Cross-Cultural-Management

Authors revisited:

Early Conceptions that made its way:

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Edward T. Hall

Excerpt of MASTER'S THESIS

"Managing International Cooperations: Evaluation of models measuring national cultural differences and their implications for business, illustrated with the examples of India, Japan & Germany"

[The Title of this publication deviates from the original title of the chapter in the master's thesis]

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1.1 Edward T. Hall

Persons polled	Cultures analyzed	Questionnaire items	Dimensions
n.a.	10	n.a.	6

Fig. 14: Brief overview of the cultural study of Hall.[8]
Source: Own Illustration.

The next model of comparison and measurement of cultural differences is the model of the anthropologist Edward T. Hall. He focused mainly on two aspects of the cross-cultural topic. The first focus is communication: "Culture is communication and communication is culture" (Hall, 1959/ 1990, p. 186) and secondly information: "Culture […] is primarily a system for creating, sending, storing, and processing information" (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 179). In his studies he presented several dimensions which are not the result of one project and depend partly on each other (Kutschker, Schmid, 2001 p. 711). In this overview the four most important dimensions are evaluated: [9]

Context orientation represents high context orientation vs. low context orientation. In high context cultures, individuals are embedded in a dense network of relationships, which leads to the effect that verbal content does not need to be detailed explicitly. It expresses the degree of which communication can be clearly understood without being linked to a certain context. Hall describes Asiatic, Arabic and Mediterranean cultures as high-context oriented cultures, whereas US-Americans as well as Germans, Swiss and Northern Europeans belong to low-context cultures (Hall, Hall, 1990, pp. 6-7). Regarding information transfer, in practice this leads to the phenomenon that "high context people are apt to become impatient and irritated when low-context people insist on giving them information they don't need. Conversely, low-context people are at a loss when high-context people do not provide enough information" (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 9).

With respect to dependency on context, a classic example for a high context culture would be Japan, where only a vague hint of a proposal of an executive is immediately interpreted as an order to be transformed into action by its subordinates. On the other hand nationals used to low-context communication (e.g. Germans) get directly to the
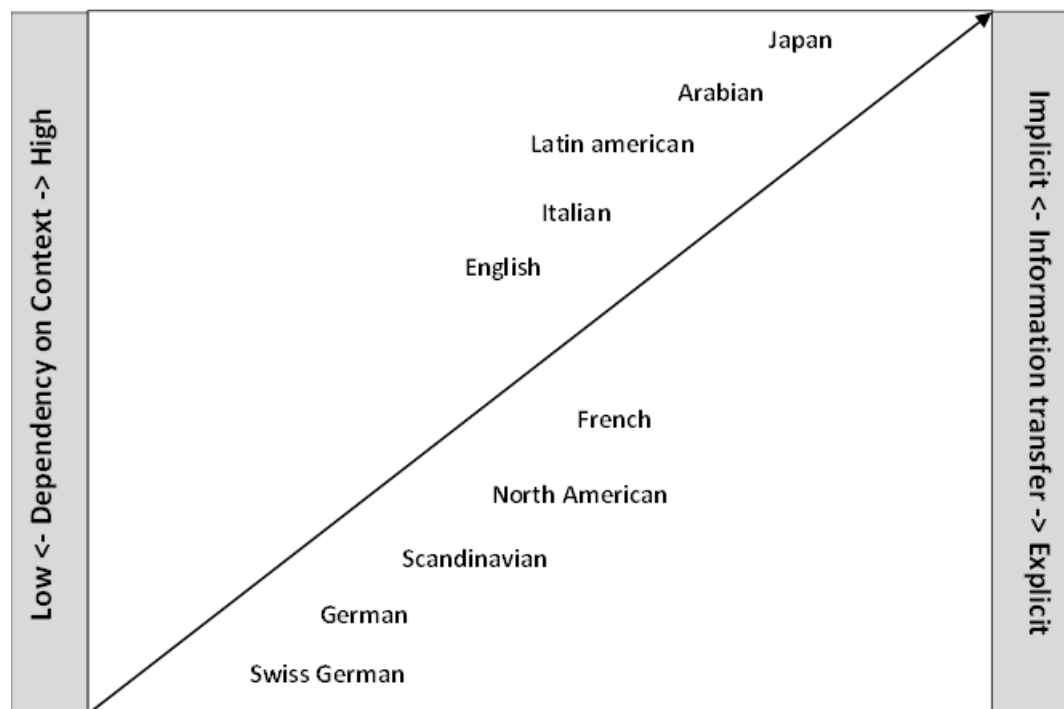
Fig. 15: Low Context/ High Context Cultures.
Source: Rösch & Segler, 1987, p. 56-67 cited in Kutschker, Schmid, 2011, p. 712.

Space orientation: Each person is surrounded by an invisible bubble of space, which are larger or smaller depending on cultural characteristics. Changes to this bubble, caused by a too close or unusually distant proximity of other persons make people feel uncomfortable or aggressive (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 11).

The expression of the bubble seems to form two clusters of countries. The first one is the Central and North-European countries with UK and the US, that need a larger

sphere of space and on the other end of the scale there is the Mediterranean European and the Latin Americans, which are used to a smaller surrounding personal space (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 11).

Time orientation is expressed by Hall in monochronic versus polychronic. In cultures with monochronic orientation, time is regarded as linear, where work related activities are arranged in a way that they can be carried out sequentially, extending from the past to the future, whereas in polychronic cultures time is considered more intangible and blurred, whereby more activities can be carried out simultaneously (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 13).

According to Hall the US and many middle European countries (Germanic and Scandinavian) are considered as monochronic, whereas Latin American, Arabic and Mediterranean cultures are polychronic oriented by trend (Kutschker, Schmid, 2011, p. 714). Conclusively it is important when people with different time orientations work together, each needs to understand the concept of the other in order to avoid needless frictions in the workflow.

Information speed deals with the different velocities of information transfer and by which complexity is coded (to be sent) and decoded (to be received) in communication. For example, the North-American culture is regarded as a culture with a high information speed, in contrast to the French culture which tends to be known as one with a low information speed (Kutschker, Schmidt, 2001, p. 716). In practice this leads to the situation that French people perceive US Americans as unbelievably friendly, but also as superficial (Hall, Hall, 1990, p. 5-6).

The circles below illustrate the difference of information speed. The lines represent confidence levels of trust when speaking to unknown people. The outer line in the American culture is perforated, signifying that it is easy to start a conversation or get

in touch with Americans, but they have a 'solid' inner line that represents deeper areas of confidence, which are harder to penetrate.

On the other hand in France the outer line is solid, which represents that it is more difficult to enter into conversations and to earn trust, but once penetrated people open themselves totally.
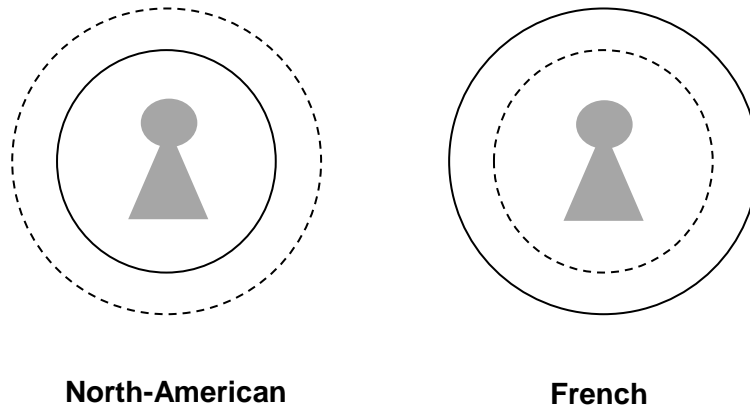

North-American   **French**

Fig. 16: Different confidence layers.
Source: Birkenbihl, (2006), p. 59, (Author's adaptation).

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