The work of global professional service firms

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Introduction

Global professional service firms (GPSFs) are arguably now one of the key sites for professional work (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008, 2012) given their size and power relative to the professions they represent, or some might say now dominate (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). They are particularly important because of their central role in choreographing the global economy and setting the rules of the game for capitalist activities (Quack, 2007). In this chapter, we consider their work, both in terms of their activities and internal organization as 'global' firms and in terms of their impacts on economies and ultimately societies worldwide. In doing this, we follow on from those who have highlighted the work GPSFs do for capitalism and elites (Morgan, 2006) and for the institutions of the economy (Boussebaa, 2015b; Muzio et al., 2013), by drawing attention to the intimate connections between the firms' mode of organizing, their activities in markets throughout the world, and the structures of the global economy. In particular, we highlight five research agendas which, we believe, relate to a pressing series of questions about the power, politics and effects of the international work of GPSFs in the early years of the 21st century.

The chapter proceeds as follows. We first explore the rise of GPSFs and their modus operandi, paying particular attention to the structures and practices they have put in place to integrate their international operations and some of the key challenges they are confronted with.

In a subsequent section, we then consider the effects of GPSFs' modus operandi and external activities on the wider world economy, focusing in particular on the firms' influence on international trade and economic governance. Next, we turn to questions about the way GPSFs are currently prioritising and affecting emerging markets. We conclude by outlining the five strands that we see as central to a future research agenda on the international work of GPSFs.

Becoming global and pursuing global integration

GPSFs have emerged as major international organisations offering a wide range of professional and quasi-professional services on a worldwide basis. Some of these firms have become "massive international operators" (Ferner et al., 1995: 343) and are often bigger and more internationalised than the *Fortune* Global 500 companies they serve (Greenwood et al., 2006). Typical examples are the 'Big Four' accountancies (Deloitte & Touche, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PriceWaterhouseCoopers), the leading providers of consulting, technology and outsourcing services (e.g. Accenture, Capgemini, IBM and CGI), and the "elite" law firms (e.g. Allen & Overy, Baker & McKenzie, Clifford Chance, Linklaters). Table 1 provides a basic outline of the size and significance of the leading firms in each of these three sectors. Clients include government institutions, non-profit organisations and, importantly, multinational corporations, which constitute a major source of revenue and prestige for GPSFs.

[Insert table 1 here]

GPSFs not only deliver services globally but also put considerable effort into developing themselves as "global" organisations, as reflected in their own websites and literature (e.g. Kangas, 1997; Palmisano, 2006; see also Jones, 2003). This stress on "globality" in many ways reflects the firms' strategic and organisational evolution as international businesses (see e.g. Beaverstock et al., 1999; Coviello and Martin, 1999; Spar, 1997). In their early days, GPSFs entered foreign markets in order to serve home-country clients abroad. This "client-following" stage led, in the 1980s-1990s, to a "market-seeking" stage, whereby GPSFs extended their services to host-country clients as well as foreign companies operating in host contexts and, in the process, developed global networks of offices (by partnering with local firms or, in some cases, by setting up foreign subsidiaries). Since the 1990s, GPSFs have gradually entered what may be described as a "network-integrating" stage. In this stage, the firms place great emphasis on global integration, i.e. firm-wide control and coordination, not just as a means of operating more efficiently than competitors, but also in order to provide seamless cross-national service to multinational clients (Beaverstock, 2004; Løwendahl, 2000). Being "global" in the present context is, therefore, doubly important for GPSFs – it means not only worldwide geographical reach but also transnational organisational capability – and hence the efforts put into achieving it.

Clearly, significant differences may exist across professional sectors in terms of the ways and extent to which firms achieve global integration (see e.g. Cooper et al., 2000; Malhotra & Morris, 2009). For instance, some firms have developed as networks of independent local partnerships and, whilst they have become more integrated over time, their constituent parts retain a considerable amount of independence in the running of their own affairs and the management of their own work and clients. The 'Big Four' accountancies have evolved in this way. In contrast, some GPSFs have mostly grown organically and place greater emphasis on central control and coordination. In these firms, central headquarters has a greater degree of authority over local units and plays an important role in determining universal standards, policies and practices, and in implementing firm-wide coordination mechanisms such as global knowledge management systems. Consulting firms such as Accenture and

McKinsey often portray themselves as highly integrated organisations (see e.g. Paik and Choi, 2005).

Differences aside, the extant literature reveals that GPSFs across sectors have over the years put much energy into the development of more integrated organisational structures (see Boussebaa and Morgan, 2015, for a recent review). For instance, scholars report on how firms have created new regional areas (e.g. North America, Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe, etc.) and introduced new roles with transnational responsibilities (e.g. global client service partner) to facilitate and manage work across geographies. The literature also indicates that the firms' central headquarters have acquired increasing responsibility and authority in terms of defining and implementing shared professional standards, work methodologies, knowledge systems and training programmes. In addition, GPSFs are said to be putting significant efforts into the management of their corporate cultures in ways that emphasize the importance of transnational collaboration (see e.g. Greenwood et al., 2010). Such efforts are supported by various international mobility systems and networking events aimed at exposing employees to "new ways of working, different cultures, different ways of thinking" (Jones, 2005: 187) and, ultimately, nurturing professionals that are able to work across national divides.

That being said, the journey to global integration has been a tortuous one. For instance, research in the context of some of the largest international management consultancies shows how employees, whilst subscribing to the idea of the 'global' firm, tend to act in ways that, paradoxically, militate against global integration (Boussebaa, 2009; Boussebaa et al., 2012). The research points to the importance of the national unit to employees' career prospects and financial rewards, and how this leads to priority being typically given to domestic projects and employees whatever the needs of other offices. Local units operate as semi-autonomous profit centres; managers and partners at this level focus on achieving their own financial objectives and are reluctant to sacrifice these for the sake of the 'global firm' ideal. 'Star' performers are kept working in their home office and only loaned out to other offices if profits made overseas can be taken back home. Such a problem is further complicated by significant cross-country fee rate differentials, which make it very difficult for smaller offices to 'borrow' consultants from the larger ones without losing much of their profits. The overall result is continual inter-office struggles over staff and revenue allocations that undermine global integrative efforts. Boussebaa (2015) reinforces this view and also identifies a disjuncture between the rhetoric of 'global' professional standards and the reality of 'local' practice in international consultancies (see also Boussebaa et al., 2014).

Global-local tensions have also been identified in major international law firms (Faulconbridge, 2008; Muzio and Faulconbridge, 2013). Here, scholars have shown how the distinctive regulatory frameworks of different countries produce varying expectations about professional work (from both lawyers and their clients) in terms of how it should be managed, evaluated and rewarded and, as a result, different organisational arrangements in different countries. Such 'national varieties of professionalism' (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2007), in turn, create various cross-national tensions within firms as these seek to implement firm-wide control and coordination systems (e.g. shared performance management and remuneration models). For example, Muzio and Faulconbridge (2013) show how attempts by English law firms to integrate their Italian operations were merely attempts at reproducing home-country practices into Italian offices and how the process led to various problems, including "demergers, lawyer exoduses [and] clashes with local regulators" (ibid.). Such findings reveal the presence of strong national path-dependencies inside law firms and further demonstrate the difficulties in achieving global integration in GPSFs (see also Morgan and Quack, 2005).

Thus, whilst GPSFs have established global networks of offices, their ability to integrate such operations may in practice be limited. Moreover, the extant literature shows that global integration efforts are largely driven by Anglo-American offices and that other offices within the firms are not always responsive, if not directly opposed, to such efforts (Barrett et al., 2005; Boussebaa, 2015; Muzio & Faulconbridge, 2013). In reality, most of the major GPSFs are Anglo-American in origin and have their operational headquarters located in the USA or, to a lesser extent, the UK. Equally, the organizational structures of the firms are largely dominated by US offices, with the UK units also occupying an important hierarchical position given their cultural and linguistic proximity to the former and their important role in expanding the firms around the world. Hanlon's (1994) study is particularly revealing here. The author shows how the 'Big Four' (then 'Big Six') accountancies are largely controlled and shaped by offices based in England and the USA. He notes how the ideology and practices of the firms were developed within such national contexts and how offices based in smaller nations such as Ireland, whilst enjoying a degree of autonomy in relation to some business matters (e.g. partner promotion, client management, use of advertising, etc.), are required to adhere to the international standards laid down by the UK and US groups. Inevitably, such structural differences within the firms lead to conflicting interests and, as a result, integration difficulties.

These observations are insightful insofar as they help us to better understand the intra-organizational dynamics of GPSFs and how these relate to global expansion in the late 20th and early 21st century. They also raise, however, a series of questions about the impacts of such organizing and expansion on the wider world economy which studies of intra-firm management do not address. In the next section of the chapter, we therefore consider how the work to globalize professional service firms has also involved work outside of the organizations in question, with implications for the structures of the global economy.

Manufacturing global effects

It is common to see rankings which locate the world's largest transnational corporations and their revenues alongside GDP, revealing that the likes of General Electric are economically more significant and powerful than many nation-states (see for example Dicken, 2015). The 'Big Four' have begun to appear in these lists, but GPSFs in other sectors are yet to grow big enough to make an appearance. Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the power and effect of even the smaller GPSFs; the 21st century arguably being the century of services (c.f., UNCTAD, 2004). We focus here, in particular, on how GPSFs have influenced the development of international trade and economic governance and the implications of this for both the functioning of the world economy and for society more broadly in the neoliberal age. Three examples point towards the significant role of GPSFs in this regard.

First, it is important to recognise the existence of "a new compact between conglomerate professional firms and transnational trade organizations" (Suddaby et al., 2007: 334). The compact relates, in particular, to the creation, promotion, and negotiation of free trade regulation. Underlying this role is the way GPSFs have, in many cases, outgrown the national regulators they were once beholden to. One of the mantras of many GPSFs is that they are post-national organizations, no longer being English or American accounting or law firms, but 'truly global' players (Jones, 2005). As a result, the interests of the firms and their clients primarily reside not in national jurisdictions, but in global trade arenas. This has led to firms both actively engaging with the likes of the World Trade Organization to ensure a regulatory environment that supports their activities and being the Trojan horses for free trade initiatives. In light of what Suddaby et al. (2007: 344) call the 'transnational professional services field', it is increasingly difficult to disentangle the activities and interests of GPSFs from transnational capitalism, the WTO, and neoliberal free trade agendas. The pervasive effects of initiatives such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services cannot, therefore, be understood without considering how GPSFs both championed and enabled such regulatory reforms; the priority of the firms in question being their own and their clients' interests, apparently above in some cases questions of professional ethics and wider societal interest, as early idealistic visions of the professions might lead us to believe (Sikka and Hampton, 2005).

We can also see, secondly, GPSFs playing an important role in the emergence of private governance. Distinct in that it relates to regimes not sanctioned by the state, as WTO initiatives are, private governance involves the creation of a set of transnational standards according to which trade is conducted. Examples include accounting standards (Ramirez, 2012), antitrust (competition) law (Morgan, 2006), and lex mercatoria trade law (Trubek et al., 1994). These are 'soft' regimes in that they are not legally enforceable, but they have 'hard' consequences in that they define 'best practice' and become a dominant influence on how trade is organised (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson, 2006), this inevitably serving the interests of transnational corporations. For instance, the International Competition Network is an organisation that brings together individuals from GPSFs, national competition authorities, and transnational bodies such as the European Commission, to "to advocate the adoption of superior standards and procedures in competition policy around the world, formulate proposals for procedural and substantive convergence, and seek to facilitate effective international cooperation" (http://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/ [accessed 16/04/2015]. Through working groups and the recommendations they produce, those, including GPSFs, with an interest in the way competition (antitrust) issues are handled produce 'best practice' standards. For GPSFs this is of interests as competition issues often relate to rules that affect mergers and acquisitions or corporate restructurings, these being key issues about which GPSFs advise clients. The 'soft' nature of the governance produced is illustrated in the following quotation:

> The ICN does not exercise any rule-making function. Where the ICN reaches consensus on recommendations, or "best practices", arising from the projects, individual competition authorities decide whether and how to implement the

recommendations, through unilateral, bilateral or multilateral arrangements, as appropriate. (http://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/about.aspx [accessed 16/04/2015]

As Quack (2007) shows, at one level private governance initiatives resolve ambiguity when trade operates at the interstices of national regimes. However, at another level, the practical problem solving that resolves ambiguity leads to a hardening of regimes that become non-negotiable and may even ultimately produce national and transnational laws (such as those on bankruptcy produced by the IMF and discussed below). This implies that the agency of GPSFs in the making of transnational governance, through their involvement in the activities of the likes of the International Competition Network, is both significant in making trade happen, and directing the costs and benefits of this. As Müller (2014) notes in the case of accounting standards, this means the institutionalization of financialized models of corporate organization that protect the interests of investors and allows profits to be reported that fit the 'narratives and numbers' (Froud et al., 2006) expected by international markets. Workers and, as demonstrated by the global financial crisis, wider society pay the costs of such approaches, whether it be in the shape of work intensification, job losses, tax avoidance or bankruptcy liabilities (Alvehus and Spicer, 2012; Sikka and Hampton, 2005).

A third example of the effects of GPSFs relates to their role in economic reform in emerging economies. On the one hand, GPSFs have worked with organisations such as the IMF to structure conditions for loans and promote initiatives proclaimed as central to economic development. One example of this is bankruptcy laws introduced into countries in Asia and Latin America. As Halliday and Carruthers (2009) outline, significant efforts have been made to impose a consistent model of bankruptcy across these regions. Most fundamentally this serves the interests of international investors in that it provides reassurance as to the parties with first claim on assets when an organisation is declared bankrupt. GPSFs have been important in devising and negotiating the implementation of such schemes, which arguably replicate the models which during the global financial crisis were shown to favour financial institutions and investors at the expense of wider society; the latter picking up the cost of bankruptcies, the former managing to avoid liabilities. On the other hand, GPSFs have also been involved in state reconstruction initiatives, particularly in post-socialist economies. Here, the 'Big Four' and global law firms were handed the task of writing the laws of trade and markets as countries transitioned to capitalist regimes (Wedel, 1998). Such work provided an opportunity for GPSFs to not only ensure conditions that favoured the activities of their clients, but also conditions that allowed their own expansion into these new markets. At times this created rifts between GPSFs and local professions, and arguably such activity is one form of the neo-colonialism we discuss further below.

All in all, the discussion above suggests, then, that an important direction for research on GPSFs is greater analysis of their work in, and effects on, national and transnational economies, and the implications of this for wider society. As key players in neoliberal globalization and contemporary capitalism, GPSFs have an important role in determining the organization of the economies that provide both opportunities for growth and development, but also, as the global financial crisis revealed, risks of instability and economic and social cost for society. In the next section, we therefore consider further the work and effects of GPSFs by exploring their role in emerging economies.

Entering and shaping emerging markets

For GPSFs, like most service organizations, emerging markets have become one of the primary preoccupations of the early 21st century. This pertains to both the BRIC economies – Brazil, Russia, India and China – but also increasingly African economies, led by South Africa but increasingly also including the likes of Morocco, Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia. The preoccupation of GPSFs with these economies raises a number of questions.

An important starting point is to return to the global integration difficulties discussed above, which appear to be more pronounced in emerging markets. A number of studies are beginning to reveal that entry into such markets is creating a core/periphery divide within GPSFs, "with the core [offices] often reflecting their location in large metropolitan cities, such as London, New York and Tokyo, where most head offices of multinational corporations are located" (Barrett et al., 2005: 20). Core offices in effect seek to serve their home-country multinational clients in emerging markets by calling on offices based in such markets. However, the latter are not always necessarily willing to help given their local concerns are generally not reflected in the agendas of the former and that their professionals can be more usefully and profitably used on domestic projects. This reality, together with unequal core-periphery profit distributions and a perceived core-periphery misalignment in work standards and practices, produces differential commitments to the ideal of the integrated 'global' firm and, in particular, undermine efforts to assemble effective global teams and provide seamless cross-national service (Boussebaa, 2015; Boussebaa et al., 2012).

These issues of global integration become even more pertinent when the strategies of GPSFs in emerging markets are considered. In line with the approach taken in North America and Western Europe, many firms have sought to enter markets not to work on domestic matters, but to establish their role in the local legs of global deals (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2015; Quack, 2007). Of course, the distinction between domestic and global deals is not clear cut. For instance, firms may need to initially provide domestic services to an emerging market company in order to secure a role in their global deals. Nonetheless, as outlined above, GPSFs are primarily preoccupied with operating in transnational rather than national fields. This implies that global integration is crucial for the controlling of standards (Ramirez, 2012), institutionalizing of practices (Smets et al., 2012), and the de-legitimization of alternative professional systems (Dezalay and Garth, 2010); all of these relying on offices in emerging markets conforming to 'best practices' established by the 'core'. As noted above, this cannot be guaranteed, but GPSFs are making strenuous efforts to ensure this basis for their sustained competitive advantage is not undermined.

Relatedly, the impacts of GPSFs on the professions in emerging markets also require close scrutiny. It is important to remember at this point that, for many GPSFs, activities in emerging markets are not actually that new. It has been extensively documented that in one form or another GPSFs have been operating in Asia and Africa for more than 100 years, thanks to their role in empire (Johnson, 1972; Dezalay and Garth, 2010; Pullaos and Sian, 2010). This imperial history mirrors in some ways the current phase of GPSFs' activities in Asia and Africa; contemporarily firms being accused in some quarters of neo-imperialism, this time at the service of global capitalism (Annisette, 2010). A postcolonial perspective on the activities of GPSFs brings to the fore, then, questions about the way local professions in emerging markets are 'colonized' by GPSFs, this implying an effort to discredit, disempower and delegitimise as part of an effort to import global capitalist models and secure lucrative markets. These are, however, open questions as empirical research on the activities of GPSFs in emerging markets is limited. This means, for instance, we are unable to differentiate between their effects in different emerging markets; surely, for example, the effects in China over the past decade are different compared to emerging impacts in Morocco? It also means that we are unable to assess the effectiveness of the reported resistance of local professions in emerging markets (Sian, 2007).

In the remainder of the chapter, therefore, we consider the future agendas around the work of GPSFs in emerging markets, in terms of the questions that need addressing and the kinds of research that can help in this task. In doing this, we propose a transitioning away from research concerned with issues of strategy and rational organisational design, generally framed from the viewpoint of 'core' actors, towards research on the power, politics and effects on GPSFs in emerging markets. Underlying this call is a belief that GPSFs and practitioners within them should be conceptualised as elites in the way that financiers often are, this in turn exposing them to the kinds of critical analysis that has been growing in the social sciences in recent years (Savage and Williams, 2008; Morgan et al., 2015).

Future research agendas

In the analysis above we have connected together questions about the internal organization of GPSFs, how this has evolved over time, and how it is related to their impacts on the economies of countries throughout the world. A recurrent theme is the importance of power, both in terms of how GPSFs are controlled and coordinated across nations and in terms of how the firms as 'global' organisations seek to shape the wider global economy. In this final section, we therefore reflect on the future research questions raised by the organisational evolution and societal impact of GPSFs over the last years of the 20th and first years of the 21st century. We focus on five questions that we consider particularly timely and pressing.

First, further research is needed on the complexities of intra-organizational core-periphery dynamics. It is now well established that GPSFs have put considerable effort into developing universal standards and related systems and practices as a means of integrating their international operations and offering seamless service to multinational clients, but research re-casting this evolutionary process as an expression of neo-imperial power is required. As discussed earlier, universalization efforts appear to be, in practice, merely efforts by core units to elevate their particular local standards to the status of 'global' norms. From a postcolonial theoretical viewpoint, such efforts are suspect because they ignore cultural and institutional heterogeneities and, in so doing, marginalize local subjectivities and forms of knowledge that do not conform to universal prescriptions – they are in effect an act of suppression, an expression of power (Said, 1978). Research is, therefore, required on the specific forms of exclusion and marginalization that are resulting from intra-firm processes of universalization. That being said, where there is power there is also resistance, and so another important area of future research concerns the ways in which peripheral actors respond to and resist domination by the core. From a postcolonial perspective, this means looking at processes of ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994).

Second, research is required on power/resistance dynamics at the level of the professions and wider economies of emerging markets. In terms of the professions, this is a logical evolution of work dating back to the 1970s which has viewed professional projects as political games played by self-interested elites (Larson, 1977; Johnson, 1972). The recent treatise by Dezalay and Garth (2010) examining the effects of the Western legal professions on Asia in the colonial era provides a historical account of such dynamics, but there is a desperate need to consider the contemporary version, which plays out through GPSFs as much or more than through individual professionals or professional associations. Questions about impacts on the professions dovetail with those outlined above about core-periphery dynamics in so much as they relate to issues of power and neo-colonialism. For example, Sian (2007) in analysing the 'Africanisation' of the Kenyan accounting profession poses a number of important questions about possibilities for reform in the post-colonial era, given the continued interest in Africa of colonial powers, contemporarily through the capitalist activities that GPSFs facilitate. The extent to which professions in emerging markets are able to develop in ways sensitive to local needs, knowledge, and practice is thus a fundamental question given the power of GPSFs to shape the economic agenda. Such questions matter for a variety of reasons, but of particular recent interest are issues associated with the entanglement between the professions and forms of corruption and wrongdoing. It is now well documented that maleficence, from the financial crisis to tax avoidance, if not promoted, has been insidiously enabled by the professions and GPSFs in particular (Grey, 2003; Sikka and Hampton, 2005). Whether GPSFs and their activities in emerging markets provide a vector for the reproduction of such undesirable activities and effects thus needs urgent consideration.

Third, an important line of future research should centre on the question of heterogeneity in the enactment and experience of imperialism. It is clear that the periphery is not an “undifferentiated fringe” (Chua & Poullaos, 2002: 412) and thus research is required on how cultural-linguistic and political-economic differences between different peripheral nations might affect core-periphery relations within GPSFs and between GPSFs and the local professions they interact with. Similarly, it is important not to view the ‘core’ as a homogeneous space. Whilst offices based in core economies may share an interest in ‘globalisation’, in serving ‘global’ clients across nations, and in implementing ‘universal’ modes of professional practice, there are likely to be differences between them in terms of, for instance, the ways and extent to which they seek to shape and control the periphery. Differences may also be expected between firms depending on their country of origin (US, UK, France, Germany, etc.). Moreover, the category GPSF itself is in need of problematizing (Malhotra and Morris, 2009; von Nordenflycht, 2010). In this chapter, we have somewhat conflated accounting, law, and consultancy firms, and given little space to the activities of architecture, engineering, and other ‘new’ professions such as executive search. This is common in the existing literature, but whether we can read-off from studies of one type of professional service the wider strategies and effects of all coming under the GPSF banner is unclear, and seems unlikely. Indeed, the ‘Big Four’ have tended to operate as loosely coupled federations rather the global partnerships, suggesting differences between them and, for example, law firms that have prioritized ‘one firm’ models. Moreover, most of the largest

GPSFs are now broad-based, multi-disciplinary organisations (e.g. the ‘Big Four’ offer not only traditional audit services but also consulting and even outsourcing solutions) so there is heterogeneity within the firms themselves. It is, therefore, important that more nuanced and differentiated analyses emerge so as to take into account country-of-origin effects, firm histories, professional jurisdictions, among other differencing features, in the constitution of GPSFs and their impacts on local economies. Such analyses would greatly enhance our understanding of GPSFs and their role in shaping the global economy.

Fourth, and related to the previous theme, research is required on the implications of the changing nature of the global economy and, in particular, the gradual transition to a ‘post-American world’ (Zakaria, 2008). For instance, the rise of the BRIC nations can be expected to empower offices located in such contexts and, therefore, potentially produce core-periphery relations that are different from those involving units based in weaker states. The BRICs are also giving rise to their own GPSFs (e.g. Wipro consulting in India; Yinke Law from China), whilst we are also seeing the beginnings of mergers between Western firms and those from emerging markets (e.g. the merger of English law firm Dentons with the Chinese firm Dacheng). Thus, research is required on such developments and their implications for our understanding of GPSFs themselves and their impacts on local economies around the world. For instance, some raise the question as to whether China’s growing presence in Africa represents a new imperialist project (e.g. Jackson, 2012).The same question may be raised with reference to GPSFs – are emerging GPSFs from China or any other ‘rising power’ potentially leading to reverse core-periphery relations or are these organisations developing a different, less imperialist model of international expansion and management?

Finally, and relatedly, the relationships between GPSFs and economic development need further elaboration. This is most pertinent in terms of the growing interest of GPSFs in Africa, but similar questions also relate to activities in much of South East Asia, in countries such as Laos and Myanmar. As noted above, questions relate to the impacts on the professions themselves in these countries, and the agency of GPSFs to set the rules of the game for the economy. They also relate to issues of power and the setting of the trajectory of developing economies, not least in terms of who wins and loses as a result of the accounting and legal mechanisms used to structure development projects, corporations, and the rising tide of privatizations in such countries. The urgency of further researching such issues in terms of the effects of accountants (Sian, 2007), consultants (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2012), and lawyers (Halliday and Carruthers, 2009) has been stressed by others. Here, our offering is to propose connecting questions of development surrounding the issues of global organisation, institutional change, power and neo-colonialism that we have documented in this chapter. If, as Scott (2008) suggests, the professions are the 'lords of the dance' and set the institutional rhythm for the economies they operate in, and as Bates et al. (2013) argue institutions are fundamental in determining the development paths of African and other emergent economies, the intimate embedding of GPSFs in processes of economic development, given their 'rhythm setting' potential, must be unpacked.

In this chapter, then, we have provided one take on the changing nature of the work of GPSFs. By concluding with a series of questions that, for us, form the agenda for future research in this area, we have sought to highlight the importance of emphasizing not only the intra-organizational work that underlies the global expansionism of GPSFs, but also the extra-organizational forms of agency and effects that characterize the work performed by these firms in the contemporary period. From our perspective, the crucial concern moving forward is, then, not exclusively what it means to be a professional *in* a GPSF. Rather it is what it means to be a professional or citizen affected *by* GPSFs and their work.

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Table 1: the four biggest GPSFs in the accounting, IT consulting, and legal sectors

Firms	Revenues (2013/14; US$)	Professionals	Number of countries in which offices present
Accounting			
Deloitte & Touche	34bn	210,000	150
Ernst & Young	27bn	190,000	150
KPMG	25bn	160,000	155
PriceWaterhouseCoopers	34bn	195,000	157
IT Consulting			
Accenture	30bn	319,000	120
Capgemini	11bn	145,000	40
IBM	16bn	431,212	170
CGI	10.5bn	68,000	40
Law			
Allen & Overy	1.8bn	3,200	32
Baker & McKenzie	2.54bn	11,000	47
Clifford Chance	2bn	3,300	26
Linklaters	1.85bn	2,600	20

Sources: firms' websites