

## The centrality of 'Between' in intellectual entrepreneurship

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## **Abstract**

A great deal of intellectual entrepreneurship happens between institutions. Between institutions in the dual sense of the term: institutions as organizations and institutions as conventions. Ideas and the energy to take them forward are often born when people from different organizations come together, ideas that might not fit within one institution alone. And the introduction of new ideas often involves pushing institutions as conventions aside, creating new space BETWEEN existing institutions for the different idea to emerge. The article explores the example of a business-and-research venture, CHOICE mobilitätsproviding GmbH, to illustrate the importance of multiple types of "BETWEEN" and their significance for organizational learning.

## **Zusammenfassung**

In der modernen Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft ist Wissen die wichtigste erneuerbare Ressource. Welche Rolle spielen Institutionen bei der Generierung von Wissen und dessen Umsetzung in Innovationen? Findet wissensbasiertes unternehmerisches Denken und Handeln innerhalb von Institutionen oder eher außerhalb von Institutionen statt? In diesem Beitrag wird die Bedeutung von Räumen und Zeiten zwischen Institutionen hervorgehoben und zwar im doppelten Sinn: Institutionen als Organisationen und Institutionen als Konventionen. Anhand des Beispiels der *CHOICE mobilitätsproviding GmbH*, einem Unternehmen zwischen Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft, werden einige „Zwischen-Institutionen“ dargestellt und ihre Bedeutung für das Organisationslernen erläutert.



### ***Grappling with the question: Is it AGAINST or THROUGH or ...?***

For an academic, the invitation to write a chapter in a book about “*Intellectual Entrepreneurship: AGAINST or THROUGH institutions*” merits attention<sup>1</sup>. But it does not fit into the usual overcommitted day. My thoughts flitted to the invitation on the way home, and again on the way back to work. It is a topic that requires reflection in motion. The call to reflection reached me in a barren office in Nantes, a temporary space for efficient work, devoid of distractions. A good place for starting to write an article about ideas generated in the course of a conference, a window of concentrated time before returning to the normal busy schedule at my base, the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB).

The question pursued me to my hotel, but I shunted it aside for the evening in favor of a good French meal with a Polish friend. The next morning, the question resurfaced while I walked from the Hotel de France past the beautiful clothes stores, the tempting chocolate shops and the elegant Place Royale, down to the tram. As I progressed, thoughts churned: AGAINST or THROUGH institutions? The tram took me and my thoughts slowly towards Audencia, Ecole de management Nantes, along the waterway, past trees changing their leaves in brilliant colors.

Thinking back to where the innovative projects I had embarked upon over the past few years had been born, I realized that the common feature lay in BETWEEN institutions. The outline for a book made its appearance at a lunchtime jazz concert in Berkeley. A course design grew after visiting the Tate Modern with a colleague from a UK business school. A research project idea took shape in flights across China, after a conference and into a family vacation. Equally important, the energy required to pursue the ideas and make them happen, had also been generated BETWEEN institutions. Entrepreneurship is more than innovation, it is more than the birth of an idea. Entrepreneurship entails making things happen, bringing new products or services to the market. Entrepreneurship is not a solo activity. It requires

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<sup>1</sup> This is an invited chapter for “*Knowledge Café for Intellectual Entrepreneurship: AGAINST or THROUGH Institutions?*” Edited by Stefan Kwiatkowski and Patrice Houdayer. Warsaw. Leon Koźmiński Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management.

collaboration for ideas to come to life, the commitment of people who bring different skills and resources to the realization of a project.

The nature of intellectual endeavor is sometimes mistakenly seen as almost diametrically opposed to entrepreneurship. The image persists of the lone scholar reflecting in a study located in something approximating an ivory tower, detachedly analyzing data and spinning out theories that become immortalized in articles and books. But the reality of much academic work today is strikingly close to entrepreneurship. It requires collaboration BETWEEN people, often from multiple institutions. For example, over two thirds of the chapters in the *Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge* that I edited with three other academics (Dierkes, Berthoin Antal, Child and Nonaka 2001) are the products of joint authorship. The process of generating the ideas for this intellectual undertaking required the support of a far-sighted foundation<sup>2</sup> that funded research projects and regular meetings in an idyllic little German town over the period of five years. The authors came together from around the world to share their thoughts. The discussions over the conference table, the dinner table and the beer table were often quite heated because academics care far more about their concepts and theories than one might imagine. Working alone within our own institutions, none of us would have envisaged or achieved a project of such broad scope.

The work in this project confirms the importance for academics as well as for business people of the “entrepreneur’s simultaneous participation in many organizations and environmental settings” (Kwiatkowski 1999 :18). It also supports the theory that in the knowledge economy there is a growing “creative class” to which intellectuals and entrepreneurs both belong (Florida 2002). In my experience at the WZB, an institution dedicated to conducting problem-oriented basic research in the social sciences, it is less helpful to pursue dichotomies than it is to work actively with the tensions that exist between tasks, fields, and actors with different orientations. Valuable knowledge is generated precisely through the management of such

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<sup>2</sup> Gottlieb-Daimler and Carl-Benz Foundation

creative tensions between the interests of intellectuals and practitioners (Dierkes 1986: 230-238). Clearly, the ability to leverage different kinds of knowledge BETWEEN institutional systems and subsystems is central to intellectual entrepreneurship (see also Tam 1999:125).

### **Working it out: In what senses BETWEEN?**

There are two concepts of institutions to think about here, two kinds of institutions AGAINST, THROUGH or BETWEEN which we pursue intellectual entrepreneurship. First, institutions are *organizations* that bring people together to achieve certain purposes. They bundle resources for ideas and actions. Academics pursue their intellectual investigations in universities, business schools and research centers. These institutions employ academics to make intellectual contributions to society. In order to make their projects happen, academics need non-academic organizations as well, ranging from funding bodies at the outset to publishing houses towards the end of the intellectual process. Second, institutions are also *conventions*, norms that develop among people as to what to do and how to do it. Conventions guide academics as to how to conduct research, publish, teach, and behave at professional conferences. Each academic discipline and each academic organization adds its own set of conventions, indicating what is to be considered valid knowledge in the field and assigning roles and status to its members. Institutions, in the form of explicit or implicit rules as well as models and templates for behavior and interpretation, for example, “may negatively constrain action, define opportunity, and facilitate patterns of interaction” (Clemens & Cook 1999: 445).

I continued to grapple with the BETWEEN nature of intellectual entrepreneurship in Roissy airport on the way back from Nantes, waiting for my flight to Berlin. As Florida recently pointed out, “creative work tends to follow you around in the sense of inhabiting your head” (2002: 149). Two hours stretched ahead of me as I took out my little Toshiba to think about the times and spaces we use for getting greater clarity into ideas, for exploring whether they are worth more than a fleeting flirt. Few senior academics find their offices good spaces to think and write in during the day.



The interruptions of telephones, colleagues, emails, students, and meetings make it difficult to pursue a thought longer than a quarter of an hour. Even good ideas cannot hang around and wait for us to discover that they are worth committing to. Some colleagues stay after most have left the office, others turn on their computers again at home, after partners and children have gone to bed. Late at night it is quiet again. Time and space squeezed in BETWEEN night and day, BETWEEN work and private life. Trains and planes, too, provide refuge from interruptions. They are the ideal BETWEEN support system: First, they transport us from one institutional setting to another, where ideas from one context can confront those from other contexts, challenging and refining them, and sometimes melding them into new ones. Then, the planes and trains enable reflecting, distancing, deepening, letting go, resting before the return to the institution where action will be taken once again (see also Kwiatkowski 1999: 177).

The practicalities of finding (or making) and using time and spaces BETWEEN organizations to encounter people who have different ideas and to reflect about those ideas may be easier to manage than the challenge of creating space BETWEEN the conventions that govern academic performance. The boundaries set by institutions in the sense of conventions are often difficult to see and they can be dangerous to cross because they mark the route for careers. Entrepreneurship entails thinking and doing new things or doing things in new ways, so it involves departing from accepted and prescribed ways of thinking and behaving. “White spaces” are more likely to lie beyond the boundaries of a given discipline than inside its established territory. Finding white spaces means moving out to create domains BETWEEN currently defined fields of work. There are at least two kinds of boundaries to push: those BETWEEN academic disciplines, and those BETWEEN academia and other fields of activity, such as business, politics and the arts.

Academics are socialized into the norms and practices of their discipline, starting with university studies. They learn which kinds of questions to pose, which methods to use to explore those questions, and how to present their results and conclusions in articles and conferences. They learn which journals to read and which to publish in. Review processes in the academic system reinforce the adherence to discipli-

nary conventions. Submissions to journals and applications for funding new projects are reviewed by members of the field, as are proposals for contributions to conferences. Promotion and recruitment procedures require publications in established journals as evidence of meeting the community's standards. The problem is that such institutions also limit what is considered appropriate or worth pursuing. The purpose of research may well be to push the boundaries of knowledge, but it is difficult to find support for innovative projects within the academic system. Deviance is in fact as unwelcome in academia as it is in most other areas of society (Merton 1972; Smelser 2001).

## **Choosing how to illustrate BETWEEN**

While it may be daunting, it is not impossible to break new ground in academia, and entrepreneurship is certainly one way to achieve it. Which example should I choose for this chapter? I kept mulling over the question and the answer came to me on a day I took off work to prepare our traditional large Thanksgiving celebration. The creative and productive time in the kitchen brought intellectual clarity. Although my work takes me to many places around the world, I realized that I did not need to look far afield to find a prime example of intellectual entrepreneurship. Right next door to my office at the WZB is a team of colleagues who have dared to take an entrepreneurial approach to overcoming the hurdles to generating new knowledge in their field (Canzler & Knie 2001; Knie & Petersen 1999). They had a vision—and a research question.

Having studied the development of mobility and transportation for several years, my colleagues were concerned about the problems inherent in current concepts and policies. The research the group had conducted over the years at the WZB indicated that the fixed schedules of public transportation could not afford enough flexibility to meet the needs of citizens in modern society. Only by including the automobile and making seamless connections BETWEEN the various modes of transportation would mobility needs be met (Projektgruppe Mobilität 1999). The current fragmentation of types of public and private transportation would have to be overcome to achieve a far more efficient and environmentally sound provision of mobility. My

colleagues envisioned a very different future that would offer what they termed “intermodal transport.” For them, mobility is intimately linked with social, economic and political participation in modern society (Canzler & Knie 1998: 118). They wanted to explore and expand “space for possibilities” (*Möglichkeitsräume*) by conceiving of new connections BETWEEN diverse means of transportation and mobility. Their question was: how would people respond to new options for physical mobility, options that did not yet exist? And they wanted to know under which conditions people would change their behavior.

In order to pursue their vision and find answers to their question, these academic colleagues realized that they would have to take an entrepreneurial approach. Instead of conducting artificial laboratory experiments or asking people hypothetical survey questions, or waiting possibly many years for the market to provide the kinds of mobility options the researchers had in mind, my colleagues invented and established a company to offer the mobility service, then they studied the people who used the service. From our conversations over the past few years, I knew that this solution had entailed finding, creating and using numerous BETWEENs. In the organizational sense of institutions, the venture required connections BETWEEN different partners in academia, government and business to establish the new company. The venture entailed creating space BETWEEN conventions in academia, pushing aside institutional norms that separate what is from what could be, and those that separate the researcher from the field.

More BETWEEN times and spaces created opportunities for me to explore my colleagues’ experiences and reflections on this example of intellectual entrepreneurship. I grabbed hours to interview them BETWEEN meetings at the WZB. And BETWEEN presentations and flights during trips to workshops in Munich and Singapore I studied some of the many publications they had produced since the project’s inception in 1997. What I heard and read about the venture rekindled trains of thought I had pursued over the years, stimulated by research about innovation, organizational learning and entrepreneurship. There is a growing interest in the learning that occurs BETWEEN organizations (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, Nicolini 2000: 785) and I had a sense that this form of learning is a key factor in enabling

learning within organizations. I captured and developed ideas on my laptop, the article taking shape during focused hours in hotels, airports, and at home. The scope of this review is by nature quite modest, limited to exploring the institutional “BETWEENS” of intellectual entrepreneurship. Far more comprehensive studies of the CHOICE project have been produced and additional ones are underway to understand the academic aspects and consequences of the experiment as well as the implications for mobility provision and policymaking (e.g., Canzler, Franke 2000 and 2002; Canzler, Knie 2001; Lengwiler forthcoming).

### ***The Case of CHOICE Mobilitätsproviding GmbH***

Like many breakthrough ideas, this hybrid business-and-research project appears very obvious in hindsight, but it took imagination and courage to launch, and tenacity and flexibility to implement. The project started with sparks in space and coincidences in time. Markus Petersen, the co-founder of the largest car-sharing company in Berlin, StattAuto, had found some publications that my colleagues at the WZB, Weert Canzler and Andreas Knie, had written very intriguing. He called to meet them in April 1997 and the sparks quickly started to fly in their office at the WZB. Markus Petersen explained that StattAuto was in the process of making the transition from a family owned company to a joint stock corporation and he envisaged the provision of new kinds of services that would enable the company to grow significantly and rapidly with many new clients. It might even lead to an IPO, a dream shared by so many entrepreneurs during the 1990s all over the world. For Weert Canzler and Andreas Knie, this opened the opportunity to conduct fieldwork and to test their ideas about intermodal transport in practice. Coincidentally, just at this same time the German Federal Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Technology called for proposals for projects on “mobility in conurbations,” and this offered the prospect of serious funding for the experiment StattAuto and the WZB were beginning to envisage.

My colleagues quickly recognized that their proposal to the Federal Ministry would require additional partners in order to put together a real intermodal offer. Another fortunate coincidence helped them: Audi AG, the German automobile maker,

approached StattAuto in its search for ways of making a splash in Berlin as the new capital of re-united Germany. It wanted to get engaged in an innovative way. When the senior manager from Audi, Jürgen Petersen (no relation to Markus Petersen), heard about the idea StattAuto and the WZB were working on, he saw exactly the opportunity he had been looking for. He was responsible for transport policy and he sold the concept to the Managing Board. Audi agreed to join the consortium for the proposal to the Ministry. The dimension of public transportation had yet to be added. The team contacted various organizations, including the recently privatized German railway (Deutsche Bahn AG). A strategic marketing manager in the wholly owned subsidiary DB Stationen und Service AG, Andreas Sturmowski, had been in touch with my colleagues at the WZB since 1997. The Deutsche Bahn had been looking for ideas to cover “the last mile,” so to speak, between the train station and customers’ homes. He found the prospect of a project with the Ministry very relevant and got the Deutsche Bahn committed to join the consortium.

BETWEEN them, the four organizations combined interests and competences into a persuasive proposal to the Ministry to create and study an innovative service combining the concepts of car-sharing with leasing. “Cash-car” would offer full-service car leasing with the option of periodically making the car available to other users and thereby getting “cash” back during times the customer did not need the vehicle. The team celebrated the success of their proposal in the Spring of 1998. They received over two million euros from the Ministry for the business-and-research experiment of studying how people learn to use links BETWEEN car ownership (via leasing and sharing) and public transportation for five years. The underlying logic of the investment by the Federal Ministry and the organizations that engaged in the project corresponded to Drucker’s observation about the tricky nature of knowledge-based innovation: “Careful analysis of the needs—and, above all, the capabilities—of the intended user is also essential. It may seem paradoxical, but knowledge-based innovation is more market dependent than any other kind of innovation” (Drucker 2002:102). Only through a business-and-research learning venture that would enable users to try out a service that did not yet exist could the necessary knowledge be obtained for the idea to be developed.

## **Creating connections BETWEEN CHOICE and its shareholders**

In late summer 1998 the new company was formed, entitled CHOICE<sup>3</sup> Mobilitäts-providing GmbH. It was designed to have four shareholders: StattAuto to manage the car servicing, the WZB for the research, the Deutsche Bahn to bring in the public transport dimension, and Audi AG to represent the private car perspective. But the process of creating connections BETWEEN the shareholders and CHOICE was not a simple one. It turned out differently for each of the four founding organizations, with some having multiple and close links, while others had tenuous or no links. The nature of the connections BETWEEN the member organizations and CHOICE ended up being very significant not only for the project but also for the capacity of the member organizations to learn from the knowledge generated in the project.

The organizational links BETWEEN CHOICE and its shareholders were created through the directors (executive and non-executive), the shareholders, and the Project Group Mobility at the WZB. Andreas Knie was delegated from the WZB to serve as managing director of CHOICE jointly with Markus Petersen from StattAuto. Jürgen Petersen represented the shareholder Audi and he served as a non-executive director. The Deutsche Bahn did not occupy the shareholder seat designated for it. Because the company's Managing Board had made a new policy decision to engage only in those ventures in which it had a controlling stake (at least 51 percent). Nevertheless, Andreas Sturmowski, who was personally very interested in the project, became a member of the Advisory Board of CHOICE.

For the WZB, the very idea of becoming a shareholder was totally new. The WZB is a research center funded by the German Federal Ministry for Research and Technology and by the Berlin Senate. It had never established or owned other legal entities. The decision to participate in this project had therefore required getting formal approval for a new way of creating space BETWEEN existing conventions about how to conduct social science research. Normally, the directors and the fellows in

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<sup>3</sup> CHOICE is the acronym for Company for Highly Organized Integrated City Traffic Elements.

their units decide decentrally on their research projects and methodologies. But the cash-car project was a methodological experiment that required taking a step the WZB had never yet tried, namely becoming a shareholder in a private company. My colleagues had to obtain support and approval from various layers of top management to go forward. Meinolf Dierkes, the head of our research unit on Technology and Organization, persuaded the President, the group of directors of other research units at the WZB, and the managing director, Christiane Neumann, that the experiment was soundly designed and an exciting opportunity for the WZB. It had not been easy to overcome some of the skepticism about a new type of research that appeared too close to the world of business and too similar to product development for an organization committed to basic research. The Board of Trustees of the WZB had to formally decide to participate in the project and become a shareholder in the new company. Fortunately, the chairperson of this organ is a senior representative from the Federal Ministry for Research and Technology, which was funding the project. Christiane Neumann became the shareholder representative of the WZB to CHOICE and Meinolf Dierkes chaired the Advisory Board.

Unlike the other shareholders, the WZB had an additional organizational link with CHOICE: the Project Group Mobility led by Weert Canzler at the WZB. Its role was to conduct the research on the development and uptake of CHOICE services. The project group included a number of doctoral candidates and students who wrote master's theses on specific aspects of the experiment. In other words, there were far more links BETWEEN the WZB and CHOICE than BETWEEN the company and its other shareholders. It had delegated a director to CHOICE, it had two active shareholder representatives, a senior academic heading the research process at the WZB, and a collection of younger researchers hungry for data. The multiplicity of these links turned out to be extremely significant for the venture and for the learning process.

## The vulnerability of BETWEEN institutions

Having an idea, finding supporters and funding, and establishing a new organization—all of these are essential to launch intellectual entrepreneurship. But then the products and services have to be developed and delivered. An organization that is created BETWEEN several partners is vulnerable to changes and difficulties in each of those partners. The CHOICE team had to manage the fragility of its links to several institutional members.

- A great deal of time in 1999 was spent trying to find a new shareholder to fill the seat the Deutsche Bahn left open. Andreas Sturmowski was personally very interested in CHOICE and actively supported the venture during this period, but then the Deutsche Bahn underwent a restructuring process, and he was reassigned to a different area with no logical connection at all to the cash-car idea.
- The connection BETWEEN CHOICE and Audi was initially very strong, because Jürgen Petersen was personally committed and Audi's goal of gaining positive marketing visibility in Berlin was achieved. However, a new policy decision by the company to focus its sponsoring funding exclusively on activities relating to racing led to Audi's withdrawal from CHOICE in early 2000. Fortunately, at this very time the Berlin public transportation company, the BVG, decided to come on board as a shareholder because Wolfgang Schwenk, the head of marketing, saw the logic of connecting car-sharing with the services of his company. He also believed the connection would be an asset to the BVG's image on the market because the media coverage of CHOICE was very positive. The arrival of the BVG in CHOICE closed the intermodal gap left by the Deutsche Bahn. However, this link, too, turned out to be quite fragile. When the BVG experienced significant financial difficulties and cut back dramatically on experiments with innovative products and on its marketing, Wolfgang Schwenk left the company. The BVG subsequently became inactive in CHOICE.
- The link BETWEEN CHOICE and StattAuto was severely affected by turbulences within this founding shareholder. StattAuto suffered significant finan-



cial problems in 1999-2000. Its transition from a private to a public company had been founded on the expectation of rapid growth, but the organization had not developed the professional infrastructure needed to service a large and demanding customer base. The original StattAuto customers had come from the “alternative” scene in Berlin and their socio-political commitment to alternative projects implied a certain tolerance for hassles in the car-sharing process. New cash-car clients generally had higher expectations regarding the quality of the car and ease of service. The customer dissatisfaction and slow growth brought the company to the edge of bankruptcy. The decline in trust in StattAuto affected CHOICE customers, so that CHOICE staff spent a great deal of time and energy reassuring current customers, time that they would otherwise have invested into finding new customers and developing the infrastructure to meet their needs.

### **Achieving the multiple goals of intellectual entrepreneurship**

The CHOICE aspirations were high: to generate and study almost two thousand customers in all the large conurbations of Germany within five years (Audi, Deutsche Bahn StattAuto, WZB 1998: 26). It started in the summer of 1998 with sixteen test customers in Berlin. The business was expected to break even after three years and to become profitable within five years (Audi et al. 1998: 10 & Appendix). Like many knowledge-based start-ups of the 1990s, it turned out that CHOICE had set itself unrealistically high targets. By the end of 2001, there were approximately a hundred cash-car customers. The target of expanding across Germany had been partially met, with partners in Hamburg and Munich.

A range of different innovative products had been launched to provide intermodality. For example, new service ideas linking public transportation with the use of cars were developed with the Berlin public transportation company (BVG). They tested a “metrocard” for passengers who had an annual pass for the BVG and wanted to use a car on the weekends. Another product was the “winter car” for people who prefer to use bikes during the rest of the year. Overall, the technical problems of providing

for seamless intermodality for customers proved more difficult to master than had been expected. CHOICE also successfully developed good software programs, but not quite fast enough to meet the high targets. CHOICE was dependent on its links with its shareholder organizations, but these were not able to learn fast enough. StattAuto had not learned how to satisfy the demands of the new clientele efficiently, and the public transportation company had not learned how to make the connections with their services smooth and easy across Germany.

The research goals, by contrast, were largely met. The WZB academics had conducted interviews at four intervals between 1999 and 2002 with 31 customers and with a control group of approximately 50 non-CHOICE users, generating insights into the conditions required for people to change their patterns of transportation. The research group shared their learning by publishing numerous reports, articles, dissertations and master's theses, as well as by organizing, attending and contributing to workshops and conferences.

A superficial reading of this outcome might lead one to conclude that the cash-car business idea failed but the research succeeded. Such an interpretation would not only be incorrect, it would overlook the power at the core of the model for organizational learning. CHOICE was a business-and-research venture, and as such, extremely productive. The fact that the project was conceived as one embodying "intellectual entrepreneurship" ensured that knowledge was created from the experience, useful knowledge for more entrepreneurship. As has been observed in many other ventures, the members of CHOICE found that "even the best concepts or strategies tend to develop incrementally. They rarely ever work out the first time out or unfold just as they were planned. In fact the original concept or its execution usually gets changed considerably before it is ready to be implemented broadly" (Pearson 2002:124). The value of the learning generated by CHOICE was explicitly recognized by the Deutsche Bahn, which decided to take the whole project over in 2001. The Deutsche Bahn had the resources with which to implement broadly the concept of intermodal transport after it had undergone significant testing and revision in CHOICE.

The CHOICE team had maintained contacts with the Deutsche Bahn over the years despite the disappointment when the company had decided to not become a shareholder of CHOICE at the outset. They therefore knew that the Deutsche Bahn wanted to become a full-provider of mobility to its customers. To this end, the Deutsche Bahn had created a wholly owned subsidiary, DB Rent GmbH. The Deutsche Bahn decided to take up the proposal the CHOICE team had developed for it in 2000 and it took over the cash-car project. The Deutsche Bahn shared the vision that had been at the origin of CHOICE and now could benefit from the knowledge generated through the experiences of CHOICE to launch its own intermodal service (Knie, Koch & Lübke 2002). The BETWEEN organization was dissolved<sup>4</sup> after it had served its purpose and the business project, with the core team of CHOICE employees, was integrated in a new and solid constellation inside the Deutsche Bahn.

## **BETWEEN times and spaces for learning in and from CHOICE**

Considering the fragility and turbulence that characterized the CHOICE experience, it is surprising how much knowledge the project generated. It is therefore important to look at the BETWEEN times and spaces that enabled learning to happen. The relative richness or fragility of the links BETWEEN CHOICE and its member organizations in turn influence the learning each organization was able to gain through its participation in the venture.

From the outset, a conscious decision was made not to locate the CHOICE offices within any of the shareholder organizations. No single shareholder should exert more influence than the others, and the ability of CHOICE employees to think creatively BETWEEN the conventions each organization represented should be maximized. In the new center of re-united Berlin Andreas Knie and Markus Petersen

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<sup>4</sup> The legal entity of CHOICE lives on: sixteen intellectual entrepreneurs from the Project Group Mobility at the WZB and staff from the cash-car project at CHOICE bought the shares from the former shareholders in order to have the framework ready within which to launch innovative research-and-business they might dream up in the years to come.

found a place that symbolically brought together the connections BETWEEN multiple modes of transportation: the Janowitz bridge spans the Spree river that flows through Berlin and it serves as a station for the Berlin underground and for a regional train line. Buses stop there, and there is easy parking for cars and bicycles. The archways under the bridge had just been remodeled to create space for offices and small shops, clearly a perfect location for a venture on intermodal transportation. It was in the central room with its huge windows overlooking the river and the boats passing by that the shareholders came together to discuss ideas and opportunities, make decisions, and resolve problems. This BETWEEN space was conducive to thinking differently about issues than each of the shareholders would have done within their own daily organizational settings.

Another BETWEEN space that played an important role for the venture was an apartment owned by a colleague on the island of Mallorca. Andreas Knie and Weert Canzler blocked off time to withdraw there and reflect and write, sometimes also with other members of the research team. It was the birthplace of several articles, book chapters and reports. Far from the pressures, constraints, and interruptions of offices in Berlin, the apartment in Mallorca offered a haven where they could periodically engage in sense-making about the developments in CHOICE, and look ahead to develop new ideas and strategies. These blocks of BETWEEN time in the BETWEEN space of Mallorca were crucial for the ability of the team to generate learning from the experiences of intellectual entrepreneurship.

The other BETWEEN times and spaces were the many review meetings and workshops that punctuated the life of the project. One of the conditions set by the Ministry for Research and Technology was that the academic project leaders of the various mobility projects it was funding, including the cash-car project, would attend monthly meetings to report on and discuss developments. These meetings stimulated learning for the project because Weert Canzler had to present and explain what was happening, including how and why deviations from the original project plan were necessary. He had to answer questions posed by the representatives of the Ministry as well as academics in other projects.

## **Organizational learning from CHOICE**

The individuals involved in CHOICE certainly learned a great deal from the experience, and the publications by the Mobility Project Group document the outcome of their analyses so that other people all around the world can draw on the knowledge they have generated. But what about the organizational learning by the participating organizations, beyond the individual learning of its employees? Is there evidence that the organizations expanded their range of potential ways of seeing and doing things as a result of their engagement in the CHOICE experience? To what extent did they benefit from this opportunity for learning BETWEEN organizations?

CHOICE as an organization learned a great deal. During the lifespan of the cash-car project CHOICE learned how to manage complex relationships with diverse stakeholders and how to launch innovative products and services. It tried out ideas, observed responses, and revised the approaches. It learned by experimenting with its customers. With the support of the analyses conducted by the researchers at the WZB Mobility Project Group, CHOICE can be said to have worked around the full learning cycle many times (Kolb 1984). In the beginning the cycle started with abstract conceptualization and moved through active experimentation to concrete experience and reflective observation. Over time, the path around the learning cycle changed and concrete experience took the lead in triggering learning processes. The interaction BETWEEN the WZB and CHOICE was crucial in ensuring that the pressures of daily business did not interrupt the learning cycle.

By contrast, there is no evidence that Audi or the BVG reaped any organizational learning from their participation in CHOICE. The organizational links BETWEEN the companies and CHOICE were limited to a single person in each case, so when the turbulences the institutions encountered broke those personal links, there was no backup to ensure that information and ideas would continue to flow in order to stimulate learning. The representatives of these companies who subsequently attended the shareholder meetings were not personally committed or interested in the content of the project. The companies and their representatives were not seeking

learning in the venture. Rather, the role of the legal specialists focused on ensuring that CHOICE did not undertake any commitments that might represent a risk for their companies.

StattAuto had the closest day-to-day working connection with CHOICE of all the member organizations, because it was through StattAuto that the cars were provided to cash-car customers. Despite the intensity of daily interactions between staff of the two organizations, it is unclear to what extent organizational learning from engaging with CHOICE occurred in StattAuto. The simple fact of working together does not automatically generate organizational learning. A combination of factors may explain why the opportunity for organizational learning was underutilized. Markus Petersen, the co-founder of StattAuto had left the company to become the co-managing director of CHOICE with Andreas Knie. He did not build strategic links back into his former company to ensure the flow of ideas and information during the lifespan of the CHOICE cash-car project. That period saw several directors come and go in StattAuto, so there was not enough continuity for a learning relationship to develop. Furthermore, StattAuto was so busy dealing with its own survival problems that it did not invest in building a learning connection to CHOICE.

The WZB's organizational learning is still open. The research team learned a great deal about the possibilities and limitations of the methodology entailed in this experiment in intellectual entrepreneurship, but the process of sharing that learning with colleagues in other research areas at the WZB is incomplete. The shareholder representatives, Meinolf Dierkes and Christiane Neumann, took their observations and reflections back to the management of the organization. But it is not yet clear what the organization has learned about the tool of creating an external organization to expand the range of forms available for the WZB to fulfill its research mission in society. A research project dedicated to this subject is planned for 2004.

The organization that clearly benefited from the learning generated by the CHOICE cash-car project is the Deutsche Bahn's wholly owned subsidiary DB-Rent. When the company took the project over from the CHOICE shareholders in 2001, it internalized the knowledge assets of CHOICE, in particular by "grafting" (Huber

1991: 97) CHOICE employees into DB Rent, including Andreas Knie who moved from his role as co-director of CHOICE to head up the new business area of inter-modal products and services. In other words, DB Rent learned vicariously from the experiential learning in CHOICE. For example, it developed very simple pricing policies rather than complex incentive schemes, and it established franchise arrangements with local providers of cars that enable both partners to maintain brand identity (Knie, Koch & Lübke 2002). Most important, the company seems to have learned from CHOICE how to continue its learning. Its approach to the market is designed as an ongoing learning process, with incremental testing of ideas in experimental phases. It also learned from CHOICE how to obtain research funding to continue to support its learning processes. Further studies would have to be conducted to determine whether the Deutsche Bahn itself is participating in or benefiting from the organizational learning of DB Rent. There is evidence, for example, that the experiences with CHOICE and DB Rent have influenced the new orientation of the Deutsche Bahn towards defining itself as a “mobility and logistics services company.” It also remains to be seen how well embedded the learning orientation is in the company when Andreas Knie leaves DB-Rent and returns to his position as senior researcher at the WZB in 2004.

## **Conclusion: Securing time and space for intellectual entrepreneurship**

Intellectual entrepreneurship will undoubtedly be in great demand in the coming decades. It will become a primary source for economic renewal and societal development. Such entrepreneurship will require learning BETWEEN diverse actors in multiple constellations. “In an increasingly complex world, the biggest growth opportunities will come more often at the intersection of multiple companies than from single visionaries acting on their own.” (Wolpert 2002:83). Therefore, the ability to link innovation efforts in new institutions BETWEEN organizations will become ever more critical.

It is also probable that, like CHOICE, many of these institutions will be temporary. In the past century organizations were built to last (Collins and Porras 1996), and they had the time to develop and refine their processes and structures for learning over the years. The speed with which new ideas, products, and processes must be envisioned and delivered puts a premium on organizational nimbleness. The ability to imagine, establish, manage, and learn from temporary BETWEEN organizations will become increasingly valuable. Therefore, in the coming decades success is less likely to be measured in terms of durability than in terms of flexibility. Temporary constellations that enable connections BETWEEN institutions to be made quickly so that people can bring together ideas and resources from different contexts will be key platforms for innovation.

Temporary BETWEEN constellations for intellectual entrepreneurship require certain environmental conditions. They cannot emerge in a vacuum because they are dependent on the existence of other organizations to bundle resources and provide an infrastructure. People must work WITHIN organizations in order to be able to connect BETWEEN organizations. Communication and transportation infrastructures are essential to permit interactions BETWEEN people and organizations. A great deal of attention (and funding) is currently being dedicated to improving the infrastructure for communication and transportation so that people and ideas can move faster and more easily. The improved media for communication and transportation stimulate intellectual entrepreneurship by bringing together ideas from different contexts. They provide inputs for the creative processes Einstein is said to have called “combinatorial play” (Amabile, Hadley, Kramer 2002:58). Furthermore the movement of people and ideas BETWEEN places increases the likelihood that fresh initiatives will emerge because “something perceived as irrational in one environmental setting might be judged rational in another one” (Kwiatkowski 1999:18).

There is a danger, however, lurking behind the compression of time and space for more rapid and efficient travel and communication BETWEEN people and organizations. The pressures for 24/7 availability and immediate responsiveness reduce the time and space needed for reflection. The BETWEEN periods are becoming



ever rarer and harder to protect. An economy based on intellectual entrepreneurship must resolve a paradox: knowledge, on which the economic model is based, is often considered the epitome of a renewable resource, while a key resource for generating knowledge, namely time, “is the only nonrenewable resource” (Florida 2002:147). This perceived scarcity of time—evocatively labeled “time famine” by Robinson and Godbey (1999)—has led to time compression strategies such as multitasking. The possibility of rapid movement engenders the expectation of rapid response by phone, email, or travel (or all three at the same time, viz. the passengers working through their emails on laptops and talking on mobile phones in European trains and airports all around the world). In light of these developments, it is not surprising that recent studies on work schedules and creativity in organizations in the United States reveal that many people often feel “overworked, fragmented, and burned out” (Amabile et al. 2002: 54).

The problem is that although the investments in infrastructures for communication and transportation successfully increase half of the ingredients for creativity, namely, the coming together of diverse ideas, they tend to squeeze out the other half, namely, the time to explore, play with, and test the ideas. The way time is managed at work in most organizations impedes the generation of new knowledge. Comparing the creative process to the juggling of balls, Amabile and her colleagues report that “recent research suggests that the success of the combinatorial process depends both on having sufficient time to create the balls to juggle—exploring concepts and learning things that might somehow be useful—and having sufficient time to devote to the actual juggling” (Amabile et al. 2002: 58). Creativity and learning both require time for concentration and reflection. Without such focused thought, intellectual entrepreneurship becomes impossible. But the time for concentration and reflection are rare commodities in most organizations. Times BETWEEN meetings and commitments have to be carved out and protected from interruptions, the authors advise (Amabile et al. 2002:59).

If BETWEEN times need to be carved out and protected, what about BETWEEN spaces? Managers, academics, and architects have recognized the importance of designing spaces into office buildings and research centers to ensure that people

can meet to exchange ideas. These may be actual meeting rooms, but are more often tea or coffee rooms, cafeterias or other BETWEEN spaces where people can come together informally. They are a type of “third place,” to use the term coined by Oldenburg (1999), as distinct from the “first two” places of work and home. The CHOICE team consciously chose to find itself an office that would be a “third place” distinct from the work spaces already used by its founding members, and within that office, it designated a central meeting space for ideas to be shared and decisions taken. Sometimes what is a “third place” for one person may be a “first place” for another, so it does not need to be created. For example, this article started to emerge while I was in Nantes, a “third place” for me but the center of work for the full-time faculty at Audencia. Similarly, my “first place,” the WZB, is a “third place” for visiting fellows who come from around the world to think and write for a few days, weeks, or months. At such BETWEEN places a person is unencumbered by organizational responsibilities, so she or he can think and work with fewer interruptions than at a “first place” while benefiting from the opportunities for creative interactions with different people.

The challenge for intellectual entrepreneurial organizations therefore lies less in the creation of BETWEEN places than in having an organizational mindset (and corresponding practical policies) that encourage people to use available “third places” where they can learn with others and generate new knowledge. This mindset requires a conscious interest in and commitment to seeking organizational learning. Without this orientation, any time spent away from core activities at the “first place” of work will appear too expensive under the restrictive regime of “time famine.” The challenge for intellectual entrepreneurs will lie in achieving a personal balance in their use of BETWEEN times and spaces for interacting with people and ideas from different contexts, while finding and defending BETWEEN times and spaces for focused thought.

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