

# Mobilities of business travel

Exploration into the occurrence, experience and performance of travel situations

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## Summary

In our contemporary highly globalized world, in which people, firms, cities and regions are linked nationally and internationally into extensive information, trade, knowledge, production and service networks, human travel for business purposes is crucial and abundant. Last few decades an extensive amount of geographical and economic studies pointed out the importance of business travel in the light of globalizing macro-economic processes. At the same time transport geographers have attempted to explain and model on micro level travel behaviour of business travellers, based on rational decision making. In this thesis however it will be argued that these traditional approaches to business travel ignore or overlook the complexity of business travel.

This thesis zooms into the highly mobile lives of directors, managers, salesmen and stewardesses; all of them professionals who travel for business frequently and intensively. Based on insights from Time Geography it will be explored and visualized that physical travelling involves the following of a path through time and space that leads through a sequence of travel situations. These travel situations have a temporal and a special component.

The first research question is: *Which temporalities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?* Temporalities first refer to the sequence, timing, duration of timeslots that host events and to the way present and absent situations are related to one another. Actor Network Theory will be used to reveal how business travellers in their experiences of present travel situations relate to and (imaginary) interact with present and absent people, objects, ideas, times and places. This results in the interrelation of dislocated travel, work and private home situations. Temporalities are continuously being performed. Some key timeslots, such as those hosting flights and meetings, are scheduled in advance whereas other timeslots are left open. In reality business travellers planned events may take longer or shorter than expected or may be cancelled or postponed. Business travellers may be able to customize timeslots on the spot, as they may schedule or reschedule; speed up or slow down; and create or cancel timeslots. Customizing is however always in negotiation with the specific situation at hand.

The second research question: *Which spatialities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?* Spatialities refer to the spatial configurations and material interactions of situations and to which the experience of situations is related. During their trips business travellers find themselves in a variety of public places, transport modes and accommodations. Some key spatialities may be selected in advance, for instance booking a hotel or flight, whereas others can be selected on the go: picking a bar to chat with colleagues; taking a break at the bench at the riverside to watch the boats pass by. Spatialities are highly dynamic: actors enter and exit; interactions are being established and broken again; and identities are being modified. Besides interfering in the occurrence of spatialities via selection, business travellers may also negotiate to modify the occurring spatialities themselves. Customization of spatialities – always in negotiation with the specific situation at hand – for instance include: adjusting your seat in an airplane; unfolding a table in front of you; asking a passenger to mute his voice; grabbing a newspaper in an airport lounge; or turning on the music in your car.

As a conclusion business travel is much more than a simply traversal of space during a certain amount of time. Experience and performance of business travel situations – with both temporal and spatial dimensions – can be seen as the ultimate

outcome of the interplay between the business travellers themselves, their activities and the spatio-temporal situations at hand. As a recommendation policy makers, spatial planners and designers in their design of transport policies and built up environments, should acknowledge this complexity and make use of the richness of situations, rather than simplifying it. Insights from this explorative research should inspire further research that, in order to grasp mobility, may have to be based on a variety of new mobilizing methods that make use of the latest technologies in information and communication technologies.

## Foreword

In this thesis I write about travel as following a path through time and space, which lead to a sequence of situations that are material as well as temporal. The writing of this thesis can be seen in a similar way. In a similar way I would like to refer to my experience and performance of writing this thesis. Certainly I run through a sequence of emotions, varying from anger and frustration to satisfaction and happiness. Which one dominates at the end? Yes, happiness! My experience and performance have been temporal as they, both the negative and the positive, were often intensified when approaching a deadline. And calmed down again after I finishing a deadline or realizing I was going to pass a deadline without finishing. On the same time experience and performance were material, for instance on the moments I lost my overview because of all the files and notes I created, but I did not structure.

What was the most difficult? I vaguely remember the words I heard somewhere during my bachelor or master Human Geography at the Utrecht University: “Scientific writing is not about writing down the things you know and the things you find out. It is about writing down the things you need, and only the things you need, to make your point.” To do that, you need to know a lot more. A lot more that you would of course like to write down, because it is interesting, but you should not, because it is irrelevant. Focus is the word! This also means throwing away information that is interesting. Was this easy? No, not at all! Did I succeed?...

This thesis is not written solely by me, but always in relation to present and actors around me from my study and private home situation. First of all I would like to thank the eighteen warm, passionate, helpful and enthusiastic respondents, of which I returned home from the interviews full of inspiration and with a big smile on my face. This thesis could never have been written without their a wonderful the insight they gave me into their highly mobile lives, via their unique stories, their photographs and some of them even via their hospitality to take me as a guest on one of their trips.

By far the most important person I would like to thank is Martin Dijst, my supervisor. Despite my mess, struggling and delays, he has always been positive, helpful, inspiring, motivating and at the same time critical in a constitutive way. I have always been surprised how much sense things made and how simple things seemed when I was discussing my chapters at his office, especially when I returned to my own room struggling again with what we actually meant. Also I would like to thank Monika Buscher, one of my lecturers at my three-month stay abroad in Lancaster, for the inspiration she gave me into mobilities research and mobile methods. And than a final thanks to my family and friends back home, who gave me a wonderful support.

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## 1 Introduction

We live in a globalizing world. Many of us are driving cars from Japan and South-Korea; gross of our clothes, shoes, toys, and more recently also many of our electronic devices are produced in China, our vegetables and fruits arrive from Brasil; and for help desk services we call India. In a search for the lowest costs, sites of production have been separated from markets of consumption. Continents, regions, nations and cities are interconnected into one 24-hour global economy, dominated and controlled by first tier world cities functioning as financial command centres, such as New York, London and Tokyo (Sassen, 1991; Knox & Taylor, 1995; Thrift 1996) and in which distribution is organized via hubs of major airports and seaports.

A new hierarchy of places, either in terms of political power, financial control, distribution capacity or added value during production and service provision, has emerged. As a consequence a new division has arisen between on the one hand the fast, interconnected world of people and places characterised by fast transportation, ICT's, and high-end materialized consumption and on the other hand the slow world consisting of those people and places excluded from the main networks accounting for 85% of the world's population, including vast impoverished peripheries, but also declining manufacturing regions or slums inside major world cities (Castells, 2000; Knox & Marston, 2004). Globalization, however, is not only about sites of production, markets of consumption, nodes and hubs, or yes indeed, places. Attention is increasingly paid to the flows and networks that connect them (e.g. Castells, 2000; Beaverstock, 2001; Sasses, 2002; Brown & O'Hara, 2002). In his conceptualization of "the network society" Manuel Castells (2000) stresses the importance of flows, including both tangible flows, such as those of people and goods, and less visible flows of information, knowledge, creativity, capital, ideas, institutions and social practises. Combined these form what he refers to as "space of flows": the major driving forces connecting and disconnecting people, firms, economies and places.

Although intangible mobiles in the "space of flows" mentioned above do not need to be physically transported – theoretically they might be transferred electronically – they do require cognitive proximity and face-to-face contacts, especially for the transfer of high, tacit, implicated and/or classified knowledge (Boschma, 2005; Uzzi, 1997). In order to be competitive inter- and intrafirm networks are increasingly based on efficient embedded trust-based relationships. In addition to the transfer of complicated knowledge, also trust-based transactions within embedded relationships require face-to-face contacts (Uzzi, 1997). An increasing need for face-to-face interactions generates an increasing demand for corporeal human travel. Business travellers travel, both nationally and internationally, for various purposes, such as for divisional or regional meetings, seminars and trouble shooting (all of them intra-firm); client or supplier relations, business deals and the search for investments (all of them inter-firm); the negotiation of subsidies and licenses (governmental) or knowledge exchanges with experts in the field, for instance at conferences or fairs (Welch & Worm 2005; pp. 284–285). Some of the above-mentioned knowledge and information transfers might be substituted by ICT-contacts, but increased overall interconnectedness (generated by these ICT contacts) will most likely generate an even higher need for face-to-face contacts (Graham & Marvin, 2001; Urry, 2002; 2003).

Travel data reflect this increasing demand for human travel. Globally, business-related travel counts for an estimated share of 19% of all international travel. Within Europe the number of business travellers travelling by air increased from less than 20

million in 1950 (World Trade Organisation, 2010) to approximately 120 million in 2005, a share of 17% (Swartbrooke & Horner, 2001) out of the total of 700 million air passengers (Lassen 2009). This research is focussing on Dutch business travellers. Within the Netherlands travel for business purposes other than commuting accounts for 8% of all kilometres travelled domestically in 2007 (CBS, 2010). On a yearly basis Dutch people make a total of 5 million national business trips of more than one day (NBTC-NIPO, 2010, data of 2008) and 5,5 million international business trips (Business travel monitor 2007, data of 2005), on which they spend all together respectively 1.34 and 5,5 billion Euros. Only very recently, in the light of our economic and climate crisis, there are some signs that business travel may come to a (temporary) hold. For the year 2009 36% of Dutch companies mentions to aim at reducing travel costs coming year whereas another third mentions to be unsure about the future of travel budgets, this in congruence with international research results amongst European, African and Middle Eastern companies (NATM, 2009). Simultaneously the EU announced it aims at reducing business travel, and subsequent CO2 emissions with 20% in 2020, by investing in video-conferencing (Standaard, 2009).

Many scholars acknowledged the impact of (mostly international) business travel on our economies (mostly in the light of globalization), and sketched out an important and somewhat heroic role for the highly mobile ‘nomadic’ people travelling for business purposes. These highly skilled professionals, with their ability to create and maintain network relations (Lassen 2009), are important constituents of the global economy. They control the “space of flows” (Castells, 2000) and are also being referred to as “transnational elite” (Beaverstock, 2001; 2002; 2005) or “managerial elite” (Castells, 2000: 443). Some of them are “circling within and between transnational corporations” (Beaverstock, 2005: 245) as expatriates or “inter-company transferees”. Annalee Saxenian, has stressed the important role of highly skilled transnational migrants in the successful regional development of Silicon Valley (1994) and, later, the role of these “New Argonauts” (Saxenian, 2006: 17) in shaping conditions for development and fostering growth of the ICT sector in the initially peripheral economies of their countries of origin (Saxenian, 2006). Either being transnational migrants (Saxenian, 1994; 2006), expatriates (Beaverstock, 2002; 2005) or global passengers constantly on the move, living in two or more worlds simultaneously (Saxenian, 2006); these mobile highly skilled professionals travelling for business, do play a crucial role in our contemporary knowledge society.

In contrast to the large amount of mostly macro-oriented literature on the share, scope and profits business travellers bring to economic processes (for an overview see table 1.1), only a very limited amount of literature has been focussed on the highly dynamic and mobile daily lives, experiences and performances of the most relevant actors involved: the business travellers themselves. It is exactly a viewpoint that starts from these relevant human agencies that is necessary to understand above-mentioned observed wider macro-economic trends and developments as a whole (Dijst 2006; Murdoch, 2006). Some scholars acknowledged this. Lassen (2009) examines the individual rational to travel for business purposes by focussing on the individual beneficial effects of business travel. Vecchi and Wickham (2006) and Krootjes (2008) made attempts to describe in detail patterns of business travel behaviour, which they linked to socio-demographic and work-related aspects and preferences of the respondents (Table 1.1). In the above-mentioned studies however, the range of behavioural choices studied is limited to the decision to travel or not, and thereby only to the long-term planning of individual trips and not to the short-term

actions and activities during the travelling itself. Also attention paid to on-the-spot experiences and the effects of these experiences on next actions is highly limited. Studies that do encompass a complete situational approach of the time-spatial context of the travel situation can be found only outside the realm of business travel studies. Laurier (2002) investigated the practises of combined working and travelling of the so-called ‘mobile worker’, within the time-spatial context of the private car (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Overview of existing studies<sup>1</sup>

	Respondents	Research method	Aspects of mobility	Work or private	Time-spatial context	What is being researched for	Attention for individual decision making
Business travel monitor (2007)	Dutch domestic business travellers	quanti	Frequency duration	Work only	X	Business travel statistics, travel motives	X
Beaverstock (2005)	Transnational expatriates	quali	Aeromobility Expatriation	Work only	X	Formation of transnationalism of managerial elites in the city	X
Saxenian (1994/2006)	Transnational migrants and intercontinental commuters	quali/ quanti	Aeromobility, long distance commute and migration	Work only	X	Effects mobility on transfer of knowledge and institutions	X
Vecchi & Wickham (2006)	Intensive travellers for business.	quali	Frequency, destinations, duration, home base?	Work only	X	Describing travel patterns	Yes. But only in advance. Planning of trips, planning of careers
Krootjes (2008)	Intensive travellers for business. Attention for household gender and age	quali	Modes, frequency, destinations duration	Mostly work but also private life	√, but limited	Describing travel patterns	Yes, but only in advance. Planning of trips, planning of careers
Lassen 2009	Employees in knowledge organisations	quali & quanti	aeromobility	Work & private life	X	Individual rationale to travel	Yes, but only related to the decision to travel or communicate virtually
Laurier (2002)	Mobile worker (not necessarily business travel)	quali	Modes: car	Work & private life	√	performance and experience of working during travelling in car	Yes. Attention for variety of actions and decisions made during travelling

This research attempts to open the black box of the business trip itself, proceeding where more traditional business travel studies stop: at the start of the trip. Instead of describing business travel patterns in terms of who is travelling, where, why and how often, this thesis aims to grasp the full complexity of business travel. In order to do so this research will focus on business travellers’ practises, performances and experiences during their travelling and the way this affects their continuous decision making in advance and during future travelling. In their decision making during their

<sup>1</sup> The overview provided in table 1.1 is non-exhaustive

trips, business travellers continuously relate to and interact with present and absent people, objects, ideas and situations from dislocated travel, work and private home situations (Dijst 2006, Friedman & Greenhouse 2000).

In this research business travel will be defined according to Aguilera (2008: p 1109-1110) as “work-related travel to an irregular place of work”. This may include all kinds of travel for a variety of work purposes (which will not be restricted to managers, finance, sales or highly educated professions, as the primary interest lies in the experience and performance of the travelling itself), but excludes the regular daily commuting from home to work.

The aim of this thesis is to give insight into business travellers’ performance and experience of business travel situations. *Experience* refers to business travellers’ emotions, perceptions and valuations. *Performance* refers to business travellers’ actions and behaviours. *Business travel situations* have two components, one temporal and one spatial. The concepts temporalities and spatialities refer to conception and use of time and space by its users, in this case business travellers. Through conception the temporal and spatial become social; through their uses the social becomes temporal and spatial (Kellerman, 1989). In itself time and space are abstract dimensions. These are given meaning only through its contents. “Temporality and spatiality provide a bridge between abstract time and space and the objects and events through which they are revealed and become socially meaningful” (Kellerman, 1989, p.31). In this research *temporalities* refer to the sequence, timing and duration of timeslots that host events. Also it will be questioned how present, past and future events are related through feelings or imaginations. *Spatialities* refer to the spatial configurations and material interactions that form the context in which events take place. Examples include the spatial settings frequently travelled through by the business traveller, such as inside the (rental) car, the hotel room, the airplane, the conference centre, the restaurant and at the airport.

Throughout this thesis the following two research questions will be addressed:

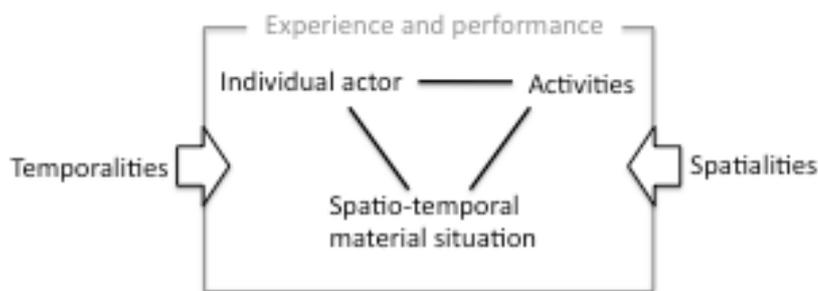
1. Which temporalities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?
2. Which spatialities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?

The research questions include the concept *occurrence*. This refers to the way temporalities and spatialities are being done during business trips. In some situations business travellers may end up, either expectedly or unexpectedly, in certain temporalities and spatialities that occur beyond the control of business travellers. Intercontinental travelling involves the spending of numerous hours in an airplane, the related waiting at airports and the possibility of unexpected delays. In other situations however, business travellers may intentionally alter the occurrence of temporalities and spatialities, by means of the selection of situations. Business travellers, for instance, may opt for travelling by train instead of car if they have to do a lot of reading or laptop work to catch up with. Intentional selection of temporalities and spatialities is one component of business travellers’ performance. Another component of performance is the customizing of spatialities and temporalities. *Customizing* refers to the alignment of interests between the business traveller and the temporalities and spatialities he or she is subjected to. This may involve either an adaptation of the business traveller; a transformation of temporalities and spatialities; or, most commonly, a combination of both. Customizing of temporalities includes the scheduling, shuffling, reshuffling, slowing down or speeding of events. Customizing

of spatialities includes business travellers' negotiations with spaces around them. Once inside the car, airplane or train for instance, business travellers may subtly try to create a personal space from which they can participate in a range of activities.

Experience and performance of business travel situations can be seen as a result of a complex interplay between the intentions and capabilities of business travellers as individual actors, the activities they wish or need to participate in, and the spatio-temporal situation they find themselves interacting and negotiating with. This can be approached from a temporalities and a spatialities perspective. In the research questions above spatialities and temporalities have been split for analytical reasons. The above-mentioned examples already illustrate however, and this will become clearer in the following chapters, that in reality spatialities and temporalities do not exist separately of each other but are in fact highly intertwined.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual model



The structure of this thesis will be as follows: The second chapter provides a theoretical framework in which Time Geography and Actor Network Theory will be introduced and used to frame business travellers situational performances and experiences. In the third chapter the methodological framework for the qualitative research will be phrased. The chapters four and five will analyse business travellers' performances and experiences of respectively temporalities and spatialities. The sixth and final chapter provides a final conclusion and discussion.

## 2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter a conceptualization of business travel practises will be developed that consists of, and arises from, the business traveller him/herself as a central actor in interaction and negotiation with various present and absent actors from his/her travel work and private home situation. The *travel situation* refers to interactions between the business traveller and present persons and objects co-located in the here and now of business travel and to imaginary interactions with persons, objects events and places that are absent. Within the 'here and now' of a business trip the dislocated *work* and *private home situation* continuously surface in thoughts, imaginations, actions and communications.

The chapter starts with an introduction in the business travellers' work and private home situations. It will be argued that business travellers in their decisions in advance of and throughout their trips, continuously relate to these situations back home. Decisions range from long-term strategic life-cycle decisions (career choices, etc), towards inspirational and improvising (last-minute) adjustments of time slots and spatial settings during trips. Next, Time Geography will be introduced to visualize that business travel reflects a path through time and space that lead to a sequence of unique spatio-temporal situations. An introduction into Actor Network Theory will follow to reveal and unfold the complexity of business travellers' relationships and interactions with present and absent persons, objects, events and places. It will be argued that these relationships and interactions give meaning to the way business-travellers experience and perform business travel situations. In the remainder of the chapter stepwise the various actors will be introduced, who or which are of relevance to the business travellers in the organizing and living of their business trips. It should become clear how these relationships and interactions shape business travellers' experiences and decisions in the planning and performance of travel and, vice versa, how their travelling impacts upon the these relationships and interactions.

### **Business travellers' private and work lives back home**

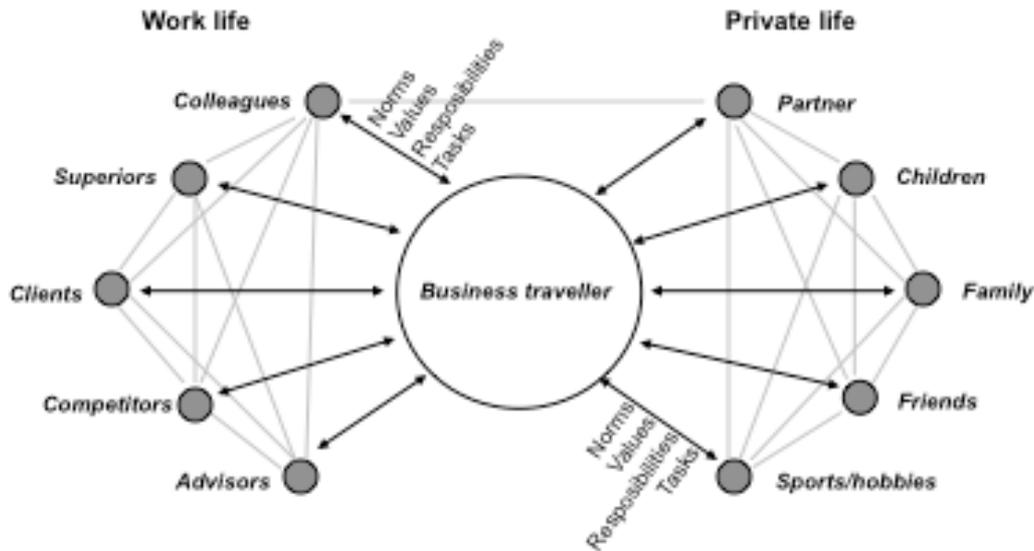
With a job comes a certain remit. Krootjes (2008) shows that travel behaviour is often suited to the tasks and responsibilities belonging to a job. Overseas coordinating managers as well as people selling products to overseas clients showed the most intensive travel in terms of frequency (Krootjes, 2008). Their most important tasks are coordinating and gaining loyalty in order to establish and maintain trust-based relationships, for which frequent face-to-face contacts are required (Boschma 2005; Uzzi, 1997). Intensive travellers organise their work around travel. Others, such as advisors or directors, are not able to travel weekly, since they need to base their activities at the office. They organize travel around their work (Vecchi & Wickham, 2006; Krootjes, 2008). Tasks and responsibilities are not only the result of a certain job. They also result from and are embedded in the relationships and negotiations between the business traveller and various actors at work.

Besides tasks and responsibilities that come with a certain job, work also provides a set of norms and values (rules of the game) that should be taken into account by all participants: the business traveller him/herself, his/her colleagues, superiors and to a lesser extent clients and advisors. One should not think of these norms and values as some static invisible structure, a context, influencing the behaviour of the participants. Instead, these norms and values emerge from and are embedded in the continuous relationships and interactions between colleagues, superiors, clients, advisors and even competitors (Latour, 2005). Interactions with

colleagues may influence the business traveller's travel behaviour, either negatively or positively. A "travel climate" on your department of the firm, characterised by many colleagues enthusiastically travelling frequently, might stimulate a business traveller to travel. A system that points out where on earth your colleagues are located could catalyze this. Or one can think of the pressure of colleagues blaming you for not travelling. On the other hand being the only one travelling might negatively influence travel, since you might get gradually excluded from your colleagues who have stronger bonds since they are staying together at the office all the time, and who may even think of you as an uncommitted stranger who comes and goes.

Sets of norms and values within a firm or business, such as 'travel culture', emerge and evolve from participators' relationships and interactions in the past, from which successful routines and traditions had been developed (Boschma, 2005). These norms and values are constantly being shaped and reshaped, through present relationships and interactions and the anticipating of foresights, ambitions and future directions. Therefore these norms and values are dynamic and constantly becoming. The two-way arrows on the left-hand side of Figure 2.1 schematically show the relationships business travellers have with actors from their work life, from which tasks, responsibilities, norms and values arise. Simultaneously these arrows symbolise the negotiations that take place between actors from the work life and the business traveller, whose pattern of relationships and interactions has been zoomed into.

Similar to work life, also private life embeds the business traveller's behaviour with 'rules of the game'. What happens if business travellers, like any other human beings, confront life choices (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000)? As mentioned, staying away from home has a large impact on the actors from the private life, especially partner and children. Children may miss a mother or father in the household. The partner may be heavily constrained in his or her own daily mobility, leisure time, and career due to high pressure on domestic tasks, such as the spatio-temporal inflexible tasks of picking up the children, especially if combined with a car not available. Commitment in a relationship with a partner, having children and taking care of parents if they are getting older, are all examples of responsibilities and resulting tasks deriving from one's private life. In order to combine intensive business travel patterns and private life a communal set of norms and values between the business traveller and his or her partner and family, has to be produced, reproduced, shaped and reshaped. In an attempt to suit travel behaviour to a desired private life situation, negotiations take place between the business traveller and actors from his or her private life, which is symbolized by the two-way arrows on the right-hand side of figure 2.1. High time pressure, often involved with business travel, challenges fine-tuning between work and private life and may result in an interruption of established relationships between men and women (Redcliff & Sinclair, 1991).



**Figure 2.1: Business travellers’ relationships with their private and work lives back home**

Most often the business traveller stands as a single link between his or her work life and private life. Negotiations, activities and events taking place at work do reach actors in the private life only via the business traveller and vice versa. If so, the business traveller finds him/herself in the unique position to control information transfer between work and private life. This gives the business traveller a certain amount of power and control, but it puts also high pressure on the business traveller’s shoulders satisfying actors on both sides, who do not know each other directly but only via you. As a result, in both private and work life negotiations, mutual misunderstanding, lies and manipulation may take place.

Sometimes direct contact between private and work life actors may take place or may be desired. Taking a partner and/or other family members on a business trip may be a way to escape the boredom and loneliness of a business trip (Lassen, 2006) and, to the partner, may increase forbearance and compassion to business travel. A business dinner in which partner’s are invited, another situation in which work and private life directly meet, may give the partner as well a peek into the black box called ‘work’. Direct meetings between actors from work and private life may play an important role in mutual understanding and compassion, however it may be questionable whether ‘forced’ introductions, such as the example of the partner’s dinner, really contribute to such binding effects, or whether they strand in superficial formalities. To the business traveller, direct meetings between work and private life may be a threat to his or her control position as the linking person. Furthermore it may be difficult and uncomfortable to the business traveller to behave as you naturally do in the separated environments.

Wittel (2001) suggests that besides work and social (private life) rationalities, travel may also have individual rationalities. Business travellers bring in various individual aspects into their travelling for work. Individual rationalities to travel may include: the escape of daily work and private life hectic (Rojek,1993; Adey et al 2007); the consumption of distance; the pursuing of a cosmopolitan lifestyle (Lassen 2009); the individual formation of knowledge and experience (Nowicka, 2006, Lassen 2009) or the use of business trips as a launch pad for vacation or the visiting of friends or family (Lassen 2006). In order to illustrate that individual, work and private life

situations are of importance to understand travel decisions, on purpose this section has exclusively emphasised this ‘home’ base. In the remainder of this chapter it will become clear that the details of business travel are being articulated in travel situations.

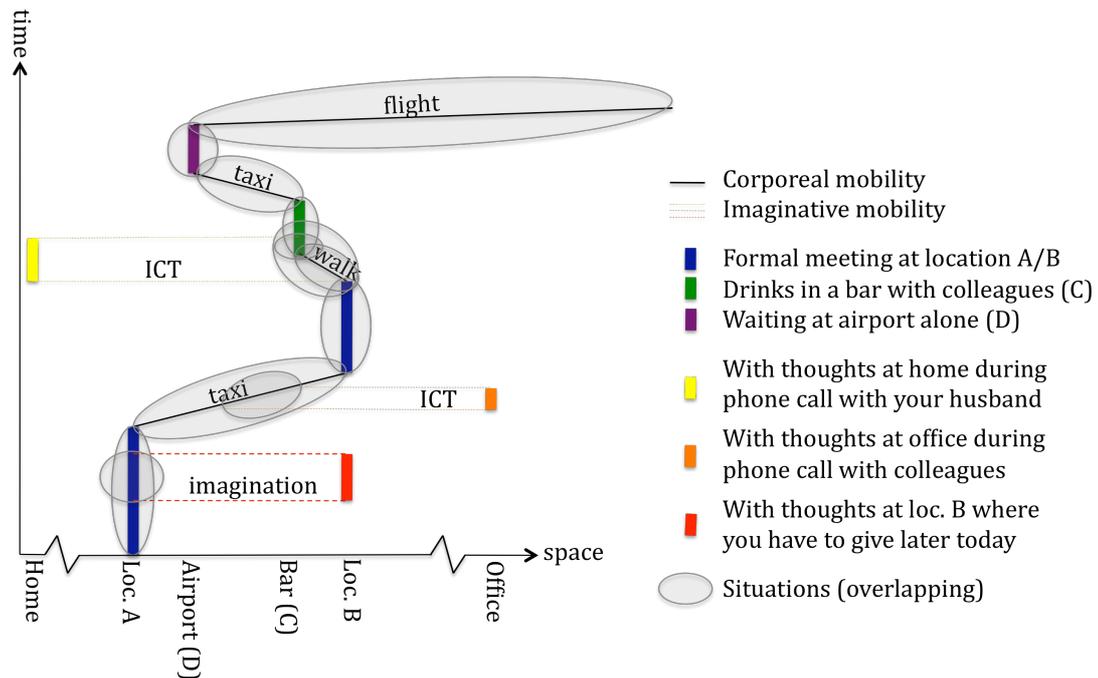
### **Travel situations**

So far the background of business travellers’ private and work situation back home have been sketched. It has been explored to which actors back home business travellers relate to when they make decisions regarding the planning of business trips. Now these home situations have been sketched, attention can be focussed on the actual travel situation. From time to time it will become clear that these absent work and private home situations work their way through into the ‘here and now’ of the present business trip.

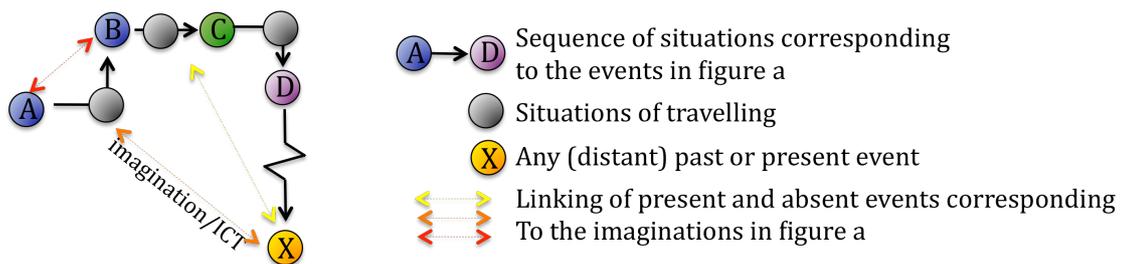
As business travellers during their business trips proceed through time and space from one event to another, they are confronted with a lot of different shorter and longer situations. Movement of individuals through time and space has been analysed and visualized by time geographers (e.g. Hägerstrand, 1970). Time geography departs from possibilities and restrictions individuals have with regard their potential movement through time and space. Business travellers face several fundamental restrictions that no human being and not many other living and non-living entities can escape from (Dijst, 2008). As business travellers are indivisible, they can only be corporeally present at one place at a time. In addition they have a limited capacity to take part in more than one activity at a time and they have a limited time span in which to fulfil all necessary or desired activities. All tasks have certain duration and take place at certain spaces. Movement from one space to another or from a certain package of tasks (at the office) to another (at home) consumes a certain amount of time (Dijst, 2008). Nowadays some of these restrictions can be partially lifted – thanks to new communication technologies one can now work on a laptop in wireless contact with the office while travelling; thanks to video conferencing a single activity such as a meeting can take place at different spaces around the globe. Being highly experienced travellers, business travellers in particular are exceptionally keen on lifting restrictions and increasing time efficiency, as will be explored in the final part of this chapter. Nevertheless above-mentioned restrictions remain relevant in organising business travel activities.

Business travellers’ movements through time and space can best be illustrated by visualized time-space paths. Figure 2.2a and Figure 2.2b show a section of business trip, consisting of a variety of situations. In figure 2.2a these situations are plotted on the space path of a fictive person ‘Anna’. The first situation starts when Anna has a formal meeting at location A. At some point during this event a new overlapping situation occurs: during meeting A she is thinking about a PowerPoint she has to give later that day at location B. As shown in the figure at this particular moment she is corporeally present at location A, but mentally present at location B. After some time thinking about her presentation she switches her attention back to meeting A again. She continues her day with a taxi ride to location B: a new situation. Notice that this corporeal travelling from one point to another takes time, whereas the imaginative switching back and forth from one place to another happened instantly. During her taxi ride she receives a phone call from colleagues: a new situation overlapping the taxi situation. By communicating with her colleague she instantly triggers imaginations of her contacts with this colleague at an office miles away (see dotted line of imaginative mobility in the figure). Before she arrives at location B she

hangs up the phone. She does her presentation. Before she notices the meeting is over again: it went quickly and smoothly. As soon as she finishes she walks away from location A towards a bar together with some colleagues. She calls her husband to inform him that her presentation went well. She enters a bar still calling. It is a bit loud here so after some minutes she decides to hang up the phone. She has no idea how they walked from location B nor did she know what bar they entered; she passively followed her colleagues, as she was with her thoughts at home. After some drinks and informal chatting with her colleagues it was time for her to leave her colleagues at the bar and head for the airport by taxi to catch her flight that leaves in one hour. The waiting at this awkward busy airport however felt like hours<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 2.2a: Travel, imaginations and situations plotted in spacetime.** Inspired by Kwan, M.-P. (2000)



**Figure 2.2b: Sequence of situations**

Figure 2.2b shows the chronological sequence of the situations introduced in figure 2.2a. Experience and performance at a given situation are related to situations people have been confronted with before. Anna called her husband as a direct result of her presentation that went smoothly. During this phone call she thinks of past situations of being at home with her husband. Also Anna goes to the airport one hour before her

<sup>2</sup> Remark: For visibility reasons, in Figure 2.2a events are only plotted in absolute time. Anna’s perception of the duration of events does not show in the figure.

flight. Because she has done this before and she knows this gives her enough time to catch her flight. Relatedness of present situational experiences, performances and practises to past situations is in congruence with Pred's (1981) *life path – daily path dialectic*, meaning that the “details of everyday life are rooted in past intersections of individual path and institutional project” (Pred, 1981, p.13), an insight and language Pred borrowed from Time Geography (Hägerstrand, 1970) and Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1979). Additionally situations may be related to future situations. In Anna's imaginations situation A is already linked to situation B that is yet to come.

The above-mentioned example (as visualized in the figures 2.2a and 2.2b) shows the sequence of new situations that continuously appear, sometimes ending; sometimes overlapping an existing situation. It simultaneously shows the richness of these situations, including:

- Interaction between present and absent (connected) human actors: Anna, her present colleagues, her colleagues back at the office, her husband back home
- Interaction between present and absent nonhuman objects: PowerPoint file, phone, seats, etc.
- Activities, sometimes multiple at a time: walking, sitting, standing, chatting, drinking, listening, giving presentation, calling, imagining
- Temporalities: Each situation has its accurate absolute timing (13h30) (plotted on y-axis figure 2.2a) and timing related to other situations (before or after). Each situation has its own absolute duration (30mins) and perceived duration (long waiting, quick presentation). Present and absent situations are linked via communications and imaginations (see dashed lines figures 2.2a and 2.2b).
- Spatialities: Each situation has its own location (plotted on x-axis, figure 2.2a). These locations can be stations (Hägerstrand, 1970): sites where time-space paths of multiple actors meet. Stations can be fixed (meeting room A) or mobile (airplane). Each situation has its own present spatial setting: bar, taxi, meeting room, airport.
- Atmospheres (related to and embedded in spatialities): Formal atmosphere of the meetings, informality and noise at the bar, awkwardness and busyness at the airport

In order to grasp how all of the above-mentioned elements come together in situations, the following section introduces actor network theory (Latour, 1987; 2005; Law, 1992; Law & Hassard 1999; Callon, 1986). It will be theorized how human actors and objects enter, shape, reshape and exit situations.

### **Actors and networks**

Actor network theory includes into its concept of actors both human actors and nonhuman actors. They are treated alike as elements that interact with one another. These interactions will be analysed rather from their effects (what does stuff do) than from their intentions (more common with human actors). Actors are subdivided into mediators and intermediaries (Latour, 2005). With *mediators* we mean those actors that “make other actors do things” (Latour, 2005, p. 104), such as taxi drivers driving a car transferring passengers from A to B. Actors (taxi driver) triggering other actors to do things: car engine, steering wheel, the passenger, other users of the road. This is also known as the “principle of irreduction” (p. 104). Actions of mediators are often specific, uncertain and unpredictable, leaving behind traces in the course of action ready to be identified and studied by the cautious social scientist. *Intermediaries* on the other hand are those actors silently acting in a more predictable way.

Intermediaries are often non-human artefacts ‘doing their jobs’ in a predictable and prescribed way, such as a car ready to drive once you ignite it, or a central heating system running once temperature gets below 18°C. Humans on the other hand have the ability to show much less predicted behaviour, acting more like mediators, steering and organizing processes, thereby making others to act as well. The above-mentioned clear-cut distinction between human actors and objects however is oversimplified (Latour 2005). Sometimes human actors may act in such well-oiled, fashionable and prescribed way that these individuals can be seen as intermediaries, whereas non-humans may become full-blown mediators, for instance when they fail to do what they should do.

To return to the business traveller, in some cases he or she might act as an intermediary: doing your job as a business traveller, fulfilling an assignment as expected, travelling in a routinized manner, staying in touch with your family by means of regular phone calls in taking home the expected souvenirs. Most often however, business travellers take to some extent control of organising stuff around them and in their choices make surrounding actors react upon their actions. Taking part in an unexpected business trip you might act like an intermediary to your superiors (just doing your job as expected). At the same time you will act like a mediator to your private home situation as you will have to negotiate to be unexpectedly away from home for some time.

#### *Formation of a network*

The business traveller, as an actor, is in constant interaction with present and absent human and non-human actors. At the work floor for instance business travellers interact with humans (colleagues, clients, superiors, etc) and nonhumans that silently allow the business traveller to do his job (desk, files, pen, paper, computer, windows, doors, phones, etc). These interactions take place in networks of which the above-mentioned heterogeneous actors are constituents. A network is not something that is fixed. Networks are constantly being formed, reformed and destructed by various actors entering and exiting it, thereby shaping and reshaping the identity of a network (Latour, 2005). Note that anything can be an actor, including physical processes such as sunshine, wind, rain, day and night. In the assemblage of networks, both intermediaries and mediators fulfil important tasks. To understand these tasks one must start with understanding the formation of a network. A network, as it is meant in ANT, should not be misinterpreted as a web, an infrastructure, or framework, something linking nodes and hubs in a static structure. Rather network should be seen a “work-net” (Latour, 2005, p. 132), in which *work*, labour – not to be misinterpreted as job work – thus action, is the input and the *net* is the output, a set of relationships, interactions between circulating actors and entities, an assembled state of affairs.

An active mediator, labour, is needed to lay down networks, which additionally need a “stabilized set of intermediaries” (p. 132) to take shape and gain stability. First step in order to form a network is the *enrolment* of actors, or, let us say, actors include themselves, or are invited into the network. Let me illustrate this with the example of a phone call. If receiving a phone call, you are being invited into a network. As you can often see who is calling you, thereby possibly triggering expectations, you can decide either to enrol yourself into the network (by picking up the phone) or not to join the network. Once enrolled, or actually during the process of enrolment, the actor is persuaded to identify with the network, to align his or her own interests with those of the network. This is called the process of translation, which takes place either consensually, or coercively (Murdoch, 2006), the former being the

actor is believing in the interest of the network (picking up the phone); the later being the actor is forced to join the network (after denying the phone call several times you might pick it up against your interest). In order to successfully establish a network, transformation should take place of either the network or the actor enrolling into the network. If you are being called by a close friend you might pick up the phone saying "...hi, how are you", whereas being called by your boss or any client a phone conversation should start probably more formal. Likewise, seeing who is calling you, you transform yourself to the network.

Once established, it is important that a network is stabilized. Intermediaries, such as the mobile phone network operators and digital signals symbolizing language transactions, should provide the network to run smoothly until disconnected by one of the calling actors (mediators). Any intermediary not functioning as expected (for instance connection failure in tunnel) turns into a mediator and destabilizes or even disconnects the network. Therefore all actors, both mediators and intermediaries turning into mediators, can influence the course of the network. As a result, networks are always highly precarious (Latour, 2005). One tiny little thing goes 'wrong' and the entire network might be in danger.

### *Power relations*

Actor network theory studies materials, practises and discourses in which "power relations are embedded and transported" (Murdoch, 2006, p. 58). Through action of mediators, other actors are influenced in their actions (power); that this power is situated inside the interactions between the actors and entities (power is *embedded*); and that power gained at some place by some actors in the network then flows out to other, dispersed, enrolled actors and sites via interactions (power is *transported*). If the time comes your boss is inviting you to join him in his office (start of an interaction) he/she would activate you (power) to move your body into his office (reaction). Once asking you to think about going on a certain business trip, the power is distributed to you. Joining another network later at home (while entering the door) you will tell your partner about your boss' proposal to go on this trip. You might want to take into account your partners reaction, before returning to your boss to tell him your decision. By doing so power is further distributed through the relationship with you partner. Likewise, instead of being placed upon it, power emerges from within the networks, an insight Latour (1985; 2005) gained following Foucault's ideas on the productive properties of power relations. All enrolled actors are stakeholders in the network and, as the definition of actor makes clear, are making other actors do things. The above-mentioned example shows very well that networks are not isolated. As shown, networks at the work floor are interrelated with networks at home.

### *Power embedded spatialities and temporalities: example of the office*

Power is also embedded in spatialities and temporalities. I will return to the example of the work floor again at the office. The office is a place in which a variety of people from cleaners to managers come, go, meet and interact. To speak in time-geographical language, the office can be seen as a station in which various individual time-space paths of humans and non-humans are temporarily bundled. Whereas being a domain for security personnel and early employees trying to get this one project fixed or trying to escape the rush of traffic jams, the office may turn into a hectic interplay of various managers, employees, advisors and clients later in the morning, to calm down again at the end of the afternoon when people are gradually returning home, followed by its final transformation when it is closed by security personnel again for the night.

As the above-mentioned just-another-day-at-the-office-example illustrates, space is constantly becoming, being shaped and reshaped and therefore highly dynamic (Lecture Dijst, 2007). Additionally, by hosting repeated time-spatial interactions of various actors, space gives structure, function and meaning to those who visit and simultaneously shape this space, which has now become *place* to its participators.

Laurier (2002), stresses the linking function of offices in our temporary society referring to the office as an "... 'obligatory point of passage' in the circulation of people and things throughout modernity" (Laurier, 2002, p.46; Latour, 1987; Hetherington, 1997). Being a place linking long chains of translations, the office can be seen as a *centre of calculation* (Latour, 1987; Laurier 2002) or *polyoptican* (Latour 2005) linking long chains of translations (Laurier 2002). The traditional office resembles organization and surveillance within distinct physical boundaries from which occasional business travel could be experienced as escape or independence (Wickham & Vecchi, 2009).

Laurier (2002) attempts to lift the definition of the fixed traditional office to a workplace more mobile, referring to as "the mobile office" (p.46) which does entail the same coordinating and linking functions as traditional offices, however is not bounded to a specific point in space, four walls and a roof. As an example Laurier mentions the car, from which the mobile worker, thanks to new communication technologies, coordinates both his/her work and private life, while being on the road. A wide range of multiple diverse sites have are transformed into workplaces (Mitchel 2003), including mobile sites, such as trains, airplanes and cars, as well as "temporary places of repose" (McNeill, 2009, p.219), such as hotels, restaurants and bars (Cresswell, 2006). Travelling, as such, could be experienced less of an escape, as one is continuously connected via mobilizing ICTs and travel has become work time instead of time out (Wickham & Vecchi 2009).

Either in fixed or fluid form, offices and mobile workplaces are highly important as centres of power and control. To business travellers with a clear 'home' base (Vecchi & Wickham, 2006) from which they coordinate their work and travel, the traditional office may play an important role in coordinating their work lives – as a frequently visited space and as the ultimate setting in which relationships between colleagues and supervisors are embedded. To those intensive business travellers who are constantly on the road, organizing work around travel, the construction of multiple *mobile offices* may be much more relevant, although occasional visits to the traditional office remain important (Krootjes, 2008).

### *Spaces of prescription and spaces of negotiation*

Spatialities and temporalities enable some behaviour and restrict other. Certain spaces do technically not allow actors to exert certain activities: one cannot use a laptop while driving a car or walking on a street. Other situations, although they would technically allow certain activities, restrict actors from exerting these activities, as doing so would be considered disturbing, inappropriate or illegal. Examples vary widely from situational behaviour that is very clearly restricted, such as smoking a cigarette in an airplane, towards situational behaviour that is subjected to vague interpretations of etiquette, such as 'disturbing' mobile phone use in public spaces (e.g. Hashimoto, 2005; Ling, 2005; Rössler & Höflich, 2005; Judes & Stevens, 2007). Below I will zoom into a number of spaces frequently visited and shaped by the business traveller. It will be hypothesised how these situations may impact the business traveller's performance and experience of activities, and vice versa, how these spaces are being altered by business travellers' actions. Some of these spaces

prescribe certain expected behaviour; others allow more room for spontaneous interactions and negotiations (Murdoch, 2006).

In formal occasions, such as a meeting in a conference room, a set of behavioural norms and values is either expected in terms of (unwritten) social etiquette and social practise, or obliged based on formal rules. A speaker is in the centre of attention presenting his message to the audience being patiently listening as silent mediators. Authority of the speaker is often supported by the spatial design of a conference room, with the audience seats pointed towards a centrally located speaker station positioned in front of them (figure 2.3). During questions and discussions at the end of a speech, more spontaneous interaction and negotiation within the audience (now turning into mediators as they speak and make others act) and between speaker and audience take place, although the organization of such interaction in formally defined question and discussion rounds, still makes it a primarily *prescribed* situation (Murdoch, 2006). However, also highly prescribed situations, can transform into a more chaotic situation in which behaviour is less standardized and in which spontaneous, particular and unexpected interactions take place. What happens, for instance, when a mobile phone rings during a meeting in a conference room? An outsider, the person who is calling, forcefully enrolls him/herself into the conference room network via the ring tone (the mobile phone on itself acts as a full blown mediator disturbing the conference room), hereby acting as a mediator to the person being called, who on his/her turn has the choice either to reject the call – and silently and shamefully return to his/her original position as an intermediary – or to answer it, fulfilling his/her recently acquired role as a mediator to the rest of the meeting participants.



**Figure 2.3: Conference room, a space of prescription**

During business trips a wide range of both formal and informal places is being visited, often right after each other: a break during a meeting, going to a bar right after a meeting or in advance of a formal dinner. Jones (2009) indicates the emergence of a wide range of informal business spaces in line with consumption patterns of increasing numbers of visiting business travellers, some of which are purpose built, such as the hotel bars and lounges, whereas others simply anticipating demand. He stresses the importance of especially these informal business spaces in fostering rich information exchange. Boundaries between informal and formal, business and leisure spaces are increasingly blurred supporting the argument that business travel and tourism are increasingly intertwined (Jones, 2009; Swartbrooke & Horner 2001).

### *Experience of spatio-temporal situations*

Simply because you are at home and with your partner, having diner gets a completely different meaning if compared to someone grabbing a fast food diner at the airport. Stretching way beyond the purely functional individual need to eat, dining with a partner at home includes a spectrum of unique local elements and practises from the private home situation, reproducing the private home situation: the partner, the 'home' dining table, paintings on the wall, subtle dining background music, the relaxation, the privacy, or – less romanticised – the standard boring 'how-was-your-day' talks, the regular disputes and the unsatisfactory cleaning up. All of these are examples of elements and practises symbolizing and identifying ones personal, local 'yes-I-feel-at-home'-atmosphere, uniquely shaped and given meaning by the relations between the actors involved.

Often considered less unique are the spatio-temporal situations associated with business travel. Instead of being an excitement or adventure business travel is more and more associated with boredom. The time is over that flying is a novelty and that it brings excitement and high expectations; to its frequent routinized user the airplane is a way of transport, just like any other way of transport (Lassen, 2006). Lassen describes a business trip as a "practise, which takes place in the corridors," (p.306), by which he refers to the monotonous landscape of Castells' (1996) 'space of flows' consisting of conference centres, hotels, taxis, airplanes and airport lounges. Being neutral, diaphanous, non-local and nothing-saying, looking all the same around the globe these spaces have been referred to, by some, as non-places (Augé, 1995) or "architecture of nudity" (Castells, 1996, p.450). Others would stress, however, that all spaces, even these global spaces, are simultaneously very local. Being built on local territory by local workers; employed with local cleaners, service personnel and shopkeepers; and used as a shelter by homeless, an airport, for instance, is a very real and very local place (Cresswell, 2006).

The examples of the home and travel situations mentioned above, illustrate how spatio-temporal situations are being experienced. Experience, however, is a rather vague term that needs further elaboration. First situations are being sensed and as such trigger emotions, such as pleasant, excitement or boredom. Second, situations are being perceived. In addition to sensing, this involves a cognitive process in which case sensations are made aware of in the brain (Downs & Stea, 1973; Geddie, 1965). As such perceptions of spatio-temporal situations include an identification of emotions and the formation of images or conceptions. The unique spatio-temporal arrangement of objects and persons at home for instance makes one identify with home, perceiving the situation as home. Third, experiences include valuations, in which case the experience of a situation will be connected to a positive or negative attitude. Valuations may arise from past experiences of emotions and conceptions. They may however also be built external images and prejudices.

### *Selection and customizing of spatio-temporal situations*

As the above mentioned examples of spatial situations already indicate, spatial configurations are highly dynamic; and the business traveller, with his/her ability to identify, interact, shape and reshape these networks, is very much part of these dynamics. This allocates business travellers an active role in their spatial experiences and performances. In their schedules in advance and their impulsivity during their trips they may interfere with the occurrence of spatio-temporal situations via the selection of temporalities and spatialities. Additionally they may also find ways to modify the contents of spatio-temporal situations at hand. Whereas some business

travellers may be frustrated what to do with their air travel time – being unable or too stressed to sleep, work or relax – others, sometimes assisted by the luxury of business class, manage to participate in individual, social or work-related activities, such as relaxation, sleeping, and work preparation, by turning the small space around their airplane seat into a personal space. This process involves the shuffling and reshuffling of materiality. Although initiated by the business traveller the selection and customizing of temporalities and spatialities is always negotiated within the context of the specific situation at hand<sup>3</sup>. In order to personalize the space around their airplane seat business travellers might interact with various human and non-human actors available in the network around them, such as adjusting a seat, unfolding a table, or asking your neighbours to mute their voices. Besides interacting with elements that already exist in the network, business travellers may enrol various non-human entities that they brought along and insert them into the network. Examples could be a laptop, mp3-player, newspaper, pillows, noise-damping earplugs and photos from home.

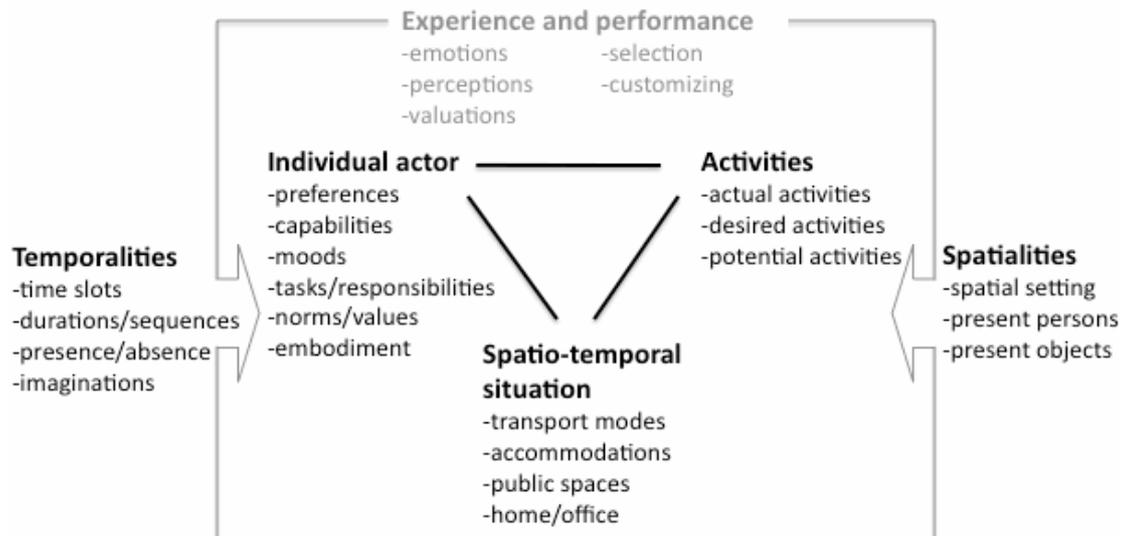
This *customizing of space* may lead to the creation of a *personal bubble*, a personal aura that mentally links an individual to ideas, people and places not physically present (Lecture Dijkstra, 2007). The creation of a personal bubble is of great importance for travellers to feel at ease in an environment, which is impersonal and relatively uncomfortable from itself. The personal bubble is a precarious actor-network that can easily be disturbed, not only by failure of internal actors, such as the exhaustion of laptop batteries, but also by external influences. Schedule changes at the airport may force a business traveller, relaxing in an airport lounge, to proceed to another boarding gate immediately. Food distribution and cabin light procedures according to an airliner's *clock-time* rhythm may highly disturb the *biological* rhythm of an experienced business traveller, trying to adapt to a new time zone in order to overcome a jet-lag (Crang 2005; Schwanen, 2006).

### **Conclusion: Situated experience and performance on the move**

So far a theoretical framework has been developed from which business travellers' situated experiences and performances, in advance of but especially also during their trips, can be analysed. Business travellers in their experiences and performances are continuously linked into a web of present and absent actors from their private and work lives, as well as unique elements present in the very time-spatial situation in which they find themselves. The travel situation is a rich concept, and thanks to its richness very relevant in the understanding of business travellers' experiences and performances. It is where people, objects, activities, temporalities and spatialities come together. Business travellers themselves are part of these situations. As such they also have an active role in: which situations are being selected and what situations look like. However, as experiences and performances are situationally embedded, in their actions business travellers always negotiate with the unique spatio-temporal situations at hand. Figure 2.4 shows a conceptual model from which the experience and performance of business travel situations can be analysed in the remainder of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> Temporal and material can be enabling and constraining. This insight arises from theories based on the concept of affordances. Affordances refer to action possibilities arising from material environments, enabling actors to make use of them if these actors are capable to do so (Gibson, 1977; 1979). Gaver (1991) applied the concept to the use of technologies and further developed the concept (Gaver, 1992) in his ecological approach to social interaction – as a property of environments offering actions to appropriate (competent) organisms.



**Figure 2.4: Conceptual model, expanded**

Experience and performance of travel situations can be seen the interplay between the business travellers themselves, their activities and the spatio-temporal situations in which they are embedded. First, the individual business traveller partially based on his work and private situation back home, has all kinds of personal preferences, capabilities, moods, tasks, responsibilities, norms, values, and embodied characteristics (amongst them gender, age, size and ethnicity). These individual aspects may be related to experiences and/or imaginations of past present and future situations. Second it matters which activities the business traveller wishes or needs to participate in – related to individual – and the activities he or she actually manages to participate in – related to individual capabilities, but also enabled/constraint by the spatio-temporal situation. Since these activities require an interaction, it also matters with what, or with whom the activity takes place. Third it matters in which present spatio-temporal situation it takes place. Spatio-temporal situations, such as transport modes, accommodations and public spaces have the main focus. But in their valuations of travel situations, business travellers may also always refer back to their spatio-temporal situations back home and at the office. In the remainder of this thesis experience and performance of business travel will first be analysed from a temporalities perspective (Chapter 4). Time slots, durations and sequences of events will be analysed and will be investigated how present and absent events are related via imaginations. Second, from a spatialities perspective (Chapter 5) the experience, selection and customizing of spatial settings will be analysed.

### 3 Methods

Inspired by Actor Network Theory, Non-representational Geography and the New Mobilities Paradigm, this thesis is an attempt to sketch out a new vision of business travel: towards a more embodied and performative nature of business travel. This approach offers methodological challenges. Methods are required to gather information that moves beyond social relations, representations and the produced as has been traditionally been investigated in social theory (Thrift, 2000; 2007). New methods are required to investigate the experience and practises of business travel and the way humans, non-humans and hybrids (between the two) are enacted and performed. In order to construct a detailed and real-time description of practises, these methods should focus on following the actor, to use an ANT slogan (Latour, 2005), and engage with respondents in ways that move beyond the realms of representation (Lorimer, 2005) and give access to the mobile non-representational spaces of experience and encounter (Thrift, 1997). Therefore in this thesis, use will be made of a combination of multi-sited ethnographic observations and qualitative interviews.

#### *Multi-sited ethnography by means of cultural probes*

First it is important to be in presence of the object of research, the business traveller. An ethnographic methodology allows the researcher to be co-present with the people one is studying and observe performances of daily practise as they occur and unfold in their natural setting, real-time: a series of interconnected interspaces whilst on the move. Because in this research the natural setting is the extreme opposite from a single, static and fixed place, multi-sited ethnography has to be used (Larsen, 2008), allowing one to grasp the mobility of people, objects, feelings, ideas and places (Sheller & Urry, 2006) in multiple sites of observation (Marcus, 1995) that cross-cut the divide between local and global (Larsen, 2008).

Ideally then, I should follow my main actors – the business travellers – in their performances on business trips. Unfortunately this would for this research consume too much time and money to do for every respondent and would moreover be too intrusive to the respondents and their organizations' privacy, since these trips allow access to privacy-sensitive, inaccessible and/or classified information and places. Nevertheless, to gain some experience and feeling of the business travelling myself, I followed two respondents on their business trips. For the rest of the respondents I will use a new experimental methodological design, in which the respondents are send out do the ethnographic observations by themselves. Equipped with photo cameras or camera phones they will be taking quick snap shots of a variety of situations encountered during their business trips.

Sending out respondents to generate part of the data collection by themselves is in itself not entirely new. Within studies of activity patterns, for instance, respondents have been asked to write down sequences of events in activity diaries, for instance in panel studies. Yet, equipping respondents with portable data gathering devices, such as cameras, has been done only on a very limited scale and mostly for design related purposes. Gaver and others (1999) describe a novel design-related experiment, which makes use of tools like these for design inspirations for aging communities in Europe. Although originally used only for design inspiration, cultural probes have later been used for information gathering as well (Hemmings et al, 2002). The package of tasks and instruments – the composition of the kit may vary depending on the information you want to retrieve, but generally contains tools to describe and record visual images, sound and/or experiences) – handed out to

participants has been referred to as cultural probes and served to extract inspirational, rich, detailed information (Jørgensen et al, 2009). In addition to capturing experiences cultural probes are designed to stimulate thoughts (Dix, 2004). By engaging the object of study into the research the researcher and researched get to know each other better. Not only the researcher, but especially also the participants will reach a better access to and understanding of their experienced emotions and believes. The cultural probes method contributes to reach an impressionistic account of experiences and emotions rather than an objective view of the object of study (Jørgensen, 2009).

In this research the self-data-gathering by the respondents has great potential. First, active involvement allows respondents to get feeling and understanding of what the research is about. This may also strengthen their affiliation with the research. Second it increases respondents' reflexivity on the spot, allowing them to give more detailed accounts of their own daily live (mundane) practises they might otherwise overlook or take for granted. Third, data-material taken on the spot, by the respondents themselves gives the researcher on his/her turn much more feeling and affiliation with the unique stories of the respondents' lives. Fourth, this self-gathered material forms an ideal basis to frame an imaginative replay of the actual business trip by the researcher and the respondent collaboratively, during in-depth interviews afterwards. Finally the method is especially suitable in this research to business travel, as the method's unobtrusiveness and unintrusiveness help to overcome intimacy and privacy boundaries. There are, however some potential drawbacks of this method: it may result in overly receptive and diffused data; and instructions to participants may be misinterpreted. All may ultimately lead towards incorrect, unreliable or confusing data. Therefore this method can never be used solely. In this research it will be complimented with in-depth interviews.

#### *Photographic material*

Main constituent of this multi-sited ethnographic research, and main task for the respondents, is making photographs. With the technological progress of photography during the last century, the making of photographs has become more easy and widespread. Not anymore is photography privileged to professionals and elite; it has become a practise performed by anyone (Larsen, 2008). Where photography has become easier and more widespread, new photographers' actor networks have arisen (Latour, 1991), consisting of people making photographs, their friends their cameras, films, photo companies, places being captured by photographs and many other heterogeneous actors. With the more recent digitalization of photography, practises of posing, shooting, printing, editing, deleting, viewing and distributing, originally disrupted in space and time, have become integrated and intersected in irritative processes performed on the spot, back home and in virtual photo sharing spaces on the internet (Larsen, 2008). Thanks to the integration of cameras into many of today's mobile phones, the photo camera, originally carried along only on specific events, has now become present into most daily life situations, ready to capture spontaneous moments of relevance (Larsen, 2008).

Photography in this research has three important functions. First, the product of photography supplies me as a researcher with highly detailed information of instantaneous moments and enables to capture and grasp everyday practises during travel. One photograph could potentially reveal more information than do minutes of talk or pages of text. Second, a chronological sequence of photographs made during a business trip could be used as a frame to imaginary 'replay' the business trip, during the interview. The third function of photographing in this research is not related to the

photograph itself, but to the practises involved with it. As mentioned above, photography involves the performance of many intertwined practises, instantaneously on the spot and afterwards at home or somewhere else. The goal is that, thanks to the active involvement into the research by the assignment to make photographs during a business trip, the respondent will be more aware of the relevant elements of mundane daily life practises of travel. Through photographic practises of framing, shooting and editing on the spot, respondents could be inspired to think about, and reflect upon, the relevance of tiny little details in travel situations encountered, that give meaning to their experience of these situations. Details that may otherwise be taken for granted and/or overlooked.

If possible respondents will be asked to make photographs of situations encountered during a business trip. On these photographs people, objects, and/or practises will be displayed as they are situated in space and time and in relation to surrounding and/or connected actors. I would like my respondents to think about which people, objects, practises and places have a particular meaning to the way they experience travel. First this meaning could be functional. During a flight people, in this case stewards or stewardesses could provide the necessary objects, food and beverages, to prevent you as a passenger from feeling hungry or thirsty and to make you feel comfortable and sharp. These functional relationships are clearly situated inside the airplane, in which stewards and stewardesses are assigned to serve passengers and are recognisable as such. Second respondents could have an emotional relationship with objects, people practises and places encountered during travel. Playing a specific song on a music player could remind the respondent to the person he or she is in love with, maybe even to the very day they first met. This emotional meaning of the song could only be facilitated thanks to a functional relationship with the music player. Photos could show, but have not to be limited to, the following elements and the way these elements are situated in and related to their particular time-spatial context.

- Any actors (e.g. objects, people or assemblies of people and objects into hybrid actor networks) that organise and facilitate physical movement from A to B (*corporeal travel*)
- Any actors assisting and facilitating business travellers to communicate to home/work (*virtual / communicative travel*)
- Any actors from the present travel situation reminding business travellers to places, events and actors not physically or geographically present, but very close in relational terms, either emotional (picture of you partner and kids) or functional (a pile of paperwork that has to be examined for a meeting next week at the office) (*imaginative travel*)
- Any actors/situations that trigger emotions/moods: which make respondents for instance feel comfortable, relaxed, uncomfortable, annoyed, worried, stressed, anxious or furious

Photos of the above-mentioned elements do not have to be limited to situations encountered during travel itself. Also pre-practises (such as booking of tickets and hotels) and post-practises (such as evaluation/report of business trip) will be analysed. Capturing above mentioned elements and moments does not have to be limited to making photographs. Thoughts, feelings and emotions could be described in notes. If respondents are able to they could capture images, motion and sound recorded by small video and audio fragments. The complete instructions (in Dutch) are shown in appendix 1.

Photographs may contain many elements. In order to interpret and analyse these photographs the following questions could be answered.

- Which people, places, objects and practises could be identified on the photographs?
- How are these elements situated in and related to surrounding actors from the time spatial context in which they occur and how are connected to other actors at a distance?
- How are these relationships being established, transformed, controlled, held stable and or being (dis)connected?
- How are elements being mobilized (Urry and Buscher, 2009)?
  - hold in place (airliner passenger in seatbelt, poster)
  - fixed in place (office, building, infrastructure)
  - temporarily stationary (traveller waiting for connection, visitor, parked car)
  - portable (laptop, picture of family)
  - part of mobile body (ipod, ID-card)
  - prosthetic constitutive of mobile system (contact lenses, pace maker, gender)
  - constitutive of mobile system (driver, time-table, speed)
  - consisting of code (digital document)
- How are these elements of specific meaning to the business traveller?  
This question could be answered only in combination with information extracted from the interview?

One of the difficulties for the respondents to capture the above mentioned elements and moments could be that the very moment encompasses mental absence during physical presence. Especially with virtual, communicative and imaginative travel respondents are relationally close to actors, places and situations not physically present. At moments like these it might be difficult to exert a task to make photographs for a research, for which both awareness of imaginative, communicative and virtual mobilities is needed as well as a focus into the present travel situation to perform the exercise of photography. Therefore photographic material and experiences are elaborated upon in in-depth qualitative interviews, in which it will be attempted to reconstruct an imaginative replay of the business trip.

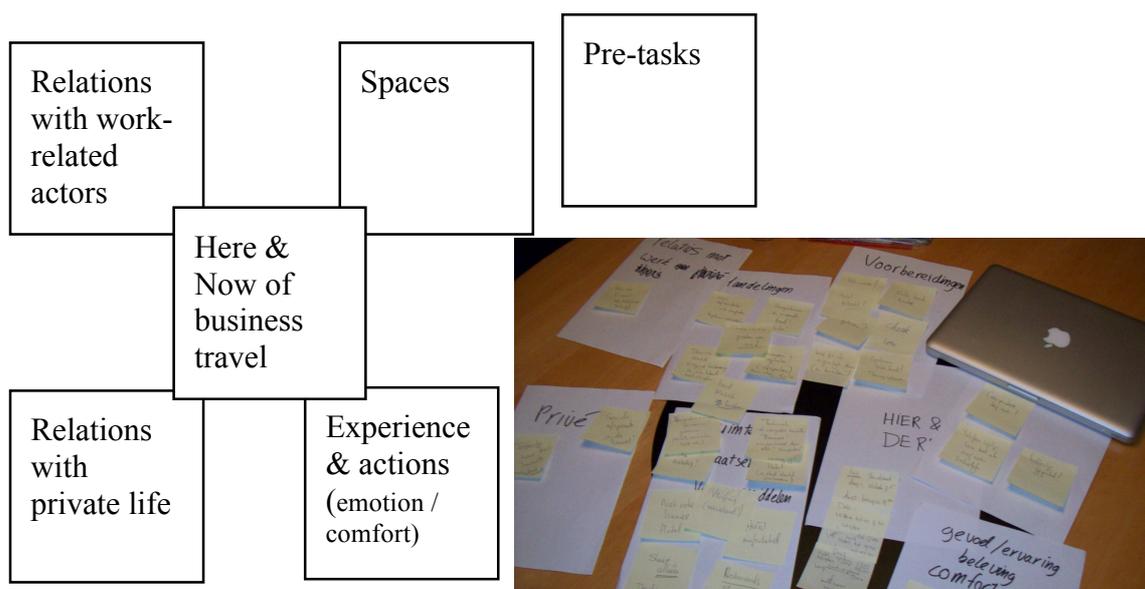
#### *Qualitative interviews*

In total twenty qualitative interviews have been held with Dutch respondents. Interviews are semi-structured to non-structured. In the interviews the unique personal stories of the respondents are central. Use will be made of the following topic list (Table 3.1), however, during the interview there is a lot of flexibility in impulsivity. After an introduction into the personal situations (both work and private life) of the business traveller and his or her patterns when it comes to business travel, I will give the respondents a short introduction into the research of which they are part. The interview then starts with an examination of the gathered photographic material, which serves as the basis for an imaginative replay of respondent's latest business trips. With this story of one trip as a basis, we can elaborate on a variety of different experiences of other trips.

introduction to the business travellers work/private situation
introduction to the research
imaginative 'replay' of the recent business trip
emotional/functional meaning of specific events and situations to the business traveller
characterisation of inter-spaces
modes of transportation (actor-networks of car, airplane etc)
places of (temporary) accommodation/stationarity
practises of travel
pre and post-practises of travel
intersections of physical, imaginary, virtual and communicative travel
objects/ICTs (laptops, mobile phones, music players, books, newspapers) facilitating physical/virtual/communicative/ imaginary travel
routinized practises, regularities, expected outcomes?
unexpected events, how to act?
Drive for the adventurous, particular, unexpected

**Table 3.1 topic list**

The respondent now has to start writing down on stick-it memos anything that comes to his/her mind when it comes to their business travelling. To maintain structure and make sure everything is clear and understandable for me as the researcher but especially for the respondent, topics are bundled into the following themes and made visible on a table at the start of the interview (Figure 3.1a and Figure 3.1b). In one of the sheets the relationships with colleagues, superiors, clients and other work-related actors will be collected. Another one will do the same for relationships with partner, kids, family and friends back home. A third sheet, will gather all kinds of characterisations of spaces visited during trips. A fourth sheet will collect memos describing emotions that come to mind when thinking of business travel. On a fifth sheet respondents may collect all kinds of preparations or pre-tasks they do, before they go travelling, based on their previous experiences and expectations. All of these come together in the ultimate travel situations of the 'here and now' of the business trip.



**Figure 3.1a: Topic themes**

**Figure 3.1b: Collection of stick-it memos**

## **Respondents**

Eighteen respondents participated in this research. Most have been selected via my personal network. Additionally some of these respondents connected me to one of their colleagues. The respondents are selected based upon the fact that they travel intensively for business purposes, although some more than others. With the selection of respondents it has been strived to have a variety of work and socio-demographic characteristics. One third of the respondents are women, this is a relative large share, compared to the share of women amongst business travellers. Some of the respondents are young and in the start of their careers; others are middle-aged, settled and experienced travellers, and some of them are highly experienced travellers at the end of their careers. The respondents have a wide range of professions, varying from entrepreneurs and managers, to stewardesses and engineers. Their travel patterns show a variety in terms of destinations, regularity of travel, duration of travel and transport modes. Below the respondents will be introduced shortly. The respondents have been given fictive names in order to stay anonymous.

### *Michael*

Michael lives together with his wife. He has two kids from a former marriage that visit him during the weekends. Michael, originally a car mechanic, is regional salesman of car engine treatment products. His home is simultaneously his office, from which his wife runs his administration and logistics. For his job Michael is on the road day in day out, visiting car garages in his region, maintaining contacts and giving advice. He travels short distances only, but he travels so much that his work life is organised in and around his car. His car is turned into a mobile office. From this mobile office he is continuously connected with his wife at home, via mobile phone communications. I have been lucky to be able to follow Michael on one of his days on the road, in and around Wychen, the Netherlands.

### *John*

In the weekends John lives together with his wife and two kids. John is entrepreneur. His company sells and maintains service contracts of machinery for the production of corrugated paper. John is a successful businessman: he runs two regional offices, one in the Netherlands and one in Poland. For his job John travels one to four times weekly, to a variety of European and some American and Asian destinations. He recently committed himself to an additional job as a manager/director at the firm's headquarters in Germany. During the weeks he lives there in a nearby apartment. Every Friday and Monday he flies back and forth between home and apartment. To John travelling by airplane and rental car has become a routine. I have been lucky to be able to follow John on one of his trips to a factory in Sweden.

### *Jason*

Jason is engineer. He works for the John's company in corrugated machinery. His function is the coordinating of machinery service contacts for clients. His projects are mostly located in Europe. Similar to John also Jason travels a lot by airplane and rental car, often together with one of his German colleagues. I met Jason when he accompanied John on his business trip to Sweden.

### *Bram*

Bram lives together with his wife. His kids have grown up and left the house and visit them from time to time. Before he got kids, some 25 years ago, Bram used to travel around the world for business. Nowadays Bram is logistics manager for a wholesale in metal products. His office is located in the firm's headquarters in the port-city of Rotterdam. For his job Bram is also on the road, although far less than he used to. He travels to the headquarters of his economic partner corporation in Düsseldorf on a weekly basis. Normally a three to four hour drive by car. Once or twice a month he also travels by airplane to clients around Europe. I met Bram at his home in Schoonhoven, The Netherlands for an interview.

### *Christine*

Christine is a young single woman. She lives by herself. For six years now Christine is stewardess for Royal Dutch Airlines. She does not travel for her job; her job is travelling. She flies to European and intercontinental destinations on a weekly basis. She spends more time flying than at home, however if she is at home after a long trip she has all the time to relax. Also she has days off at destinations. She used to visit a lot of tourist attractions. Nowadays however she uses her time mostly to relax in the hotel, at the beach or do some shopping. I met Christine at her apartment in Utrecht, The Netherlands for an interview.

### *Sandra*

Sandra is single woman. She recently divorced and she now has her own house nearby Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. She lives together with her son, who is about to leave the house. Similar to Christine, Sandra works for Royal Dutch Airlines. She used to work on the ground for years, as an airport staff member. Since two years she switched to a job in the air as stewardess. To her flying feels like an escape from her home situation, especially during her period of divorce. At destinations she likes to see as much as possible. She brought her son on a few of her trips. I met Sandra in her house in Sassenheim, The Netherlands for an interview.

### *Roger*

Roger lives together with his wife and two kids. Roger is entrepreneur. He runs an innovative company that sells automatic lighting systems, such as for traffic lampposts. Of all respondents Roger probably travels most frequently, with an average of four to five business trips a week: always flights; mostly to European destinations. He often manages to combine two destinations in one day: a morning meeting in Paris, flying for lunch, and an afternoon meeting in Madrid. He always strives to return home the same day, even if this involves arriving late around midnight and waking up early in the morning around five for the next trip. I met Roger in his house in Doorn, The Netherlands, for an interview.

### *Peter*

Peter lives together with his wife. Their daughter grew up and left the house some years ago. Peter is a salesman in electronic medical equipment. For his job Peter is frequently visiting clients around the world. Furthermore he is always in search of new clients, for which he travels to conventions and congresses around in Europe, Asia and North America. For this he is away from home for a couple of days, at least

once or twice a month. Peter explicitly strives in his trips to maximize time efficiency. I met Peter in his house in Eindhoven, The Netherlands, for an interview.

#### *Sallie*

Sallie is a young woman. She lives together with her boyfriend. She has a job as project manager at a technical research institute. The field of knowledge is nano-science technology. She is one of the few women in this men's world. For her job she travels to conferences and project partners, mostly located in Europe. She does not have a car. To her office she travels by bike and on her trips she travels by (high-speed) train or airplane, in case of the latter she takes a train to the airport. I met Sallie at her house in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

#### *Harry*

Harry lives together with his wife and two daughters. Harry has a job as a job as a designer and developer of electronics and software, for heating systems. For his job Harry travels once weekly to destinations in the UK, France, Spain and mostly Germany. If possible, when trips are less than four to five hours, Harry likes to travel by (high-speed) train. I met Harry at his house in Zeddam, The Netherlands.

#### *Jack*

Jack lives together with his wife. Once every two weeks his kids from his former marriage visit them. To Jack his wife and two kids are extremely important. This can be traced back in his practises of phoning and text messaging and in the decoration of his office, in which he positioned pictures of them on his desk. Jack is a consultant for family corporations that have run into trouble: financially but mostly also psychologically. The interactions with his clients often involve a lot of emotions from the client's side. As such they require much attention and careful treatment from Jack's side. For his job Jack travels around The Netherlands on a daily basis, always with his own car. I met Jack at his office in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, for an interview.

#### *Nathalie*

Nathalie lives together with her husband. For her job Nathalie is a contractor organising, coordinating and assisting elementary schools in ICT projects. She coordinates overseas ICT interactions between kids and teachers, via email and teleconferencing. For her Job Nathalie travels irregularly (on average once a month) to European and North American destinations. I met Nathalie at her office, located in an elementary school building in Velp, The Netherlands, for an interview.

#### *Karen*

Karen is a middle-aged single woman. She has her own house, located right next to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. She is employed at an innovative industrial corporation that specializes in innovative conveyor belt solutions for soda producing companies. She is in charge of managing machinery service contacts with overseas clients. For her job Karen travels once a week by airplane to destinations in Europe, Asia and the Americas. I met Karen at her house in Hillegom, The Netherlands, for an interview

#### *Gertrude*

Gertrude, is single woman. She lives together with a colleague in an apartment in Amsterdam. Gertrude has a job as a missionary, giving aid to poor people in society.

Gertrude and her colleagues like to refer to themselves as little sisters of Jesus. Gertrude, although slightly older than most of the other respondents, travels a lot for her job. She coordinates an overseas network of small religious groups who give aid to the poor. For this job she travels for longer periods of time to destinations all around the world. I met Gertrude in her apartment in Amsterdam for an interview.

#### *Magnus*

Magnus lives together with his wife and two sons. Magnus works on contract as a diplomat. He negotiates loans for development projects in developing countries, between local governments, western investors and development agencies. For his job Magnus travels irregularly, to destinations worldwide, often in Latin America and Sub Saharan Africa. Mostly his destinations are not the typical tourist or business destinations. I met Magnus at his home in Baarn, The Netherlands, for an interview.

#### *Harrold*

At the time of interviewing Harrold lived together with his wife and kids. Recently he got divorced. Harrold works as a freelancer. He is a specialist in cabling for sound and vision media solutions. He sets up mobile TV and sound studios. For his job he travels irregularly, sometimes for a long time (more than a month), to theatres, concert sites and television studios throughout Europe. I met Harrold at his home in Zeist, The Netherlands, for an interview

#### *Jeffrey*

Jeffrey lives together with his wife. His kids have grown up and moved out. Jeffrey works as a senior scientist at a technical research institute. His field of knowledge is nutrition food technology. For his job Jeffrey travels to research institutions and conferences in Europe, Asia and North America. Travelling by airplane is often necessary, but Jeffrey prefers to travel by train or by car, because with his two meters length travelling by airplane can be a pain. I met Jeffrey at his home in Schoonhoven, The Netherlands, for an interview.

#### *Boris*

Boris lives together with his wife. His kids from his former marriage visit him from time to time. Boris is designer of medical equipment. For his job he travels to conferences and conventions around the world and he cooperates in overseas technological projects. He often travels to the United States. His trips often last a week. In his trips Boris mixes business with pleasure. During his trips he lives very intensively, often budgeting on hours of sleep. He is often exhausted when he returns. I met Boris at his house in Dieren, The Netherlands for an interview.

## 4 Analysis of temporalities

If we could plan this meeting with a client in Rotterdam on Wednesday around lunchtime, than that would give me right enough time to arrive from Värnamo, Sweden, late Tuesday night; make some arrangements at my regional headquarters in Doesburg, The Netherlands on Wednesday mornings; and allow me to catch my plane at Düsseldorf airport on Wednesday night, so I can wake up fresh in my apartment in Nürnberg to catch up work for my second job at the headquarters in Weihammer, Germany. I really need to check how things are going over there, since I'll be gone again by the end of the week, for a brief visit to Poland.

Fragment John

This is a glimpse of the life of John. John is a successful businessman: he runs two regional offices for a company selling corrugated machinery worldwide, one in The Netherlands and one in Poland. He recently committed himself to an additional job as a manager/director at the firm's headquarters in Germany. For most business travellers, like John, time is scarce and speed saves time. As travelling costs large amounts of money and time, business trips are often packed with many activities and tasks, but nevertheless are managed in a minimal time span. For most business travellers the key word is efficiency: in terms of time, cost, energy, utility and/or pleasure. As the travelling itself, and all the waiting involved, costs valuable money, time and energy, every minute counts and every moment is crucial.

Most business travellers live in and are part of, what Manuel Castells calls, the "space of flows", the high-speed networks that connect major nodes and hubs. Unlike Castells argues, this research will point out that all spaces being visited and travelled through that are connected into hyper mobile global flows, are at the same time also very local. On their trips business travellers experience various moments of hyper mobility at high speeds, but one moment later they might find themselves hold up stationary at an airport, train station, traffic jam, hotel room or parking lot. Travelling by car, train or airplane, although highly dynamic and mobile, is embedded in local infrastructures of roads, railways airports and airspaces. Negative (environmental) effects of fumes, traffic jams, noise, and greenhouse gasses have both local and global impacts. Mobility, high speeds and highly efficient time use hosting multiple activities on the one hand, go together with immobility, low speeds and moments of waiting and pause.

In the second part of this chapter a variety of spaces – formal and informal, mobile and stationary, present and absent – will be characterised that are frequently being visited, travelled through, or interacted with, by business travellers. It will be investigated in which way these spaces alter performance and experience of everyday business travel and in which way these spaces are interacted with (and possibly transformed) by business travellers. This spatial and material dimension is only part of the complete situations analysed. First, this chapter will focus on the temporal dimension. It will be introduced how to analyse and measure temporal units, sequences and relations between events. From there it can be explored how business travellers actively and passively experience, allocate, shuffle and reshuffle time frames for events, in their scheduling in advance as well as spontaneously on the spot.

## Typology of timeslots

To analyse the way business travellers perceive and organise time, use will be made of time slots. A time slot can be seen as a demarcated period of time spend in a certain station or vehicle. Time slots as such host single or multiple activities. In this paragraph will be analysed how business travellers organise, plan, arrange and rearrange timeslots that may occur within or beyond their control. Based on the intentionality of the business traveller's role and the spontaneity in which time slots occur, a typology of three different types of timeslots can be made: *emerging* time slots, *created* time slots and *reserved* timeslots (see figure 4.1).

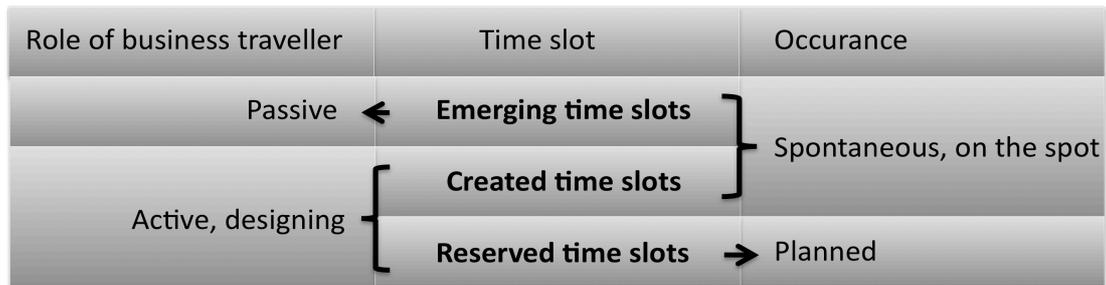


Figure 4.1: Occurrence of time slots

### *Emerging time slots*

First, timeslots may spontaneously *emerge*. Imagine a meeting went smoothly: a situation may emerge in which you have a timeslot available of twenty minutes to relax or do some work before you have to leave for your next appointment. Or an airplane is delayed, leaving you no choice than to wait in the airport terminal for one hour. Like the above-mentioned examples, emerging time slots generally arise on the spot, spontaneously (figure 4.1). The business traveller's role in these situations is passive; time slots emerge beyond the control of the business traveller. Emerging time slots often result from external factors that cause uncertainty in the duration of events or travel passages. Time slots emerge where there is a relaxation in time. This does not necessarily lead to a feeling of relaxation and a release of stress to the business traveller, as will be shown later this chapter.

That timeslots emerge beyond their control does not mean that the business traveller is out of control. He or she has various ways how to deal with and react upon these moments of time relaxation. Sometimes these moments may be an opportunity to do some essential activities one would otherwise find no time for. John's business trips are so fully packed with activities that he allows no time in his planned schedule for lunch and diner breaks. To him short emerging time slots are the single spontaneous occasions in which he finds rest and time to grab some food and have some drinks. As a result he may end up eating quick fast food at airports or peanuts for diner at a hotel bar late in the evening. Emerging timeslots may take much longer than a couple of minutes. Sandra is stewardess. She mentions that with the economic crisis many flights are being cancelled.

Sometimes it happens that you find yourself at some exotic location and your returning flight is being cancelled. Totally unexpected, this gives you a couple of days off – though you are still being paid – offering the perfect opportunity to do some sight seeing, shopping or sunbathing.

At other moments business travellers might take an advantage of the emerging time slot in order to speed up their time schedule by proceeding to a next event earlier than

scheduled. In order to do so business travellers creatively rearrange, reschedule or shuffle around events and travel passages. John:

Back in the days, if I arrived on the airport early, for instance if a meeting went smoothly, I was not going to wait for hours. I immediately turned to the electronically displayed schedules and rebooked to an earlier flight. I specifically booked flexible tickets, which allowed doing so.

Roger is entrepreneur in automatic light systems. For his job he travels four days a week to various European destinations. Quite similarly to John he mentions:

Despite my tight planning, sometimes it surprisingly happens that you may arrive too early for an appointment. Some couple of years ago I would have spilled time waiting on a parking lot before entering my appointment; nowadays I would just enter the building right upon arrival, mentioning: “well that is a surprise, did I calculated that traffic jam which is always there at that particular place at that particular moment, does it stay away”. In most cases an appointment can start a bit earlier, in which case I will be finished earlier as well.

Contrarily Harry finds more peace in letting emerging timeslots pass. Harry travels once weekly for his job as a designer/developer of electronics and software.

It happens occasionally that I arrive early for an appointment, for instance if the travelling went smooth. Than I’ll just wait.

#### *Created time slots*

Second, timeslots may be *created*. Sometimes business travellers may find themselves in a situation in which they need some time for an event right away. This could be illustrated by an example given by Peter. Peter is a salesman in electronic medical equipment, frequently visiting clients and congresses around the world

In sales it may always happen that you meet an interested potential buyer. Although you actually have to move on you still make the decision to make some time for this person in the hope he’ll get back to you. In those situations it is always important to think from the perspective of the potential client. If you were the client, how would you think about someone prioritizing to move on: well, than I would find somebody else who can sell me this product.

Based on prioritizing Peter in this case creates a timeslot that was originally not there. In order to do so, he might have to improvise and shuffle some things around or arrive a bit later at his next event. A similar way of prioritizing events is mentioned by Jack. Jack is a consultant for downhill family corporations. Interactions with clients require careful treatment from Jack’s side, as clients may be highly emotional.

I sometimes receive an unexpected phone call or message from a client, of which I know it will take me some time to answer. I than try to wait for the right occasion to call him or her back, but if it is urgent and/or no occasion is likely to emerge, I will have to create one. For instance stopping my car on a car park aside the road to have my full attention to make the call. To me, having difficult conversation with emotional clients cannot go hand in hand with driving my car at the same time.

Similarly to emerging time slots also created time slots happen spontaneously on the spot (figure 4.1), often as the result of impulses towards sudden signs, encounters or interactions. Unlike emerging time slots, created time slots happen within the control of the business traveller, who has an active, designing role.

### *Reserved time slots*

Third, timeslots may be reserved, planned or scheduled in advance. No business trip starts without the planning of travel passages, hotel reservations, scheduled meetings, presentations or conferences. Unlike emerged and created time slots, reserved time slots do generally not occur spontaneously. They do not happen on the spot, but are planned in advance. Similarly to created time slots they require an active designing role of the business travel (figure 4.1). Reservation of time slots in planning is used to schedule a trip, smoothen the process of travel and not least importantly to feel prepared and relaxed about what is to come. This can be illustrated by the following story of Nathalie. Nathalie is a contractor organising, coordinating and assisting ICT interaction projects between overseas elementary schools (Figure 4.2).

I am a person who likes structure and organisation. Planning therefore is highly important. I do not like to encounter sudden surprises. In my cooperation with overseas schoolteachers and kids I sometimes have to organise a full familiarizing programme to set up a successful ICT project. Especially in these cases when the responsibility for the whole programme is mine, planning ahead is extremely important. This planning costs me a lot of energy and brings me some stress.



**Figure 4.2: Video conference between overseas schools**

Where some respondents try to plan everything entirely in advance, others stress the importance of last-minute flexibility. Planning always needs to have a certain degree of flexibility. Karen is employed at an innovative industrial corporation, where she manages machinery service contacts with overseas clients:

Sometimes my appointments get cancelled at the last minute. That is because my clients – tin can factories – may have sudden inspections from mayor soft drink companies, which have more priority than a meeting with me. Simultaneously they may request me to pass by instantly if something is wrong with their assembly belt.

Bram mentions another external factor having an important influence on his planning, one that no one can escape from. For his job as a logistics manager for a wholesale in metal products, Bram travels to the headquarters of his economic partner corporation in Düsseldorf on a weekly basis. Normally a three-hour drive:

I have weekly two-day trips to Düsseldorf. In my planning I always take care of the weather forecast. If the weather forecast is bad I will take a train instead of the car, leave earlier, or postpone the whole trip.

These last-minutes adjustments in a time schedule may have a more spontaneous character and may be closely related to the created time slots on the spot discussed above. Although business travel to all respondents involves a mix of emerging, created and reserved timeslots, some personal differences could be identified in the ratio of different types of timeslots in this mix. To highly experienced and highly frequent travellers, such as John, Peter and Roger, the travelling itself – organising and connecting travel passages – does not require much active attention and energy as their experience takes over as a sort of autopilot, thereto assisted by secretaries and internal travel agencies assisting in the scheduling and planning of their trips. For these highly frequent travellers travelling is work-time rather than time-out. Much of their attention and energy is therefore being put in the spontaneous creation and reshuffling of events on the spot and the creative allocation of events over emerging timeslots, as this is where their added value can make the difference. Less intensive travellers, such as Nathalie and Harry, on the other hand, are more actively involved in the reservation (planning) of timeslots and a bit cautious towards reshuffling the carefully constructed schedule. They are a bit more likely to accept the emergence of timeslots by passively waiting them out. Hereby not only travel intensity plays a role but also personality. Where John and Roger are quite assertive in their actions, Nathalie and especially Harry seem to have a shy and more modest personality.

### **Selection and customizing of temporalities**

Above, different types of time slots have been introduced. Here we will explore how business travellers use, organise and allocate these different types of timeslots. It will become clear that in practise these time slots are not so much separated and fixed. Time slots intertwine and time slot durations are flexible. This flexibility results partly from the complexity in the estimation of time slot duration. Time is constantly in play: business travellers negotiate time slot duration, via the *calculation of time slot duration* in advance and the *speeding or slowing down of performances* in practise.

#### *Calculation of time slot duration*

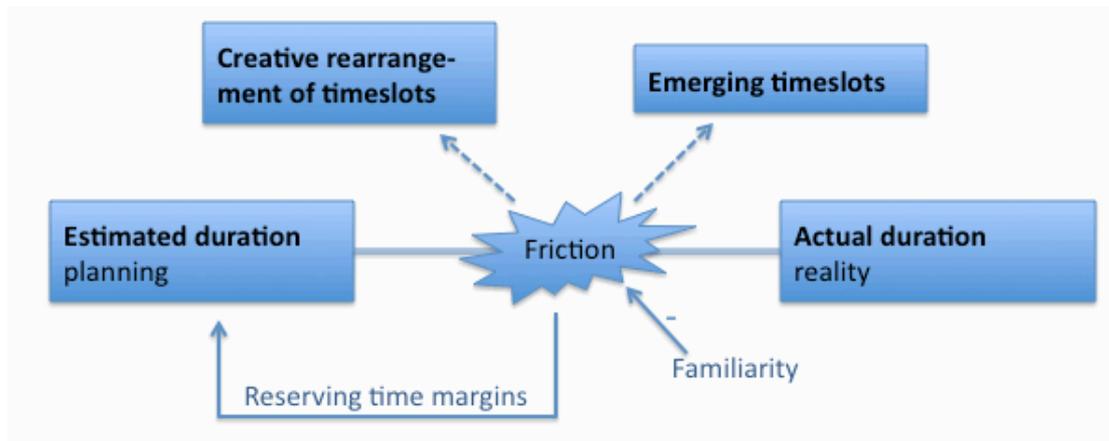
As the example of the weather (introduced by Bram, p...) already illustrates, there can be no reservation of time slots without the estimation of the duration of events and travel passages. Based on travel experience and prearranged time schedules, business travellers – or in some cases their travel agencies or secretaries – continuously calculate and estimate the duration of various time slots: “This meeting will approximately last three hours” or “the passage driving by car from Utrecht to Amsterdam should under normal circumstances take about thirty minutes”. Figure 4.3 shows that there will always be some degree of friction between estimated and actual duration of time slots. Harry, designer/developer of electronics and software:

You should never leave and arrive way too early, as you will have to wait wasting time and energy; but if you leave too late, all the time you’ll experience stress and uncertainty about making it on time.

In their calculations of time slot business travellers can be assisted by objects symbolizing and organising time, such as clocks, agendas and all kinds of new ICTs like laptops, smart phones and navigation systems. Michael, salesman of car engine treatment products, for instance comments on the use of his GPS navigation system:

To estimate time intervals I often make use of my GPS navigation. I do not need it for the purpose of navigating: as I am driving around day by day in the same area I am familiar with the exact locations of, and routes towards, all my

clients. Yet one look on my navigation display will give me a very accurate estimation of the exact time of arrival, enabling me to plan and organise driving intervals and inform my colleagues and clients about my time of arrival.



**Figure 4.3: Friction between estimated and actual duration of time slots**

Friction between estimated time slots in business travellers' time schedules on the one hand and the exact duration of time slots in reality on the other hand lead to various spontaneous moments of pause (in case of overestimation) or pressure (in case of underestimation). Spontaneous moments of pause, rest or slow down to some would trigger moods of unrest, disturbance, annoyance or stress. They may fail, or feel pressure, to arrive on time for the next event or passage. John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery:

I'm getting restless when we are being slowed down, when there is no action.

Business travellers can creatively act upon underestimation by rushing through, skipping, rearranging or shuffling events on the spot. Bram, logistics manager:

I once found myself in a long cue in front of check in at the airport. If I had waited I would never have been on time to board my airplane. I left the cue, turned to a small airliner counter and managed to arranged an occasional check in over there, allowing me to exactly arrive on time to board.

To others these emerging time slots offer opportunity to recharge energy and release stress. Stewardess Christine appreciates those brief moments of relaxation that arise during a flight:

Once we arrive at our destination we have enough leisure time. However for the time we are in the air we have to work hard and long. Brief spontaneous moments of pause are then very welcome.

Similarly to moments of pause, moments of time pressure would give a huge amount of stress to some, whereas to others it will keep them in the right flow, giving approval that they are doing a good job. Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems:

I need tight deadlines and time pressure. When I am rushing from one event to the next I feel and perform best.

To most business travellers a key point to a successful and smooth process of their business trips lies in a combination of (1) accurate estimation of time slots – especially those reserved for travel passages – and (2) flexibility and creative

rearrangement of time slots on the spot in case estimation proved to be less accurate. Both above-mentioned skills can be improved and mastered over time by learning and experience. Travel experience – the built up of skills and routines with travelling in general and the familiarity with specific local travel passages in particular – can help a lot in estimating the duration of travel passages. However, travel always brings uncertainties, whether assisted by time calculating technologies or not and regardless of the way of transport. Think of traffic jams on the road, security delays on the airport or railway network failures. In their schedules business travellers therefore need to reserve time margins around events in case they will last longer than estimated.

*Speeding or slowing down performances on the spot*

We find ourselves inside a large Mercedes with German licence plates. We have less than an hour to arrive at Düsseldorf airport, some 140 kilometers away. That is where the fast Mercedes on its German Autobahn can provide its service: speed (Figure 4.4). “I have driven this passage from Doesburg to Düsseldorf about a thousand times and it’s like a game: every time you make it on time you’re trying to depart a bit later next time”. Time margins are indeed really small. One unfortunate traffic jam could be enough to miss our flight. Strangely enough John hardly ever misses a flight.



**Figure 4.4: Inside large fast Mercedes**

Fragment John

John’s familiarity with the particular driving passage and airport in the above-mentioned fragment allow him to take into account very tight time margins, without getting into trouble. In order to do so, John relies on a whole network of transportation and organizational technologies enabling his hyper mobile movement: the fast rental car; the uncongested German highway allowing these high speeds both legally and physically; and the fast drop off of this rental car at the airport. Similarly

to John also Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems, takes into account very tight margins:

If I am arriving at Schiphol Airport and my name is not being called for immediate boarding please, it means I am too early. If I would take prescribed margins of about two hours in advance for every flight, on a weekly basis that would cost me sixteen hours of time, almost the equivalent a part time job. 'Just another day at the office' to me starts like this: If my flight is at 08.00 from Schiphol. Train at 06.50, arrive at Schiphol around 07.35, checked in online already, proceed to security, push through security with Privium, board the airplane if it is on schedule or move to the business lounge if it is delayed.

Like John also Roger relies on supporting technological transportation systems: the punctuality of the Dutch railway network and the exclusionary Privium technology on Schiphol airport for frequent customers based on iris-scan identification. Roger acknowledges that taking into account very tight margins, also brings complications.

As a consequence of a very tight planning, from my experience I know that once you have a delay, lets say fifteen minutes, you will have to deal with it all day: You will be fifteen minutes later to depart to your next meeting; you will not be able to catch up time driving to this next meeting, this meeting on its turn will start and end fifteen minutes later; well... eventually you will arrive back home exactly fifteen minutes later.

Estimating time margins around events of uncertain duration can be difficult and undesirable. This is illustrated by the following story from Jeffrey, senior scientist at a technological institute: Jeffrey realizes he has to take into account time margins while driving on Dutch motorways around and during peak hours. In his planning however he rather seeks for avoiding those situations than adapting to them.

As I am driving my car a lot, I do come across a lot of congestion on the road. On Dutch motorways, by far the worst in the terms of congestion, I will always take into account traffic delay. As a result I sometimes have to reserve more time for a short passage. Most often, however, I will try to adapt the planning of my appointments in a way I avoid most of the expected peak hour delay around the cities.

Where many business travellers in their planning minimize time margins; some have a different approach. Jack, consultant for family businesses:

I always try to depart at least one hour earlier than necessary. Once I am almost reaching the destination, knowing I will certainly be on time I'll park my car and have a break or do some work. One might think this is a waste of time, but for me it is an essential part to stay relaxed. This way there is no single moment during travel I will have to worry about arriving on time, allowing me to release stress and show up fresh, balanced and focussed.

To Jack tight time margins are not a wishful option. To counterbalance his stress-sensitive personality, he needs to build in certainty and rest. To him emerging time slots offer a welcome release of stress and an opportunity to relax and focus. A more extreme example of slow down is seen in the life of Gertrude. Gertrude, for her job as a missionary, coordinates an overseas network of small religious groups who give aid to the poor. She refers to herself and her colleagues as little sisters of Jesus. Unlike most of the other respondents she has to worry less pre-arranged schedules and punctual arrivals for important meetings. Her life unfolds in a different pace:

Except for my intercontinental flights, I wish I could go by local train or bus around the world so that everything is going in a slow pace. I do not rush from one place to another. I am so lucky that I can do so many things, go to so many beautiful places and meet and help so many wonderful people that I take pleasure in experiencing every minute of it. Only once slowed down the real assets of life reveal themselves all around you.

Throughout this paragraph we came across the difficulties and considerations that have to do with the estimation of time slots and the reservation of safety time margins in order to be on time. If being on time at a particular event is of vital importance (this could be a presentation, or an intercontinental flight), all respondents mention to take into account safe time margins. However what is considered safe time margins means something entirely different to some than to others. Generally the more intensive travellers seem to take into account tighter time margins. Also familiarity seems to play a role: to locations respondents are not familiar with they take into account wider time margins as estimations of time duration are less accurate.

#### *Synchronising timeslots and the co-location of actors*

One of the most fundamental reasons why people travel for work purposes is to meet others with a shared interest, whether it is colleagues, supervisors, (potential) clients and investors or other interested parties. To meet each other time slots should be reserved and aligned so that the significant actors can be co-located for some time in a certain place. For most business travellers, with their tight time schedules and geographically dispersed activities this can be quite a difficult task, especially if a gathering of multiple actors should be organised. Karen, manager of machinery service contacts:

Organizationally it can be very hard to get all the important actors around the table at the same time. Sometimes however it is necessary to see the engineering manager and his team plus the production manager and his team together. If this opportunity occurs I should not be the one being restricted.

In some branches a conference or convention can be the right event to co-locate various interested actors. Peter, who works in the sales of electronic medical equipment:

A conference or convention hosts a pool of scientists, salesmen and investors, all interested in your field or branch. These events offer a huge potential for selling your product, if you know how to make the right contacts. [...] Breaks are the perfect moment in which potential buyers are walking around freely, available to point your attention to.

Prearranged reserved timeslot alignments are not the only moments that host co-located interaction. More spontaneous contacts may arise in emerging or spontaneously created timeslots. Travelling in companion for instance can be a very good way to get to know your colleagues. On the way various timeslots will emerge in which you can discuss private and work-related topics. Harry, electronics designer, for instance mentions:

Travelling together can be nice. It makes the evenings much nicer, especially the diner. Best thing is that you get to know your travel companions really well.

Co-location of actors during business trips is of course not only limited to acquainted people. Contacts with strangers, especially those with fellow passengers during intercontinental flights, are frequently mentioned to occur regularly. Magnus – for his

diplomatic job Magnus negotiates loans for development projects in developing countries – for instance commented:

On business trips I meet a lot of strangers. Especially during intercontinental flights, there are various moments in which you make a quick chat with the passenger next to you, for instance when food is served. Complete conversations however only arise provided I'm in the mood for it; the person looks and sounds interesting; and there is plenty of time.

More on interactions of co-located actors in the context of the spaces hosting these events, will be dealt with later this chapter.

### **Relationality and imagination**

The first paragraphs of this chapter explored how business travellers are able to negotiate with time. It has been shown how business travellers' *performances* have something to do with the way people estimate, plan, organise, create and rearrange their time slots; in their time planning in advance, as well as in their reflexive performances on the spot. This paragraph will try to grasp how the *experience* of one particular moment during a business trip is related to temporally and spatially dislocated events, places, people, objects and ideas presently absent.

We came across that different people perceive and react upon time, speed, hurry and breaks differently. To some a moment of pause or slow down is being perceived as frustrating, whereas to others an emerging timeslot could be a welcome occasion to relax. In this paragraph it will be argued that these perceptions and performances not only differ between different people. Experience of business travel is far more dynamic and embedded in the complete situation in which it occurs. The same individual may experience and act upon situations completely different from one moment to the other. Their performance and experience are temporally related to events that took place beforehand or events that will take place in the (near) future.

One might appreciate a single moment of rest, right after a tiring meeting for instance, or as preparation right before an important presentation. Jack, consultant for family corporations:

It is nice to have a moment of relaxation right before a meeting or presentation; a moment in which you can clear your mind and come to rest. I purposely plan these moments in advance to important events.

Sallie, project manager in nano-technologic at a research institute:

Days filled with conferences and meetings can be quite exhausting. A moment of relaxation right after a presentation can be very welcome. [...] After a full day I always try to create a moment for my own, have some rest and privacy in my hotel room.

In the above-mentioned examples Jack and Sallie find ways to control moments of relaxation by reserving (Jack) or creating (Sallie) time slots. This way they do not have to rely on an emerging time slot as this might not show up at the desired moment.

On the other hand being hold up while you actually have to move on to get to the next event can be experienced much more frustrating. Magnus, diplomatic negotiator in developing countries:

I know from myself I generally get annoyed, restless, impatient and stressed on moments I find myself wasting time waiting. But this is particularly worse

if you know you cannot afford to waste much time, for instance if you need to catch a flight and you're hold up at security or customs.

As we have explored above, the experience of a single event may be related to the experience of preceding and succeeding events. Events and the experience of events cannot be seen and studied as isolated. However, the experience and performance during an event, is not simply the result of what just happened and what is about to start. Events are embedded into complex sequences and chains linking up a variety of related events that may be dislocated in both absolute time and space. Absent events spaces, people and objects are linked via imaginations, communications and virtual representaions.

#### *Intersection of private lives and work lives*

Karen, manager of machinery service contacts, stresses that in the background of travelling work at the office always goes on:

When I'm on my way back from a business trip, the first thing I do is working out the meeting. After that I may have time left to relax. Otherwise I'll be lagging behind on this particular event already when I return to the office. This would be an extra workload on top of a pile of work that is already waiting for me at the office as I have been away for a couple of days.

For Karen, and many other business travellers, work piles up at the office as business goes on whilst on a business trip. The fact that stuff goes on at the office and that work is piling up while they are away requests some business travellers to continuing their office work whilst on the move. Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems:

Back in the days, when I travelled more incidentally, travelling was part of the day. I was going on a trip: an event in itself; an event worth it to reserve time for and maybe do some sight seeing and shopping on the way.

Roger reserved some time exclusively for the travelling itself, in which case he could vividly experience and actively engage in (relaxing) practises of the here and now of travelling.

Nowadays things are a completely different. As I am now doing many daily European business trips, each day I am travelling eight hours a day. Besides my meetings, there is also enough office work to be done to spend at least an equal amount of time. Well, you can calculate that this work has to be done, at least partially during movement. Instead of being part of a day, I now see travelling as a collection of events or obstacles disturbing my daily rhythm. Specifically I am pointing at all the moments you cannot spend time effectively, such as short flights, security checks, or transfers.

While business travellers are on the move, some or most of their colleagues stay at the office. These office-based colleagues see their travelling counterparts come and go. Karen:

Most of my colleagues often have no clue, what it encompasses to be on a business trip. It happens that I return home from a tiring business trip at one in the night. If I would than return at the office around ten in the morning, I experience that they would look at me as if to say: We were all here at eight, why are you so late? That's why I'll generally arrive on time, even if I would be perfectly allowed to take some more hours of sleep.

Not only work goes on back home; also business travellers' relationships with family, friends and relatives. Nathalie, coordinator of ICT projects between elementary

schools, stresses that especially her private life situation is very important, also when she is abroad:

For me it is very important that people can reach me on my mobile when I'm abroad. First of all to organise the trip itself: my fellow travellers should always be able to reach me during our trip. Second it is very important to me that my relatives, friends and family back home can reach me if something is wrong. Luckily my private situation is stable. No news generally means that things are all right. Sometimes I do call or text back home. However, not at regular fixed times. If you are then not able to make that communication at that particular time they will be waiting and worried. [...] I do not really bother being accessible for the office back home. I'll let my colleagues know in advance that I will be abroad and when I will be back. These private situations often play a role in the planning of their business travel patterns. As mentioned in one of the examples above

The importance of home is also stressed by the following example of Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems. Despite his intensive travelling, for Roger returning home to his family is very important:

I'll try to do anything to arrange my European appointments on one day. I'd rather leave my own house at 04.30 in the morning, returning home 22.00 in the evening, a couple of days in a row, than staying overnight in hotels. This way I can remain an organised way of life, of which returning to my own house and my own family is part. This is far better than any hotel could possibly get.

Roger realises, however that not always this is possible. A bit annoyed he continued:

Sometimes it happens that the situation requires you to stay overnight, for instance if a culture requests you to dine, join an informal night programme or other bla bla bla.

Where a private situation may be a factor to return home; it may also be a factor to enhance travel and escape home. Sandra, stewardess, has had an unstable private situation:

After a long period of problematic marriage recently I divorced. This is not a particularly stable situation. It was about time for me to take my live into my own hands. This triggered my decision to start flying as a stewardess, after years of groundwork at the airport. Flying gave me a way to escape my private situation. By means of flying I regained my freedom.

#### *Elision of work and private lives during business trips*

It has already been discussed that work life – back home and on the spot – and private life – back home – constantly intersect and intertwine via business travellers' imaginations and communications during business trips. These intersections of work and private life are however not only limited to communications and imaginations, but they may also take place in real time during business trips. In their trips business travellers sometimes combine the formal part of their trip with the visiting of friends and family. Karen, manager of machinery service contacts:

As I have been travelling for years I have friends and acquaintances around the world. Once I'm around for business I plan to pay some of them a visit. It is nice to step out of the business part for just a single moment and combine the business trip with the visiting of a friend.

In the above-mentioned example Karen reserves time for the official work-related part of her business trip, as well as for the private-life related part of visiting her friend. Although a business trip may be planned to have multiple purposes, both work and private; the formal work part is often the main objective. It therefore often happens that activities such as visiting a friend are not planned in advance, but that they are subjected to emerging or created time slots at the moment. Bram, logistics manager:

Occasionally it happens your business trip leads to a destination where you have old friends or family living nearby. Once you're around anyways of course you will try to pay them a visit, but only as long as it can be arranged time-wise.

The real time intersection of business and private life during business trips may not only be limited to a mobilized business traveller visiting overseas friends. Occasionally friends or family may themselves be mobilized to visit or travel along with the business traveller overseas. Jeffrey is scientist in food nutrition technology at a Dutch technological research institute:

Last year I had a congress planned in South Africa. For the same period my daughter was looking for an overseas internship; she picked South Africa since I would be there. On that business trip I took my wife with me. Next to the formal programme of the conference I added a few days off, which we spend sight-seeing the country and visiting our daughter.

Similarly Sandra sometimes takes along relatives on her flights as a stewardess:

If there is still space in the aircraft occasionally I can reserve relatively cheap seats for family and friends. Last year I took my son with me on a trip. For me it was a bit strange to see my own son sitting in one of the seats, while I was in my normal working setting, which is otherwise far away from home. Luckily the other staff members took extremely good care of him.

In various way business travellers mix business with private lives during their trips. The stories of the respondents mentioned above support the argument that the boundaries between business and leisure become increasingly blurred.

### *Imaginary presence*

Most business travellers spend much of their time away from their homes and their offices and as we have seen above life and work go on back home and at work, while they are away. Although many business travellers on their trips try to focus on the purpose of that particular trip, they cannot, and/or wish not to, completely isolate themselves on their trips from these continuing flows of events. Constantly they will recall imaginations of home and work, via incoming phone calls, messages and email, photographs and movies on their laptops, or music fragments on their music players. This paragraph will argue that business travellers during their trips are not always imaginary present in the here and now of that particular trip. It will be explored where these imaginations come from and how and where they surface during the actual corporeal travelling. Consider the following fragment of me following John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery:

While I followed John on his business trip to Sweden, he received a phone call from a colleague in Germany. John: "There are some major problems back there, I should really go back as soon as possible to check what is going on." From that moment on, while he was physically moving through the southern Swedish landscape, in his mind he was puzzling about how the get

things back on track again at headquarters in Germany. “These are hard times in business. Everywhere you go you will be reminded that the impacts of this economic recession are very severe: internal reports about stagnating sales, news on collapsing stock exchange rates, empty airports. Worst of all is the stress about having to fire many employees.” With his German colleague in the back of the car, John verbally reproduced what was going on right now at headquarters. “But hey, what can we do right now, we are on a highway in the middle of southern Sweden”. The best thing would be focussing on the purpose of this trip, which he managed to do after some time.

Fragment John

Throughout the above-mentioned fragment you see that John is not mentally present at the location and events where he is physically travelling. Synchronous developments at a physical distance got his attention, triggering him to imaginary travel to events happening at headquarters in Germany. Discussing the matter triggered this colleague to imaginary travel with him. Only at the end of the fragment John switches to the situation right here and right now. The fragment shows that John during his trip is constantly being reminded that the business he is responsible for is stagnating. Particularly on his mind is the necessity to fire some of his employees. The fragment also shows that there can be various types of stimuli, signs or events, that happen within the *here and now* of the business trip, that remind the business traveller of a situation back home. This happens directly, via the incoming phone call from Germany, as well as indirectly via signs such as empty airports and news reports. These latter signs, indicating general economic decline, are in next steps associated with his company’s problematic financial situation and the firing of his employees. This indicates that distant imaginal relations between events, spaces, people and objects are triggered by and embedded in present material interactions. This will be further elaborated upon in chapter 5.

Similarly to John also Sallie, project manager in nano-science, experiences actual events during her trips, partly based on her imaginations.

On the outward journey my thoughts are usually already with the upcoming event at my destination: will everything go smooth; do I need to prepare any more things; is there something I have to read. On the return trip on the other hand I’m thinking of what time I’ll be returning home.

Similarly to the fragment of John also this example of Sallie shows that her mental presence does not always correspond with her actual presence, her imaginations often a few steps ahead.

#### *Face-to-face contacts and distant communications*

The decision to align timeslots and travel paths and meet each other face-to-face, is by far the most important why people travel for business. The question is: what exactly need to be achieved face-to-face that cannot be achieved via new communications on a distance? Magnus, mediator in co-financing issues in developing countries, stresses that not all information can be communicated over distance.

Some complex actions and communications need to be arranged face-to-face. During a period without face-to-face contacts these issues pile up. At some point things get messy. At such moment it is time to travel out there; fix all current issues; and prepare for foreseen upcoming problems.

Sallie, project manager in nano-technology, stresses the importance of face-to-face meetings in the establishments of new contacts:

When establishing new contacts it is very important to have a face-to-face kick-off meeting. Only after such face-to-face contact you know which face belongs to which name and what type of person or persons are involved. Every next time you contact this person over distance you will be able to recall this image.

Similarly Nathalie, coordinator of overseas educative ICT collaborations, mentions:

I noticed that if you work with each other face-to-face, followed by some drinks, a diner, and some informal activities; than you get to know each other much better and feel much more attached to each other. [...] Right after a face-to-face contact with your overseas colleagues, telephone and email contacts with them will be excellent. After some months, however, communications decrease: You're busy, they are busy with their own things, they are not answering emails, we have to do some other stuff first, we can answer those emails later. Then it is time to set another meeting.

Face-to-face meetings create some sort of mutual knowing and understanding between two or more individuals or parties. Knowing each other from face-to-face interactions smoothens later distant communications. The most crucial difference between face-to-face meetings and teleconferences is what happens directly after a conference. Boris is designer of medical equipment. For his job Boris visits conferences worldwide and he cooperates in overseas technological projects. About teleconferencing he mentions:

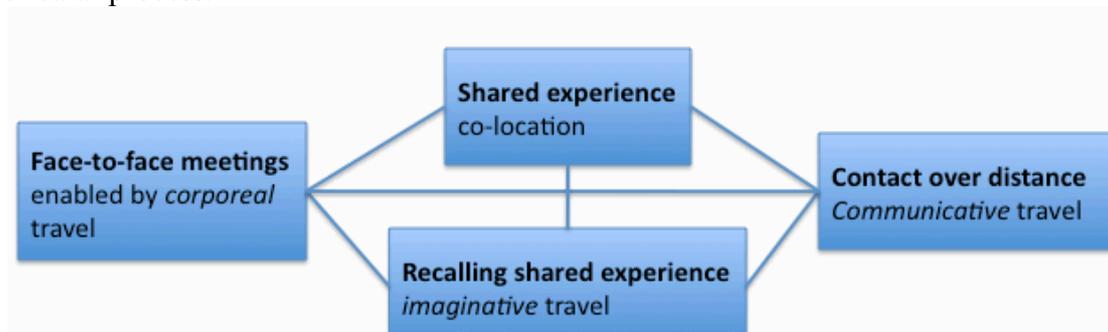
After disconnecting a videoconference parties on both sides completely disconnect from each other. A barrier arises of *we* versus *them*. For a few moments there will be some discussion and gossiping within both parties, after which you will go on with your own stuff. Now consider a face-to-face meeting: After a meeting individuals of both parties will still be amongst each other, often in small mixed-party groups, discussing and evaluating the meeting informally.

Boris continues with the importance of the creation of a nice and friendly atmosphere during face-to-face communications:

When we have a face-to-face meeting with our American partners we try to create a highly informal and relaxed atmosphere with jokes, laughter and over-the-top crazy behaviour. Not only during the official meeting but especially also in the evenings and at some days off, we will try to have a wonderful crazy time that will make a big impression in our minds. Every next time the Americans will contact us, they should directly have to associate our names and voices with the shared experiences during the above-mentioned events.

From the above mentioned examples we can see that distant communications and face-to-face meetings go hand in hand. One can speak of a generative effect. Hereby corporeal travel, communicative travel and imaginary travel are interrelated (figure 4.5). In order to meet face-to-face, alignment of time slots is needed: appointments often need to be made via distant communications. Besides providing mutual knowing and rich communication, co-location of actors during face-to-face meetings hosts a shared experience: a set of relationships, a series of interactions, and the creation of an atmosphere. This shared experience will be stored in imaginations of the actors involved. During distant communications that follow, actors will again

recall this shared experience. After some time distant communications decrease and it is time to see each other again, have a new, shared experience. This could lead to a circular process.



**Figure 4.5** Interrelation of corporeal travel, communicative travel and imaginative travel

Peter, salesman in electronic medical equipment, on the other hand stresses face-to-face contacts nowadays fulfil a less prominent role:

With today's technological possibilities, travel is now far less important than it used to be when I started travelling twenty years ago. To a large extent business travel can now be substituted by teleconferencing and exchange of presentations and media, supported by phone calls and emails. This saves travel time and travel costs. [...] You might think that face-to-face contacts can be useful for persuasion, negotiation, lobbying and working out deals. However most of the lobbying and negotiation takes place in advance on a distance, via ICT. Usually when a face-to-face meeting take place, the deals have already been worked out to a large extent. [...] A couple of years ago the CEO of electronics firm Philips went to Eindhoven airport. On weekdays this airport is mostly used by Philips business travellers. He started asking regular passengers: *You work at Philips? Where are you heading and for which reason? Not important, go back to the office.* After this statement it became harder to justify business trips".

Most respondents respond to the debate around face-to-face versus distant communications from a professional point of view, arguing the relative advantages of both ways of communicating for the exchange of knowledge and trust. They abstain however a more personal viewpoint on the matter, which could have lead to a better understanding of the possible role of an individual rational for travelling, over distant communications, as argued by Wittel (2001) and Lassen (2009). Most of them take travelling for granted, mentioning that travelling is a function of the job, and that they adept and get used to it. An exception to this is Boris, designer of medical equipment. Besides the professional argument made above that face-to-face contacts support trust and rich information exchange Boris also points at his individual benefits from travelling.

I'm an adventurous soul. During and next to the formal parts my business trips are packed with adventure and amusement. I try also to strategically choose destinations and downtown hotel location that maximize the possibility of adventure. Besides all the fun, or maybe thanks to all the fun travelling also widens my viewpoint on the world and increases universal knowledge.

Above it has been explored that face-to-face interactions cannot easily be substituted by distant communications, as both ways of communicating are intrinsically different. Distant communications are intertwined in the everyday practises of travel. On the same time details of distance communications are embedded in face-to-face meetings.

## **Conclusion**

The research question addressed in this chapter was which temporalities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers. It has been explored that the experience and performance of time is far more complex than the simple passing of absolute clock time. Temporalities refer to the sequence, timing and duration of timeslots that host events. Business travellers, thereby relating to all kinds of actors at work and back home, may select timeslots in advance. With the planning of business trips some key timeslots, such as those hosting flights and meetings, are scheduled in advance whereas other timeslots are left open. In reality business travellers planned events may take longer or shorter than expected or may be cancelled or postponed. The experience and performance of temporalities takes place mainly on the spot, where timeslots emerge and timeslots can be created. Business travellers may be able to customize timeslots, as they may schedule or reschedule; speed up or slow down; and create or cancel timeslots. The customizing of timeslots on the spot is always in negotiation with the spatio-temporal situations at hand. The experience and performance of timeslots is also related to past events and events yet to come.

## 5 Analysis of spatialities

Business trips are often packed with activities and there are various tasks and activities business travellers need, or would like to be done, both work related and for the purpose of relaxation. On the move in various vehicles and on hold at various stations business travellers in their trips are continuously managing to make something out of every moment. Their actions, activities, interactions and moods are at least partially related to very time spatial situation in which they find themselves. In chapter 4 it has been explored how various timeslots may emerge or may be reserved or spontaneously created and how timeslots can host single or multiple activities exerted by single or co-located actors. So far it has been attempted to focus mostly on imagination and relationality in time. As we already touched upon briefly in the story of John (chapter 4), the interlinking of distant events only works via the triggering of imaginations and communications via present material interactions. Temporalities forms one part of travel situations. All situations are on the other hand also spatially embedded. In the following chapter this situations will be analysed from its material basis, from which business travellers' experience and performance of spatialities will be explored.

### Introducing materiality

The following fragment first confirms how different dislocated events are interrelated (as had been explored in chapter 4) and in addition it clearly shows the role of materiality in linking up these events. In this fragment I am following Michael, a salesman in car engine treatment products, on one of his regular days on the road.

It is eleven in the morning. We departed at Wychen train station, where Michael picked me up. Fifteen minutes later we arrived at a car-garage. "I'll be right back". Michael was now visiting one of his clients, the owner of the car garage, for ten minutes. Back in the car Michael made notes on what he found and what he sold at the garage. "Next week, when I will give this client a call, I will use these notes to ask him about the particular car that they could not fix and about how the products I sold them worked out". While we drove to the next client Michael gave a call to Kathy, his wife and secretary. "Hi, sweetheart, how are you? ...We sold something!" In a much more formal way he briefs her in technical jargon which products and quantities he sold. She registers and organises the data in an official electronic database at home, and reports the delivery service to deliver the products tomorrow. The conversation ended informal again. "By the way, we eat pizza tonight". After a ten minutes drive we arrive at the next client. With a smile still on his face after the phone call with his wife, Michael invited me to join him inside. Michael informs his client about the disease of his mother, something Michael wrote down two weeks ago he talked to him on the phone. The client answers: "It's better now. I am always amazed you remember all these things". After an inspection at the garage and the sales of some products, we continued our way, updating Kathy via the phone. "What do you guys want on your pizza tonight, she answered".

Around one o'clock it is time for a break. [...] During the break one of his colleagues gave Michael a call. "During lunch break me and my colleagues usually call each other briefly to ask about today's happenings and sales. It is nice for us to have these chats. I have regular calls with my wife but these colleagues are on the road alone all day long". We had lunch and continued. A client called. By requesting him how things were going, Michael bought

himself a couple of seconds to check his administration of this particular customer. After checking Michael referred to the clients previous order and his newborn son. Again this client was surprised Michael knew all this instantly on the phone. The remainder of the day we visited a couple more garages.

Fragment Michael

Michael's day is consists of a chronological sequence of events: a mixture of repetitive events including garage visits, driving sections and a lunch break plus various moments in between of making notes and having phone conversations with his wife, colleagues and clients. To make sense of the way Michael experiences these events and performs, these dislocated events need to be untangled from their chronological order and their geographical location. Once untangled, various relations could again be established between these events.

Based on the series of Michael's actions one lunch-break is related to another lunch-break or one garage-visiting event is related to another garage-visiting event. The same series of practises are involved, for instance in the case of the latter: parking the car, walk inside the garage, have a coffee with the owner, take an inspection tour and finalize the sale. Based on the contents of a conversation, the visiting of a garage is related to: the making of notes right after this particular visit; the phone conversations with this client that may have taken place two weeks earlier; and the upcoming event Michael visits this client again. Similarly the informal parts of the conversation with his wife are content-wise related to each other: "We eat pizza" and one hour later: "What do you want on your Pizza". Content-related events like the above-mentioned may often – but not necessarily – involve the same actors.

Some events are causally related in a chain of events: selling products to a client, followed by making notes on this particular sale and reporting these to his wife via the phone, resulting in his wife contacting the delivery service and the delivery service delivering the goods to the client next day. Events may however have nothing to do with each other, but still be causally related. Because Michael just had a delighting phone conversation with his wife, he kept a smile on his face while driving the next passage to his client and entering his client's garage. These two events simply relate to each because one event happens to follow the other. In this case the mood and imaginations experienced during the former event flow over into the next.

The formal parts of the conversations with his wife are related as they involve the same language – a technical jargon – and again similar actions. Through language also an atmosphere could be created; one that is representing for instance a cosy and homy atmosphere back home. The "Hi, sweetheart"-starts of the conversations with his wife directly refer to a relaxed, homy atmosphere, that is being reproduced during the time slots of every phone conversation until Michael arrives back home.

After the final visit Michael took a look at his navigation system and informed his wife, "We'll be home at 18.23h". "Thanks honey, I thought you'd never call". Afterwards he mentioned, "Yes, as soon as I leave the garage of my final customer, I'll enter destination home into my navigation system; I'll check the time of homecoming; and I'll give my wife a call, so that she knows what time I'll be arriving. From this moment on my thoughts will be at home already"

Fragment Michael

The above-mentioned fragment of travelling with Michael clearly illustrates the triggering of imaginations (of home) through material interactions (checking and briefing time of arrival). It also shows that a series of practises of corporeal travel (leaving garage of last customer), virtual travel (setting the navigation system) and communicative travel (calling his wife) lead to imaginative travelling (thinking of home). It illustrates the New Mobilities Paradigm argument that multiple mobilities intertwine and interact with each other. Similar to Michael also stories of other respondents illustrate present material interactions and representational elements triggering imaginative travelling. Sallie, project manager in nano-technology, for instance mentions:

Often on return trips I have bought something to bring home: souvenirs, tea, chocolate. Buying these items I'm especially thinking of home.

Some *actions*, such as buying souvenirs, make her think of places, persons and events; in this case home. Also *objects*, in this case the souvenirs she bought, may trigger imaginative travelling: later at home she might think back of the place she visited once displaying her souvenirs or eating the chocolates. Another example is given by Jack, consultant for family corporations:

As you can see my office is located right next to an elementary school (Figure 5.1). People might think this could be disturbing, but to me it is not. I open the windows. Hearing kids play and yell makes me happy as it reminds me of my own kids I miss so much during the days. (Jack only sees his son and daughter one weekend every two weeks. red.) [...] Also I have a picture of the most important persons in my life, my wife and my two kids (figure 5.2)



Figure 5.1: Playground

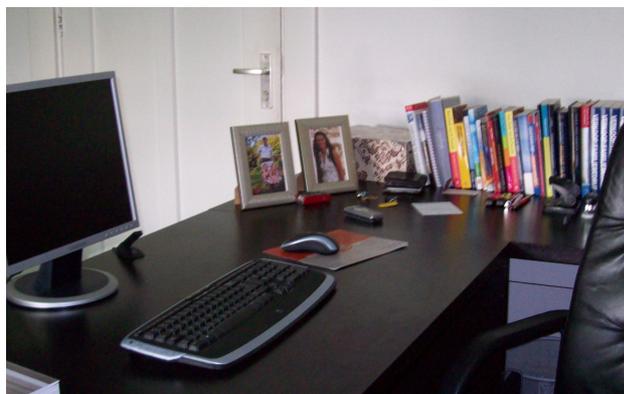


Figure 5.2: Positioning of photographs of wife and kids

### *Materialization of time*

In chapter 4 'time' and the role of business travellers in arranging time have been conceptualized. Time is not only related to materiality in a sense that time hosts events in which material interactions between business travellers and present human and non-human actors from the spatial settings take place. Time is also *directly* materialized into various objects and practises symbolizing and organising time. In order to estimate, plan, organize, synchronize and rearrange time slots, business travellers make use of a variety of assisting objects. On his regular days on the road Michael is driving from one visit to another:

For me clocks are very important. I do check my watch a lot. When I am at one of my clients however, I never look at my watch, as this apparent simple action will almost certainly be perceived as... come on hurry, I got more important things to do. [...] There are more subtle ways to check what time it

is in front of a client, such as looking at his or her watch or a clock behind the desk. Also I have more subtle tricks to end an appointment if my time is running out, verbal and non-verbal.

Similarly Peter mentions:

When I am in a professional dialog, I cannot stand it when people check their watch or mobile phone. Attention should be paid to the each other. [...] Likewise I would never check my watch in front of a customer.

Unlike Michael and Peter, some other business travellers on the contrary would not make a point of demarcating the time limitations of a meeting or appointment. Jack for instance is trying to structure meetings as clearly as possible, in order to create transparency, calmness and clarity. Part of this structuring is the demarcation of time. To clarify this he uses exactly his watch and puts it clearly visible on the table at the start of a meeting.

At the house of one of the respondents I found various clocks indicating major global time zones (figure 5.2). Peter, salesman of medical equipment:

These clocks symbolize our 24-hour global economy: when night falls in the New York, the Tokyo clock already started its new day.

At the same time it reminds the time gap between biological rhythms worldwide:

One look at these clocks and I know whether I can call one of my overseas clients or colleagues, whether I can reach them on the office or whether I have to call them on their mobile phones.



**Figure 5.2: Clocks symbolizing 24-hour global economy**

Also virtual mobilities are intertwined with corporeal mobilities through materiality. Harrold is freelance audio-visual expert. For his job he has to travel to theatres, concert sites and television studios throughout Europe. Harrold always check Google Earth right before he leaves:

I want to know exactly where I'm going and how to get there. Last time I said to a taxi driver in Oslo: no you should go to the right here. I had never been in Oslo, but I recognised the route from virtual maps. [...] Sometimes I also like to explore an area by navigating randomly. However, immediately upon arrival I want to check Google earth where I went and which routes I took.

Jeffrey, nutrition scientist at a technical research institute, points out how he uses virtual mobilities not only in advance, but also during the actual travelling:

If I'm visiting by car a destination I'm not familiar with, I'll use GPS navigation to get there. If I travel by airplane I'll always make sure somebody picks me up upon arrival at the airport.

Stewardess Sandra gives another example of virtual travelling as a preparation to actual travelling:

We have a slip site for every destination we fly upon. It is a website that provides general information, do's and don'ts, excursions, restaurants and weather forecasts. It is also a place where stewardesses can meet and share their experiences with the particular destination. Often I use this website before I select my destinations and right before I depart

Virtual mobilities – through the materiality of computers, websites, navigation software and GPS devices – work their way through in imaginations and corporeal movements on the spot. Through navigation technologies Jeffrey and Harrold are more aware of where they find themselves physically travelling. In contrast to for instance phoning, these examples show that the intertwining of mobilities, may also strengthen ones awareness of physical travel presence.

With today's new communication and information technologies, business travellers make use of a variety of ICT devices in order to mobilize their lives, including mobile phones, electronic agendas, voice-recognizing memo recorders, laptops and navigation systems. Often these multiple ICT systems are synchronised and synthesised, via technologies like Wifi and Bluetooth, into harmonious systems that are directly available in temporally created mobile workspaces. Figure 5.3 shows the interior of the car of Michael, salesman of car engine treatment products. He customized his vehicle into a mobile office, in which a memo recorder, navigation system, file map and a bottle of water are harmoniously integrated. Also integrated into this mobile office, Michael himself.



Figure 5.3: Car as a mobile office

Throughout the above-mentioned examples it has been explored that events are related to each other through imaginations and communications that are embedded in present material interactions. Establishing relationships between events is a first step in understanding the experience of events and the performance of business travellers during these events. It allows you to understand that experiencing a moment encompasses more than the isolated perception of that particular time and space. It gives a glimpse into a world of imagination and offers clues about where these imaginations come from and how they are triggered via present material interactions. In the following section the experience of spatialities will be further elaborated upon.

### **Experience of spatialities**

In this paragraph it will be examined how business travellers interact with the everyday spatial settings they pass through or hold at, and how these local interactions alter their performance and experience on the spot. First it will be introduced what the interspaces of business travel look like. It questioned whether these spaces are purely global, or also intrinsically local.

#### *Global networks, local places*

The first fragment of this chapter gives a glimpse into the hyper mobile world of which some of the business travellers are part. It clearly shows the abstract tempo in which geographically dispersed events are being visited and the complete abstraction of the concepts speed and distance. With hardly any breaks and barely enough time to eat, business travellers like John move across the globe within hours. A world or lifestyle by some referred to as the space of flows (Castells, 2000).

People always ask me: Wow, you seem to have been everywhere, you must have seen a lot of the world! My answer would be: O yeah, I have seen the greatest variety of universal hotels, rental cars, taxis, conference centres, hotel rooms, burgers and fancy restaurants.

In chapter 4 we started following John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery, on one of his trips to Sweden. The next fragment shows how temporalities and spatialities are intertwined.

We were driving on the German Autobahn. The speedometer tips 200 km/h, but except for all the other cars on the road that seem to drive terribly slow, this abstract notion of speed does not really manifest itself. The car that is isolated very well keeps all the noise, wind, fumes and other cars outside, acting as a sort of cocoon, shield or bubble separating the three of us from the world around us. Inside the car both John and Jason are busy talking and phoning (mostly in German). The fact that we are not anymore in the Netherlands and phone calls get ten times more expensive does not seem to bother them really. "Travelling by car is very relaxed. It is easy to create your own space. You can always make phone calls, a thing I do very frequently. And if travelling in companion you are able to freely talk business and private matters with colleagues". Furthermore "[...] the car offers a great deal of flexibility and freedom to go wherever you want and need to go, fast. Timing of arrival is highly predictable".

Fragment John

Travelling abstract speeds and being sealed off from the outside John and his colleagues dislocate themselves to a large extent from the landscape they are speeding

through, or rather, flying over. One could speak of a tunnel effect as illustrated by Graham & Marvin (2001) in their example of high speed trains or global optic fibre cables connecting at high speeds A and B, however passing by everything in between. Exception is a single stop to fill up the monstrous car with the numerous litres of petrol consumed on its way, thereby including the petrol station into the fast world of business travellers, their fast cars and the fast lanes of the motorway. The abstract speeds and the creation of an individual bubble – thanks to the isolation of the car, conversations and phoning – strongly enhance the exclusion from the outside world.

Being dislocated gets a somewhat different dimension when you find yourself in third world countries. Magnus, diplomatic in the negotiation of loans for developing countries:

My strips mostly lead to third world countries. Unfortunately in these countries you live a life completely separated from majority of poor, local people. You always end up in an extremely luxurious four or five star hotel that can be seen as some sort of a western enclave. Not at all a representational reflexion of real life out there. I realize this and I dislike it, but you simply have no choice. Alternative accommodations are simply too dirty, unhygienic, damaged, uncomfortable and unsafe. Middle class hotels, basic but clean, as we can find all over Europe, cannot be found in these countries.

Not all respondents can be considered to be entirely and exclusively living in the fast world of the space of flows. To some travelling encompasses a much more local experience. Harrold, freelancer as an audio-visual expert:

Lately one of my colleagues said to me I shouldn't take a flight to Oslo via Copenhagen, as that would be a hassle and would cost a lot of time. Well, personally I don't think so. I have never been to Copenhagen. Even if it is only the airport, I would still like to see that actually. The Danish language, the stylish shops, the wooden floors, the Scandinavian furniture; this airport is great and unique. Another new experience, nice.

Even the airport – prominently a space of fast flows and often referred to as global space (Castells, 2000) or non-space (Auge, 1995) – is simultaneously experienced and appreciated as typically local or Danish. Harrold continues:

On that same trip to Norway my colleagues wanted to drop me off at the hotel, when I said: No please let me take the train. From Google Earth and online travel planners I already knew exactly which train to take, where to switch trains, which station to get off, and how to navigate back to my hotel. A local train ride, what does that look like in Norway? Nice, I want to experience these kind of things. I want to navigate my own way. Maybe that has something to do with my boy scouts background.

Gertrude, little sister of Jesus, in her trips tries to avoid as much as possible places and flows exclusive to fast elite. In here life she gives care to those who need it: the poor, the excluded, the sick. On her trips all around the world she always tries to be as much embedded to the daily lives of the people on the other end of society.

Of course I cannot avoid taking intercontinental flights, but domestically I always try to take the local public transport. I do not care that it takes longer. If that is part of everyday lives of local people out there, why should it not be part of my life out there? It just makes me feel more at ease, than living in excluded luxury, dislocated from reality around me.

In her thoughts, experiences and actions Gertrude is very much embedded into the very local situation she finds herself:

Once I'm abroad, or actually also when I am at home, I always very strongly experience life as it unfolds right here, right now. I chose not to have a mobile phone, so I'm really free. I always appreciate contacts with locals, with strangers. I can really enjoy everything that lives, grows and blooms. The colours, smells, life, the weather and the sounds. I really love to listen to music. Not individual music imported on a Walkman, or how do they call these devices these days. No, I mean music in the streets, in the bus or on the market. With people singing and dancing on it.

The above-mentioned section sketched out that experience of business travel is something global, local, personal and situational. In the remainder of this paragraph the experience of spatialities will be highlighted of two spatialities frequently visited by business travellers: the hotel room and the airplane.

### *Hotel room*

A place visited very frequently by almost all business travellers is the hotel. Peter, salesman in medical equipment:

As fixed costs of business travel – the flight tickets – are generally much higher than variable costs – hotels and restaurants – my business trips are often intensively packed with a combination of various activities, and they generally take quiet a few days. A comfortable hotel is therefore an important starting point.

There is a lot to be said about hotels. Bram, wholesale distribution manager, for instance mentions:

Hotels are alright. Well, ... not really, ... actually I think hotels are terrible. The room is not yours. Ugly. Often mouldy. Bed sleeps like shit. Pillow is worth nothing. [...] Nothing nice to do. The atmosphere is cold and unhomy [...] Only the breakfast, yes the breakfast is taken care of, often nice and healthy.

Like Bram most business travellers are not very positive about hotels, often mentioning cold and unhomy atmosphere, uniformity, impersonality as most important. Harry, designer/developer of electronics and software:

I would prefer cosy family hotels outside the city centre. Qua location however, often you end up in the standardised business hotels. Well at least let it than be a little atmospheric, some decorations and colours are nice.

The search for a place that feels a bit like home, or is at least more personal than the standardised hotel rooms can be found by many of the respondents. Nathalie, coordinator of overseas educational ICT collaborations, on her trips stays at host families from time to time:

I'm lucky. The good thing about host-families is you really get to know the local culture. Joining them on activities, participating in a home cooked diner, you are actually part of their normal life. It feels more warm, like being at home.

Taking part in her host-family's domestic social practises, to Nathalie staying at a host family is atmospherically related (see p...) to the being home. Staying at a host family also has its disadvantages, compared to staying at hotels. Nathalie:

The good thing about hotels is that they offer the opportunity to withdraw yourself into your room, even if it is only for one hour." [...] After a long day of work it might go like this: Well, lets meet in about one hour, let's say 19 hours in the lobby. [...] Staying with a host family is a different story. You do

not have as much privacy as in a hotel. Although you might have your room you cannot stay there for hours to refresh, and relax. Your hosts try to make your stay as nicely as possible, inviting you into a complete programme that fills the entire evening.

Where brief moments of privacy are often prearranged within the social practises amongst colleagues visiting hotels, this is not the case with staying at host-families.

Business travellers' relationships with the hotels they stay in are mostly functional. As stays are often short, activities of business travellers inside hotel rooms are very limited. Nathalie:

I have been thinking what am I actually doing during my stay inside a hotel room. I reached the conclusion that my activities are limited to: opening my suitcase, without unpacking it; sleep; and take a shower in the morning.

Karen, manager of machinery service contacts, has only one simple demand regarding hotels:

I do not care really which hotel I am staying. The only thing that is important to me is that hotels have a good restaurant with healthy food. As I regularly arrive late at night, it is also important that this restaurant stays open late.

As a very frequent visitor of hotels (approximately three nights a week) Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems mentions:

I don't care much about what a hotel room looks like. I only sleep there and most of them look the same anyway. [...] There is only one very important simple demand from my side: that is the window should be able to open. If that is not the case I am not going to sleep there, since I will get a tremendously heavy headache from sleeping heat, air conditioning or air that is not fresh. [...] As a simple result of this very fact, the hotel should preferably not be located alongside a busy road in the city centre, as the traffic noises will penetrate my room from around 5am onwards.

The contributions of Karen and Roger show that personal preferences and lifestyles are reflected in the choice for hotels. Both strive to continue their daily practises whilst on their business trips as if they would be at home: in their cases opening the window and healthy food consumption. They search for hotels that allow them to do so.

Some business travellers mention the importance of the location of a hotel. John, businessman in corrugated machinery:

As I am dependent on a rental car to reach factories located outside smaller cities, I need a hotel that is easily accessible by car and offers good parking opportunities.

Peter, salesman in medical equipment:

I want my hotel to be closely located to the venue I'm visiting; often this is a centrally located conference centre.

Sallie, project manager in nano-science:

A centrally based hotel makes me more mobile in the night, allowing me to take part in some informal night programme in a restaurant, club or bar.

For the exact same reason Roger on the contrary prefers his hotel to be located outside the city centre:

I prefer outskirts hotels. This gives me a good excuse not to make the night too long and head for my hotel.

Various examples show that the location of day and night activities and the accessibility either by car, foot or public transport, are taken into account in the choice for a hotel. Further elaborate on the strategic selection of spatial surroundings will follow later this chapter.

### *Airports*

Airports are frequently visited spaces most business travellers would have liked to spend less time at waiting. However not all airport experiences are necessarily negative. Sallie points out the hectic and dynamic atmosphere at airports:

Airports are very much alive. The load of impressions, energy and dynamics fascinate me. The buzz and vibe of these dynamics supply me with new energy. Inside the airport I am myself part of the same dynamics: Usually I am walking around, often having some phone conversations. I hardly ever sit down really.

Sallie continues about the crowds of people at airports:

On the one hand airports are highly individualistic. The large and fast moving crowds at airports make you feel anonymous and on your own. On the other hand you feel part of these crowds, as you are all on the move.

Magnus, diplomatic negotiator in developing countries, on the other hand, highly dislikes the hectic atmosphere at airports:

Airports are terrible. It is an unpleasant and uncomfortable setting, in which you, and your fellow travellers, are often a bit moody and tired. Conversations take much effort. For the time being people withdraw with a magazine or book. There is always this stress of travelling.

Especially the waiting works on Magnus's nerves:

Waiting in front of customs I often get very impatient en stressed. How much time do I have; Why is my cue so slow? Can I move quicker through one of the other cues? [...] Please, let my plane not be leaving without me; Check watch; He is not sneaking through the lines now, is he?

Also Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems, is annoyed with the waiting and congestion at airports:

Instead of showing your passport once, you now have to show it three times or more: at baggage check in, at security, and at the gate. Long live open borders and a united Europe. [...] Where security checks got four times stricter, the size of airports themselves and the number of personnel have hardly increased. This chokes the flows.

Congestion, slow down and hold up at airports clashes with Roger's endeavour for speed and efficiency:

Especially at airports in southern Europe – Italy, Spain – airport personnel often have this relaxed and slow southern mentality. What? Do they think that I'm on a holiday?

Illustrated by examples from frequently visited spatialities of airports and hotel rooms this section has showed that experience of situations is materially embedded in the spatialities at hand. Other frequently visited mobile spatialities, such as public transport and private cars will be examined later this chapter, when it comes to the selection of modal choices.

### Occurrence of spatialities

The experience of business travel at hold or on the move inside various stations and vehicles contains much more than simply movement from A to B and residence at hotel C. It has been explored that being in and moving through various spatial settings gives meaning through travel and generates a spatial experience. In the following paragraphs we will see that business travellers not only passively take these spatial experiences for granted by entering and exiting spaces. On the contrary, *to some extent* – this does not mean that business travellers are the single initiator of actions – they can and do have an active designing role in selecting and customizing spaces around them that specifically fit their personal interests and aimed activities at the very moment of experience. It will be argued that business travellers can match space and moment in two ways: *selecting spaces* or *customizing spaces* (figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4: Matching space and moment

### Selecting spatialities in advance and on the spot

In important part of the planning in advance of a business trips is the selection of transport modes and routes. As most business travellers have tight time schedules their selection of transportation modes is often based on time efficiency. Roger, entrepreneur in automatic lighting systems:

Except for Dutch and some nearby German and Belgian destinations, I always travel by airplane, so I can return home the same day. To get to Schiphol Airport I always go by train. It is a direct train and it runs faster than I can drive by car. With the exception of extremely early departures, when trains do not yet run, but there will also not be any congestion.

Like Roger, many other business travellers take trains to Schiphol airport. Jeffrey, nutrition scientist:

Schiphol is very well accessible by train, as you get off the train right at the entrance of the terminal. Also, with the current congestion levels on Dutch highways, arriving on time at Schiphol by car is unreliable and for parking at Schiphol you pay the jackpot.

Peter, salesman in medical equipment:

It is never a problem to get to the airport, whether it is Eindhoven, Düsseldorf or Schiphol and to catch a flight from there. The tricky thing is to get from the airport to your final destination. How, depends very much on the destination. In cities like London, München, Tokyo and Singapore I always prefer to take public transport, which is fast and well organized. At American destinations on the other hand I always rent a car; this works best here as distances are generally large and public transport is poorly organized.

Similarly Roger mentions:

Northern European destinations generally offer great and well-organized public transportation systems. At southern European destinations however public transport is a mess. Here taxis generally work best. However, you have to get out of the airplane and airport quicker than your fellow passengers as taxis are limited. In Paris both car travel and public transport take me too much time to reach the centre. If I'm visiting my clients in Paris I kindly request them to travel to Charles de Gaulle airport, to have the meeting in a conference room I rented at the airport or in one of the airport hotels, for a couple of hours.

The above-mentioned examples show that business travellers often choose the quickest options. As showed, these depend much on the side-specific opportunities available at the particular destinations. Once we look upon the selection of transportation modes and travel routes in more detail however, it becomes clear that business travellers' choices are not only based on the shortest time to get from A to B. Sallie, project manager in nano-science:

Travelling by train I'd rather take a slower direct train, than gaining half an hour with the hassle and insecurity of six interchanges.

Roger continues:

I always depart from Schiphol airport. I know this airport by heart and I also have a Privium membership. This is a technology allowing frequent customers to proceed through the lanes quickly, based on iris scan identification. If possible I always travel Royal Dutch Airlines. With this airliner I know exactly what to expect. I know when and how to check in online. It's simply a matter of routine.

John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery:

To get to our final destination we don't take public transport. Too complicated. Wherever we are, to transfer from and towards airports (Figure 5.5) we always use rental cars. Therefore we have contracts with rental companies (Figure 5.6).



**Figure 5.5: Airport**



**Figure 5.6: Car rental office**

To many business travellers, travel has become a set of practises and routines. Efficiency, comfort and reliability have to do with the extent, to which the business travellers are familiar with the transportation mode and route in question. Transportation does not exist separately from them and cannot be seen as an external

structure. The business traveller is part of these transportation systems, as much as these transportation systems are embedded into the business travellers' personal systems, their routines, and their practises.

One of the most prominent practises exerted by most business travellers on the move, are those around the activity of working. Roger, entrepreneur in automatic lighting systems, for instance takes into account the functionality of travel situations for the participation in activities on the road:

I am trying to do as much work as possible, whilst on the move. I therefore look at different modes of transportation in a very simple and functional way: Car is phoning, train is phoning and 'laptoping', airplane is only 'laptoping'.

To Roger travelling from A to B involves much more than the movement itself, most importantly the functional relationship – the ability to exert work related activities – with the particular transporting vehicle. The planning of travel passages and the choice for transportation modes have complications for the way Roger organises his work:

If I know I'll be travelling by car soon, I will postpone making and answering phone calls until the moment I enter my car. During the driving I will deal with all the accumulated phone calls.

The other way around, Roger's organisation of work may also play a role in the planning of his mode of transportation:

I sometimes choose the train over the car because at that particular moment I have to do a lot of laptop work.

Unlike Roger, Jeffrey experiences more complications with making phone calls on the move:

Driving my car I can take short phone calls, but I always have to focus on the road strongly. Inside trains it often is so noisy that I'm generally restricted to some text messaging.

Working on the move gets even more complicated when the matter you are dealing with is classified, sensitive or for other reasons not meant to be heard by bystanders. Peter, salesman of medical equipment, for instance mentions:

The work I can do during travel is highly limited. In the sales branch of medical electronic devices there is a very high competition. I cannot allow myself to accidentally spread any sensitive information on projects and possible deals I am working on. In any airport, airplane or train, there could be somebody catching my information. Therefore I cannot talk business conversations in public and I have to be very careful working on my laptop as people could watch the screen from behind. [...] The only place where I can freely have conversations is my own car. A mode of transportation I therefore highly prefer.

Harry, designer/developer of electronics and software on the other hand prefers travelling by train:

It is not always possible because it is so far, but if possible I prefer to travel by train. I would not mind spending up to four hours in a train compared to a one-hour flight. First most of the time gained with this flight, you already lose at airports and at transfers to get into town. [...] More importantly, trains are much more comfortable and relaxed, plus I can have a nice lunch or diner in the train, while I'm travelling.

As the above-mentioned examples illustrate business travellers take various things into account before they make decisions regarding transportation modes and routes. However, not always business travellers are free to choose their most preferable options. Peter, salesman in medical equipment:

All my business trips have to be approved always in negotiation with my superiors and internal travel agencies. The question is: are the ones authorizing your trips themselves experienced travellers? Can they imagine themselves in the position of the traveller? Do they see things like priority boarding or a rental car in particular situations as a necessity or as a luxury? The question is: are the ones authorizing your trips themselves experienced travellers? Can they imagine themselves in the position of the traveller? Do they see things like priority boarding or a rental car in particular situations as a necessity or as a luxury?

This paragraph made clear that decisions for transport modes and routes are not simply the result of rational decision making in terms of time and space by the business traveller solely.

### *Recreational activities*

Although business trips are often packed with formal tasks and activities, sometimes there will also be some spare time, for instance to spend on experiencing your destination.

The first time I went on a business trip to Canada I saw absolutely nothing of the country, except maybe for some brief moments of staring out of the window during the three hour car drive. On my next trip, the one I organised myself, I thought by myself: this we need to change. Canada is so beautiful; we need to see something of the country.

On her second trip to Canada Nathalie, as she was organising the programme herself, was able to reserve timeslots for relaxation and cultural experience. Similarly Sallie, project manager in nano-science, mentions:

If possible, I would like to see something of the cities I'm visiting: have a little walk or sightseeing tour. I hardly ever find time for this, but if I go there often enough, eventually this moment will come.

Boris is designer of medical equipment. Recreational activities have a prominent role in his business trips, so much that they even influence where he is going in the first place:

On a yearly basis I used to make a couple of intercontinental trips, often coupled to a conference or convention I wanted to attend. My motivation to attend specific trips was often based on where would I like to go, what would I like to see and experience, where can I have a lot of fun? Next step was to convince myself and my superiors from the fact that is was also very relevant for my job.

On his trips Boris spontaneously creates various timeslots filled with recreational activities:

I visited a variety of places I would always have wanted to go. During the evenings we had a lot of fun (Figure 5.6, left). Every night we visit various bars and clubs (figure 5.6, middle). I do not stick to the conventional tourist stuff. In Istanbul for instance I walked from my hotel to the Aya Sofia mosque, however I walked in one geographical line, straight through a couple of slums narrow alleys and local bazaars, no other tourist had ever gone. [...]

In Houston I reserved some extra days after the official programme had finished. We rented a car and drove towards the Gulf of Mexico and onto the beach, where we almost got stuck (figure 5.6, right). As usual we had great fun”.



**Figure 5.6: Mix of business and pleasure**

To Magnus, diplomat in negotiating loans in developing countries, sightseeing and experiencing local culture are also very important, but more from a business point of view:

One of the most crucial parts in building up complex trust based relationships with diplomats investors and policy makers in Middle Eastern, African or Latin American countries, is mutual understanding of each other and each others culture. I cannot visit Egypt without visiting the pyramids. I have to show interest in their culture and what is important to them. That is simply a matter of respect.

Christine and Sandra are stewardesses. Their work is concentrated during the physical movement of travelling itself. Once the destination is reached they head off for their hotel and they have one to four days off, depending on the destination. Christine:

We have a system that we can select our favourite destinations. At least once a month, but preferably more often, I pick sunny destinations. I recharge energy, it makes me feel happier and I get a nice tan. Whether it is Suriname, Curacao or Kenya, as long as it is sunny and far away, so I can get enough days off, I feel fine about it.

Unlike Christine who is flying for several years now Sandra started flying only one year ago:

Now I have the freedom to fly, I will try to see as much as possible from the world. Wherever I go, I often want to do a lot of sightseeing and cultural experience.

For Sandra and Christine the selection of destinations has its limitations. They will sometimes have to do less favourable destinations, such as short European flights that offer hardly any days off.

#### *Selection of spatialities on the spot*

As the examples show business travellers select spatialities in advance based on their personal situation, the activities they aspire to participate in, and the way spatio-temporal situations enable or constrain them to do so. However, business travellers do not select spatialities only *in advance* of their trips. Also *during their trips* business travellers continuously find spatialities that match the specific moment of experience. This will be illustrated with the example of taking breaks. Michael, salesman of car engine treatment products:

I generally take a lunch break around one o'clock. I'll park my car alongside the road on a quiet place nearby, depending on the location. In Wychen for instance I always park at the local sport park, because this is a quiet place" (Figure 5.7, left). [...] "At this time of the day, these sport fields are deserted, except for some people walking the dog. Without being disturbed I can eat some sandwiches and have some phone calls with colleagues who also have lunch break.

Michael chooses the sport fields not to watch people sport or to see the trees; he chooses this place because it is *neutral*. He hardly experiences external stimuli from this surrounding area, so he can focus on his lunch and his phone calls. Figure 5.7 (right) shows one of his other lunch spots.

This is a spot near the river Waal. It is one of my favourite spots. It has a nice view and I like to see the boats slowly passing by. The place relaxes me.

In this case Michael visits the place, specifically to experience its attractive characteristics. To Michael this place is therefore not neutral; it is being consumed.



**Figure 5.7: Selecting the perfect spot to have a break**

Similar approaches can be found by others as well. Jack, consultant for downhill family corporations:

When I find myself having some spare time I am often searching for a peaceful quiet spot: this could be a silent parking place. I would prefer to make a stroll in the woods. [...] Another thing I frequently do is renting a lounge in a hotel, just for one hour. Unlike airport lounges these are often very quiet, especially during the day. These offer me a functional work and relax place including an internet connection, coffee making facilities, some food and a couch to rest.

Sallie, project manager in nano-science, stresses that her daily moments of relaxation are often restricted to the planned time slots for coffee and lunch breaks. However, in these timeslots she specifically select spatialities available on the spot that give her a pleasant experience:

During meeting breaks people often cluster together in smaller groups. Personally I really like to go outside for a couple of minutes, take a deep breath of fresh air, maybe catch some sunlight, and make a short walk. [...] It is healthy, wakes me up, refreshes my mind and helps me stay focussed for the remainder of the day.

Similarly Bram, logistics manager, mentions:

Office spaces may have a lack of natural light and can be so poorly ventilated. I often go outside when I got a chance to consume some fresh air.

Another example of specting spatialities on the spot is if you get an incoming phone call or that you have to make that urgent phone call. Not all situations – places and moments – are optimally suited for that. Sallie, project manager in nano-science, mentions:

If I need to *make* a phone call, I wait till I have a break and the ability to select a silent spot nearby: an empty alley, corner or garden. [...] When I *receive* a phone call, I can only choose whether to pick up the phone or postpone answering. Often you stop moving for a minute and pick up the phone. This particular situation may not be ideal for answering the phone. You may not have enough time to finish the phone conversation. You may not be able to fully concentrate on the phone conversation, as you are doing something else simultaneously. Or there may be a lot of disturbing noise on the background.

To concentrate on the phone call business travellers often subtly select spatialities. In Figure 5.8 for instance John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery, for instance walks (automatically) to a corner of the hotel breakfast area. This corner is quieter than the rest of the room. Staring ‘into nothingness’ out of the window he can focus on his phone conversation. In Figure 5.9 John’s colleague Jason in the same hotel breakfast area, positioned his phone in such way that he can work out paperwork, have phone conversations, and eat breakfast at the same time.



Figure 5.8: Selecting spatiality for a phone call



Figure 5.9: Positioning of phone at breakfast

Business travellers may make small subtle translations of the spatialities at hand. These not only evolve the selection of suitable spatial settings, but may also involve an adaption of the contents of spatialities at hand. In the following section it will be explored how and to what extent business travellers are able to customize spatialities.

### Customizing spatialities

The following fragment of John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery, shows how travel spaces can be customized during travelling.

The airplane is quite empty. “Normally low cost airlines like Air Berlin are like a coop: Families and people on holiday make a lot of noise. As a result the charm of flying is gone. Also you can forget to do some serious work. The best you can do is take a nap, read a (news) magazine or discuss some brief (work-related) topics” (figure x.x). As soon as we take off John and Jason quickly move to a seat next to the path. “Next to the path you have

more space for at least one leg; you have at least one private chair railing; you can freely walk through the airplane; and most importantly you can grab your stuff and leave first upon arrival. John: “I think I’m a bit claustrophobic, easy access and exit makes me feel more comfortable”. The seat in the middle is the worst: if there are two large people aside you, personal space is very limited and it feels like you cannot move; also you risk the fact that you have no chair railing available.



**Figure 5.10 Customizing airplane seats**

Fragment John

By quickly moving towards another seat, extending the tables in front of them and grabbing a newspaper, entrepreneur John and his colleague Jason slightly modify the spatial arrangement so it provides more comfort and suits their activities better (figure 4.5). Jason is engineer. He works for John’s company in corrugated machinery, where his function is the coordinating of machinery service contacts for clients. For his job, also Jaab has to travel a lot. About airplanes he mentions:

There is not so much you can do in the airplane. As we’re travelling mostly short distances best is to read a magazine or newspaper.

In this case they only make use of actors locally available (e.g. seats, newspaper, extendable tables, arm chairs). Often however, business travellers bring in their own objects introducing these objects into the local networks. Karen, manager of machinery service contacts, for instance mentions:

I always like to drink water. Wherever I go I’ll always try to have some bottles of water within hand reach, for instance in the car door, or on my desk.

Bringing bottles of water and putting them in sight and within reach is part of the way Karen arranges space around her, customizing it to her specific needs at a particular moment. Also Roger, entrepreneur in automatic light systems, has something he always brings while travelling:

This is my travel bag. (figure 5.11) I always take it with me on my trips. I rather have it repaired every couple of years, than taking a new bag. Why? This bag is part of my system. My keys, passport, wallet, credit cards, paperwork... I put everything in the exact same place, every time. This allows me, for instance, to check in really quickly, as I know exactly where to grab for which item, without thinking about it, searching or even looking for it. Simultaneously it prevents me from leaving behind these valuable and essential items at home or losing them during a trip.

John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery, always takes a rucksack with him:

With the amount of travelling I do, shoulder bags will give me a skewed back. Trolleys are not an option as the wheels give stains on your pants. I swear by a rucksack. Besides this rucksack fits anything and can be very well organised (Figure 5.12)



**Figure 5.11: Roger's travel bag**



**Figure 5.12: John's credit card collection**



**Figure 5.13: Collection of credit cards**



**Figure 5.14: Local valuta**

Business travellers in their bags carry collections of credit cards and local money with them (figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14). As we can see from Roger's and John's stories, a series of practises have evolved around using their bags. Rather the practises of Roger and John in interaction with their bags than the physical qualities of the bags themselves make these bags essentially useful. As business travellers travel regularly through the same types of spatial settings, they develop routines and skills in translating these spatial settings. As the above-mentioned fragment of John in the airplane already indicates, a series of practises arises around translating spaces and exerting activities. With increasing travel experience these practises happen automatically (sitting down in the airplane, switching seats at take off, and unfolding tables after ascent, etc). These practises make travelling more relaxed to the experienced traveller, but it may become too standardized and boring. John:

The fun of travelling is gone after all these miles. Flying is like stepping into a bus over and over again. "I have got this bag for more than twenty years now. It goes with me on every business trip, couple of times a week.

Another example is customizing hotel rooms. Figure 5.15 shows the creation of a temporal office in a typical hotel room.



**Figure 5.15: Creation of temporal office in hotel room**

Often business travellers decide to what extent it is desirable to customize a local space or if it would be better to move towards (select) a space that is from itself more suitable. Bram, wholesale distribution manager stresses the importance of your own personal space:

Unlike at home, or at the office in The Netherlands, at headquarters in Germany I don't have my own office. No personal space in which I can organise stuff around me and have a desk to write or put my laptop on. I could of course arrange some of these things in one of the company's working lounges, yet I always decide to return back home right away after an afternoon meeting.

The above-mentioned example from Bram shows that, although there is an opportunity to *customize* one of the local spaces available (lounges), Bram *selects* home to move towards.

This paragraph showed that business travellers may find many ways to customize spatialities around them that fit best the very moment experienced. Customizing of spatialities however always takes place in negotiation with the unique spatio-temporal situations at hand. Performance and experience of situations is also related to the business traveller's embodiment, as will be explored in the next paragraph.

### **Embodiment**

Corporeal travel literary means the travelling of your body. With your body also come limitations. These capability constraints can be very basic things, such as: one has to sleep; one has to rest; one has to eat; and one cannot physically be at more than one place at the same time. However, various aspects of your bodily appearance also alter the way interactions on the spot, with clients, colleagues or strangers, take place. One could think of gender, skin-colour, looks, clothes, style, facial expressions, etc.

Business travel is often a men's world, but there are also woman involved. It is particularly interesting to see and experience business travel through the eyes of woman. Sallie, project manager in nano-technology, did not really think about gender differences, until I specifically asked her about it. During the years she simply got

used to have a majority of men around her and she has taken the situation more or less for granted.

Do I notice any difference travelling around as a woman in a men's world? Yes nanotechnology definitely is a men's world. ... Now I think about it, I do get a lot of attention, from colleagues, strangers. They all want to know what I'm doing and how I ended up here. But I have always been open for attention and spontaneous interactions. I think this also has a lot to do with appearance and personality. Also outside work I like to talk to people. Even when I'm in the train for instance, I tend to have a lot of conversations with strangers.

Karen, manager of machinery service contacts, more clearly experiences the facts that she is a woman amongst men:

It's a men's world. At first instance you get surprising reactions. On the phone: Oh wait it is Karen not Denis. Haha, I often hear them thinking: huh a woman, can she do the job? Once they know me, they know better. [...] Contacts with clients in the Middle East can be particularly difficult. To avoid misunderstanding and complications in email contacts I often just use Mr. instead of Ms. If the job requires me to physically travel out there, I'd have to send my male colleague. I would really like to see the Middle East and my Middle Eastern clients as well, but it simply involves too much problems travelling there; especially safety issues and problems how to get things arranged as a woman.

Safety issues seem to play an important role amongst female business travellers. Sallie, for instance stressed the importance of taking precautions:

As a woman I'm taking extra precautions regarding safety issues. If travelling home at night alone I need to prepare things well. I always make sure I got my trip back planned very well. If travelling by train for instance I would never take the last connection, and I will always make sure I have a back up plan, somebody who can pick me up in case I strand somewhere on the route. During the day I don't care, I'll just step into the train and see how I get there. [...] Maybe another precaution: In my hotel room, during the night, I always make sure the door is locked.

Nathalie, coordinator of overseas ICT projects between elementary schools, points at gender related issues with carrying luggage:

Luggage is a bit complicated. As a woman, you often need something smart for presentations, something festive for the night and something casual for your own comfort. Nevertheless I generally take only very few luggage. This is nice from a practical point of view, as you have to take with you all stuff all the time. There are of course always various men who would like to help you carrying or lifting your suitcase. But I don't feel too comfortable with that; I rather feel more independent.

To Nathalie carrying light luggage goes much further than simply practical. It has to do with much deeper-rooted feelings regarding male-female relationships and independence.

The embodied experience of business travel involves more than gender related issues. Jeffrey, nutrition scientist, is almost two meters tall. With his length Jeffrey is able to have a clear overview of the situation:

Some time ago, I was waiting in front of airport security. From my point of view – I can't help it, I'm pretty tall – I noticed my cue was not moving at all. I counted the number of people in front of me and I calculated that with the

current speed I would never had made it on time. On the other side I saw a cue progressing much better. Leaving behind surprised faces, I left for that other cue. I got through nicely on time.

Being tall also has its disadvantages. Jeffrey continues:

My length is not always nice. Travelling by airplane for me is a hell. There is no space to leave my legs. If possible I try to avoid flying. If not, I have to adapt myself, or my situation. Old airplanes are generally fine, but the latest models are terribly cramped, especially with low cost airliners. In advance I always try to reserve a seat at the exit rows. This is often possible for an extra cost. Otherwise I would ask the flight personnel to change seats.

From the stories of others we can see that skin colour and ethnicity have their impact on interactions. Peter, sales manager in medical equipment, has Indonesian roots:

At airports I have to reserve at least an extra fifteen minutes for security. I always get picked out to have a full routine luggage and body inspection.

Sarcastically he continues:

Of course these routine checks are performed totally random and have nothing to do with my dark skin colour and Indonesian looks. Rather strange then, that they always pick out me and let my colleagues move through without a problem.

Being a white man in Africa on the other hand also has its implications. Magnus, mediator in co-financing issues in developing countries:

As a white man in Africa you have to realize how local people look at you. Often people will treat you politely and with respect. However you should watch out that do not perceive your presence as: ...Oh this white man is simply going to tell us, with his western arrogance, what to do and how to do things better. [...] Especially where cultures intersect, appearance is extremely important. With that I mean that you express your patience, politeness, sympathy, interest and respect. This is particularly important, as business is often a matter of bestowing.

One way of expression is via your face. Gertrude, little sister of Jesus, stresses the richness of information she retrieves from facial expressions:

I always notice people's faces. Body language is very important. Faces express often more than words could tell you (Figure 5.16). This is particularly important if you don't speak each other's language. You still can communicate.



Figure 5.16: Facial expressions

Above Magnus and Gertrude touched upon the issue of appearance. In similar ways also many others mentioned the importance of appearance. Peter, salesman in medical equipment:

As long as you're visible – that means not at home, alone in your car, or locked in your hotel room – you have to be aware of your appearance. Everything you say, the way you behave, and the way you look is being observed. You have to be aware that you are representing a company, or a product. What they see in you; so do they also think about your product or service. Even amongst colleagues this is important, they are not your friends. [...] You can be yourself; you have to be yourself; just make sure you are aware of how others perceive you.

Additionally Michael, salesman in engine treatment products, stressed the importance of a positive appearance on your success in business.

A famous salesman once told me: what you see is what you get. If you see things negatively, this negative attitude will be reflected in your appearance. Your appearance on its turn will be transferred to your client and determines your success.

The embodied experience is not only limited to human bodies. It is often a combination of human body and all kinds of supporting materials that form one hybrid unity. These materials may include clothing accessories or objects brought along, such as laptop computers, music players, photo cameras. John, entrepreneur in corrugated machinery:

I carefully select the right outfit for any different client and any different occasion. Having the clothes for the job, gives me the right representation I should have. It simultaneously makes me feel more comfortable and relaxed. I care only about quality, not so much about prices, when it comes to dressing in the proper style.

The embodiment of materials becomes very clear with the following example mentioned by Roger:

As soon as I open up my laptop, in the airplane for instance, it is automatically a signal to people around me not to disturb. It is some sort of a code amongst business travellers, which is understood and respected by all of them. The same applies to when you plug in a music player. On the contrary, if you are just gazing or reading a magazine, strangers around you are much more likely to start talking to you.

Throughout the above-mentioned examples we see that the particular embodiment of the human-material hybrid in question – man in stylish suit, man with opened laptop, woman with music player – alter the way this person interacts and experiences situations.

## **Conclusion**

The research question addressed in this chapter was which spatialities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers. In chapter 4 it had been explored that present and absent events are related via imaginations. This chapter showed these relationships have a material basis in the present situations, via present objects, persons and technologies that enable or trigger imaginations and communications. Next, this chapter explored how experience of travel situations is related to unique spatialities at hand. Business travellers may plan

spatialities in advance. An example is the decision for destinations, transport modes and routes. These decisions go often beyond rational thinking in terms of which alternative is the fastest or the cheapest. Rather they are the result of unique qualities of alternative spatialities, aspired activities, routines and attitudes. Further it has become clear that not only does selection of spatialities take place in advance. Often the selection of spatialities takes place as an act of impulsivity during the travelling itself. Besides selection business travellers also customize spatialities on the spot. Selection and customizing of spatialities, although initiated by the business traveller, is always in negotiation with the specific spatio-temporal situations at hand.

## 6 Conclusion and discussion

In our contemporary highly globalized world, in which people, firms, cities and regions are linked nationally and internationally into extensive information, trade, knowledge, production and service networks, human travel for business purposes is crucial and abundant. But what does this human travelling for business purposes involve; what do business travellers come across; how do they experience their trips; which travel choices do they make themselves; and when do they relate to others? The aim of this thesis is to give insight into business travellers' performance and experience of business travel situations. *Travel situation* is a very rich concept in which the business traveller meets and/or interacts with present and absent people, objects, practises, ideas, places and conditions.

In this thesis I zoom into the highly mobile lives of directors, managers, salesmen and stewardesses; all of them professionals who travel for business frequently and intensively. The design of this research has been a combination of multi-sited ethnographic data gathered by the respondents themselves and qualitative in-depth interviews. In total 18 Dutch respondents have been interviewed. In advance of the interviews the respondents, thereto instructed, collected mostly photographic material expressing snap-shots of their daily lives on the move. The self-gathering of data should give respondents a better understanding of and affiliation with the research, and it should increase their reflexivity on the spot, allowing them to give more detailed accounts of their own mundane daily live practises they might otherwise overlook or take for granted. Additionally the self-gathered detailed (photographic) material should provide me, as the researcher, much more feeling with the unique stories of the respondents' lives. Based upon the respondents' unique personal travel stories an imaginative replay of the actual business trip has been constructed afterwards during the in-depth interviews by the researcher and respondent collaboratively.

This thesis should give a far richer insight into the full-blown situational complexity of business travel that has largely been overlooked or neglected by most (business) travel studies so far. Last few decades most business travel studies only give a macro perspective of business travel. Regional, urban and economic geographers have extensively studied the important role of, mostly international ties and linkages and of business travellers as the main constituents. Transport geographers have linked wider observed (business) travel patterns on a macro level with individual decision-making on the micro level, however they explained and modelled these travel patterns from narrowly cognitivist rational behaviours on a micro level. The left column in table 6.1 gives an overview of the conceptualization of (business) travel in most traditional travel studies. Remark should be made that the table characterises traditional approaches in general, whereas some individual studies may be somewhat more nuanced in their approaches. Traditional studies see business travel solely as the single activity of physical movement of people, as if neutral objects, from A to B for work purposes. The moving involves a certain absolute distance and duration that bring a certain travel time and travel cost, which, weighted against utility gained at B compared to A, is determinant for individuals' planned decisions to travel and choices regarding transportation modes. Offering a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to this rather empty and simplified conceptualization of business travel, forms the main scientific rationale behind this thesis.

<b>Traditional transport geography</b>	<b>Findings in this research</b>
Movement from A to B	Travel as situational practises
	Experience: emotions, perceptions, valuations
	Performance: actions, behaviours, routines
Rational decision-making based on maximizing utility and minimizing time and financial costs	Often boundaries to rationality. Often even irrational
Only planned in advance	Also impulsivity on the spot
Travel time is wasted time	Multitasking. Travel time can be used for work, social contacts or relaxation
Travel as single activity	Travel as series of (overlapping) activities
Travel as originating solely from work purposes	Mix of work, individual and social life purposes
Non-relational: Business traveller as single initiator of actions	Relational: business traveller acts in relation to present and absent superiors, colleagues, friends and family, and in interaction with present surrounding persons, objects & spaces
Single focus on physical movement	Interrelation of multiple mobilities: physical, imaginary, virtual and communicative
	Besides mobility also immobility
Only movement of people	Mobilizing of people, objects, ideas, events
Persons as neutral objects	Embodiment: size, gender, background Extended embodiment with objects
Only absolute (clock) time. No attention to physical processes	Role of natural rhythms and processes: biological rhythms, day/night, weather

**Table 6.1: Characterisation of differences between traditional approaches and my research**

Travel situations consist of two main components, one temporal and one spatial. The first research question is: *Which temporalities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?* Temporalities refer to the sequence, timing and duration of timeslots that host events. With the planning of business trips some key timeslots, such as those hosting flights and meetings, are scheduled in advance whereas other timeslots are left open. In reality business travellers planned events may take longer or shorter than expected or may be cancelled or postponed, in which case time shortages or new time slots emerge. Emerging timeslots may be experienced as pleasant: a break after a busy meeting, but also as unpleasant: the waiting for a taxi knowing that you have to catch a flight. Hence the experience and performance of timeslots is also related to past events and events yet to come. Business travellers may be able to customize timeslots on the spot, as they may schedule or reschedule; speed up or slow down; and create or cancel timeslots. Customizing is however always in negotiation with the specific situation at hand.

Besides events also present and absent people, objects, ideas and places can be related to one another. Being physically away from home and the office does not mean one is mentally away. Actors places and events from the dislocated work and private situation back home work their way through in the here and now of business travel. While business travellers are travelling physically, in their imaginations they may connect to far-away places, people, ideas or practises, not in the last place home. In the New Mobilities Paradigm (2006) Sheller and Urry redefined mobility as a wide concept, encompassing not only physical, but also imaginary, communicative and virtual travel. This research shows that these multiple forms of mobility intersect and

intertwine in the practises of business travel. Whilst on the move imaginations of home and work are triggered via mobile phone and email communications and representational objects and events, such as photographs, paperwork and listening music. Business travellers continuously switch between actual presence in the 'here and now' of the business trip and a mode of imaginary presence with relationally close, but physically distant people, concepts, events and places.

Multiple forms of mobility are intrinsically different and complexly interrelated. Physical human travel enables face-to-face meetings between actors based on a distance, whereas distant communications are needed to schedule and reschedule face-to-face meetings. In comparison to phone or email, face-to-face meetings constitute instant and richer information exchange that for instance is needed for trust building and problem solving. This can only be understood if looked upon the practises of face-to-face meetings. Before and after official face-to-face meetings actors find themselves clustered together into smaller groups and in less formal settings, such as during walks, breaks, drinks and dinners in bars, lobbies, restaurants and cafes. It is at these moments that people get to know and catch up with each other, and it is here where many of the knowledge-exchanges, discussions, decisions and deals are being made. It is also these shared face-to-face experiences that people imaginarily relate to when they communicate over distance via phone or email with one another later again.

Business travel situations not only have a temporal component. As already illustrated in some of the examples above all situations are also material. This forms the basis for the second research question: *Which spatialities occur during business travel and how are these experienced and customized by business travellers?* Spatialities refer to the spatial configurations and material interactions that form the context in which events take place. During their trips business travellers find themselves in a variety of public places, transport modes and accommodations. Similarly to temporalities some key spatialities may be selected in advance, for instance booking a hotel or flight, whereas others can be selected on the go: picking a bar to chat with colleagues; taking a break at the bench at the riverside to watch the boats pass by. Spatialities are highly dynamic: actors enter and exit; interactions are being established and broken again; and identities are being modified. Besides interfering in the occurrence of spatialities via selection, business travellers may also negotiate to modify the occurring spatialities themselves. Customization of spatialities may for instance include: adjusting your seat in an airplane; unfolding a table in front of you; asking a passenger to mute his voice; grabbing a newspaper in an airport lounge; or turning on the music in your car. Also customizing of spatialities is always in negotiation with the situations at hand.

#### *Added value in comparison to traditional approaches*

What do these insights add to the conceptualization of business travel as compared to traditional transportation geography (see Table 6.1)? First, instead of a simple movement in absolute time and space, business travel should be seen as practises shaped by spatio-temporal travel situations. Situated practises are being experienced and performed. As showed above spatialities and temporalities may create and alter emotions, such as pleasant or unpleasant. Experiences can also take a more cognitive form of conceptions, for instance when past experiences are stored in someone's mind. In their actions business travellers may value alternative situations based on these conceptions. As business travellers travel frequently, they built up conceptions of travel situations and acquire skills in the performance – the selection and

customizing – of travel situations. Positive experiences with familiar travel options often lead to positive conceptions, whereas negative conceptions may be developed for unfamiliar situations. Following their skills and conceptions, business travellers may routine travel practises.

This introduces the second critique to traditional approaches: Business travellers' decision making is not always rational. Admittedly, in some situations business travellers, or the companies that send them on a trip, do relate to travel distances and travel costs in the planning of business trips: travelling towards inner city areas for instance, business travellers may pick public transport, whereas travelling towards the outskirts of cities or remote locations they are more likely to opt for travelling by (rental) car. Often, however, business travellers' performances such as the decision for transport modes and routes, cannot be understood from the narrowly cognitivist model of thinking that underpins rationalizing 'minimaxing' behaviour. As mentioned above business travellers may for instance select situations they are familiar with, as these offer them the idea that they know what to expect. More general the selection and customizing of spatialities and temporalities – for instance the planning of destinations or transportation modes, but also the packing of a suitcase – is always embedded in the emotions, conceptions and valuations regarding travel situations.

Third, traditional approaches study only the planning of business travel in advance and leave no room for impulsivity on the spot. Regardless of how situations are planned in advance; situations on the spot are always unique and may unfold in unexpected ways. Situations are dynamic and may be unpredictable. Physical processes – such as the weather, seasons, day and night – may have profound effects on temporalities and spatialities. This may alter business travellers' experiences and performances. If it got dark already after a long meeting, one might for safety reasons decide to take a taxi instead of walking to the hotel. With snow travelling by car takes more time, and might be a reason to cancel a whole trip. At the end the details of business travellers' experiences and performances are continuously articulated in unique travel situations on the spot. As mentioned before business travellers may find various ways to select and customize suitable travel situations around them.

Fourth critique to traditional approaches is that they focus on business travel as solely originating from business purposes. In reality the decision to travel or not is not only made with business purposes in mind. Business travellers may for instance have individual reasons to travel: they may travel to gain knowledge; widen their horizon; or see business travel as a lifestyle. They may also have social reasons not to travel, such as partner and children at home.

Related to this is the fifth critique that the business traveller is not the single initiator of actions. Decisions made in advance and on the spot are not made by the business traveller solely, but always in interaction with the present and absent actors. The decision to go on a business trip is not made solely by business travellers themselves: also colleagues, superiors, family and friends may play a role. The details of the planning of a trip may be outsourced to a travel office. Not only in the planning of trips, but also during the travelling itself, business travellers do not make their decisions solely. As mentioned before selection and customizing on the spot always takes place in negotiation with surrounding actors from the present spatio-temporal situations. Within the process of negotiation the interests of the business traveller are being aligned with the interests of the network, either resulting in an adaptation of the networks, an adaptation in the realization of the business travellers interests, or a combination of both. These negotiations constitute complex interactions that may take

place between actors in the local networks but may also only take place between intentions and expectations in one's mind: Can you ask a customer to walk with you to the taxi because you have to catch your flight? Is it safe enough to take this phone call while you are driving on a busy highway section? Would it be fair towards fellow passengers to put your bag next to you in a busy train to create your personal comfort zone?

Sixth, travel is more than a single activity. Time Geography assumes that humans have a limited capacity to participate in more than one activity at a time. As a result movement from A to B counts as one single activity namely travelling. However, this research shows that one single travel passage already constitutes a far more complex series of various separate and overlapping activities, such as boarding, walking, talking, sitting, eating, reading, working (on a laptop) and phoning. Pushed by their tight time schedules and enabled by the latest ICT technologies, many business travellers have become excellent multitaskers. Travel time should therefore not be simply overlooked as wasted time. Travel time can be used for overlapping work, private and activities

Seventh, business travel is not only physical movement of people. As mentioned before, business travel situations host a complex interplay between physical, imaginary, virtual and communicative travel. While travelling relationships are established not only with present actors from the networks around them; but, as mentioned earlier, one also links to relationally close actors, events, and places at a distance. By doing so all kinds of new actors are introduced to the local present networks. Business travellers for instance bring along and make use of their mobile phones, books, music players, travel bags and laptops. Business travel therefore encompasses not only mobility of people; also all kinds of objects, places, events and ideas are being mobilized.

The final critique is that the business traveller is not a neutral object in absolute time and space. Natural rhythms of the body not always match the clock-time schedules of business travel: beating get-legs and speeding up and squeezing in timeslots day in day out, while budgeting on moments of relaxation, eating and sleeping challenges the physical and psychological limitations of the body. To what extent is highly personal. Wherever business travellers are moving, they will take their bodies with them. Findings in this research point out that gender and ethnicity, articulated in embodiment, alter experiences and interactions, experiences and the shaping and reshaping of identities on the spot. Some dark-coloured business travellers mention for instance to experience repeated problems and time delays at airport security checks, because they are always picked out for 'routine checks'. Some female business travellers experience extra attention and assistance in their male-dominated business worlds. Both struggle with issues of independency, prejudice, misunderstanding, discrimination and underestimation of qualities. Embodiment is not limited to the business travellers' human bodies, but extended with the clothes they are wearing, the interactions they are establishing and the attributes they bring along. Unfolding a table in front of you and opening up a laptop for instance may be a subtle sign for fellow passengers not to disturb.

By the hand of the insights listed above it has become clear that business travel is much more than a simply traversal of space during a certain amount of time. Experience and performance of business travel can be seen as the ultimate outcome of the interplay between the business travellers themselves, their activities and the spatio-temporal situations at hand. The occurrence, experience and customizing of on the one hand temporalities and on the other hand spatialities – as analytically

separated in the two research questions – are therefore intrinsically intertwined and embedded in these spatio-temporal situations. Here lies an important role for geography. In the end travelling always implicates following a path in time and space that leads through a sequence of situations. Although situations may be actual or imaginative, single or overlapping, selected or avoided and shaped or reshaped; they always have a material and a temporal basis and as such are always localized in both time and space.

#### *Reflexion and recommendations for further research*

The purpose of this research is to explore the richness and complexity of travel situations in which a wide range of elements, actions and relationships come together, including persons, objects, temporalities, spatialities, experiences, performances, practices and negotiations. Because of the explorative character, insights of this thesis are very broad, but should at the same time be dealt with carefully. These insights may however open up new ways of thinking and form therefore an excellent starting point to inspire further (business) travel research. This thesis is only a first step in the rethinking of business travel. Additional research is highly recommended.

First of all new research is needed which is more strongly focussed on particular elements of business travel situations. Qualitative phenomenological research could further analyse the role of emotions, affections and feelings during business travel. Findings of this research pointed out that experience and performance are strongly embodied, something that has not been taken into account in the theory and design behind this research. The embodiment of experience and performance could be a starting point for further qualitative (feminist) research, especially with regard to gender and ethnicity in a masculine and western world of business travel. Another related issue is cultural differences. Qualitative and quantitative studies are needed that compare business travel experiences and performances in various cultural contexts, for instance related to dualisms of collectivism/individualism, conservativeness/progressiveness, inward/ outward orientation and to corporate travel cultures, etiquette, norms, values, and attitudes towards work, leisure and family. Of specific interest could be negotiations and adaptations when business travellers from various cultural backgrounds work and collaborate with people and institutions within the context of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore use could be made of insights from the wide range of studies on expatriates. From a European Union perspective it could for instance be questioned whether one can speak of free movement of goods, people and ideas in which borders should not be boundaries, or whether differences between cultural contexts will always limit or challenge interaction.

Studying mobility also challenges the way we are doing methods. Challenges could be how to catch or follow highly mobile persons; how to collect rich information on the spot; and not in the last place how to get a feel for what is going on in the travellers' minds. Methodological approaches often fall short, while attempting to grasp the richness and complexity of mobility. Panel studies with travel diaries only give a glimpse of situations as they unfold on the spot. Questionnaires and qualitative interviews may be useful to get an insight into conceptions of travel situations; they do not take place in the heat of travel action and as such always register only what respondents memorise. Ethnographically it is hard to observe the highly mobile business travellers. Multi-sited or even 'mobile' ethnography, in which actors are truly being followed, may be desirable, but is often practically impossible time-wise, budget-wise, but also in terms of privacy. Studying mobility requires new methods and new combinations of methods.

This research has given respondents the role of researchers. In practise the self-gathering of data by the respondents has not often been used before in forms different than writing activity diaries in panel studies. This study can therefore be seen as a pilot. Overall this pilot has succeeded in its target to be a fruitful addition to the qualitative interviews. For over half of the respondents the self-gathered photographic material has proven to be very useful. The additional value lies mostly in the rich and detailed snap-shots of travel situations and the mutual understanding between researcher and respondent. As a remark not all respondents were willing or able to gather the (right) photographic material. Some of them did not travel between the moment I contacted them and the moment the interview was scheduled. Some of them could not fit in the assignment in their tight and hectic time schedules. Some of them provided only a very limited amount of photographs and gave more detailed accounts of their experiences during the interviews. Others used photographic material that was taken previously and not with the specific assignment of this research in mind. These photographs captured unique (leisure) situations and tourist attractions rather than the mundane daily life travel practises this research aims for. In potential this method could also be used.

As proven a successful method in this qualitative research, the self-gathering of data by respondents potentially enables to set up a large-scale quantitative research from which the insights gained in this research could be tested. In addition to notes and photographic material also video fragments could be gathered by the respondents that add a temporal dimension to the situational snap-shot and enable the researcher to understand this situation better and to frame it temporally in relation to past and future situations. Via new ICT techniques business travellers are able to take notes, photographic or filmic material on the spot that is automatically stored with GPS coordinates. This could most easily be achieved through simple applications that can be installed on many of today's business travellers' smart phones that already enable GPS navigation and photo/video cameras. This may enable the researcher to track intersections between imaginary, communicative and corporeal mobilities, and visualize these via two or three dimensional maps or time-space diagrams.

Findings and methodological insights from this research are not only useful for studies on business travel. Insights could also be a starting point for various other studies that have to do with mobility. Expatriate studies have already been mentioned but one can also think of the relevance of the conceptualization of performance and experience of travel situations for studies regarding tourism, commuting and daily mobility patterns not related to work, such as recreation, shopping and the visiting of family and friends. For instance questions like the following could be addressed: How and to what extent do commuters select and customize spatialities and temporalities on the road or in trains during congested peak hour commuting? Do people experience recreational travelling intrinsically different than travelling for work purposes and does this show differences in activity patterns on the move?

### *Societal relevance*

This thesis pointed out the difference between movement and mobility. Since its introduction in the New Mobilities Paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006) mobilities are praised for giving a perspective on travel that is far more real, nuanced and sophisticated, than simple movement from A to B as studied by traditional transportation studies. The biggest question however is where the added value lies for society. So far the mobilities discussion is mostly an academic one that yet has to work its way through in the reality of governmental and corporate policy and

planning. Local, national and international transportation policies are still primarily based on models from economists and traditional transportation research that reason from absolute notions of maximizing utility and minimizing costs, distances and travel times. Examples are the planning of road, rail and airport capacities, air-taxes, road pricing, excise duties on petrol, and policies aimed at stimulating public transport. Simultaneously spatial planners in the planning and restructuring of cities and neighbourhoods towards sustainable environments, focus on the *design*, *diversity* and *density* of the built environment. These 3 D's are thought to influence travel demand (Cervero & Kockelman, 1997).

This research shows very clearly that travellers not always reason and decide rationally in terms of minimizing travel time or travel costs. Business travellers choose transportation modes and routes for instance in advance and on the go, because they feel safe, relaxed or comfortable; because they can participate in desired activities; because they follow their superiors; or simply because they are used to. Also it shows that the built up environment is not always influences their choices. Mobility needs to be understood from the way it manifests itself into travel practises that are embedded in unique spatio-temporal situations. The built up environment is part of these situations, but not the only part. Situations are far more dynamic over time, as they also include persons, (mobilized) objects, and physical processes such as the weather. Although not always rationally, travellers' actions always make sense seen from the very situation in which they are taken.

In their design of transport policies and built up environments, policy makers, spatial planners and designers should acknowledge and make use of the richness of situations, rather than simplifying it. Design of public and private spaces, such as train stations, train interiors, airports, airplanes, hotel rooms, restaurants, or the parts of these spaces that are designated for business travellers, could be inspired by insights into how business travellers move, what they do, what they do not do, what they need and what they do not need when they are round. An example could be the improvement of the design of trains. Unlike cars, trains to many business travellers lack privacy or quietness to have mobile phone conversations; to some business travellers the most important reason to travel by (rental) car instead of train. To many business travellers an important reason to travel by train over car is the possibility to work on laptops. This could be much more effective if train environments are more quiet and private. One could investigate the effects of the introduction of private business cabins in trains, equipped with desks and wifi connections. Introduced in high-speed trains this may have business travellers opt for slightly longer but much more attractive train travelling instead of air travelling, in which case phoning is most often not allowed and at least half of their time is wasted on transfers and waiting at airports.

Also policies could be designed, with the complexity of travel situations in mind. In the introduction of this thesis it has been mentioned that in the light of the financial and climate crisis both companies – to cut corporate travel expenses – and governmental bodies (EU for instance) – for environmental concerns – are trying to promote teleconferencing over physical business travel. With today's latest and especially tomorrow's technologies there are opportunities to substitute at least a small part of human travel, however it is therefore necessary to take into consideration the importance of informal practises around face-to-face meetings. It could be investigated if somehow informal small-group situations in advance of and after a teleconference could to some extent be reproduced virtually via individual laptops and smart phones via cyberspaces like Twitter or Skype.

Nevertheless, no matter which how policies and built up environments are designed and no matter how innovations in new communication technologies alter future societies; as long as persons, firms, institutions and regions are linked over geographical distance, the need for human business travelling will always remains. This thesis sought answers to open up the black box called business travel. It touched upon its practises that unfold in travel situations. Travel situations that are intrinsically geographical as they always have a material and a temporal basis. The insights given in this thesis reveal however only the tip of the iceberg called travelling. Here lies a potential for new mobilities research grounded by a wide range of new, mobilized methods enabled by the latest technologies in information and communication technologies.

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