

BELLO, Paula (F)
M.A., Doctoral Candidate, University of Art and Design Helsinki
Hämeentie 135 C, 00560 Helsinki, Finland
Tel: +358 50 402 6992
E-mail: paula.bello@uiah.fi
Theme 2: Connecting interventions

Encounters of the Sixth Kind: Interactions between global and local design landscapes Case study: ‘Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland’

Abstract

In 2001, together with a group of experts and institutions, we started the project ‘Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland’ in order to build an infrastructure to support an exchange between Mexico and Finland focused on the development of the crafts and design industries. The interaction between Finland and Mexico – two very different contexts, infrastructures and practices of design and crafts – is expected to compliment and enhance each other: a historical, cultural richness and diversity encounters a strong market knowledge and innovation leadership.

The project is an on-going process that has created both great expectations but also deep uncertainties. On one hand, the most valuable output has been the construction of international design partnerships to nourish the interactions between actors, institutions and civic society; links between individual and institutional nodes are seeds for longer-term, more grounded, sustainable collaborations and innovations. On the other hand, they also bear controversies about its consequences in local identities, values and practices. As Manuel Castells points out, ‘our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the net [global networks of instrumental exchange] and the self [identity constructions]’¹. In fact, the lack of means for understanding these struggles prompted me back to the university to research and develop frameworks and tools for comprehending the social and cultural consequences of international design practices.

Theories from globalisation processes have provided the theoretical background to approach my research problem; especially, the works from Arjun Appadurai on global cultural landscapes (Ethnoscapes, Ideoscapes, Technoscapes, Mediascapes And Financescapes), and of Nestor Garcia Canclini on hybridisation processes. Based on this, I have developed a framework to analyse design initiatives that deal with the local consequences of the processes of globalisation; this framework compliments Appadurai’s five global landscapes with one more landscape in which design practice is the main protagonist, called Goodscapes.

In this paper, the project Encuentros is critically analysed using the Goodscapes framework by crosscutting all the landscapes, in order to thoroughly understand its implications and dynamics. The data for this study was gathered in 2005 and 2006 with field research both in Mexico and Finland, including interviews to project stakeholders and experts, observations, revision of documents, media coverage and prototypes, and consumer research. As it is a project in progress, this analysis falls under the Action Research (Stringer, 1999) methodology, and will assist in the decision-making process for the future development of ‘Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland’.

¹ Castells, Manuel (1996) *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume 1, The Rise of the Network Society.* United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing. P. 3

1 Introduction

The accelerated conditions brought about by the global processes require that all fields look for new ways in which to create strategic partnerships and knowledge sharing that would help in the international competitiveness. As a period of intense transformations at individual and collective levels, we require new creative approaches and skills to cope with it; projects at national, regional and local levels are called for, but how they are actually carried out is source for debate and concern. Along the lines of what Manuel Castells (2000) denominates the *milieu of innovation* and Richard Florida (2002) names the *social structure of creativity*, the creation of a space that actively promotes the use of design, develops the infrastructure necessary for it, and fosters a synergy with the human capital is of growing interest to designers, institutions, industries, governments, and society in general. The interest reflects in all areas, but I am especially interested in processes during the creation of international networks of cooperation, and the implications for the local practices of design.

There is a good body of knowledge on the social sciences analysing the global processes and the local implications that can shed some light into the design discourse. For instance, there is a grow in the internationalisation of designers, who realise that the traditional ways of working are not enough anymore. On the other hand, there is also a deep concern to keep those traditional practices and cultural forms that have formed individual and collective identities. These two processes, which may sound contradictory, are clearly identified in the social sciences as homogenisation and heterogenisation.

According to Appadurai (1990), the global cultural scene is tense due to the two opposing movements of the homogenisation and the heterogenisation of cultures. Homogenisation represents a submission to global culturalism while heterogenisation offers resistance to it. Heterogenisation presents itself through different denominations, such as indigenisation (Appadurai, 1996), localisation (Crang, Jackson, 2001), or hybridisation (Garcia Canclini, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999). These authors use different terms for the experiences that occur when any type of influence is brought into a new society, as it is translated or adapted into the local values.

In the same line of thought, Giddens (2000) observes that globalisation has also been the reason for the revival of local identities. It has been so because it has propelled a responsive movement of resistance (anti-globalisation, nationalists, etc.) that are working and promoting the diversification and differentiation of local identities worldwide. Crane (2002) supports this by proposing that, when considering that social identities and relations are constructed and deconstructed by all forms of culture, the importance of cultural globalisation lies in the effects and responses of local cultures to it.

What these authors and other authors recognise (Castells, Friedman, Bauman, Sahlins, Garcia Canclini) is that the power of the global forces coming into the local are distinctively manifested, as they depend upon the reactions of the local. They come as global ideologies, media, financial products, goods, services, etc., but they acquire a distinctive dimension depending on the locality's own frame of reception - adoption, resistance, rejection, hybridisation, localisation, etc.

Garcia Canclini (2000) sustains that hybridity is not the aim, but the processes that drive to it, as they are those constant means that propel the relativity of the notion of identity; this revokes any intention to purify any identity or cultural practice, as it places it in a dynamic, regenerating process. On the other hand, Marshall Sahlins (1999:408-409) argues for the 'inventiveness of

tradition' as the processes of transformation of older forms in order to make them appropriate for new situations. It is precisely this ability to reinvent what gives vitality to any cultural practice. These two strong and thorough arguments respond convincingly to those that oppose to any kind of intervention and seek the purity of a determined ethnic group or even product. This is also the arena where design plays a significant role within cultural identities.

From the project point of view, it is imperative to understand the dynamics of the identified global flows, and how these interact with the local practices, in order to make the most appropriate use of them. Authors agree that the interactions are unevenly going in and out, with different impacts in each community, and with different perceptions by each individual. As I see it, the major challenge is to comprehend the big, global picture while being situated in the small, local environment. However, this requirement – to both understand the global and the local – is seldom found on the same person or team.

In this paper, the project Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland will be analysed under the line of thought explained before. It was chosen as a case study because it embodies some of the most characteristic processes of globalisation: accelerated flows of people, ideas, technologies, media and finances through the relationship of two countries. It carries both the good and the bad of globalisation processes. On one side, it promises the sharing of knowledge and know-how that could support the design and innovation system, and improve competitiveness. On the other side, it is visible the struggles between tradition and modernity as different ways of thinking and doing, the means of hybridisation into something indefinite, and uncertainties about local identities. In brief, here is a project with a lot of potential but also with a lot of threats: a project of today.

2 The project

The project 'Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland' was initiated with the aims of establishing links between designers, craftspeople and other professionals from both nations; the responsibility of the project was the creation of open forums and opportunities to work together. The long-term purpose was that, by fertilizing those relationships, new collaborations combining expertise, know-how and methods would support processes for developing culturally innovative products, services and strategies.

Some of the foreseen objectives of such an initiative would be to promote the added value of design and hand-made products; to innovate, based on the distinct cultural heritage, on forms, methods and/or applications; and to market internationally the design and craft professionals and industries from both countries. In concrete, the idea of creating the ground for design culture exports that would result in cultural innovations was fascinating. This endeavour would require the construction of a bilateral cooperation infrastructure of through partnerships between institutions and individuals. The content of a project integrates more than a plan for its development; it requires an integration of individual actors and communities, of the tensions between the global and the local conditions, of the ideas and concepts (and what they represent and require to exist), of the production and consumption systems, and finally, of the flows and relationships between all these elements that will define the mode and speed of the development of the project.

The initial plan of the project was initiated from my own experience receiving the input of two different – but extremely complementary – cultures of design; this statement will be further explained throughout the article. My initiative only flourished thanks to the support of Anne Stenroos, *Director of Design Forum Finland*, and of Héctor Rivero Borrell, *Director of Museo*

Franz Mayer. We started to collaborate with concrete plans and objectives in June 2001, seeking support from governmental and private institutions in both countries. The scheme considers three levels of cooperation that operate in parallel throughout the project, through different means and with different actors:

1. Between organizations and institutions in Finland and Mexico: to develop and create programs for future collaboration, i.e., residence programmes for designers in both countries, and exchanges between universities
2. Between designers, craftspeople and organizations in Finland and Mexico: to develop and produce a collection between Finnish and Mexican designers and craftspeople, i.e., the Collection MXFI
3. Between organizations, promoters and retailers in Finland and Mexico: to promote and commercialise the production made between Finnish and Mexican designers and craftspeople, i.e., commercialisation and promotion (exhibitions) of products from both countries

Following to fill this scheme, the network of collaborators has expanded greatly, and it is thanks to the support of each participant that this project has been feasible. The next table illustrates those that have taken part in the 3 phases of the project:

	Mexico	Finland
Partners	Museo Franz Mayer	Design Forum Finland
Project Management	Planta, Design Culture Agency (Paula Bello)	
Governmental Organisations	CONACULTA and FONCA Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry of Education Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Educational Institutions	EDINBA Universidad Iberoamericana Centro de Diseño	University of Art & Design Helsinki
Other Institutions	AMACUP, A.C. Tienda Artefacto Galería Mexicana de Diseño	Arts Council of Finland Fiskars Co-operative Finnish Crafts Organisation
Experts and Designers	Paulina Parlange, Carmen Cordera and Marta Turok; Manuel Alvarez, Oscar Hagerman, Héctor Esrawe, Haydeé Girón and Andrés Amaya	Anne Stenroos, Markketa Luutonen and Henrikka Tynkkynen; Harri Koskinen, Maarit Mustonen, Camilla Moberg, Teemu Oksanen, Heikki Orvola, Pyry Tamminen, Ilona Törmikoski and Karin Widnäs

The project considers up to this moment four phases of collaboration with different aims and activities, briefly described in the following calendar:

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
First phase							
Preparation phase		■					
Requests for funding in Finland and Mexico		■					
Travel of the Finnish team to Mexico							
Analysis of Mexican crafts by Finnish team			■				
Proposal for Residence Programme (FONCA)			■				
Second phase							
Requests for funding in Finland and Mexico			■				
Travel of the Mexican team to Finland				■			
Talks for the Residence Programme: Fonca & Arts Council of Finland				■			
Establishment of collaborations: designers-institutions				■			
First proposals by Finnish designers				■			
Analysis of Finnish Design by Mexican team				■			
Institutional proposals by Mexican partners				■			
Third phase							
Requests for funding in Mexico				■			
Development of prototypes: Heikki Orvola & Maarit Mustonen				■	■	■	
Establishment of Residence Programme Mexico-Finland					■		
Development of prototypes: Karin Widnas and Teemu Oksanen						●	●
Requests for funding in Finland						■	
Presentation of proposal by the rest of the designers						●	●
Development of prototypes: rest of the designers						●	●
Fourth phase							
Production of exhibition and publication							Not defined
Establishment of commercial relationships in Mexico & Scandinavia							Not defined
Presentation of exhibition and publication							Not defined

In the project, it is possible to recognise three main blocs of exchanges:

People: the Residence Programme for designers in Mexico and Finland, funded by the Arts Council of Finland/City of Tampere, and FONCA, is probably the most important part because it ensures a long-term, constant collaboration between individuals supported by strong institutions, which will strengthen the design and cultural relations between the two countries. The agreement was signed in the beginning of 2006, and the call for participation is now open to designers and artisans from both countries.

Ideas and products: the brand MX-FI provides an opportunity to develop hand-made products result of the cooperation between Finnish and Mexican designers and craftspeople. At the moment, the brand is focused on the collaboration of Finnish designers and Mexican craftspeople with the support of AMACUP, Artefacto and the Galeria Mexicana de Diseno (8 projects planned, 4 being developed at this moment); it is sought that this could be inversed in the future to allow Mexican designers to work with Finnish industries.

Media, education and promotion: there are and will be exchanges of several exhibitions between institutions from both countries, with their corresponding media coverage. The project has been a rich educational experience to the participants as they are introduced to different histories, modes and methods of crafts and design in both countries. There have been proposals from various educative institutions represented in the project to establish further collaboration programmes

3 The research problem

As we become nodes in larger networks, both as designers and consumers, we need the means to connect to other nodes in the network. Design, besides being itself a user of the networks, is to be the facilitator for building those bridges, by creating both physical and virtual platforms, and by representing how these relationships take place. As Manuel Castells (1996) points out, 'our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the net [global networks of instrumental exchange] and the self [identity constructions]'

New identities are constantly formed by the hybridisations of older ones through global flows, and designers, by transforming the built environment, become a key player in those constructions. It is not only that things flow across borders, but designers and design knowledge are also being displaced, bringing with them ideas that in turn either transform or are transformed by the new environment in which they exist. As Crane (2002), Soja (1989) and Appadurai (1996) defended, the important thing is not so much that influences arrive but how those external influences are received in each locality.

Matters clearly explained in the social sciences reflect my concerns over this and other design projects. Understanding the process has become central: analysing the global processes, the responses and position of the local participants, the outcomes and the shortcomings. So far, it is possible to recognise a variety of responses and attitudes towards Encuentros, from complete support and praise to total rejection. Arguments from both sides – gathered through interviews and informal conversations – present valid points, especially because I must recognise myself that the objectives have not always been clear. The line of reasoning behind those supporting is that it is necessary to create international partnerships that could bring some fresh perspectives and know-how, as a mean to improve competitiveness and quality of life. On the opposite side, those opposing it argue on the basis of imposition of practices, on the base of the destruction of local identities. Both sides just represent the dialectics of the global and the local, the heterogeneous and the homogeneous.

As many sociologists and anthropologists have argued (Appadurai, Garcia Canclini, Sahlins, Friedman, Castells), opposing forces coexist simultaneously: it is true that there is a movement of homogenisation, moved mainly by the dissemination of the capitalistic mode, but also true that this has resulted in new cultural modes that far from making the world the same, it is offering a richer repertoire.

For this reason, we truly require mechanisms and knowledge to deal with these situations. The implications for design – as "a creative activity whose aim is to establish the multi-faceted qualities of objects, processes, services and their systems in whole life-cycles" (ICSID, 2006) – is that, by modificating reality through the material world we create, we are contributing to both the homogenisation and the heterogenisation of the world. This is a situation that requires full understanding, in order to make the most appropriate decision for the content, the context, the moment and the user.

There has been a lack of mechanisms to systematically evaluate the social and cultural implications of an intervention of this kind in the participating communities. Certainly, an objective and decisive evaluation of the social and cultural implications of any design initiative can be disputed. However, having a deeper understanding of the social and cultural realities and problematic surrounding it can be very helpful to identify potentials and limitations, and consequently, assist to make more appropriate decisions. Hence, my aim is to develop

instruments that can facilitate this process; I am especially interested in a framework that could facilitate the dialogue between disciplines and cultures, as it has been one of the most demanding challenges during the Encuentros process.

Globalisation and cultural theory – from authors such as Appadurai and García Canclini – provides an effective mean to frame and analyse social and cultural implications of design projects. This is because it situates experiences in the larger world context, it relates them to the social and cultural tensions of the new global order, and it acknowledges their mutability and fluidity.

4 The research framework

Renowned anthropologist Appadurai (1996) proposes a framework of cultural landscapes to describe and explain the complex processes and disjunctures that take place within it. In his model, he visualises the perspectival relations between the actors, the environments and the various landscapes. The landscapes overlay, shift and flow constantly, distressing each other and being perceived differently in diverse contexts and moments. The framework comprises five dimensions or landscapes of '*Global Cultural Flows*':

1. **Ethnoscapes:** The landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which people live: immigrants, tourists, refugees, exiles, etc.
2. **Technoscapes:** The global configuration of technologies moving at high speeds across previously impermeable borders.
3. **Financescapes:** The global grid of currency speculation and capital transfer.
4. **Mediascapes:** The distribution of the capabilities to produce and disseminate information and the large complex repertoire of images and narratives generated by these capabilities.
5. **Ideoscapes:** The ideologies of states and counter-ideologies of movements, around which nation-states have organised their political cultures.

Goodscales: the Sixth Dimension

Building on Appadurai's construction of landscapes, I propose the concept of *Goodscales*. It invites reflection on the different processes of products, services and systems within the global economy where design plays a significant role (Bello 2004, 2005). *Goodscales* refer to the paths, paces and experiences of the conception, production, distribution, exchange, use and disposal of goods: products, services and artificial systems, both physical and virtual. It also comprises all the processes required to achieve these products, services and artificial systems.

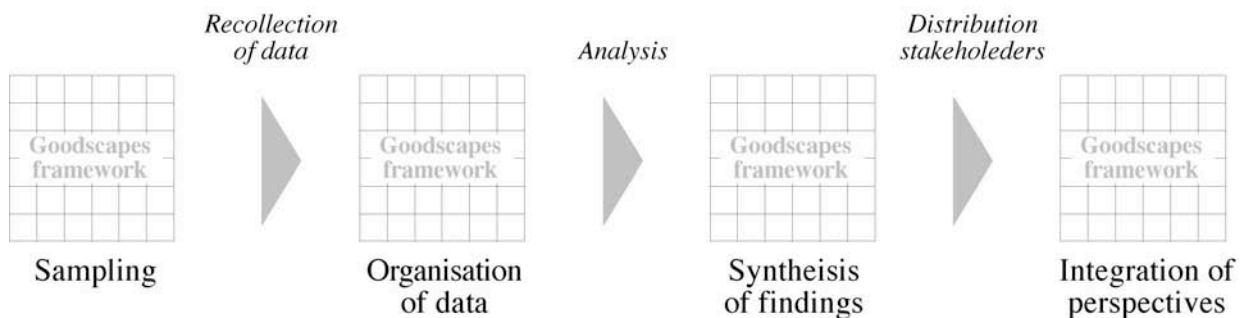
The framework of *Goodscales* only comes to life when interrelated with the other landscapes, and therefore, it is constantly redefining itself. It is impossible to separate any design process or initiative from these five global forces, so by consciously recognising this interaction and dependence, it is assumed that we can come across new knowledge or information that would otherwise have been overseen or discarded. It would allow analysing design from a dynamic, incidental perspective.

5 The research methodology

Following Schatzmann and Strauss (1973), the methodological paradigm for field research should be defined on the basis of what operations might yield the most meaningful information. In this case, Action Research is considered the most appropriate for the following reasons:

- The objective of the project is the improvement of selected communities: 1) crafts communities in Mexico, and 2) design communities in Finland and Mexico
- I am an active participant of the project, both in the development of the original concept and in its management. I see my role as facilitator and as a practitioner researcher
- The project is at a point that it is imperative to reflect on our actions, understand the problems we are facing, and make a resolution for specific actions.
- The project is ideal to test the hypothesis of the theoretical framework
- The project has been selected to be a pilot programme for the establishment of a Residence Programme between Mexico and Finland, so it may have implications at policy level.

As Stringer (1999:23) points out: *'As practitioners develop programs and services, [...] we need to take into account the impacts of those developments and solutions on the lives of the people we serve'*. The action plan for the project has been developed in as much cooperation as possible – considering the physical limitations between Finland and Mexico – but the participation may not be as inclusive as I wished for. It has relatively followed the principles of Action Research, but it has not done it systematically. However, it is proposed to continue from now on with the further scheme of cyclical research and practice, in which the Goodscapes framework assists to organise data for evaluation by the stakeholders and during the decision-making process, as the following diagram describes:



The methods to recollect the data were those characteristic of ethnographic research (Spradley 1980): questions, observations, and records. The work of Schatzmann and Strauss (1973), Spradley (1980) and Stringer (1999) are central to this research. Data for this article was collected between January and May 2006 in the following modes:

- Interviews: Notes during the interviews, recordings of all interviews, and transcripts and translations of most relevant parts
- Observations: Diary with observational, theoretical and analytical notes, and photos
- Documents: A selection of most relevant official and informal documents of the project

The sampling for this case was focused on people, as the main objective of the research is to understand how the actors involved perceive the changes that are taking place within globalisation processes and, specifically, within the project 'Encuentros'. The selective sampling (Schatzmann, Strauss 1973) has been done by creating, based on the theoretical framework of 'Goodscapes', a matrix that intersects the different landscapes (Appadurai 1996) with the following criteria of the profile of the interviewee:

- Institution: member/representative
- Expert on that area: media, finance, ethnics, technology and ideology
- Designer
- Crafts community: member/representative

The data obtained was then categorised following the theoretical framework of ‘Goodsapes’, under an analytical matrix that follows the same characteristics of that used for selecting the sampling.

During the data gathering, some limitations came across, as the lack of time for interviewing, the lack of financial means to travel, and the unavailability of some key persons to interview. However, the data was enough to write this article, and my intention is to do a second round of data gathering in autumn 2006 to compliment this article for my dissertation. It is important to mention that this is a project in progress, and in some parts, due to the stage that they are in, the information that I can discuss and publish is limited (i.e., financial statement and design proposals).

6 The research findings

The following table is a brief summary of a few of the features that rise from the connections between Goodsapes and the other cultural landscapes in relation to this specific project:

	Goodsapes Design climate of Encuentros exchanges Processes of design and production of MXFI collection Flows of products and services between both
Ideoscapes	Global & local design paradigms Import & export of design ideas
Technoscapes	Technological & innovation capabilities Technological limitations
Mediascapes	Creation & circulation of design knowledge Coverage of project by the media
Financescapes	Problems of financing Capital supporting design application
Ethnoscapes	Diasporas of designers, artisans and experts Encounters of different disciplines and cultures

The Goodsapes of Encuentros

The configuration of the project has in itself several dimensions: the community of actors involved, the space and place in which it exists, the tension between the local aspects and the global influences, the ideas and concepts that have surged from it, the tangible and intangible production, and most important for this paper, the flows and relationships activated in it.

This analysis will focus more on the dynamics of the relationships and flows in order to bring insight into the process. For this occasion, the paper will present the first stage of a cyclical analysis; the product of this research will be circulated to the stakeholders involved to receive feedback from the different perspectives that each role or discipline holds. The enrichment of these contributions will assist in the long-term planning of the fate of Encuentros. Hence, the following analysis centres on the flows and relationships produced, as a mean to understand the processes, and considers the following parts:

1. The dynamics that the project has activated
2. Each of the parts involved, according to Appadurai’s landscapes model
3. How each of the landscapes relate to the other
4. The implications for the future

GOODSCAPES

The first aim of the project was to create an infrastructure for the exchange of professionals and ideas that would end with some concrete benefits. The creation of the network started from the central contacts of two institutions, Design Forum Finland and Museo Franz Mayer, which in turned linked institutions and individuals they believed valuable for this initiative. Some of the relationships between Mexico and Finland already existed (like Design Forum Finland and Museo Franz Mayer), and others were created from zero. There have been 2 main periods of contact: during the trip of the Finnish team to Mexico (2002) and of the Mexican team to Finland (2003); the rest of the time, the communication has been through specific events (such as the residences or exhibitions), and mainly through electronic media.

The relationships and flows can be divided in the following routes:

- For and through exhibitions: Firstly, through the organising parties and adjacent individuals and supporting institutions; secondly, the exhibition itself is a medium for the transmission and sharing of knowledge
- For the arrangements and negotiations of the Residence Programme: this was a rather long process that started with a physical contact between the head of FONCA and of the Arts Council of Finland in August 2003. It was then canalised to the City of Tampere, and between negotiations and finally the agreement was signed on February 2006. However, it is one of the most important achievements as it assures a continuity.
- For the development of the MXFI collection: This is probably the most demanding part of the project, as we sought to materialise the connections through specific projects that could open new markets and demonstrate the potential of sharing capacities. In the beginning, the collection considered 8 projects managed by two associations: Artefacto and Amacup. However, the limitations in resources, mainly financially and time/space, has damaged clearly the potentials; so far, only four projects have had any developments at all, one of them for sale in the Artefacto shop.
- For specific projects that participants have started themselves: some of the participants of phase 1 and 2 have organised their own projects of collaboration. For example, some universities have established exchanges of professors, or promoted studies abroad for the students.

The interests of the participants have defined these routes, and how they have been able to encompass them. This has both enriched but also blurred the objectives that the project had in the first place; it has both articulated and disarticulated. Indisputably, opportunities better than expected have appeared, such as the Residence Programme, but others have complicated, such as the Collection MXFI. This is a moment in which all the partners have to question the future development, and the structure and paths that we would allow to take it.

The management of the project has been fragmented, which both allows more flexibility but also uncertainty. It first allows flexibility because it can adapt to the resources at the time, but it confuses as there is no steady pace of development. Within the project, I act as design manager, but my role as facilitator has been extremely demanding, as it has to deal not only with the usual design problems, but also in greater part with situations out of my hands. For example: structural political changes, diplomatic negotiations, differential exchange rates between Peso and Euro, changes in the administrations of the involved institutions, lack of funding appropriate for this project, lack of free time for participants to contribute, technological constraints, and raise on material costs. In reality, what is missing from the project is one person who would dedicate 100% of his or her time to manage the project as a whole; then the design manager would concentrate on the specifics of conceptualisation, production and branding.

IDEOSCAPES

The normal and understandable cultural differences are recognisable in the communication, organisation and production styles. One of the interviewees used the following metaphor: 'Finland works in a network structure, with linkages between organisations; Mexico works as an archipelago, lots of initiatives and institutions but they all working on their own'. The historical path of Mexican and Finnish institutions that are somehow involved in the practice and promotion of design are indeed radically different. While Finland has a long tradition relating all the partners, Mexican institutions is still maturing by increasing links, for example, between universities, promotion centres and industries.

However, according to the responses in the interviews and the observations during the whole process, there are no critical problems in the project due to cultural misunderstandings. It must be recognised the genuine interest of all parties to accommodate their way of practice to the way of the other. One outstanding example is that of the MXFI project by designer Karin Widnas and artisan Gustavo Mateo, in which they have overcome the physical separation and were able to communicate through ideas and clay (apologies for not being able to show their project at this moment, but it requires discretion as the prototypes are in development).

Nonetheless, these cultural differences may be key to the success and failure of any initiative. The ideal would be to deepen the understanding of each culture of the other by sharing thoughts and habits, and the only way to make that possible is by creating the conditions to physically interact for longer periods of time. In turn, this would advance into a more participatory process and would clarify what can be or cannot be done, which from the beginning was one of the main concern. In discourse, the participatory process is without a doubt the richest and most convincing, but during this process, we all participating have realised that it is not that simple: the scarce financial resources, as well as the limitations of time and space, are complicated to overcome.

One government representative from Mexico reasoned on the importance of creating 'in situ' for the project, the sense that each community that participates would develop new roots through this collaboration. Consequently, adding value to whatever is produced in it – weather products, services, systems or knowledge – by creating something new and unique, one more manifestation of hybridisation (Garcia Canclini) of two design cultures: in politically stimulating terms, cultural innovation.

In order to achieve this, is necessary to clarify what each country and community can offer, and what each would like to receive. To make this 'Ideoscapes' coherent with the possibilities of this project, it is fundamental that the ideas, contributions, resources and expectations from each are put on the table for discussion.

ETHNOSCAPES

The types of communities participating are diverse, from the cultural standpoint but also from the disciplinary one. The main question may be how these communities came to participate, and in each case the response is different. As mentioned before, the first nodes of the networks were Design Forum Finland and Museo Franz Mayer. Each, through discussions with their own teams, made a proposal for participants, and it is interesting to see the different approaches that clearly reflect the history of each design culture.

In the case of Finland, Design Forum Finland linked Taito, the Finnish Crafts Association, and 8 designers, selected on the basis of outstanding skills and disciplines in which collaboration with

Mexico would be viable. Furthermore, they tied with other institutions that supported the project, like the Arts Council and the Ministry of Education, but who had no personal participation so far. This reflects the aim from their side, as discussed with the Design Forum former Director Anne Stenroos, to assist the heterogenisation of their historically homogeneous society, as a tool to make their designers more competitive in the international market

In Mexico, the directors of Museo Franz Mayer decided to link mostly institutions (educational, governmental, private and promotional) and a few designers that had a wider role in society (as teachers, leaders of organisations, etc.). The reasoning behind was that, firstly, the most imperative need for Mexican design is to establish alliances between actors, in order to develop a wider, participatory strategy, thus Finland could be a good learning experience; secondly, that the outcomes of the project could spread the most possible through targeting the heads of institutions.

Outlining these two perspectives, it is comprehensible the association between such two different countries. For instance, Finland can be a model of a national design strategy, with an infrastructure and organisation to support it, a much-needed frame for Mexico; on the other hand, Mexico can inspire through the multi-cultural and hybridisation qualities of the local material culture, a central concern for Finnish design within the international arena.

One important question that keeps open but should be further addressed for my research, is how the diasporas between Mexico and Finland have affected the individual, and its repercussions on the context and on others. One of the Finnish designers that participated believed that his most striking experience was to find himself in front of the cultural, traditional diversity of Mexico, where many of the processes are still the same than hundred of years ago. That produced in him a desire to find old processes that have been forgotten in Finland, and reinterpret them into updated applications.

From the experiences expressed by many of the participants, coming into a new culture with fresh eyes, can bring benefits in two main ways: on one side, he or she can see valuable forms, expressions, functions and materials that may be overviewed by the locals who have always been in contact with them; on the other side, the visitor can be deeply influenced by the same experience, producing changes in their own creative work. This hypothesis needs further research, but if it is correct, the flows of people may be understood as a positive contamination of creativity, with effects both in the local and the foreign. The question then would be if there is a way to improve and deepen this experience.

MEDIASCAPES

The project has enough content as to make it attractive for the media; it covers contemporary issues and has the right set of persons involved. The first and second phase where reasonable covered both in Mexico and Finland through the networks of the members, including publications in Reforma, La Jornada, El Universal and Heslinki Sanomat newspapers, the magazines Form Function and Taito, and the ICSID Newsletter.

Nonetheless, the partners have a well-established system for media promotion that could be better used for the advancement of the project. For example, the project would be highly benefited of having a webpage where all the information could be gathered and shared, which would not only promote the project amongst the general public but could be a useful tool to maintain the participants informed of the developments, improving the trust in the project. The diffusion is a central issue that needs further development, and not only regarding descriptions and presentations, but also a documentation of the processes.

Regarding the flow of information, the amount of nodes has complicated it, making it really difficult to know all that is happening, creating confusion and scepticism in many participants. In general, the interviewed participants showed faith in the project, but nonetheless, did not have a clear idea of what to expect. The physical distance is a major barrier that has tried to be overcome by the use of technologies; most communication has been through e-mail, with some phone conversations. Although it is clear that without them the project would face even more difficulties, it is clear that they are just a mechanism which rely on personal use.

This brings to another important matter, which is the accessibility of the different participants to the communication means. In this sense, there are two problems:

- Relating to the language: the mother tongues are Finnish and Spanish, but English has been mostly used, partially excluding those not speaking it. Translations are costly in time and money, so the job has been relied on the heads of institutions and myself, limiting terrible the communications channels.
- Relating to technologies: although most have access to Internet, some Mexican communities do not have it. Therefore, they are dependant on the institutions (Artefacto and Amacup) to receive and transmit their points of view to the rest of the network.

FINANCESCAPES

This landscape is certainly the most volatile one, as it has had several behaviours and has jeopardize the continuation of the project. There are two things to analyse here: on one side, the flows of funds for its operation, and on the other, the return of the investment.

The funding has been obtained through applications for grants and institutional support, applied independently through Design Forum and Museo Franz Mayer. What is most interesting here is the respond of the funding parties: in phase 1 and 2, the achievement of grants was very successful. The expenses for the participants were shared between Finland and Mexico, with the aim to get the participants to know each other and the context of the other. However, for subsequent events, the procedure got more complicated. There are plenty of organisms supporting the travel costs of visits to other countries; mobility is understood as a cultural learning experience and the seed for establishing new connections.

On the other side, after establishing the 'meeting' points, when actual cooperation projects need concrete support, it has gotten much more difficult. The reasons are several and it is not implied that there are no mechanisms, but it shows that the more precise a project becomes, it is more difficult to find the proper funding.

On the Mexican side, the main problem is that there are few institutions that fund design initiatives: from the perspective of technological support, this is a cultural project, from the approach of cultural associations, it has commercial implications, and from the business-oriented associations, design and product development is not a priority area. FONCA offers the funding for 'Co-investment projects', in which the costs are shared by an association between public and private instances, so this project would fit perfectly, but then we face another two problems: firstly, as there are too few mechanisms for financial support in the country, many of our participants have applied for grants so there is a limit of one per applicant, leaving us with no institution who could back us up; secondly, many of the experts involved in Encuentros are part of the jury for selecting, so they cannot be involved.

What has been more surprising is the response from the Finnish institutions: for the third phase of the project, Finland has contributed only 25% of the project (through an Arts Council grant to develop prototypes for the collection MXFI), while Mexican private and public institutions have covered 75% of the costs.

The return of investment is very difficult to evaluate at this moment, because most of the efforts have been concentrated on the exchanges and not in production. So far, only a concrete case has produced income: the pillows made in San Juan Chamula with designer Maarit Mustonen. They were produced as a pilot by Artefacto, and though the whole production was sold, it has not been enough to recover the investment by Artefacto; now they are planning the new production for next year, and they will follow the responds of the clients to the product. One observation made by Artefacto's partner is the importance of selling the products as stories, telling from where and how the product is made. The products come with a label explaining the process, but it is not functioning so well: it has too much text and no images, which is not fast enough to attract the client's attention. Therefore, the labels have to be re-designed for the next sale, following the observations made by the consumer and the retailer.

One thing that it is clear is that if this project doesn't become self-sustainable economically, it will fail. The modes of operation require that it is profitable. From the interviews made and official responds for funding, it is clear that the position of philanthropy and good-will is not enough, because this is an initiative that could be more stable, healthy and growing if a new model of business is developed. It has to link the two ends of a continuum: the social and the market ends of design (Margolin, 2002).

TECHNOSCAPES

Probably the most striking finding of this research has been the minor role that technology has played in Encuentros. The claim raise from the surprise encountered when the data from the interviews and observations was placed in the Goodscapes framework, and it basically had a significant less weight than the other landscapes. This may be understood because the focus of the project is more on relationships, but it does not justify it.

The discussions about technologies centred on the production methods and the communications systems used in the project. As it was mentioned in the Mediascapes, there are important gaps between the accessibility to communications, and this is a major concern of the project. On relation to the production, this mostly reflects one of the difficulties faced during the production for the Collection MXFI, which are not surprising but also represent demands for the institutions that try to articulate the requests of designers, artisans and contexts.

Certainly, the technological role of Encuentros is a matter that has to be re-evaluated within the project plan. Immense possibilities have been overlooked, especially considering the developments in Finland, and the arena for application in Mexico.

7 Conclusions

As several of the interviewees coincided, this project is an experiment to combine two design cultures, with the desire to produce cultural innovations that would advance their design systems, and hence, improve their competitiveness. From this point of view, it can be most valuable from the perspective of production of new knowledge by understanding the process, which is not only a characteristic of this particular case but shared by those who move between the local and global landscapes. Like so, it is a new model that has to be tested against many forces: it needs to

mature, to find itself and its role within the larger frame. Opening a new road represents many obstacles, but when the road works, more will follow.

The objective of this research has been to deconstruct a complex design initiative under a new framework, which could assist to determine the action research plan, and organise data and information in an accessible manner for actors of different cultures and disciplines. After the presentation of this paper, the next step will be to summarise the findings of this part of the research, and distribute it amongst the stakeholders for their input. At this stage, all the inputs will be integrated, and redistributed again as a tool for decision-making.

The proposal to follow this framework raised from the need to synthesise the different cultural and disciplinary perspectives of a complex situation. In this sense, it could make the process more participatory and facilitate the decisions to improve the project. It can also be a good tool for other projects with similar structure. Nonetheless, some questions regarding its applications raised during this analysis; it still needs more development to clarify how it should be used, and further experimentation to define how to visualise the data in the most accessible way. The final aim of this framework is to articulate discourses and inputs between the global and the local, between disciplines, and hence, this work is not finished yet.

8 Interviews

Cordera, Carmen (Director, Galería Mexicana de Diseño), 12.01.2006. Personal communication

De Orellana, Margarita (Director, Artes de México), 20.02.2006. Personal communication

Espinosa, Mario (Executive Secretary, FONCA-Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes), 16.02.2006. Personal communication

Garcia Canclini, Nestor (Anthropologist, Professor, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Iztapalapa), 2.03.2006. Personal communication

Gimenez Cacho, Julieta (Associate Director, Museo Franz Mayer), 25.01.2006. Personal communication

Mallet, Ana Elena (Independent design curator), 24.02.2006. Personal communication

Mateo, Gustavo (Artisan, San Bartolo Coyotepec), 10.02.2006. Personal communication

Mustonen, Maarit (Designer), 21.06.2006. Personal communication

Oksanen, Teemu (Designer), 21.06. 2006. Personal communication

Parlange, Paulina (Founder and Partner, Artefacto shop), 19.01.2006. Personal communication

Punzo, Mario (Artisan, Santa Clara del Cobre), 7.02.2006. Personal communication

Rivero Borrel, Hector (Director, Museo Franz Mayer), 22.01.2006. Personal communication

Velasco, Eleazar (Director for the Mediterranean and Southeast countries of Europe, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México), 17.01.2006. Personal communication

9 Bibliography

- Appadurai, Arjun (2000). *Grassroots Globalisation and the Research Imagination*. Public Culture, Volume 12, Number 1 (Winter 2000) Duke University Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1990) *Theory, Culture & Society: Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*. London, Newbury Park and New Delhi: SAGE, Vol. 7
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. Minneapolis, USA: Public Worlds, Volume 1, University of Minnesota Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun (ed.) (1986). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, Zygmunt (1998). *Globalisation*. USA: Columbia University Press
- Bello, Paula (2001) *Finlandia-Mexico. Proyecto de Cooperación Cultural para el Desarrollo y la Promoción del Diseño y la Artesanía de Alta Calidad*. First document for the establishment of the project Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland.
- Bello, Paula (2004) *Goodscapes: Mapping Design*. Proceedings from the 4th Conference in Design History and Design Studies (in press), Universidad de Guadalajara, Guadalajara, Mexico, 2004
- Bello, Paula (2005) *[De]Constructing Design: on the Framework of Goodscapes*. Proceedings from Joining Forces: Design Research, Industries & a New Interface for Competitiveness, International Conference on Design Research. Helsinki, Finland. 22-24.09.2005
- Bello, Paula (2005) *Places of Flows: [Re]Framing Design*. Proceedings from Locating Design Conference, International Design History Society, London, UK. September 6-9, 2005
- Bello, Paula (2005) *Encuentros/Kohtaamisia Mexico-Finland*. Documentation of the project.
- Castells, Manuel (1996) *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume 1, The Rise of the Network Society*. United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing
- Crane, D., Kawashima, N., Kawasaki, K. (eds.) (2002). *Global Culture. Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalisation*. New York, London: Routledge
- Crang P.; Jackson, P. (2001) *Consuming geographies*. In Morley D and Robins K (eds.) *British Cultural Studies* (OUP: Oxford)
- Florida, Richard (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*. United States: Basic Books
- Friedman, Jonathan (1994), *Cultural Identity and Global Process*. London: Sage
- García Canclini, Néstor (1995) *Consumidores y Ciudadanos. Conflictos Multiculturales de la Globalización*. México, D.F: Editorial Grijalbo

García Canclini, Néstor (2000) *Culturas Híbridadas. Estrategias para Entrar y Salir de la Modernidad*. México, D.F: Editorial Grijalbo

Giddens, Anthony (2000). *Runaway World*. New York, London: Routledge

Margolin, Victor and Sylvia (2002) *A 'Social Model' of Design: Issues of Practice and Research*. Design Issues Vol. 18, No. 4: 24-30.

Sahlins, Marshall (1999) *Two or Three Things That I Know About Culture*. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 5: 399-422.

Schatzman, L. & Strauss, A.L. 1973, *Field research: strategies for a natural sociology*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Spradley, J.P. 1979, *The ethnographic interview*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York NY.

Stringer, E.T. 1999, *Action research*, 2nd edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks Calif.