance of the temporal dimension with dynamic processes where boundary concepts "…may lead, lag, or coevolve with another and causality is often bidirectional, tracking boundaries over time is critical." This also requires considering boundary as space for the organizing processes of boundary formation. Oliver (1993) points to the importance of multi-theoretical perspectives and pushed further with radical epistemological assumptions for capturing a more comprehensive array of factors in boundary management.

Subsequently, Yan & Louis (1999) reviewed four significant functions of boundary as demarcation, perimeters, interfaces, and frontiers for transactions that extended prior research to examined boundary work at deeper levels of organizations. Compared to prior definitions, Yan & Louis (1999: 29) developed a dynamic perspective to "…define boundaries as a system's domain of interactions with its environment in order to maintain the system and to provide for its long-term survival." This integrates a number of earlier perspectives such as monitoring and boundary spanning, and legitimacy and credibility. The limitations of their work focus a

unilateral perspective to solve boundary problems without being able to account for multiple perspectives taking place within the interactions.

Boundary spanning refers to processes that are driven by motives related to the definition and functions of boundaries (Oliver, 1993; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). The motives of boundary spanning include determining authority over membership, acquiring information, achieving autonomy and control, increasing efficiency and reducing costs, and gaining legitimacy and credibility. Boundary spanners are the decision makers, or filters, for determining flows in and out of the organization because they regulate the terms and conditions of the flow exchange (Miller, 1972). Boundary spanners have power to make inferences in their information processing task, engage in gate keeping to manage resources and information flows, and leverage vital information for organizational survival (March & Simon, 1958). How boundary spanners construct and change boundaries to legitimate their role in the space between organizations remain to be explored. Usually, vital information is related to non-routine boundary spanning tasks (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) such as environmental scanning for strategic planning among upper level managers or technological innovations (Keegan, 1974). Tushman & Romanelli (1983) found that task and environment uncertainty was positively related to the influence of boundary spanner.

From a different theoretical paradigm, Gilmore (1982) examined boundary as a socially constructed phenomenon which places organizational leaders in not just boundary spanning tasks but also with defining and redefining boundaries and questioning the existence of some boundaries. However, the discussion primarily focuses on a competence concept of boundary without little consideration for how the social construction of boundaries unfold over time or how differential power positions socially construct boundaries. A more dynamic approach to

organizational boundaries employs a composite of mental, physical, and social factors to account for their central roles in interorganizational interactions and innovative learning (Hernes, 2004; Wenger, 2010). Boundaries become reconfigured in a different space that transcends the constrictions of physical geography and time into a different sphere - cyberspace. The next section proposes a more dynamic and complex approach to consider boundaries in three contested spaces.

Three Contests in Organizational Boundaries as Dynamic Spaces

The following three contests of boundaries are minimal sketches over broad swaths of histories and disciplines. The purpose is to focus on investigating organizational boundaries in globalization processes as well as how these unfold in the contested space of organizational boundaries. The types of boundary differ between each context but they are interrelated in terms of their contested space, competing powers, and momentary resolutions.

Contesting Boundaries of Nation-states

Inherent in the rise of the modern nation-state is the conscious drawing of explicit formally recognized boundaries by multiple actors to separate one sovereign state from the others. Nation-state boundaries date back to 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia which established the function of sovereign rights over geographical locations in Europe to end thirty years of war. As a new concept of governing at the time, "powers that were previously dispersed are now centralized; the very character of the modern state is historically unique (Seidman, 1994: 296)." The idea of nation-state severed the connection between religious and territorial control as well as fragmenting indigenous cultural communal structures in deference to relatively distant

political systems. European imperialism furthered the diffusion of sovereign states around the world which gave rise to the current system of international order. "The drawing of state boundaries had the effect of creating national consciousness through exclusion (Blake, 2005: 20)." The exclusion eroded established governance systems such as monarchies, tribal communities, feudal systems, and various indigenous communal systems. Over the next three and half centuries, immeasurable number of lives were lost and incalculable damage laid waste to many communities as a result of wars that have been fought in order to establish nation-state boundaries. In an apt comparison to organized crime, Tilly (1985) described how state making asserted control over land, and then required resources to support a military that can protect and expand into more territory. The difficult process to create nation states continues to this day as in the example of Tibet and China, Israel and Palestine, and Ukraine and Russia. The United Nations provides the broadest forum for 193 nations to gather with the most recent recognition of South Sudan as a sovereign state in 2011.

In a comparison of sovereign territories and boundaries between Europe and Africa, Asiwaju (2005: 124) states that "[i]n Europe, as in colonial and post-colonial Africa, state territories and boundaries share an essential arbitrariness in their creation and their locally felt artificiality." Who had the power to create the boundaries? Colonial powers drew political boundaries in Africa with little regard for existing indigenous cultures, socioeconomic patterns, and ecosystems. Chatterjee (1993) describes how anti-colonialists nationalists constructed their own sovereign domain within the colonial society before engaging in conflict with the imperial powers. His study of Indian society in provides an example of who has the potential power to recreate boundaries.

In the postcolonial period, many commentators refer to the same boundaries as the source of contemporary political problems, crises, and wars in Africa. Compared to the European countries, the African nation-state boundaries are relatively more entrenched with central control and greater distinction between nation states. The existing political boundaries in Africa demonstrate how problematic they can become when accepted without questioning their existence which in turn continues to reconstitute their rigidity. From an organizational perspective, boundary spanners such as foreign ministers sustain their sovereign boundaries with their boundary spanning activities such as buffering and bridging with outside constituents.

Creating boundaries is often a problematic process that may involve long drawn out conflicts such as the ones between Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, North-South Korea, North Ireland-Ireland, and Iraq-Kuwait. The boundary space is literally a contested one with military interventions. No clear line marks the boundary. It is usually a space referred to as the borderland or demilitarized zone where conflicting engagements happen in a localized space and perpetuated by a distant capital. The results of such conflict may include a substantial borderland zone for a boundary that is tens of miles wide.

Nation-states provide an important case to understand boundaries because the separation of nation-states entails a contested space that involves competing powers to create and establish boundaries. Varner & Varner (2014) described the impact of how laws created in a country is both an expression of the culture but also reinforce the cultural norms for intercultural business communications. These also set up cross cultural relationship dynamics for multiple generations with distinct cultural identities but also need to grapple with challenges of racism and at best intercultural misunderstandings (Peterson, et. al., 2018). Sovereign contexts impact the development of boundaries in other arenas such as intellectual capital and e-commerce. Most

nation-state boundaries are relatively stable and often taken for granted once they are created until challenges arise to question the legitimacy of boundaries and seek to reestablish new ones.

The current challenge to the boundaries of nation-states is the question about their relevance. Richardson (1990: 2) states that "…concept of national sovereignty is being submerged by the flow of financial transactions and information exchanges which diminish the relevance of national boundaries." Peers in political science argue that clear demarcations between national and international relations and between domestic and international politics are increasingly outdated in a global age (Milner, 1998; Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999). The drive toward globalization by TNCs challenges the fundamental role of nation-states to provide for its citizens. Many TNCs have control of resources and revenues that surpass the size of many small states. The nation-state boundaries may not be able to reign in the influence of TNCs on a nation's citizenry because substantial resources can be brought to bear to override local objections. Computer and internet technologies, telecommunication, and transportation innovations enable the compression of space and time, which raise question about the relevance and power of nation states. Ohmae (1990), a McKinsey consultant, constructed one extreme image with the borderless world which means the separation of sovereign states is somewhat meaningless in a global economy. He referred to strategic alliances between the metropolitan centers of the US, EU and Japan as primary launching positions for rapid deployment of competitive initiatives around the world and into the secondary markets of South America, Asia, and Africa. The dismantling of trade barriers facilitates such mobility for business enterprises and at the same time, diminishes a fundamental organizing principle of the nation-state which is self-determination for its members.

In sum, activities of TNCs pose challenges to nation-state boundaries to politically refashion regulatory regimes that facilitate trade flows. Few nations can resist or restrict the influence of TNCs within their boundaries. While TNCs are a strong force, an informed and organized citizenry can engage in acts of protests and resistance against the global imposition on the local. Korten (1995: 140) describes the actors with competing powers as "the greater the political power of corporations and those aligned with them, the less the political power f the people, and the less meaningful democracy becomes." Thus, boundaries associated with nation-states are contested spaces where boundary definition, permeability, and interpretation stem from local actions (governments and citizenry groups) in response to global processes (TNCs and associated foreign governments).

Contesting Boundaries of Intellectual Capital

Sovereign boundaries create meaning in conjunction with many other multi-layered and hierarchical boundaries such as those related to knowledge, property, membership, social and racial identities, community, etc.. Establishing boundaries to construct modern nation states needed the Enlightenment project which entailed constructing boundaries to centralize decentralized knowledge dispersed in communal relationships and practices. Contesting the boundaries of intellectual capital centers on whether the project of Enlightenment with the social sciences is a humanitarian force to combat bigotry, fanaticism, corruption of excessive power of the church and the state or is an ideology of social progress. Hence, contesting boundaries would be used to justify domination and colonization of the 'undisciplined savage' lying outside the bounds of a rational social design. Between the two perspectives, a complex range of issues arise from different societal and industry sectors. Within the context of the modern nation state system, boundaries of intellectual capital already excluded knowledge from local traditions,

indigenous peoples, and non-Western communities as backward, primitive, superstitious, and non-scientific.

Numerous barriers and infrastructure establish what can be considered relevant locally acceptable knowledge and ways of knowing. The assertions of such boundaries are manifested in established structures such as school walls and fences, grading and evaluation processes, educational degrees and certificates, titles of "Dr." or "Chief Learning and Knowledge Officer", and accreditation by institutions and agencies. Regulations reinforce norms for communicating across cultures in business (Varner & Varner, 2014). The process of accumulating scientific knowledge enabled the rise of experts who become documented with legitimacy through different institutional processes and designations. They become knowledge keepers and legitimating authorities to manage and control boundaries concerning necessities in educational curriculums, legitimate socially educated behaviors with rewards or punishments, and most importantly, governance structures and regulations of property rights including intellectual property. In addition to formal education, industries create a host of certification programs with hierarchical boundaries that sanction levels of expertise. In particular, the IT and healthcare industries offer a complex array of certification programs to recognize workers' legitimacy for certain knowledge tasks. Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine whose knowledge is handed down through the generations would be excluded by external legitimating infrastructures.

Reich (1991) described a class of workers as symbolic analysts who engage in intellectual work such as problem identification, problem solving, experimentation, collaboration, etc. Reich discusses knowledge workers who are engaged in the same activities but without an externally validated formal educational infrastructure. Boundaries around experts, symbolic analysts, and knowledge workers specifically focus on the western scientific

paradigm to the exclusion of many intellectual traditions (Ani, 1994). The scientific method rose to determine objective truth which drew a boundary to exclude and dismiss non-scientific knowledge (Bauman, 1992). Hence, intellectual capital became the accumulation of expert knowledge that supported the development, management, and legitimacy of the modern nation state by gathering, organizing, and disseminating information through various institutions such as schools, prisons, health care agencies, factories, and local and state agencies.

An important regulatory mechanism of the nation state centers on boundaries for property rights including intellectual property with trademarks, copyright, and patent laws. The principle of copyright law is for the "encouragement of learning" which dates back to 1710 during Queen Anne's reign. In the US, the "encouragement of learning" principle is based on the rationale that profit is the primary motive for producers to search for and disseminate knowledge. Intellectual property rights, primarily driven by western interests, are articulated and regulated through the WTO's Trade-related Intellectual Property agreement. In 1996, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) was created as one of 16 specialized agencies of the United Nations to help implement TRIP. The first two initiatives in 1998 and 2001 focused on helping developing and least-developed countries to conform to TRIP's intellectual property regulations.

Within the context of globalization, localized knowledge in traditional practices surfaced as having potential market value in the global marketplace. Resources and research scientists are deployed for scientific investigation and empirical determination for scientific goodness of fit and global dispersion within the global free trade infrastructure. As "experts", researchers determine scientific legitimacy of local traditional knowledge and then managers follow to create the business case for the global marketplace. Coupled with capitalist enterprises, intellectual property rights evolved to extract value for the producer where consumers require economic

resources to gain access to intellectual property and in some instances, to regain access when

TNC asserts control over indigenous intellectual capital through patent regulations.   Hence, the

coupling of scientific knowledge and global economics act to create boundaries around

intellectual capital by disconnecting it from original sources for global dispersion.

   Boundary becomes another contested space where accumulation of intelligence and

knowledge for market value conflicts with the creation of an informed and enlightened citizenry

for self-determination within a nation-state. While global market and self-determination may

complement each other for international entrepreneurial activities, contested terrains and tensions

arise when a citizenry faces restricted access to intelligence for making informed decisions and

act in their own self-interest and well-being. Environmental degradation and pollution, poorly

informed consumer use of products and services, and political events. One of the most infamous

cases is the Nestle's baby milk formula being marketed to mothers in developing countries.

More recent issues include genetically modified organisms in agriculture, nuclear testing by

France in the South Pacific during the 1990s, and the US war on terror to name a few.

   In sum, intellectual capital boundaries support innovations that become diffused around

the world with complex structures to manage and control economic exchanges in the global

market. International managers evolve with greater similarities as their ranks swell with MBA

degrees and corporate training being offered around the world from a relatively shared

intellectual foundation. Cross cultural differences become relatively less pronounced than in

earlier decades. The contested space centers on legitimacy of knowledge and ways of knowing

that support a TNCs ability to identify and detach knowledge from sources for distribution.

Competition between different actors takes place within a regulatory framework established by

the WTO and implemented by TRIP. While industry sector issues are negotiated by trade

ministers from different countries, the overarching framework already established the foundational infrastructure which allows for the temporary resolution or stability of the regulatory boundaries. Gaining agency for resistance to challenge boundaries of intellectual capital will need to take place on multiple fronts to rebalance the intent of intellectual property rights for the "encouragement of learning" versus the "enforcement of global markets". One access point of intervention could be in the contested spaces of e-commerce.

Contesting Boundaries of e-Commerce

The image of Ohmae's borderless world resonates most naturally in cyberspace where information technology enables virtual organizations to conduct business in a seemingly frictionless fashion through time and space. Dismissing the idea of boundary almost eliminates the need for any further consideration of its related issues, especially when common rhetoric expound on being able to connect and do business anytime, anywhere in the world. The basic idea of e-commerce is the conduct of business activities through information communication technology (ICT) networks. Dutta (1997: 61) defined e-commerce as "…the sharing of business information, maintaining business relationships, and conducting business transactions by means of telecommunication networks." Global virtual teams can effectively collaborate provided they are supported with key by their international managers with best practices (Goettsch, 2016). However, boundary issues are significant concerns in e-commerce and they unfold on multiple levels that are interrelated to one another. E-commerce boundaries could be as prominent as the digital divide or as innocuous as spyware filters for protecting computers. Dissolution of geographical boundaries maybe simultaneously replaced by boundaries of preferences on different dimensions such as social, intellectual, and economic with the potential to be even more insular (van Astyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005).

A prominent e-commerce boundary centers on the digital divide which refers to the bifurcation between the haves and the have-nots of ICTs. Research findings indicate that the diffusion of ICT on a global basis has a growing gap in the digital divide. As of 2019, the global internet penetration was 58% of the population (www.internetworldstats.com). Social factors such as political stability and the absence of violence, adult literacy, urbanization, and popularity of television media contributed to social learning processes (Liu & San, 2006). The physical development of ICT systems and engagement of Internet users are not possible in volatile contexts. However, the digital divide encompasses many other contested spaces that include struggles of class, race, age, education, and political systems. Hence, boundaries as contested spaces in the digital divide are social and economic composites that construct the access and distribution of necessary resources for the diffusion of ICTs and engagement in e-commerce.

The actors of competing powers in the digital divide are not Internet users versus non-users. Instead, the actors are the constituents who take up different positions in a contested space such as to provide computers for all students versus acquiring textbooks. The actors involved may include administrators, teachers, parents, students, textbook publishers, computer firms, and professional staff members. The economic resolution in the contested space determines which side of the digital divide the students would get situated.

Nation-states shape not only the digital divide but also the boundaries of e-commerce itself. Bingi, Mir, & Khamalah (2000) examined challenges to global e-commerce on four different dimensions – economic, social, technical, and legal. The nation-state has a strong influence in shaping the environment on all four dimensions. In addition to the intellectual infrastructure that contribute to regulating property rights over information as discussed above, sovereign states affect e-commerce by developing regulations concerning privacy, cyber crimes,

technological developments, taxation, legal validity of transactions, and policing e-commerce conduct. While e-commerce may transcend time and geographical space, the lack of uniform international standards for e-commerce and different national infrastructures impose substantial obstacles to achieving expected and projected potentials of e-commerce (Frynas, 2002). ICTs like many technological innovations often move faster than socio-legal systems in creating the regulatory boundaries. Hence, boundaries as a contested space in e-commerce will likely continue to be ambiguous for the near future as various regulatory issues are debated through courts and different legislative systems across and within nation-states.

Organizations are the primary drivers of global e-commerce activities. The blurring of firm boundaries stem from evolving organizational design and structure with outsourcing, strategic alliances, network structures, supply chain management, and virtual organizations. The term post-Chandlerian firm refers to the combined process of outsourcing some activities while increasing in-sourcing of other activities (Robertson & Verona, 2006). As a result, the impact of technological change, especially ICTs, may have conflicting outcomes for firm boundaries.

Cooperative firm partnerships in e-commerce take place at the level of intersecting firm boundaries. The contested space centers on developing viable economic interfirm relationships based on trust (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992) which is fundamentally a human endeavor that is more socially than economically or technologically based. The challenges to developing trust in virtual relationships of e-commerce stem heavily from a limited communication channel without the traditional rich non-verbal cues in face-to-face interactions. However, successful virtual organizations managed to overcome obstacles in interfirm relationship development. The struggles in some cooperative firm partners lie in ambiguous boundaries. While moving forward into collaborative partnerships, managers engaged in creating trust must also guard against

unwanted bleed through of competitive information and practices to partnering firms. Various computer security systems create safeguards with pre-approved access, firewalls, and passwords to prevent unintended leakage of information. But they are not always full proof and without established trust in the boundary spaced, competing actors may act in their own self-interest at the expense of their partner firms.

Global e-commerce influences organizational behavior within firms too. Two important considerations for e-commerce in overcoming geographical distance are boundaries related to bounded rationality which limits human capacity for information processing (Simon, 1957) and satisfaction of specialized preferences where local heterogeneity gives way to virtual homogeneity (van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 2005). Specialization allows for deeper development of expertise in a subject matter but the challenge is being able to reconnect into the larger scope of organizational operations. Boundaries of e-commerce within firms impact the workforce in different arenas that may include automated supervision, training and development, and integration of work-family activities (eg. when work is taken on vacation with emails) (Perlow, 1998). Effective communication for establishing and creating cross cultural relationship remains core to human relationships, eve on virtual teams. The contested space is work performance – where and when work get done in conjunction with other spheres of life activities. ICTs allow for telecommuting but this diminishes serendipitous conversations by the water cooler and social contacts. Actors engaged in competing powers here may be found in a hierarchy of manager-employee and peers where the span of control increases due to automation and peer oversight in addition to managerial oversight. E-commerce allows for more feedback loops from peers to impact the work space. Within organizations, the momentary resolutions in establishing boundaries in e-commerce are paradoxical in the sense that employees have many choices to

complete work but work has also encroached on many other aspects of life because people can connect easily from many places 24/7. Thus, work has a greater dominance in life and organizational practices with ICTs enable greater monitoring and control over work.

In sum, boundaries in e-commerce are very dynamic on multiple levels. While e-commerce on the surface appears to eliminate sovereign boundaries and geographical space, a critical factor is that new boundaries are being created in both cyber space of e-commerce and the business context within which e-business is taking place. Sovereign boundaries matter greatly in the borderless world of cyberspace. As some boundaries are dissolved, the focus needs to be on what boundaries are being constructed and at what levels are they being reconstructed and imposed.

A Pause for Reflection

Organizing boundaries related to nation-state sovereignty, intellectual capital, and e-commerce highlight how the space in between is more complex than a permeable barrier between different entities. The boundaries in each forum are interrelated to boundary sets in the other two forums. Boundaries in the nation-state construct the context of support and enforcement to develop intellectual capital and e-commerce. However, feedback loops from e-commerce activities and new frontiers in intellectual capital require nation-states to respond with configuring new boundary sets and/or revising established ones. While existing boundaries are questioned and debated concerning their relevance, the key lies in what new boundaries are created, defined, and drawn. Determining new or altered boundaries is part of the precursor for developments that happen between two places or state of existence. As organizational

boundaries are revised, dissolved, or dismantled in international relationships, they often reflect the positional powers of competing actors in a contested space.

The aspiration in this paper is to develop a heuristic model of organizational boundary in international management that goes beyond a static and taken for granted phenomenon to include the dynamic chaotic processes of contestation in a space of betweenness that is generated by competing actors. While unequal distribution of power among the actors creates contests that are not fair, the layers of justifications and contradictions can still be brought forth for questioning with the possibility of redrawing and recreating boundaries. The pause for reflection in place of a conclusion here is to keep open this work in progress to explore future possibilities in recreating, redefining, and reconstructing organizational boundary studies as a dynamic globalization process.

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