2015

Globalizing the Local in the SilkAir MI 185 Crash Investigation

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> "Lighthouse worker Mohamed Adli said he heard two blasts, a crash as the plane plunged into the river, and a third blast minutes later.
>
> 'Bang! Bang! And Bang! We've never heard anything like this in the kampung before,' he told reporters." (Chia, 1998, p. 2)

Introduction: Problems of localization in the g/local

While effective definitions of culture and broader theories of intercultural complexity can help frame the work of professional communicators on worksites and projects of international importance, these definitions and theories may not fully prepare practitioners for complex motives at play in the development of some transnationally momentous documents. Moreover, even though professional communicators may benefit from working definitions of national and communal cultures, such knowledge and articulations are not enough when transnationally disparate jurisdictions intersect decision-making. These administrative assemblages (see A. Ong, 2005, 2006, 2008) function as hierarchies that complicate intercultural work in ways professional communicators have not fully considered. Intentional to the scope of this paper, I associate these jurisdictions, or administrative assemblages, with larger sovereignties, nation states that in their breadth map over and subsume the diverse cultural milieus much recent professional communication scholarship has examined without considering the role these assemblages play in distributing local power globally in outcomes that are not always just for human populations. (For such scholarship see, for example, Bokor, 2011; Dura, Singhal, & Elias, 2013; Fang & Rajkumar, 2013; Hunsinger, 2006; Price, Walton, & Petersen, 2014; Raju, 2012; Savage & Mattson, 2011; Savage & Matveeva, 2011; Sun, 2006; Towner, 2013; Voss & Flammia, 2007; Warren, 2006; Yu, 2010.)

In recent professional communication scholarship, the article that comes closest to critically addressing administrative assemblages is T. Herrington's "Global intellectual property law, human rights, and technical communication" (2013), which examined transnational legal agreements that make international property law an extraterritorial source of power over globally disparate human communities. By contrast, this paper examines the transformative role one international convention plays in granting *jurisdictional preeminence* to certain local—meaning national—civil aviation regulatory agencies, effectively globalizing their power in international airline crash investigations. Even though Herrington does not mention the power of administrative assemblages specifically, her paper draws attention to legal agreements and transnational arrangements that no doubt include global jurisdictional assemblages of great power. Importantly, although the notion of jurisdictional preeminence, which I first mentioned a moment ago, may appear redundant, I value the term for emphasizing two problematic aspects of globalizing power these locally situated administrative assemblages bring to international airline crash investigations: (a) the great degree of power that one location in the world can exert over globally dispersed Others (e.g., stakeholders, locations, communities); (b) the potential for jurisdiction to have a greater (i.e., more prominent or preeminent) role to play than expert opinion in international airline crash investigations.

As a likely intersection where disparate motives crisscross national sovereignties, airline crash investigations are rife with potentially complex jurisdictional commitments that could undermine the social-justice goals recent professional communication scholarship has linked, quite rightly in many instances, with a turn to the local, communal, and intercultural over the international or transnational (e.g., Agboka, 2012, 2013; Mattson, 2013). But what happens when the local is empowered in such a way that it is turned outward to the global and distributed in ways that impact negatively certain human populations? In a recalibration—a twist if you will—of what it means to turn to the local for socially just outcomes, this paper examines the role of jurisdictional administrative assemblages and socio-legal frameworks (internationally agreed-to conventions) that give credence to certain jurisdictions over others in a world of locations that many, myself included, have too easily brushed over as international or transnational culture and space.

The focal point for this effort is the jurisdictional assemblage of Indonesia and its civil aviation authority that, according to international convention, held lead investigative rights over a highly controversial international crash investigation—that of SilkAir MI 185, a Boeing 737-300 that nosedived into the Musi River near a *kampong*, or rural village, in South Sumatra, Indonesia on 19 December 1997 (Tan, Wee, & Sahelangi, 2007, p. 861; National Transportation Safety Committee, *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185*, 2000). The international framework that established the primacy of the Indonesian civil aviation authority in this crash (and other national civil aviation authorities in other crashes) is Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in revised editions following the 1944 inaugural convention in Chicago (e.g., 1994, 8th ed.; 2001, 9th ed.; 2010, 10th ed.). In practice, the convention serves to transform national jurisdictions (in effect, local or domestic spaces) into temporary zones of internationally momentous decision.

Put bluntly, this international convention transforms such lead agencies into momentary supranational powers that issue findings and offer recommendations that, all said, are potentially staggering in their ramifications to a transnational sphere of stakeholder communities. To be clear, this transnational sphere comprises globally distributed communities: victims' families, operating airlines, aircraft manufacturers, aircraft part manufacturers, lawyers, nondomestic regulatory authorities and government officials, among other stakeholders. Relevant to this paper, such momentary supranational powers find their clearest expression in a single work of professional communication: international airline crash investigation reports. It is one such crash investigation report that provides the basis for rhetorical analysis in this paper. (Because the 8th edition of the Annex covered the period of the MI 185 crash investigation up to publication of the MI 185 crash investigation report in late 2000, I reference it frequently in the literature review.)

The literature

In recent years, professional communication scholarship has linked culture to notions of hybridity with its indeterminacy, however challenging to decision-making, privileged (Haas, 2012; Longo, 1998; Martin, 2000; Surma, 2005, 2013, 2014; Walton & DeRenzi, 2009; Williams & Pimentel, 2012; Yu & Savage, 2013). In so doing, these approaches identified and clarified a lapse in prior and concurrent scholarship, which favored ease-of-use, largely instrumentalist approaches to culture and intercultural complexity (e.g., Gould, Zakaria, & Yusof, 2000; Hall, de Jong, & Steehouder, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Lannin, 2001; Tegtmeier, et al., 1999; Thrush, 2001a; Voss & Flammia, 2007; Warren, 2006). Though ease-of-use approaches are often less attentive to the cultural nuances of real-world communication contexts, it is not surprising that these strategies would be sought after by practitioners who require point-of-decision advice for success in intercultural communication on a need-to-know basis. Admittedly, a clear tension between these two camps of localization theory and practice in the literature reveals a split personality of sorts that will often lead international and intercultural professional communication practitioners and scholars alike to one of two problems common to that tension as either-or choice.

Either one pursues fine-grained approaches and suffers the consequences of an unwieldy depth of knowledge about culture for a communication product or else one chooses ease-of-use methods that potentially lead a project to get culture wrong at the outset. Perhaps the real issue with either approach, or the camps that have developed around them, is the sense that they function as either-or choices; that one must choose. Perhaps the better option in international and intercultural professional communication is not whether to select from these two alternatives as such but to learn what other, perhaps overlooked, g/local dynamics can add clarity and dimension to practitioners' time-sensitive choices for professional communication projects, products, and genres in the inseparable g/local as an always interdependent system.

Compellingly, Agboka (2012) did much to advance a theory of cultural complexity when he questioned culture writ large. Specifically, Agboka applied *large culture conceptualization* to fine-grained understandings of culture that would help professional communicators pursue social justice through communication projects and products that see culture as vibrant, detailed,

holistic, and multi-vocal (p. 161). While perceiving culture as multidimensional in context, and thus inherently complex, is no easy task in practice, Agboka challenged narrow, isolated definitions of culture that too often get culture wrong early on, resulting in professional communication projects, products, and genres that fail or falter because of their reductive presumptions about culture and cultural difference (pp. 159-181). A comprehensive critique, Agboka's analysis can bring interested practitioners to clarify their attitudes toward cultural communities in communication situations that had previously been approached solely as cultural summaries, brief definitions of culture that subsume local communities under stereotypical characteristics of nation states or regions. Even with Agboka's analysis considered, however, one vexing problem remains: professional communicators work in time-pressured regimes where attention to cultural nuance can easily fall away as deadlines and other aspects of the workaday world take precedence. In our professional communication scholarship, therefore, we must yet consider such time restraints until theory and practice present alternatives to one side or the other of an opposing-camps view. Such an alternative requires systemic reworking of the known premises of international and intercultural communication, which my paper, however tentatively, attempts to achieve.

As many readers might acknowledge, international airline crash investigations are fully transnational, involving stakeholders from multiple countries in circumstances that are wholly tragic, complex, and time sensitive. Such transnational investigations require expertise of SMEs from any number of national backgrounds in circumstances where prevailing culture(s) appear indeterminate even as currents and trends across systems and among organizational actors intersect the tragedy that brought so many stakeholders together. Though present at times as a type of false neutrality, objectivity, or indeterminacy that Western systems of thought are said to claim, generate, replicate, and distribute (e.g., Briggs & Sharp, 2004), transnational culture is not inherently so innocent. Although many ethical problems accompany such imperialist globalizations, other globalizations exist that could support more ethical outcomes in the world. Such nameless globalizations can be seen, oftentimes, through the need for them.

In international airline crash investigations, for example, a global network of civil aviation regulators from outside the country where the crash occurred may quite passively harbor alternative expert opinions that, though perhaps valid, lack standing to influence the course of international airline crash investigations. Without such authorization through international convention, these nondomestic regulators become effectively secondary even when their informed opinions may be fully first-rate. Because international convention gives jurisdictional preeminence to national, meaning local, civil aviation authorities, local power holds wide discretionary authority in international airline crash investigations that singularly, and sometimes negatively, impact transnationally distributed stakeholders (e.g., families of victims, operating airlines, aircraft manufacturers, and aircraft part manufacturers). Across the three published editions during and since the SilkAir accident investigation, Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (1994, 2001, 2010) has placed too much emphasis on the local for local's sake, cloaking the potential for ethical lapses in the international crash investigations Annex 13 authorizes.

What is needed instead is a more ethical globalization, a system of transnational governance that oversees all international crash investigations and subsequent publication of airline crash investigation reports. Such an arrangement would convey confidence that crash investigation reports, including findings and recommendations, emerge from consensus in a community of transnationally distributed regulatory experts invited to participate in such investigations. Such an arrangement would serve as a welcome alternative to the present regime where domestic civil aviation authorities *lead* international airline crash investigations whenever these occur within their jurisdictions and thus prepare, authorize, and distribute official international airline crash investigation reports that necessarily bear global repercussions for any number of transnationally disparate stakeholders.

As ethical actors, many professional communication practitioners and scholars acknowledge that genres of practice and study carry social (Sullivan, 1990) if not life-and-death consequences (Katz, 1992) for human populations. Thus, ease-of-use methods in isolation are potentially hazardous to the fine-grained approaches to culture that Agboka challenged us to seek out. But what of international crash investigations? As spelled out across the three editions of Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation during and since the SilkAir crash investigation (e.g., 1994, 2001, 2010), jurisdictional rights of the local, or "State of Occurrence" (Section 5.1), trump rights in the wider transnational as so many globally distributed communities, or stakeholders. Broadly understood, therefore, in the context of an international airline crash investigation, the shared goal of any transnational assemblage is to learn as much as possible about an air disaster. While this effort necessarily depends on a transnational assemblage of airline operator, aircraft manufacturer, domestic and nondomestic industry regulators and government officials (among other invited experts), only the domestic industry regulator bears authoritative standing over the facts, findings, and recommendations borne out in the international airline crash report as official account. This anomaly of assemblage and authority exists despite the overarching imperative that investigators identify the causes of an international airline crash and reveal its implications, a guiding principle that also requires, when possible, publishing corrective steps to enhance the future of flight safety.

Importantly, this last goal is not always just specific to the aircraft make and model associated with an international airline crash but often includes other generalizable lessons for civilian aviation safety (Sections 5.1 & 5.4). Despite these worthy goals, a loophole appears in the Annex 13 language authorizing the State of Occurrence as the lead regulatory body in an international airline crash investigation: "The sole objective of the investigation of an accident or incident shall be the prevention of accidents and incidents. It is not the purpose of this activity to apportion blame or liability" (Sect. 3.1). As will become clear in this rhetorical analysis of the SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation report, this language resulted in a kind of investigatory anemia whereby expert opinion sometimes had a lesser role than jurisdictional preeminence.

No matter how much Section 3.1 might appear as an escape hatch from ethical culpability, the passage does not change the influence crash investigation reports wield over subsequent lawsuits, which necessarily rely on these reports as official documents. Referring to a separate crash investigation, for example, Wong (2002) related one lawyer's view of the legal implications of official publication of the crash investigation reports for Singapore Airlines SQ

006, a Boeing 747 that crashed on takeoff from Taiwan's Chiang Kai-shek International in October 2000. Pertinent to U.S. participation as the State of Manufacture—much like the U.S. role in the SilkAir MI 185 case—the U.S. legal system proscribes published findings in such reports from serving as evidence in court. Nevertheless, the lawyer went on to observe that publication of the airline crash investigation reports effectively freed up the case, allowing plaintiffs to obtain information that defendants had once held close in deference to the active investigation(s). In this way, the lawyer noted that facts presented in crash investigation reports, no matter how counterintuitive because of the proscription, yet play a role in U.S. courts, transforming crash investigation reports into "a road map" for litigation (para. 3-6). Therefore, although Section 3.1 of Annex 13 grants statutory cover to a lead regulatory agency from the legal mash of lawsuits that follow publication of airline crash investigation reports, it is nonetheless clear that such reports can, in fact, steer subsequent litigation internationally. Even as international and intercultural professional communicators recognize that U.S. courts, with their own rules of what counts as evidence, often factor heavily in such litigation (namely lawsuits against U.S.-based aircraft and/or U.S.-based aircraft part manufacturers), we should also note how international airline crash investigation reports published elsewhere in the world influence, however indirectly, that legal process in the U.S. In fact, such effects become examples of the local (i.e., State of Occurrence) affecting any number of globally disparate communities of stakeholders across the world, not least in courts of law.

Indeed, after the release of the SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation report by the National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC), Indonesia's main civil aviation authority with jurisdictional primacy over the crash site, one news report concluded that the absence of report language supporting a widely publicized theory that pilot suicide had caused the crash led lawyers to pursue a competing theory: mechanical malfunction. Though not irrefutably supported in the facts of the MI 185 crash investigation report, this alternative theory—that a faulty rudder assembly might have caused the crash—drew strength from findings of a prior airline crash investigation, the 1994 crash of a U.S. Airways Boeing 737 outside Pittsburgh International Airport in the U.S. (Rudder theory).

Elsewhere, news reportage of family members' reactions to the official MI 185 crash investigation report captured the emotional impact that perhaps the official crash investigation report alone could bring to those most directly affected. Perhaps no contrast was as stark as the reactions of family members of the two pilots. Responding to the report's publication, the wife of Captain Tsu Way Ming who, along with all passengers and flight crew, died in the crash, found a measure of comfort in NTSC report language that gave no evidence to support the popular news media claim that her husband had intentionally crashed the flight (Vasoo, 2000). In a 2004 news article, by contrast, Dearnaley revealed that many families of the victims had ceased hoping that the Indonesian civil aviation authority would revisit the facts of the case and revive the investigation even after news surfaced that Captain Tsu may have had greater gambling losses than previously reported in international media. Dearnaley added that the father of copilot First Officer Duncan Ward "told the Herald the family was already convinced Captain Tsu had forced down the plane after subduing Duncan or locking him out of the cockpit so did not need another investigation." Regardless of Annex 13 language to the contrary, it is clear, therefore, that official international airline crash investigation reports are highly valued, not just

for steering subsequent litigation but for prompting emotive responses that could, at least potentially, reopen an investigation.

Assemblages that make the local global

An ethical conundrum rests on the hierarchical reversal that sees the State of Occurrence placed above other national, regional, or transnational authorities that could harbor other informed opinions about the facts of an international airline crash, including its causes and implications. For outside stakeholders (e.g., families of some crash victims as well as employees in a separate assemblage of non-domestic regulatory bodies and manufacturers), the privileging of a single jurisdiction over the transnational collective of stakeholders may prove quite unethical in some international crash investigations. The privileging of jurisdictional power of certain domestic powers over others—let's call it the internationalization, or globalization, of the local—makes working definitions of culture and broader theories of cultural complexity quite problematic for international and intercultural professional communication practice and scholarship that relies on unidirectional notions of localization and internationalization. Perhaps the complexity of such cases is less about always favoring or choosing a direction (i.e., whether to localize as an inward continuum or internationalize as an outward continuum) than about recognizing the many unpredictable shifts that alternate and fluctuate in g/local contexts. Even when international and intercultural professional communicators think they have picked a more ethical option, g/local contexts have a way of globally distributing misguided attempts to empower the local. Thus, what had appeared to me—perhaps too simplistically—as taking the more ethical choice of moving closer to the local has become, on closer analysis, the Janus-faced anomaly that is g/local, which is a problem far more prevalent than our international and intercultural professional communication scholarship would seem to suggest.

Here, T. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1973/1983) offers us, as international and intercultural professional communications practitioners and scholars, that theory of reversal that not only parallels that g/local transition I have identified but actually accounts for it as that process when the local turns global in contexts, practices, and genres that matter to our work. Indeed, this dynamic reversal as enigma signifies the ethical challenges that international crash investigation reports, and other genres of similar global reach, invoke when they are so dependent on jurisdictional preeminence to authorize facts, findings, and recommendations contained in their pages. Specifically, Adorno, in emphasizing the inseparability of the existential subject and object, argues that the subject's sense of self, its identity, becomes fully dependent on its own controlling perspective of the object, or other. Even as the subject is so dependent on the object, or other, for that sense of self, Adorno held that the subject—we might say "I"—cannot exist without the object, or other, without resulting in an existential crisis of the self (p. 139).

When reimagined as applied theory for international and intercultural professional communication, Adornian inseparability finds its g/local counterpart in this enigmatic reversal that operates as a potentially unethical turn in our international and intercultural projects, products, and genres. Much as the subject fails to perceive its dependence on the object in conventional Adornian theory, this reversal in g/local contexts results in globalizing transitions that distribute the local outward, whether as the multiple transnational meanings of international airline crash investigation reports or other similarly situated genres that allow the local to take

the lead and impact other locals—even Others—across the world. A type of subject, this self—now the local of international and intercultural professional communication practice and scholarship—becomes, in certain situations and conditions, a platform allowing jurisdictional preeminence to perhaps cause great harm to stakeholders in their separate local communities. In a process similar to when the subject "I" does great harm subsuming the "Other" for the sake of self-awareness, the jurisdictionally preeminent local in international airline crash investigations holds too much power over the global, increasing the potential for social injustice should a national (i.e., local) civil aviation authority falter in its lead capacity on an international airline crash investigation.

Ong (2005) proves instructive, as well, when weighing the ethical dilemmas that often follow such reversals, or the globalizing transitions from local to global. As I apply it, Ong's analysis of assemblages reveals the right to power when one locally situated regulatory agency holds jurisdictional preeminence over an international airline crash investigation. Having linked such administrative powers not just to domestic, regional, and global governance but also to organizational collectives (e.g., manufacturers, financiers, regulators, educators, etc.), Ong theorized that strategies which establish, build, or revitalize economic and intellectual capacity in certain well-situated locations tend to perpetuate injustices elsewhere, due to ongoing, particularly intense development in those privileged sites (p. 338). Likewise, in as much as international airline crash investigations privilege the regulatory authority of State of Occurrence over other invited and participating entities, a kind of disequilibrium takes place. This disequilibrium legitimizes the local regulatory authority in the State of Occurrence, including its presentation of facts as well as its findings and recommendations. Because informed opinions of experts in nondomestic regulatory agencies lack equal footing, as determined in Annex 13 language (e.g., 1994, 8th edition), the present system lacks credibility.

What is missing, therefore, is a transnationally viable system of checks and balances able to legitimize the facts, findings, and recommendations of international airline crash investigations based on all available expert opinion. Building on Ong's observations of negative effects on human populations when regional, national, and communal assemblages rely too much on administrative efficiencies and empowerment of privileged sites that engage the global (2005, pp. 338-339; 2006, p. 75-118), I recommend an alternative, transnationally viable system of checks and balances with corrective power to support authentically ethical outcomes for all stakeholders. Separate from needed revisions to Annex 13 that would alter the present arrangement of local jurisdictional preeminence over international airline crash investigations, other more ethical globalizations might help improve the situation for stakeholders. These alternatives—what I'll term *counter assemblage(s)*—may help interrogate and even recalibrate the current system for more socially just outcomes.

Although the international news media, when doing its job, may be the most popularly obvious choice for as an advocatory counter assemblage, other globally viable options, including regulatory counter assemblages, are needed particularly as workplace contexts to which intercultural and professional communication practitioners and scholars can contribute. Of course, a comprehensive revision of Annex 13 may be the best way to advance a regulatory counter assemblage whereby transnational regulators no longer give credence to jurisdictional

preeminence but rather privilege collaborative, transnational exchanges among authorized experts invited to participate on international airline crash investigations. Such a change would no doubt lead to the production of more socially just international airline crash investigation reports as an outcome for the greater good.

Even though internationally complex airline crash investigations yet rely on direction from the lead regulatory agency of the nation with jurisdiction over the crash site, such investigations do involve non-domestic regulatory agencies invited to serve in an advisory capacity. For instance, in airline crash investigations outside the United States, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) often fills this role. "International Aviation Safety Program" (2000), a set of presentation slides produced by the U.S. NTSB in the same year as the SilkAir MI 185 accident investigation report, explains the role of NTSB participation in locations outside the U.S.:

> **Accident Investigation** – The NTSB is responsible, consistent with U.S. Department of State requirements, to fulfill the obligations of the United States presented in Annex 13 to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation.
> For an accident or incident in a foreign state involving civil aircraft of a U.S. operator, or of U.S. registry or manufacture, the state of occurrence is responsible for the investigation. The U.S. Government participates in these investigations through an NTSB appointed Accredited Representative and a team of advisors named by the NTSB [emphasis and missing punctuation in original] (p. 38)

Thus, NTSB-appointed experts participate for a variety of reasons on international airline crash investigations outside the U.S., including when, as was the case with the Boeing 737 of the SilkAir MI 185 crash, the crash investigation focused on an aircraft manufactured in the U.S.

Methodology

With disparate expert opinions present in the *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185* (National Transportation Safety Committee, 2000), this rhetorical analysis relies on close reading and the premise that what is absent from that report is perhaps as important as what is present. Here, I value Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia and Slack, Miller & Doak's argument for an articulation theory of communication (1981; Slack, Miller & Doak, 1993). Together, these theories allow discordant voices to coalesce into meaningful traces within and around a central genre, the international airline crash investigation report just mentioned. Thus, the nondomestic regulatory expert invited to participate in an advisory role on the SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation, while lacking the jurisdictional authority granted the lead national civil aviation agency under Annex 13, yet factors prominently in this rhetorical analysis. When noted, these cacophonous disruptions in the report stand out in stark relief within a genre that globally disparate stakeholders would quite likely expect to present a unified presentation of facts, findings, and recommendations. Certainly, the *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185* effects cacophony, the result of the incongruous messages brought on when jurisdictional preeminence denies nondomestic experts that level of authority that their relevant knowledge and informed arguments should secure. To be clear, locating such tensions in the *Aircraft Accident Report:*

SilkAir MI 185 is not meant to undermine the findings or recommendations of the NTSC, which is the Indonesian civil aviation authority.

While the facts, findings, and recommendations in the NTSC's official crash investigation report may very well be as accurate an assessment as humanly possible under the Annex 13 regime, this analysis faults that international convention for granting jurisdictional preeminence to any single agency when the stakeholders—particularly families of victims—live in transnationally disparate locations. As international and intercultural professional communicators, we must reform genres that global publics expect, however problematically, should bring conclusive evidence, clear findings, and purposeful recommendations to more effectively alleviate human suffering. All told, providing a greater measure of comfort to the families of victims and distributing valuable corrective knowledge—whether to airlines, aircraft manufacturers, aircraft part manufacturers, domestic and nondomestic regulatory authorities, or government officials—must take precedence over matters of jurisdiction.

I begin the close reading that follows with a brief statement to help situate the tragedy alongside my own life story. Though I do not have any direct family connections to the crash of SilkAir MI 185, this approach represents my best effort to remember, and thus forefront, the human tragedy that necessitated the international airline crash investigation report at the heart of this rhetorical analysis. Importantly, Dragga & Voss (2001, 2003) faulted similar reports for taking the focus off human tragedy through impersonal visuals and tabular data that too often dehumanized, and yet dehumanizes, the injured and deceased. Although I do not study visuals in this paper, Dragga & Voss's appeal for humanistic relevance informs this effort as I identify problems that jurisdictional preeminence creates for stakeholders in the *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185* (NTSC, 2000). Adapting Surma's feminist and cosmopolitan ethic of care for Others (2013, e.g., pp. 27, 66, 100-101, 109; 2014), I contend that the loss of life from airline disasters must necessarily compel great care, not just during the initial international airline crash investigations but in the related reports that professional communication practitioners produce for civil aviation regulators. The imperative to take care, an ethical response to human suffering, is especially integral to working toward social-justice outcomes for globally disparate stakeholders as readers of professional communication genres. In much the same way that international airline crash investigations exemplify forensic care for crash sites, international and intercultural professional communicators should care for transnationally dispersed human populations through related professional communication genres, such as international airline crash investigation reports.

"Meaningful local:" A personal anecdote

As a U.S. citizen working in Singapore at the time of the SilkAir MI 185 crash, I turned 27 years old just days before the tragedy. Like my Singaporean friends and colleagues, I was deeply troubled by news reports out of Indonesia. In the weeks and months that followed, our individual and collective expressions of sympathy for the families of victims most of us had never met would emerge in conversations over coffee at nearby hawker centers and canteens. Though I eventually left Singapore for the U.S., ongoing interest in the case led me to pursue this rhetorical analysis of the *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185* (NTSC, 2000).

More on the SilkAir MI 185 disaster

SilkAir MI 185 was a Boeing 737-300 that nosedived into Musi River near a *kampong* (village) in South Sumatra, Indonesia on 19 December 1997 (Tan, Wee, & Sahelangi, 2007, p. 861). Comprising 97 passengers, 7 flight crew—including 5 cabin crew and 2 pilots—the victims numbered 104 from 14 nations (Lee, 2000, p. 2; Tan et al., 2007, p. 863). Thus, circumstances of the tragedy were truly complex and the human communities affected spanned the globe. It is important, here, to remind readers that even though families are the most directly impacted stakeholders, their voices were not part of the official report language. Even so, major threads in news media reports covered these, and other, aspects of the tragedy: Had the Pilot-in-Command switched off the cockpit voice recorder? Did the flight data recorder cease to work due to mechanical failure or human interference? Had the Pilot-in-Command positioned the aircraft in a suicidal dive? Was mechanical failure to blame for the tragedy? Such public controversy gave family members little comfort even long after publication of the official crash investigation report had done little to clarify what had caused the accident. Into this mix of uncertainty, other powerful interests—e.g., corporations, lawyers, domestic and nondomestic government agencies, and courts in transnationally disparate jurisdictions—would interact without doing much to resolve the uncertainty that marked nearly all aspects surrounding the crash and the investigation that followed (see, for example, Johnstone, 2001, p. 15; Lim, 2001, p. 3; 'Faulty Valve' Ruling, 2004; Fracassini, 2004).

Analysis of the official SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation report

Prior professional communication scholarship about aircraft crashes has shown that overall context, or situational awareness, matters to communication both for airline pilots and air-traffic controllers. For example, spoken words in cockpits and air-traffic control towers can be misconstrued under the many stressors of commercial aviation (e.g., Cushing, 1994; Thrush, 2001b). Yet when crash investigators are left with few words, if any, in the official record of flight-deck communication, the work of recapturing and thus interpreting the level of situational awareness on the flight deck becomes all the more challenging. Such were the circumstances in the aftermath of the SilkAir MI 185 crash, a crash that would vex the crash investigators charged to find meaning in the puzzling circumstances of the disaster.

With the great mystery facing investigators at the forefront, I begin this rhetorical analysis section with the following report language from Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC):

> This was an extremely difficult and challenging investigation due to the degree of destruction of the wreckage, the difficulties presented by the accident site and the lack of information from the flight recorders during the final moments of the accident sequence. The analysis is drawn from facts compiled in the engineering and systems, operations, human factor aspects of the investigation. (NTSC, p. 28)

I add this statement to further refute any suggestion that this paper seeks to challenge the credibility of the report. This paper does not make that argument, but instead claims that, as

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written, Annex 13, the international convention that grants jurisdictional preeminence to a local (often meaning national) civil aviation authority, is bound to make complex international airline crashes all the more difficult to solve, due to the positioning of nondomestic regulatory experts and their informed opinions in second position to the jurisdictionally preeminent domestic agency experts. In other words, Indonesia's NTSC could be replaced in name with the United States' NTSB or Japan's NTSB, and the same systemic flaw could potentially lead to problems in establishing a unified, collaborative investigation where facts, findings, and recommendations take precedence over jurisdiction. It is neither the location (i.e., Indonesia) nor necessarily the competency of any civil aviation authority but rather Annex 13 as written, which leads to the problem of jurisdictional preeminence in international airline crash investigations.

Discord under front cover: Tensions among transnationally disparate regulators

Acknowledging, as noted previously, Bakhtin's heteroglossia (1981) and Slack, Miller & Doak's articulation theory of communication (1993), professional communicators should think critically about the role formal conventions, like Annex 13, play in granting local administrative assemblages globalizing powers that, however temporary, undermine collaboration on published professional genres that stakeholders and g/local publics alike quite rightly expect to speak as one on key facts, findings, and recommendations. Intriguing results follow, however, when discord emerges, under front cover of such genres, in the form of competing stories about what really happened. As I review such moments in the crash investigation report of *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185*, I am reminded of Spivak's analysis of the Rani of Sirmur (1985, 1999), an indigenous ruler who appeared briefly in British imperial records but then disappeared without fanfare, apart from an enigmatic entry that seemed to imply that the Rani had committed *Sati*, or ritualized widow self-immolation. Although Spivak would find evidence, in time, to the contrary (1999), her point remains valid as clarifying theory. That is, in addition to any included details, what is left unsaid in formal documents becomes elemental to official accounts that go to press too soon, before real disagreements are resolved and before all relevant meanings are fairly vetted for inclusion.

For professional communicators weighing the tensions that I now review, consider that just one side of the story—that of Indonesia's NTSC—is deemed official by international convention Annex 13. Found in Appendices M and N of the report, by contrast, the nondomestic regulators' comments, however relevant they may be to the investigation, need not be accepted, or even fully considered, by Indonesia's lead civil aviation authority. For this reason, we see a bit of Spivak's subaltern (1994) in the efforts nondomestic regulators take to be heard from the hierarchically lesser appendices of the official crash investigation report. For the record, Appendix M is "Singapore Accredited Representative's Comments on Draft Final Report" and Appendix N is "USA Accredited Representative Comments on Draft Final Report." As separate informed opinions in reply to the draft final report, these statements might be expected to stand on their own merits. Instead, Indonesia's NTSC and its representative(s) have inserted evaluative commentary supporting, refuting, or even ignoring these nondomestic experts' material assertions. This practice disrupts the cohesive power of these expert opinions as stakeholders read such perspectives as an interrupted sequence. In fact, Indonesia's NTSC, as lead agency in

the investigation, plays the role of interrupter rather than professional collaborator in these hierarchically subordinate sections of the crash investigation report.

Singapore accredited representative's comments as alternative to the official record

Singapore's accredited representative at the time, Captain Tan Wee Lee (not to be confused with Captain Tsu Way Ming of SilkAir MI 185), replied to the the draft copy of the report briefly in Appendix M, a 7-page section of the final SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation report. (This page count included commentary from Indonesia's NTSC.)   Addressed to Professor Oetarjo Diran, then Investigator-in-Charge of Indonesia's NTSC, Lee begins his letter amicably enough, stating "We are pleased that the NTSC has concluded the investigation" (M-2), yet it is clear in the following paragraph that any recommendations provided from Singapore are at the sole discretion of NTSC to consider, pursue, or deny:

> As requested, our comments on the draft final report incorporating comments by SilkAir and CAAS [Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore] are attached for your consideration. They also include comments from the Singapore Police, to whom you asked us to extend a copy of the draft final report. (M-2)

Functioning in his capacity as Singapore's accredited representative on behalf of Singapore's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Lee focused mainly on this goal: The role of a separate probe by the aviation security authorities, i.e., the [Singapore] police, into the background of the pilots and the view that the NTSC's report should not address those aspects in any significant way. To this recommended change, the NTSC representative replied, "The aviation security authorities were notified taking into account the findings of the Human Performance & Factors Group in July 1999" (M-3). Yet even as the Singapore representative contends that information about the pilots should be left out of the "technical report," he raises points for clarification about both pilots' backgrounds. In the following sequence, Singapore's representative responds to that part of the crash investigation report that focuses on the financial situation of Captain Tsu Way Ming, the PIC, or Pilot-in-Command, before suggesting that more be done to examine the financial services obtained by First Officer Duncan Ward:

> 3. The Singapore Police has commented that two statements in the report relating to the financial position of the pilot are inaccurate:
> *Page 25 paragraph 1.18.3.3*
> The statement "*During 1990-1997 the PIC* [Pilot-in-Command] *traded over 10 million shares, where the value and the volume of the trading increased significantly every year*" should be corrected. The value and volume of the PIC's share trading did not increase every year but fluctuated during this period. (. . .).
> *Page 43 para 2.14.3*
> The statement "*The data available also showed that his loans and debts were greater than his realizable assets*" is incorrect. The pilot's realizable assets were higher than his loans and debts.
> 4. The Singapore Police also recommends that the report include mention of the capital gains made by the pilot over the years through the sales of his houses. In addition, it

should also mention that the First Officer had another insurance bought in 1992. (M-3, M-4, all emphases in original)

To these suggestions from the Singapore accredited representative, the NTSC through its representative replied, "The First Officer's insurance policy bought in 1992 was not relevant to the accident" (M-4).

Although Singapore's representative suggested other changes to the report, the portion about First Officer Duncan Ward's insurance policy is the only place where the NTSC representative responded directly to those suggested changes. Around the Singapore representative's other suggested changes, stark language speaks to the tragedy in its matter-of-fact portrayal of the crash site, attempting to account for its sheer complexity:

> *Page 9 paragraph 1.12.1.2 & Page 28 para 2.2*:
> The report states that "*examination of the recovered passenger oxygen generators revealed no evidence of activation from which it concluded that the aircraft did not experience depressurization in flight.*"
> We suggest to insert a line before it, "*Not all of the passenger oxygen generators were recovered.*" (M-4, M-5, all emphases in original)
> Page 6 Section 1.11.1
> 6. We propose to change the third paragraph to read as "The FDR [Flight Data Recorder] module was first cleaned and then packed in a container filled with clean water (to prevent the tape *medium* from drying out and becoming brittle). It was hand-carried to the United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) HQ's readout facility in Washington, D.C., USA." This is to avoid readers having the misimpression that the FDR tape was damaged because the FDR module was carried to the NTSB immersed in river water." (M-5, all emphases in original)

All told, the exchanges between the Singapore accredited representative and the NTSC representative were primarily cordial, but these exchanges, as well as the comments that went without reply, capture on paper the power that Annex 13 affords the local in the administrative assemblage of the lead investigation team in Indonesia. All suggested changes from the Singapore accredited representative (and from the U.S. accredited representative) are subject to review and approval or rejection from Indonesia's NTSC and its appointed representative(s). It is clear that this is the case regardless of the subject matter expertise of nondomestic regulatory experts.

USA accredited representative's comments as alternative to the official record

The U.S. accredited representative at the time, Acting Chairman Jim Hall of the National Transportation Safety Board, responded to a draft copy of the final crash investigation report at length, comprising Appendix N, a 57-page section of the final SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation report. (This total page count included commentary from Indonesia's NTSC.) Addressed to Professor Oetarjo Diran as well, Hall's letter begins with a paragraph recalling the NTSB's invited role in the investigation:

> The National Transportation Safety Board participated in the National Transportation Safety Committee's (NTSC) investigation of the December 19, 1997, accident involving SilkAir flight MI185 as the State of Design and Manufacture of the accident airplane, a Boeing 737, as provided in Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation. The Safety Board provided a U.S. Accredited Representative and technical advisors from its investigative staff as resources to the investigation. Additionally, Boeing, the Federal Aviation Administration, and Pratt and Whitney provided technical advisors. (N-2)

This passage of Hall's letter provides a fairly succinct overview of how the U.S. NTSB and other nondomestic agencies perceive their roles. Hall links the NTSB's support role to Annex 13, noting that the NTSB "*participated in* the National Transportation Safety Committee's (NTSC) investigation" and that the U.S. NTSB "provided a U.S. Accredited Representative and technical advisors from its investigative staff as *resources* to the investigation" (N-2, emphases mine). Yet, Hall frontloads the lengthy letter, indicating the U.S. NTSB's primary disagreement with the draft final copy of the crash investigation report:

> Of greatest concern are the statements in the draft final report that the "NTSC is unable to find the reasons for the departure of the aircraft from its cruising level of FL350 [flight level 35,000 ft.] and the reasons for the stoppage of the flight recorders" and the "investigation has yielded no evidence to explain the cause of the accident." Additionally, the draft final report contains recommendations that are not supported by the factual evidence. (N-2)

Given the length of Hall's letter to the NTSC, I focus in my close reading on the significant points of contention in the comment and response-to-comment exchanges between the U.S. NTSB and Indonesia's NTSC. Again, the goal of highlighting these differences is not to take sides as to whether Indonesia's NTSC or the U.S. NTSB is correct in their separate interpretations of the SilkAir MI 185 crash but rather to reveal how problematic it is both to stakeholder and g/local publics' confidence when disagreement appears in formal international airline crash investigation reports such as that of MI 185. Fair or not, stakeholders and g/local publics expect such reports to form professional, rhetorically unified forensic accounts of what really happened to accident aircraft, and major differences across expert opinion, if left unresolved due to jurisdictional preeminence, only undermines confidence in official accounts.

At the crux of the US accredited representative's reply to the final draft copy of the report is the notion of probability. Note the role of "more likely" in the following passage:

> As further discussed in this summary, when all of the investigative evidence is considered, it leads to the conclusions that: 1) no airplane-related mechanical malfunctions or failures caused or contributed to the accident, and 2) the accident can be explained by intentional pilot action. Specifically, a) the accident airplane's flight profile is consistent with sustained manual nose-down flight control inputs; b) the evidence suggests that the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) was intentionally disconnected; c) recovery of the airplane was possible but not attempted; and d) it is more likely that the nose-down flight control inputs were made by the captain than by the first officer.

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By contrast, at the crux of the NTSC's responses to the U.S. NTSB's concerns is the argument that as long as there is doubt, owing to the complexity of the crash investigation site and the absence of data from the CVR (cockpit voice recorder) and DFDR (digital flight data recorder), there is no way to prove the U.S. NTSB's claims. Here, the NTSC explains this critical difference of approach in its reply to the U.S. NTSB:

> *The NTSC is aware that others may draw different conclusions from the same set of facts. With reference to the conclusions referred to in the statement "when all of the investigative evidence is considered, it leads to the conclusions _", the NTSC has a set of different conclusions based on the evidence available"* (N-6, emphasis in original).

This tension between the U.S. NTSB's preference for arguments of probability and the NTSC's preference for irrefutable evidence appears again in this Appendix N exchange, beginning with a comment from the U.S. NTSB (first paragraph) and followed by a response from the NTSC-appointed representative (bulleted list):

The NTSC draft Final Report suggests that the cessation of the CVR and DFDR could in each case be explained by a broken wire. Although this is technically correct, the probability of two such unrelated wire breaks occurring several minutes apart and affecting only the CVR and DFDR is so highly improbable that it cannot be considered a realistic possibility. (N-9)

- *The draft final report stated that "A break in the wire supplying power to the CVR could also lead to CVR stoppage without any sound being recorded. However, from the limited quantity of wiring recovered, it could not be determined if a break in the wiring had caused the CVR to stop." The report did not conclude or rule out that the stoppage of the CVR was due to a broken wire.*
- *The draft final report did not make any statement linking FDR stoppage with wire breakage as implied by NTSB.* (N-9, emphases in original)

Clearly, the most controversial points of contention emerge from the role of the PIC (Pilot-in-Command). For example, across 10 uninterrupted pages, the U.S. NTSB presents a comprehensive background of the professional life of Captain Tsu Way Ming, including the following "four operational events," one of which resulted in his demotion from a recently obtained appointment as a line instructor pilot (LIP):

- On March 3, 1997, a go-around was performed on an approach into Manado, Indonesia;
- On May 17, 1997, a flight was conducted with a dispatch authorization for an inoperative parking brake;
- On June 24, 1997, *the captain pulled, and then reset, the CVR circuit breaker before a flight*; and
- On November 20, 1997, an overweight landing occurred in Singapore. (N-25, emphasis mine)

In response to the U.S. NTSB's commentary, the NTSC-appointed representative responded, "All group reports have been analyzed and integrated into the final report. Specific details such as those stated above were not deemed necessary for inclusion in the final report" (M-28). In fact, the published copy of the official crash investigation report does include brief reference to the PIC's actions on June 24, 1997. In Section 1.18.3.2 Professional Background with SilkAir, the report describes the action that prompted Captain Tsu's demotion as "an operational incident," referring readers to Appendix I for more details (p. 25). Appendix I, includes a timeline, "Professional Events in the Pilot-in-Command's Career During 1997" that includes more context on the pulled circuit breaker incident:

> While preparing for the flight in the flightdeck, the PIC had asked the first officer some questions about the Manado incident [first bullet point above]. He then pulled the circuit breaker for the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) in order to preserve the previous conversation between the two pilots as evidence for the ongoing investigation into the Manado incident. The PIC decided to reset the circuit breaker before takeoff. The flight continues uneventfully. (I-2)

These interactions do not serve to resolve the mystery of what really happened aboard SilkAir MI 185, but instead lead to educated guesses that prompt experts to hold divergent views. While it is difficult to know what really happened aboard SilkAir MI 185, professional communication practitioners and scholars can yet benefit from understanding how transnational conventions, such as Annex 13, can either serve to productively unify or else problematically disrupt expert opinion that will, when published, go on to impact stakeholders—most importantly family members of victims—for the rest of their lives.

Although it is tempting to take a stance in support either of the official account of Indonesia's NTSC or of some alternative expert opinion from one or more nondomestic agencies, it's more important for international and intercultural professional communication practitioners and scholars to see these disruptions across expert opinion as tensions of the g/local. Whether arguments of probability or arguments of certainty matter most in these cases, Annex 13, as worded at the time of the SilkAir MI 185 tragedy, established a system that placed jurisdictional preeminence higher than collaborated consensus among globally disparate regulatory agencies.

Although not necessarily problematic in all international airline crash investigations, this arrangement yet increases the likelihood that local, meaning national, regulatory agencies will draw mistaken, even unchecked, conclusions. A system of checks and balances that would serve as a counter assemblage may lessen the potential for such investigatory dilemmas. Comprised perhaps of transnationally distributed, yet somehow productively authorized regulatory agencies, such a counter assemblage might lead international airline crash investigations to a more socially just future. For victims' families, such a future might at least portend greater confidence in the processes that follow these human tragedies—not least in the collaborative work of diverse experts, both domestic and nondomestic, in establishing facts, determining findings, and providing recommendations in international airline crash investigation reports.

Conclusion

Globally, local administrative assemblages are more tied to international conventions than our international and intercultural scholarship has tended to acknowledge. Although this paper has focused on the potential negative consequences of an international convention, Annex 13 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation and its numerous editions after 1944 (1st ed.), the reality is that not all outcomes of such arrangement are inherently faulty. For example, Sapp, Savage, & Mattson recently edited an *RPCG* special issue on human rights (2013). They framed that issue with their introductory essay, "After the International Bill of Human Rights (IBHR)," which placed emphasis on the International Bill of Human Rights as an impetus for global social justice efforts that followed, not just in the international sphere but across g/local publics.

Perhaps they would agree that ethical hazards necessarily intersect the effects of many such international agreements on various issues, including human rights. These effects, or what Balakrishnan (2003) called "instrument effects" (p. 77), include top-down controls over local communities, as brought about through transnational agreement. But they also include a parallel track that Balakrishnan did not explore as clearly. Whenever agencies in regional, national, or community contexts—again empowered by international agreement—make decisions that directly affect globally dispersed stakeholders and g/local publics, the power of the local becomes transnational. In the case of Annex 13, such an arrangement—the "instrument effects," applying Balakrishnan's understanding—can result in unethical reversals that empower the local via jurisdictional preeminence as an administrative assemblage that influences globally disparate lives, not least the families of the victims of international airline crashes. To correct such effects, appropriate changes to Annex 13 would enable a stronger system of checks and balances for international civil aviation. Such a system might very well require new arrangements in the transnational sphere that would no doubt involve other instrument effects that would also need recalibration through ongoing transnational collaboration. But what is the best aspect of the transnational sphere if not for so many human communities to work together for ethical outcomes?

In this paper, I have found corrective potential in the ideal of counter assemblage(s) as arrangements of governments, organizations, and communities to support socially just outcomes for globally dispersed stakeholders and g/local publics. Though I first coined the term counter assemblage(s) in a proposal for an undelivered conference paper a few years ago, I suspect that these humanizing arrangements can already be found at various stages of development in the many partnerships that span g/local publics. For example, we might think of the ethical achievements of civil society organizations (CSOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that raise funds through private donations and public funding, perhaps achieving a measure of social justice while working alongside sympathetic governments and businesses. Such arrangements are not without their own hazards, however: an unethical director here, an overbearing corporate sponsor there, a duplicitous government official over there—not to mention unexpected events such as wars and natural disasters.

Still, as an ideal unblemished by human foibles and the admittedly unexpected, counter assemblages, as I perceive them, hold promise as the new workplace cultures that could give

international and intercultural professional communicators opportunities to put their practices to work for ethical outcomes. In cases such as the crash of SilkAir MI 185, these outcomes could very well include bringing comfort to families of victims through critical work on formal reports and other vital professional genres. Such families need to know that, in particular, formal crash investigation reports emerge through good faith consensus-building across expert opinion without jurisdictional preeminence, a kind of extraterritorial privilege, getting in the way, however infrequently, of the facts of international airline crash investigations.

To conclude, I suspect that *Aircraft Accident Report: SilkAir MI 185* (NTSC, 2000) is hardly an outlier and will continue not to be so until Annex 13 is revised with language that establishes a system of transnational checks and balances that limits the right to power of any jurisdictionally preeminent local agency. To focus on an either-or divide that favors the local over the transnational or else the transnational over the local without great care for the systemic effects is a sure way to reinforce social injustice in the world. Even while drafting this paper, an international civil aviation tragedy took place that may very well involve greater uncertainty than the SilkAir MI 185 crash, or perhaps more than any civil aviation crash in history. Across globally dispersed communities, many of us ask what happened to Malaysia Airlines MH 370. Did the Boeing 747 crash into the sea? If so, which sea or ocean? Did the plane land somewhere? If so, where? If just some of these facts were known, the work toward a formal report of some kind could begin in earnest. Perhaps other reports will result even in the absence of knowing. When they do, who will lead the investigations?

The answers may very well depend on where the aircraft is found—whether in international waters or within the geographical jurisdiction of one country. According to Sections 5.3 in the most recent edition of Annex 13 (2010), we can infer that Malaysia would most likely take the lead role if MH 370 is located in international waters:

> When the location of the accident or the serious incident cannot definitely be established as being in the territory of any State, the State of Registry shall institute and conduct any necessary investigation of the accident or serious incident. However, it may delegate the whole or any part of the investigation to another State by mutual arrangement and consent. (5-2)

Given the international effort to locate MH 370, whether or not a formal crash investigation report is ever prepared, there will no doubt be many formal reports prepared on the subject. While the resources of many nations support the effort to locate MH 370, the final formal report, whatever its purpose once the facts are known, may very well be subject to some of the same problems that jurisdictional preeminence created in the case of the crash of SilkAir MI 185.

As international and intercultural professional communication practitioners and scholars, we can work to understand intersections of international convention and jurisdictional preeminence, as well as other administrative assemblages that impact g/local stakeholders and publics. Though a tired refrain I know, there are no easy answers. The work that we do, including the documents we create and analyze, cannot break from context. More and more, the international conventions and agreements that globally dispersed communities sign onto will affect professional

communication practitioners and scholars even as we try to catch up in our understanding of these complex contexts through our own discipline-specific efforts at situational awareness.

Though establishing and contributing to counter assemblages may one day help us more effectively humanize the global effects of our work, we can at least begin to study the globalizing systems that yet constrain us, including the international conventions that prop up these systems. While it is yet to be seen whether counter assemblages, by contrast, might fully develop into viable systems of checks and balances, there is much that we still don't know about the instrument effects of such efforts. Regardless of the long-term viability of such counter assemblages, international and intercultural professional communicators can yet strive to act collaboratively for the greater good, even when local administrative assemblages, like that of the SilkAir MI 185 crash investigation, take preeminence. For now, I see the future of international and intercultural professional communication practice and scholarship as requiring more intentionality about the meaning of global, and thus globalizing, assemblages. Whether administrative or otherwise, such assemblages alter our understanding of what it means to be authentically local, even in our workplace cultures. In the case of the SilkAir MI 185 tragedy, it was not only the crash that proved enigmatic but the g/local human systems that surrounded the crash investigation. For international and intercultural professional communicators, such disruptive human systems make reducing international and intercultural communication down to the local a more difficult proposition. Recognizing, instead, that the present and future *is* g/local is probably a necessary first step to begin unraveling many of the genre-specific mysteries that yet face international and intercultural professional communication practice and scholarship.

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