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Cross-cultural management: new epistemological basis

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Abstract.

In terms of interculturality, there is a need to cross points of view both in terms of practices and in terms of research. This study aims to complete Hofstede and Trompenaars' theories developing new epistemological basis and new variables according to non-western cultures. First, we show that the anthropological sources of the discipline bequeath to it a disabling methodological legacy. Then, we propose a method, in a culturalist approach, that goes beyond the descriptive taxonomy of cultures to the study of specific dynamics generated by their encounter in workplace. Finally, we propose new cultural dimensions whose validity is tested through a survey conducted within multicultural teams operating in Morocco. We demonstrate that the spiritual significance of work plays a key role in the way to achieve it. This has an impact on motivation methods and professional fulfilment. Also, we show that the degree of openness predisposes a culture more than another to be more efficient in multicultural situations and to more easily adopt new working manners. Our goal is to construct a theory outline that allows the acquisition of real intercultural competence in contact with new cultures. Our findings contribute to give more intelligibility both to diversity managers and cross-cultural management researchers.

Keywords: cross-cultural management, identity in work, international competitiveness of firms, Hofstede, Trompenaars.

1. Introduction

The way in which diversity surrounds us today is disconcerting. The report of the World Commission on Culture and Development identifies 10,000 distinct societies in more than 200 states. Globalization has brought them into contact and made them dependent on each other without leading to speculation - still groping - on how best to manage this contact and dependence. Some wonder whether humanity has not made the serious mistake of putting the cart before the horse by allowing this process of hybridization of values, practices and needs before considering a "global constitution" that defines the nature of the links and interactions between the parties concerned. In order to guarantee the same quality of commitment and the protection of the rights and interests of all is it not necessary to respect their particularities? Is it not important to take into account the pace of evolution of each society and the degree of permeability of each culture to the flow of discourses and values, instead of leaving room for



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the power balances-commercial, political, military or media- that naturally arise in the absence of clauses advocating other aphorisms?

What is happening today is that the fate of many cultures is sealed in their absence, in supra-state and supra-ethnic spaces that despise their hitherto proven ability to live in harmony with the world (Belanger, 2002). Desiring to shape cultural diversity into a culture that would be global, globalization movements at different political, cultural and economic levels clearly rooted the notion of difference, which has steadily gained ground and become a value in itself.

This brief detour through the major issues raised by globalization is not an empty rhetorical exercise before tackling the question of the international firm and the appropriate management of its human resources. It is that we see the same issues looming behind these new organizational structures, and we discern the same challenges in the globalization of strategies and processes. Indeed, carried by the wave of globalization of economies, the company is not spared by this new societal order; it is also invaded by the issue of cultural difference. The global manager is therefore called upon to make cultural diversity a strategic asset. This is a heavy task when prejudices block the will, when perceptions and attitudes differ, when the expatriate buries his enthusiasm at the first culture shock, when local staff sees that decisions affecting their lives are taken "elsewhere", when one is faced with new ways of doing things without having the means and time to integrate them.

As a discipline, the development of cross-cultural management has itself been based on a denial of cultural difference. Founded mainly by North American and Western European theorists, cross-cultural management identifies cultural differences in the workplace through variables that it assumes to be universal. These are characteristic of all differences that are likely to exist between cultures (Hofstede, 1997 and 2010; Trompenaars 1993 and 2004). However, such certainty can only come from a slight attitude towards human diversity and a faulty scientific posture. How can one easily admit that the study of the relationship to time, space, power, group, risk is sufficient to know fully and in depth all the characteristics of a culture and to be able to compare it to another? According to what postulate can it be affirmed that these dimensions are limited and mechanically transposable without any nuance?

Moreover, the concept of culture, which is the core of descriptive theories of cultural differences, deserves an epistemological positioning other than that inherited from Western anthropology. For by studying the cultures present in companies with the same methods, the theorists of cultural difference create for their expatriates defective analytical tools. They realize this at their expense once they are confronted with the reality on the ground (Kealey, 1990). We have therefore deemed it necessary to return to the path of epistemological and methodological reflection on the question of cultural diversity in the workplace through its variable dimensions. We are trying to develop rules that encourage diversity managers and cross-cultural researchers to adopt a stance that is essential for the acquisition of cross-cultural competence, i.e. the ability to receive and appreciate, at their true value, all other ways of doing things in order to get the best from them in the service of performance.

2. The concept of culture and the relationship to otherness:

Cross-cultural management is essentially based on the analysis of cultural differences in the professional environment. An examination of the concept of culture and the different



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meanings it has acquired since it appeared in the field of social sciences and more particularly in anthropology shows a disabling conceptual legacy for this native Western discipline.

Curiosity about the lifestyles and customs of different populations is probably as old as humanity itself. But the concept of culture, in its present meaning, did not appear until the Enlightenment, when two important aspects characterize it. First, it is intimately associated with the ideas of progress, evolution and questioning that characterize the thought of the time. Secondly, it is always used in the singular and often confused with "civilization", reflecting the universalist and progressive philosophy of the moment. The emergence of the concept was therefore less linked to a discovery of human diversity than to a project of rationalization and control of reality with a strong tendency towards uniformity, which would have a great influence on the Western way of approaching other cultures. Even "cultures" in the plural only come into being through a reflex of German identity protectionism facing the power of neighbouring states, particularly French and English (Hegel and Herder). If this nationalist vision reflected the originality of the various nations, it also entrenched the idea of "cultures" as totalities linked to a territory.

The XIXth century saw the introduction of the concept in anthropology as an object of analysis. From the universalist vision of Tylor to the materialist perspective of neo-marxist anthropologists, via American anthropology and the French structuralism, the concept of culture was turned and overturned, sometimes enriched and sometimes abused. Its accepted meanings have seen significant changes rooted in major transformations in European and North American societies. Above all, they have been the expression of a tumultuous relationship with otherness and the world. The relationship of the ancient Greeks with "barbaric" societies or that of the missionaries with pagan peoples tells of an existential anxiety about the threat posed by these different and perhaps better ways of living, but which have the wrong idea of launching an irritating challenge to the intellectual and political self-assurance of the Western model. When Christian truth was replaced by scientific truth, it was anthropologists who, unconsciously for the most part, took over. Although it was unworthy of the scientific community to omit entire parts of the cultural heritage of human race, they tried to appropriate it in the name of universalist philosophies. However, because it was constantly linked to ideological-political ventures (Clifford 1973 and 1992; Edward Said, 1978 and 1993; Fabian, 2002) anthropology was unable to free itself from a priori to see more broadly and therefore more truly, to place itself in the purely human context that it deserves and suits it. Because the discovery of the interculturality is recent and because the influence of the researcher's own culture on observation and analysis of objects has long been ignored, the validity and reliability of a number of methods and theories may be called into question. For, by applying this rule, we should practice the anthropology of a society through the vision of several others, we would certainly have as many results as angles of view; and rather than spreading a one-sided view on a given society, which would only be a projection of the culture of the researcher himself, should we not speak of cross-examination? Should we not describe the particularities of culture A as seen by culture B?

Even today, the concept of culture continues to be shaped by political circumstances and the plans that Westerners have for the rest of the world. With the decline of modernism, globalization and immigration movements, we are witnessing a rapid expansion of identity



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politics. Theoretical and paradigmatic questioning and reformulations have been inspired by the decolonisation movements and the identity and political claims of the colonised groups with whom anthropologists have built their knowledge. The culture of the 1980s was then essentially characterised by hybridity and creolisation. It is perceived as an object that the social actor has the right to possess and not as a constituent of the person himself. It has now become one of spearheads of the recriminations of minority and indigenous groups as well as a tool of political rhetoric for the Western worlds and liberal democracies.

These "truths" which the Western world believes in and which form the basis of its structure are not received indiscriminately by other societies. They perceive invasions of thought as well as invasions of territory and this mania for wanting to impose its spiritualist or materialist ideologies and its religious and economic practices, especially since they do not represent an exceptional civilizing alternative. Such an attitude leads to secular misunderstandings. However, it would be interesting to recognize - at least - the existence of other classification schemes far from the evolutionary or modernist approach. Those of Asian cultures, for example, are based on geographical considerations, while those of Muslim cultures are linked to spiritual matters. It would also be instructive to examine other models which, in addition to having founded greatest civilizations, have above all ensured their coexistence with others. Indeed, the greatest danger is to deny a place on the planet to those who do not conform to a specific vision.

If we have gone so far in addressing the issues of representation and relationship to otherness, it is because we are convinced that they all come back to a different but equally influential degree within the multicultural company and predetermine the relationship between the expatriate manager or executive and the local staff. More importantly for our study, and from an epistemological point of view, they influence, to a large extent, the methods of cross-cultural management as a discipline in development. Cross-cultural management is defined as the encounter with the "other" in the organizational context. For the company's welfare, an effort to be informed is then necessary to reduce the margin of imagination, stereotype, incomprehension, fears and rejections that "he" can arouse. Used as a management variable, the concept of culture transmits to management the same deficiencies and concerns of anthropology. The condescending and excluding look of Western culture has been contracted by the theorists of cross-cultural management who have developed variables by referring only to their way of conceiving the firm and the relationships with their fellow men. However, the essential object of the discipline is indeed the deep knowledge of all interacting cultural systems in order to bring them closer together over time and around the same objective. On a methodological level, cross-cultural management inherits from anthropology the posture of the observer who considers himself to be the legitimate representative of mankind, the others would be deviations, exceptions. Curiously, the influence of the cultural factor on the vision of the cross-cultural researcher has always existed and has always been ignored. The results and readings edified by Hofstede and Trompenaars have been adopted and applied to humanity. However, as we have already shown, the very foundations of this reading are profoundly shaped by the cultural affiliation of these authors who, while being consciously convinced of the failure of the *one best way*, do not manage to reduce its influence in their methodology and in their interpretation of the results; Their studies, though prodigious, have resulted in an incomplete decoding tool and a cultural reading that is sometimes mistaken



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(Elgouchi, 2019). It is therefore important to see to what extent the researcher's culture plays a role in his or her understanding of cultural diversity and what methodological principles can reduce its influence for a more complete analysis of cultural synergies in the workplace. The aim is to provide a tool for the analysis of cultural difference and a methodology respectful of the nature of this object.

3. Intercultural dynamics in management:

Intercultural dynamics is the energy that is created when two cultural systems meet to face a common situation or problem. It can be positive or negative depending on the size of the gap between indices of cultural variables but also on the ability of these two systems to reconcile differences while maintaining their internal balance. The concept of intercultural dynamics replaces and rectifies the purpose of cross-cultural management. It gives it another more global and, therefore, more effective dimension for diversity management. Believing that cross-cultural management only makes sense in situations where two or more cultures interact, we believe that it is entirely appropriate to understand the organization's cross-cultural issues by studying the interactive dynamics of these cultures and not by stopping at the study of their characteristics. Thus, it is not only a question of finding what is constant in a culture (d'Iribarne, 1989) but also, and above all, of identifying what is likely to change. It is not enough to "radiograph" cultures (Hofstede and Bollinger, 1987), but to identify the dynamics created when they meet. Some cultures may appear closer on particular variables, while others may be more compatible than their respective geographical locations or historical experiences would suggest. Thus, the variables that we propose are the declination of the different sides of this dynamic whose precise knowledge will allow the global manager to prevent blockages on the one hand and to initiate appropriate synergies on the other hand.

Adler (2008) proposes three steps to encourage intercultural synergies: 1. description of the situation (What type of obstacle is the company facing? What dilemma results from the point of view of the different cultures involved?), 2. the cultural interpretation of the situation (Why do actors behave in this way? How can the situation be understood and explained using knowledge about cultural systems and different perspectives?), 3. the development of cultural creativity (What can one culture bring to another in terms of solutions? What can we learn from each other in terms of best practices? How can the different solutions be put into practice?). However, it is equally important to anticipate the obstacles to such synergy. Some salient cultural traits can run counter to sound business management. A strong collectivist spirit conflicts with the individualism and profit-seeking on which the principles of the capitalist economy are based. The "myth of the boss", strongly rooted in some cultures, disturbs hierarchical relations by introducing a rigid distance between management and employees, hindering good professional communication. In other examples, oral tradition can worsen the withholding of information and the vagueness of management goals.

This diagnostic must be made first before any search for positive intercultural dynamics. It is the responsibility of the global manager to define the cultural particularities of his employees, especially those that it would be unrealistic to change. He must propose compromises between the parent company's goals and those of its employees. It is in fact a cultural audit that takes place in four phases:



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1. Identification of cultural traits: through a questionnaire that declines all possible cultural variables. Frequency analysis allows the identification of the deepest and most shared cultural features. It can be completed by interviews,
2. Measurement of the most salient gaps: by referring to values, objectives and regulatory and/or conventional benchmarks,
3. Definition of risks: Differences between present values must be translated, in a consensual manner, into potentially real risks to the company's performance,
4. Development of concepts: mutual awareness of risks must lead to the collective creation of new concepts intended to irrigate the different functions (quality, service, communication, leadership, etc.) and representing a real shared reference.

Intercultural dynamics is important for human resources management in the sense that it allows singularities and differences to be considered both as a performance factor as well as a source of misunderstandings and conflicts. The risks of friction, confusion and mutual frustration that may arise from these differences are all the more difficult to explain since they are precisely the product of unconscious action strategies. When these strategies are thwarted, actors tend to trigger immediate defense mechanisms by making value judgements about each other's behaviour. In order to avoid questioning one's own model - and thus risk becoming aware of its limitations - one prefers to discredit the other's model. Some cultural systems have, more than others, values of flexibility that allow actors to test and question the order of things, to analyze objectively their own operating processes. Such work makes it possible to communicate on how one perceives and receives things and makes one's own cultural sensitivity intelligible to the other. In order to reach this degree of intercultural maturity in the company, it is the role of the manager to facilitate, through his attitude and his interventions, the expression of these differences in functioning. But to do so, he must of course be aware of the limits of his own ways of doing things.

Thus, the concept of intercultural dynamics proposes an interactionist approach that includes the understanding of existing cultural logics as well as the analysis of the relations between them. It assumes first of all a work on oneself in order to better understand the systems of meaning and to establish, in a consensual manner, modes of functioning adapted and adopted by all. In this sense, the manager plays the role of mediator who is responsible for initiating this approach and mobilizing the good will of the actors involved.

4. New methodological rules:

4. 1. The historical approach

While management theorists, adepts of the Western ethnological vision, consider that cultures differ in the way they respond to problems, it is first necessary to admit that they don't have the same perception of these problems nor the same interest. In fact, cultures prioritize problems and needs and it is partly for this reason that they do not provide the same answers. Their historical experiences being different, there is indeed a need to seek, in this series of strategies, both free and constrained, this source of cultural responses. They have been discovered or invented over the centuries and then invalidated, confirmed or transformed. Knowledge of the conditions under which the actors of a culture were able to develop their



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strategies allows us to understand and explain in depth the choices they made about this or that cultural response; choices that they were able to maintain or modify later. All this constitutes different paths that produce different cultures. For the intercultural researcher, it is just as important to study the difference in orientation and action choices, in a strategic approach, as to know cultures, in a diachronic approach, from their historical origins, their traditions, their constraints and interactive liberties. However, none of the intercultural management theorists considered it important to inform the analysis of the variables for each culture with a historical dimension. Only d'Iribarne (1989) has tried to explain the difference between the managerial styles of French, Dutch and American cultures in their respective histories and traditions. It is regrettable that the study does not result in a tool for analysing cultural difference but only in a descriptive comparison of three different styles.

Thus, a first requirement that both the researcher and the manager must set for themselves is to understand the historical and social context they are dealing with. Such research would provide a correct and complete understanding. On a more practical level, it would also have given the opportunity to conceive other ways - because they would have been understood - of responding to common organizational problems. For the global manager, it would be a treasure trove of possibilities and verified achievements that could moreover help him in designing the type and degree of change to lead within his team.

4. 2. Reconciling the quantitative and the qualitative

Since the 2000s, an emerging generation of intercultural researchers has been attacking the methods of Hofstede and Trompenaars. The adepts of participating observation such as Chevrier (2003), Cazal (2000), Aktouf (2006) follow in the footsteps of their precursor d'Iribarne and praise the advantages of qualitative investigation based on ethnographic and semiological methods. They criticize the canonical model, which is still dominant, for its excessive use of quantitative methods. Certainly, a lot of information does not always lead to more knowledge about intercultural issues. However, significance and representativeness remain two sine qua non conditions to go beyond the case study and lead to a reliable and generalizable analytical model. To do this, it is not pointless to provide for a less sectarian method. In our study, the use of the questionnaire made it possible to reach a large sample of respondents and different sectors, the role of interviews were to complete and verify the readings of collected quantitative data (Elgouchi, 2019).

4. 3. The organizational anchoring

When reading the databases provided by Hofstede and Trompenaars, we were confronted with some shortcomings in the presentation of some situations taken out of their organizational context, which increased the confusion of answers that, even if they were sincere, could not be reintroduced and applied to the organizational field. For example, the notion of the group changes significantly in content and importance, whether it is family, friends, co-workers or compatriots. Asking a question about an individual's commitment to family and friends cannot be transposed to the world of work as a clue. Here, it is necessary that the cultural element be put back in its place. Thus, the researcher who is involved in the sociology of organizations is called upon to mobilize more than one discipline, to draw extensively on anthropology, psychology and history, to understand the cultural fact in the workplace. But



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the formulation of the questions and the situations proposed to the respondents cannot be outside the particular context of the firm, even if their preparation and reading require multidisciplinary insights. Authors such as Hofstede and d'Iribarne refer to these areas only to support a generalization or a point of view, sometimes preconceived. However, the opposite approach must be adopted. Indicative situations must remain within the organizational context. This is possible by applying all the cultural variables identified to areas directly related to the management of the organization such as motivation, evaluation, decision making, leadership, etc. In addition, they must only target a population that is confronted and concerned by intercultural issues in the workplace (some of the respondents to the Hofstede survey were MBA students). Only to this extent would the research and its results be contingent on the field of study.

5. New cultural dimensions:

A study involving 13 multinationals operating in Morocco and belonging to different management schools and sectors allowed us to apply the new model and to define new variables (Elgouchi, 2019).

Individualism/collectivism: This variable is derived from Hofstede's but deals with the relationship between the individual and the group only in the professional context and through several aspects such as the degree of individual independence, the importance given to objectives and self-realization, which Hofstede calls "masculinity"; or through the predominance of laws between individuals at the expense of the relationships which Trompenaars calls "universalism". Other indicators such as the tendency towards collective work and evaluation, the predisposition to sacrifice for the group, the importance of conviviality practices in the professional sphere and the priority of achieving objectives at the expense of human relationships are also prolific in terms of meaning.

Relationship to power: The variable we propose to address this question is more global than the one previously developed in the theories of cross-cultural management; it deals not only with the distance tolerated from the hierarchy (Hofstede, 1997) but also with the aspects that are recognized as a source of power (Trompenaars, 1993), the need for freedom and alternative to rules and directives, presented by Hofstede as "uncertainty avoidance", the part of the private and professional in the relationship to the hierarchy, named by Trompenaars "the specific/diffuse" involvement, the styles of leadership tolerated in the company as well as the patterns of decision making.

To understand the relationship to power in a culture and, consequently, within the company, it is necessary to know its sources, the reasons that make it legitimate. Trompenaars explains this first dimension of power in what he calls the foundations of social status. We retain five sources of power: achievement, function, age, gender and social status. Second, the styles of leadership tolerated in an organization are only an expression of the need for freedom, responsibility and creativity that Hofstede calls "uncertainty avoidance". In companies, individuals who do not have the anxiety of uncertainty and risk, whatever the origin of their "serenity", feel the need to act with total freedom when they decide and in the way they feel most appropriate. They are less accepting of the rules and limits imposed by a hierarchy. Conversely, individuals who do not tolerate ambiguous and high-risk situations recognize the



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importance of guidance, laws and rules. They readily accept the protective power of the line manager. Finally, in the relationship between hierarchy and subordinates, the choice is made for the part of the private that we want to share in the professional situation. Trompenaars explains this trend in a dimension that he describes as involvement in the relationship with others, the two opposites of which are the specific way of sharing with others a single aspect of oneself - particularly professional - or, on the contrary, the diffuse approach of engaging all facets of one's life at the same time.

Degree of affectivity: This variable broadly follows Trompenaars' "neutral/emotional" dimension but applies to specific aspects of management. In each culture, a more or less important part is given to the affective in the face of rationality. The degree of emotion that is externalized in the relationship with others is often the result of a convention. Some cultures willingly show their feelings about an event or situation and their reaction is very emotional. Others prefer to control their affect and adopt a neutral attitude. This does not mean that they are devoid of feelings; joy or grief reached an intense level and can no longer be controlled, they will also be externalized. It should be noted that an individual with a high degree of affectivity expects his or her feelings to be recognized and would feel frustrated and disappointed by a neutral or rational attitude; on the other hand, an individual with a low degree of affectivity expects an objective reaction and would feel offended and attacked by a high degree of affectivity. Of course, in companies, these two attitudes have a deep influence on communication styles, conflict management and how to react to leadership.

The material and the spiritual: The religious tends to disappear in so called secularized Western societies. This idea, quickly accepted by social sciences subjected to rationalist thinking, does not take into account symbolic phenomena in the analysis and theorization of individual behaviour. For a long time, researchers in management sciences, like managers, have been silent about the spiritual dimension in the workplace, the last few decades having established a "secular" and "neutral" management that did not think of religion or even religious fact. Today, seeing the number of books and articles recently published on the religious in workplace (Demontrond, 2007; Barthe, 2012), one would believe that there is finally an awareness of the influence and importance of religious in relation to economic issues. However, reading these works shows that they offer only a semblance of an answer, that they are only a hasty reaction to a number of news item and anecdotes pointed out since the events of September 11 and the Western war against the ghosts of immigration and terrorism. Litigation around the wearing of the Islamic veil, the growth of specific markets for halal or kosher products, development of Islamic finance are all topical issues that we are now trying to link to management. However, the presence of the sacred in business and its real influence on organizational behaviour does not lie as much in the external aspects of religious practice as in the deep values it suggests (Touba, 2006). Thus, we distinguish between spiritualist cultures and materialist cultures:

In spiritualist cultures, a considerable part of cultural values comes from religious beliefs. These guide ideological preferences, largely predetermine political systems and relationships with others. In business, they redefine the meaning of performance that goes beyond the tangible result towards an allegorical value: contribution to human work, service to the religious community, divine recognition, gratification for what is considered a good deed,



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meaning of existence, etc. On the other hand, they give a stronger symbolic meaning to self-realization through the enhancement of action. The historical and politico-economic experience of materialist cultures has meant that values of philosophical and scientific origin have become more important than those of religious origin. Political systems are based on the notion of gain and profit, a pragmatic sense prevails in relationships and work takes on a utilitarian value and guarantees freedom and equality. Within the company, performance is focused only on measurable objectives. Interpersonal relationships therefore have no reason to exist other than to pursue common objectives. Individual achievement is highly valued and corresponds to the material and moral recognition of competence. On one hand, work is the ongoing link to the community and to the divine and, on the other hand, it only obtains the value of the result produced. The meeting of these two divergent visions of the productive act is likely to create a serious uneasiness. Thus, spiritualists may feel frustrated by the lack of sacred elevation of materialists at work. They seem too pragmatic or even opportunistic; their concern for productivism makes them "less humane" because their action has only a capitalist value. For their part, materialists can be annoyed by the attitude of these cluttered utopians and slowed down by the weight of their beliefs.

Openness degree: Cultures evolve by opening up to others. History has confirmed this several times. They are designed as closed systems: they protect themselves, and open: they need information and interaction to survive. In this regard, culture is essentially dynamic; it corresponds to what community members do and believe they are. More fundamentally, culture will be said to represent the work a community does on itself to exist and reproduce itself as a social entity, to maintain and change itself; ultimately, it is the creation and recreation of a world. This implies that the intelligibility of any cultural system must be found not only in the system itself but also in its interaction with other systems, and that this interaction is not just a mere dependence or constraint, it is constitutive of the system itself.

Culture is also the matrix of identity. It is built around a "hard core" of cultural elements considered as immutable, including assumptions and values (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1987, 2005) and cultural elements that can be transformed or abandoned, namely norms or some considered secondary values. As a result, we believe that the degree of one culture change in contact with another can be a meaningful analytical variable. It is a question of defining cultures by their ability to adapt their values in contact with another value system. Historical and social conditions make that some cultures, at some point in their "life", become more or less willing than others to change. The trials of war, colonization, underdevelopment or "overdevelopment" lead to a rethinking of identity that makes cultures more resistant to the benefits of other cultural models. This general atmosphere even affects the individual attitude of social actors who begin to look suspiciously at any proposal for new visions that come "from elsewhere". Some particular social structures influence the attitude of openness to other cultures. A young society includes a large category of individuals with "more diluted" cultural features; this mainly concerns Internet and satellite-channel generations where the choice of values itself is not only made in reference to the elders but to a global palette available on websites and TV programs. Finally, some cultures have a heterogeneous subcultural composition and are able to easily accept and integrate other practices or ways of doing things on an ad hoc or permanent basis as long as they serve the intended goals and do not oppose their core values too much.



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Thus, cultures with a high degree of openness are built around a restricted "hard core" that allows a great interaction with everything that represents a novelty. They more easily welcome and adopt rules, attitudes and ideas and can generate them themselves. Cultures with a low degree of openness define their identity through a quite large "hard core", made up of deep values that make them impermeable to any novelty. The assimilation of different ideas and rules is a laborious process - even impossible - which risks leading to conflicting tension and identity withdrawal (Bataille, 1997). Of course, not every culture can be totally open or totally closed, the difference lies in the part of identity that it willingly submits to change.

All the theories of cross-cultural management have omitted this aspect of their studies. Hofstede unintentionally mentioned an angle with the "uncertainty avoidance" dimension, which refers to the feeling of anxiety about the unknown future. The dimension we propose concerns a more or less great anxiety about one's own identity. The first is only one of the second's results. However, the relationship between culture and change is one of the most decisive issues in cross-cultural management, which aims to bring different ways of doing and acting into line with one's own vision. Within the firm, individuals belonging to an open culture have a high tolerance for stress and changes in working methods and conditions. They are curious and enthusiastic about partners from different cultures and are committed to getting to know and integrate them. Conversely, people from a closed culture are very anxious about new developments and have difficulty tolerating change in workplace. They cling to their methods, old or new, and do not accept any criticism or questioning. Their attitude - displayed or hidden- towards other working methods varies between disinterest, irony or condescension.

Relation to time: This is one of the constant variables in the analysis of cultural differences in companies. Time is a decisive element in the design and achievement of goals and a key factor in the success of projects. It includes the importance given to past, present and future (Hofstede, 1987) which has an impact on motivation and career management, and also the way tasks are organized depending on whether it is a monochrone or polychrone culture (Hall, 1983; Trompenaars, 1993).

Relation to space: This variable concerns the relationship and the role each culture reserves to the environment. The attitude towards nature is an indicator of our daily behaviour in the firm and the way we manage business. A culture may seek to control nature, submit to it or live in harmony with it. In companies, this has also an impact on space management, proxemics and ergonomics.

6. Conclusion and discussion:

We have tried to raise some epistemological weaknesses of cross-cultural management received from its anthropological heritage. The attitude towards otherness and the influence of the observer's culture are an integral part of the methods used. This reality has considerable consequences for the principles that the intercultural researcher must adopt. It is important in his or her scientific approach to remain aware of the limits imposed by his or her cultural belonging. He must try to be curious without prejudice and adopt a humble and caring attitude towards a new culture. In order to do this, knowledge of cultures cannot omit the historical and social aspects that characterize it. The fields of religion, tradition, politics, economics and



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media all provide clues as to how social actors mobilize or invent collective strategies to cope with constraints. Finally, it is from this deep knowledge that the cultural variables that affect organizational behaviour must emanate.

On the other hand, cultures are built as an internal dynamic process in which different values and practices of common experiences of different groups within the same society confront and articulate each other to give rise to other values and practices. They are also a complex whole in permanent interaction with other wholes. The encounter of one culture with another undoubtedly creates a power struggle. Within the multicultural organization, the role of the global manager is to control this dynamic by taking into consideration the gaps and convergences between the cultures present and by respecting the values in progress in the elaboration of managerial policies and the setting of common goals. However, the balance between strong identification with the company's objectives and the recognition of the cultural particularities of the employees proves to be extremely delicate.

The notion of "corporate culture", which is not a creation of the social sciences but stems from the business world, was quickly adopted to deal with market doubts or mergers and relocations. Once again, the anthropological use that has been made of it is in fact the one that has most often been questionable. In order to obtain loyal and efficient behaviour from employees, managerial discourse refers to a conception of culture as a closed and immutable universe, characterising a supposedly homogenous community. In this narrow vision of culture, it is also assumed that culture pre-exists the members of the organization and imposes itself on them by determining their representations and value system. Not adhering to these representations and values is, in a way, to exclude oneself from the organization. However, it is clear that corporate culture is not a mere emanation of management but the result of a complex interplay of interactions between groups that make up the company. Denying differences, which are, after all, conscious among the actors, can only lead to a feeling of frustration and exclusion. Recognizing them would be a great motivation. However, to avoid cultural particularities being a permanent argument for demands and pressure, the global manager must undertake the delicate project of drawing the limits of what is negotiable and conceivable. From a rather offensive perspective, the manager must acquire the ability to handle the discourse of difference in order to be able to build social bonds in the long term. Whether in moments of crisis, change or negotiation, some cultural particularities can be valued, provoked or even jostled. A keen psychologist, some would say? Rather a keen anthropologist, freed from the preconceptions of anthropology.

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