

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>2 CREATING A MEANINGFUL PICTURE</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Introduction	2
2.2 Need for outsiders	2
2.3 Accurate description of culture	4
2.4 Nature and sequence of proper research	13

## 2 CREATING A MEANINGFUL PICTURE

### 2.1 Introduction

Many change management consultants emphasize the change process. That is certainly recommendable, but in order to conclude a change process satisfactorily, it is essential to know the point of departure and arrival. In other words, the content of culture is at least as important as knowing how to get from A to B. Without knowing the locations of our points of departure and arrival, we are like a steersman who knows his trade very well, but who has lost sight and does not know where he is nor where he is heading for.

True, we have to be careful with analogies, because nowadays a blind steersman can use a talking GPS-system, but I suppose you get my point. Moreover, such a GPS-system for culture does not yet exist, or....., well.....perhaps.....our system may come close.....

### 2.2 Need for outsiders

You may recall from Chapter 1 that those who rise to the top are in general true representatives of the actual organizational culture. People who have been working for an extended period in the same organization, find it hard to describe its culture accurately. They have become an intrinsic part of it and find the way things are done “normal”.

It takes an outsider to open your eyes, as the newcomer on the Board of Directors in Chapter 1. To the dismay of his fellow Board members, he was able to assess the culture of the company adequately with the help of the Hofstede Model on Strategy, Culture and Change .

But there are more reasons why it is wise to involve outsiders to depict the organizational culture accurately:

- **Need for specialists:** Because culture is so complex, one needs to be able to capture the theoretical framework, while simultaneously having acquired vast work experience in a large spectrum of companies, branches and hierarchical levels in order to interpret the results correctly. This field is so large and the diversity of organizations so wide, that the most successful change consultants are those who invest in their continuous learning curve. Development of know-how about the links and impact of strategy, organizational culture and change management is still at an infant stage.

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Take e.g. the following complicating factors.:

- a. Convictions, the deepest level of organizational culture, are hard to measure and to translate into numbers and therefore, hard to compare. We can only do so indirectly by using validated scientific research.

- b. Whether employees will service clients in the best possible way cannot be measured with the help of a culture scan. What only, in this case, can be measured is the degree to which culture will enable employees to do so. The effect of employees' activities can only be identified by measuring the degree of satisfaction among their clients. In other words, one should be aware what can be measured with help of a culture scan and what not.
- **Need for a data bank:** Culture only exists by comparison. Without a data bank it is hard to give meaning to the cultural data collected in a specific organization. This may need some explanation. For example, when members of an organization claim that it is their conviction to service their clients optimally, then how strong is their conviction really? Of course, the respondents will tell us that their conviction is very strong, but how strong is "very strong"? Only by comparing this conviction with those of other groups, it becomes meaningful and relevant.
  - **Avoidance of dependency:** At first sight, top managers are not always amused with the cultural pictures presented to them. For subordinates who conduct a cultural survey, it may be tough to handle negative reactions. This may stop them from giving a comprehensive and truthful picture of their findings.
  - **Avoidance of emotional involvement:** Anybody working in an organization, tends to be emotionally involved with work and colleagues. This will influence perceptions and expectations. Information collected by employees themselves that runs counter to their ideas about their work reality may be rejected, colored or omitted.
  - **Avoidance of socialization:** The impact of socialization is too often ignored. Both external and internal forces cause us to adjust ourselves to the norms prevalent in the group we have joined. External forces shape our beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Think of the informal social control exerted by colleagues and team members and formal social control exerted through formal rules and regulations and actions taken by management. Internal forces which induce us to adjust relate to the need to belong, to feel appreciated, the need to attach meaning to our work life and the need to have a platform for the realization of our individual ambitions.

All these forces and needs socialize newcomers to accept "the way we do things here" and to start seeing "our" way the normal way. It is then very hard to perceive and describe one's own culture objectively. Of course, there are always people who complain a lot about many issues. But as long as they do not try to redress theme or leave the organization, these nagging issues may be part of "normal" work life. Even when a specific team or group has created a counterculture as a sign of rejection of mainstream culture, it is hard to describe the mainstream culture and counterculture in objective terms.

It is for these reasons that management should involve outsiders to measure their culture, certainly when it concerns the subculture of senior and top management. To the question, "which outsiders?", Annex 4 gives an answer.

## 2.3 Accurate description of culture

If you want to describe organizational culture accurately, you have to meet at least the following requirements:

- 2.3.1 Creating an objective picture
- 2.3.2 Creating a precise picture
- 2.3.3 Creating a meaningful picture
- 2.3.4 Proper choice of target groups

We will explain these requirements below, together with some of the options as well as the choices we made.

### 2.3.1 *Creating an objective picture*

A group of people forms an intricate web of relations, attitudes and behavioral patterns. It becomes even more complex when more people join (specifically when they are of a diverse background), and when they operate in a context with complex structures, systems and processes. An objective description of this multifaceted reality is rarely, if ever, feasible. So we'd better rephrase this first requirement: the challenge is describe culture as objectively *as possible*.

Our emotions, such as likes, dislikes and expectations color our perceptions, certainly regarding social interaction and therefore our perception of groups. So the question is, how to avoid bias during data collection and processing these into (meaningful) information? Every observer and every respondent is by definition subjective, not objective. It makes sense therefore to collect descriptions about culture from multiple sources.

So, how to describe culture as objectively as possible? Let's examine some of the methods.

***Top management decides on data collection:*** One method, rarely questioned, is that top management decides how the data will be collected. Top management has a final say about what formally happens within their organization, but not necessarily about what happens informally. That may lead them to think erroneously that they know best which issues to cover. This was the idea behind the approach adopted by Trompenaars *cum sui* who sought to identify dilemmas together with their clients.

There are at least four reasons why the use of dilemmas may yield biased results:

- The longer people work for an organization, the more blind spots they develop for their own culture. What outsiders may perceive as salient aspects, insiders may perceive as "normal", and they may be unable to identify the truly crucial dilemmas they are unconsciously coping with;
- Dysfunctional aspects of culture may turn into taboos swept under the rug, certainly by and vis-à-vis management;
- Preoccupations of top management may not apply to work reality at lower levels;

- A number of dysfunctional aspects of culture cannot be captured by the formulation of dilemmas. Some aspects may just be dysfunctional *per se*, e.g. a culture in which everybody distrusts everybody.

Of course, the preoccupations of management have to be addressed and dealt with, if only because management represents the client. But cultural surveys should not be limited to dilemmas, they should cover as much ground of work reality as possible in the sheer interest of top management.

A similar approach, though less elaborate, is the one frequently adopted by management consultants who assert that they do not need a precise model to describe culture. To them, a cause or opportunity is enough to start a meaningful discussion with the client.

**Obtaining information by observation:** Data collection solely through observation carries the imminent risk of biased perceptions of the observer or management consultant. Even more so when the consultant claims to have an infallible intuition which allows him or her to describe the client's culture accurately. It is easy to thwart that claim, however, just by asking whether he or she is able to predict behavior of his/her spouse or partner in emotionally loaded situations. An honest answer should be: "No, unfortunately not!" If intuition is fallible when it comes to predicting your partner's behavior with whom you may have already shared a number of years, then how can you be able to describe a culture accurately?

Admittedly, it is easier for newcomers to describe a culture than it is for old-hands. At the same time, a group of people is infinitely more complex than one individual, plus an organization usually houses several subcultures. A lot of striking information goes down the drain if a description limits itself to the average of all subcultures. Still some consultants honestly believe that, yes, they are able to depict an organizational culture accurately through typologies. If only life were so simple, then there would be no need for consultants. Authors who have come up with typologies classically limit these to eight at the very most. Work life is far too complex to be meaningfully captured in two to eight well-defined typologies, such as Dionysian culture or the Eiffel tower.

**The anthropological method:** Cultural anthropologists of the "old" school may claim that they are able to describe cultures objectively as long as he or she displays the proper attitudes, deploys proper methodologies and spends a considerable amount of time among the objects of the study. Management in general would not dream of using this time-consuming and costly approach, unless students perform this task for free. But students do not have the vast experience to compare their findings nor relate them to different organizations. Their report on culture will remain a nice story but lacks the handle to turn it into a tool of management.

**Qualitative data collection - Interviews:** Data can also be collected by respondents working inside the organization, either through interviewing colleagues (qualitative), or through questionnaires (quantitative). The first approach is characterized by two subjective carriers, the interviewer and the respondent, easily leading to biased results. It is nevertheless possible to achieve a fair degree of objectivity, if the data collection meets some strict pre-conditions:

- At least eight respondents per subculture are selected. This group should represent a wide diversity in terms of gender, age, education, seniority, function and hierarchical level. These respondents should be able and willing to act as meaningful sources of information.
- At least two interviewers should divide these eight respondents among them, one female interviewer and the other male.
- The interviewers should be non-directive and open minded. They should have an ability to create trust right away, know when to stay aloof and when to ask follow-up questions, and how to sidestep socially desirable answers.
- The questions should induce respondents to come up with meaningful information and they should cover as much ground as possible.
- Such in-depth interviews will take a minimum of around 2,5 hours after which a protocol has to be written based on the notes or recording the interviewer has made.
- From all these protocols the interviewers need to distill the information on which respondents implicitly agree, the common characteristics. The interviewers should also identify salient information given by only one or two respondents. That information may indicate on which aspects the culture is divided.

This approach is not frequently used, because it is rather costly and there may not be many consultants who possess the required interviewing skills. On occasions interviewing may be helpful, some examples will follow later on in this book.

**Quantitative data collection - questionnaires:** A standardized questionnaire can come closer to an objective picture of reality, if:

- The questions have not been dreamed up by a consultant or by management but are founded in rigorous research.
- The questions cover as much ground of work reality as possible.
- The questions do not invite socially desirable answers. It helps if the questions are not too precise and leave room for the respondent to give his or her view, yet on the other hand do not allow for different interpretations. In other words, it should not be obvious what is looked for.
- The structure of the questionnaire should make it more difficult to give socially desirable answers. For example, by mixing questions which belong to each other, turning some of them around and others not. In other words, to present questions in such a way that respondents do not know what we are looking for.

- Data collection is done anonymously. If employees fear that management can trace certain answers back to individuals, it is less likely that they will give their honest opinion. As it is hard to convince employees that the questionnaire is 100% anonymous, every effort should be made to ensure that the answers cannot be traced back to certain individuals. This can be best done by locating those who handle on-line data collection and reporting in a totally different country to those working in HQ and to those who receive the reports to be discussed with clients.
- A minimum of 35 randomly selected respondents participate (but preferably much more).

In spite of all the measures we take, subjectivity can never be avoided all together. The challenge is to minimize the bias. For that very reason the methodologies to measure labor satisfaction or to describe culture are of such different nature. With labor satisfaction, management wants to know how their team members *feel* about their work. In other words, they want to know the respondents' subjective reality. With culture, management wants to know "*how it is*", taking for granted that it is impossible to know whether a totally objective picture has been created. As Hofstede says, the best one can realize is inter-subjectivity, not a completely objective picture.

### 2.3.2 *Creating a precise picture*

The second challenge is to create a precise picture of the culture we survey. We need a precise description of culture in order to translate findings into concrete actions. A qualitative description of culture based on participatory observation or in-depth interviews may not yield sufficiently precise input to develop and select concrete actions.

Quantitative data collection will supply a precise description of culture although the exact positions in the Model should not be taken too literally. Life cannot be expressed in numbers. These positions reflect tendencies, such as whether a culture supports or hinders a productive work attitude.

Quantitative data collection does not just generate numbers and numerical positions in the Model but also provides descriptive information. Its strength lies in forcing respondents to answer standardized questions which allows for precise comparisons.

"Precise" does not mean describing a particular culture in two decimal points. Precision is achieved by meeting four criteria simultaneously:

- a. Describing culture in comparative terms
- b. Comparing actual culture with optimal culture
- c. Being aware that an optimal score does not equal a maximum score
- d. Taking different perspectives to anchor the description

#### **a. *Comparative description***

Culture only exists by comparison at the least at the deeper levels of culture; i.e. that part of culture which cannot be observed. A quantitative description will allow much more easily for comparison than a qualitative description, at least when a data bank is available with a lot of quantitative descriptions. That implies that adding tailor-made questions to the standard questionnaire will not result in additional meaningful information. The answers to the stand-alone tailor-made question simply cannot be compared. Management may be happy with the average answers to the new question or they may be disappointed, but that is based on their prior expectations, not based on any norm nor on the deviations from the norm. What is true for one new added question is of course even more true for a tailor-made questionnaire examining specific preoccupations of a client. It sounds so nice to tell a client that you can design a unique questionnaire for the sole purpose of meeting the specific needs of the client. If the client wants to receive specific answers to specific questions not included in the standardized questionnaire, we advise qualitative data collection instead (interviews).

***b. Comparing actual and optimal culture***

There is no such thing as a singular BEST culture to perform. Each organization and often each unit within an organization is at least partly embedded in a different environment. Each culture and each subculture needs to meet different requirements. A truly precise picture can only be obtained by comparing actual and optimal culture. The actual culture describes how things are now. The optimal culture describes the optimal situation; i.e. a culture which will support the group to realize objectives in the best possible way.

The challenge is not to impose your personal norms.

Also here, it will be much easier to compare actual and optimal culture using a quantitative method than a qualitative one.

***c. Being aware that an optimal score does not equal a maximum score***

We do not live in a one-dimensional world. You may have one leading goal, such as realizing high profit in the short run. But in order to achieve this, you have to achieve many more objectives, such as efficient work execution and smooth cooperation between function groups and departments.

There are three reasons why in the optimal situation, maximum scores of zero or hundred do not always make sense:

- It may not be right to choose a maximum score. Is it good to please the client no matter if his demands are excessive? Do you want your employees to go for high productivity even at the cost of health and safety?
- There may be external demands which make a maximum score unattainable. Take laws and directives of the central government that limit the adaptability and flexibility of pharmaceutical companies.

- Conflicting internal demands may make it unlikely that you can realize maximum scores. How to combine full ethical responsibility with 100% customer orientation in the banking sector?

**Maximum** scores may be rarely feasible or desirable. Management<sup>1</sup> has to determine the **optimal** culture in order to assess the functionality of the actual culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Those who define the optimal culture should have a helicopter view, whether they are managers or not.

**d. *Taking different perspectives to anchor the description***

Our preference for a quantitative data collection approach may be clear, but we certainly do not reject other approaches to data collection. Considering the complexity of groups, it is wise to utilize other methods as well. Our method usually takes off through online data collection with standard questionnaires. Despite the rigorous research undertaken by Geert Hofstede on which our work is based, it is conceited to think that work reality can be fully covered by standard questionnaires. Depending on the quantitative findings, we may advise clients to collect additional qualitative data on particular issues, for example through in-depth interviews. Information from those sources may shed light on contradictory information which the client could not explain, or on remarkable results that demand more context and background in order to be tackled.

One form of collecting qualitative data takes place anyway. Every contact with a client provides consultants with additional information about culture, consciously or unconsciously. Culture is reflected all the time and everywhere within any organization. A good consultant is able to give meaning to different expressions of culture, but also to differentiate between expressions of culture or of a particular individual.

Culture reflects a central tendency in an organization, and a subculture reflects a central tendency of a certain group within that organization. Does the reception area make you feel welcome or do you feel like an intruder? This can be a symbolic expression of an open or a closed culture.

But even if the reception area does not make you feel welcome, it is well possible that the receptionist does. It is also possible that most people make you feel welcome with the exception of one individual. In that case, that individual does not represent the culture of the organization. It might be that he or she has an unpleasant personality or just had a quarrel at home, came in through the rain, was standing in a traffic jam, or... Cultures are not neatly integrated phenomena.

In Annex 3 additional data collection processes are described in more detail.

In Annex 5 a list of symbols is presented per dimension, which can be used as a checklist, but keep in mind that cultures are not nicely integrated phenomena that can be analyzed with a checklist. This applies especially to the most superficial level of culture, viz. symbols.

### 2.3.3 *Creating a meaningful picture*

Nothing can be simpler than to design a list of questions that look for information about the way people relate to each other, to their work and to the outside world.

In our experience, when our clients ask us to have a look at the questionnaires they have been using created by other consultants, we frequently notice a mix of questions about “how it feels”, addressing labor satisfaction, and questions about “how it is”, addressing culture. The people who drew up the questionnaires and the consultants using them tended to be ignorant of the hotchpotch, although it was sold as a tool to measure culture.

If you come across a survey that claims to address the cultural aspects of work reality, then ask yourself:

- Are there any overlapping questions? Are some questions redundant?
- Is work reality covered to the largest extent possible?

You will only know this, if your questionnaire has been based in solid scientific research.

Another issue is even more pressing. Imagine that you have constructed a questionnaire with 46 items. These 46 items will generate a wealth of data that needs to be consolidated in autonomous issues, else you will face a universe of 46 variables, also called dimensions. The number of combinations with 46 variables is so overpowering and surpassing our brain power, that it will be hopeless to move from data to (meaningful) information.

The challenge is to cluster the answers in such a way that autonomous response groups are identified. This allows us to capture complex reality with the help of a model that contains autonomous dimensions. This is not something to dream up, but to be founded in solid academic research. The model we use, “The Hofstede Model on Strategy, Culture and Change”, consists of 6 autonomous dimensions and two semi-autonomous dimensions. Models are only an imperfect reflection of reality, but they are useful in making things understandable and workable. This is what we mean in our motto: *In the case of culture, never say “never” and never say “always”.*

In spite of its shortcomings, some of the great advantages of models are:

- They allow us to compare by building up a data bank. We have seen that culture only exists by comparison between groups. There are of course, many other realities apart from culture. People share basic emotions and needs, yet every individual is unique. This uniqueness of individuals and their personalities is the realm of psychology, not of cultures.
- Models allow us to categorize complex reality. This allows us to think about our work reality in a meaningful way. It enables us to exchange ideas and opinions about our work reality and to take focused action to address dysfunctionalities.

If you are a professional working in the field of culture and change or a client making use of such services, it makes sense to check whether the approach and methodologies to measure culture meet the criteria in this section,

We can assure you that our methodology and approach do, see Annex 4.

#### *2.3.4 Proper choice of target groups:*

No organization beyond a certain size and complexity has just one culture. Subcultures exist, following all sorts of delineations, such as grounded in:

- Hierarchy
- Function
- Location
- Customer expectations
- Technology

When differences among subcultures are not taken into account, a cultural audit will generate an average picture in which salient information among subcultures may have been covered up.

We refrain from averaging the scores of subcultures in a measurement, unless a client explicitly asks for it. It is of little use to compare the mean scores of, for instance, banks with each other. It is very useful to compare back offices with back offices and dealer rooms with dealer rooms - not only among banks, but among similar function groups anywhere.

It is therefore of prime importance to identify right away which groups and subcultures are to be measured separately.

## 2.4 Nature and sequence of proper research

Our work is based on proper research, conducted by Geert Hofstede and his research team during the 1980's in Denmark and the Netherlands on my request.

We recommend their article: "*Measuring organizational culture: A qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases*", by Hofstede, G., Neuijen, B., Ohayv, D.D., & Sanders, G. (1990), published in: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35, 286-316.

### 2.4.1 Requirements to be met

We will make an effort here to highlight the differences between research, aiming at a model describing differences among national cultures, and research aiming at a model describing organizational culture.

Geert Hofstede and his research team on organizational cultures decided that no subsidy would be requested, so that the team could operate independent of external financiers. One may think that this would also be in the interests of those granting subsidies. We found that then – as now - there is a lot of confusion about proper research in the field of culture. Requirements to be met for research on differences between national cultures and on organizational culture are almost opposite. At least concerning the creation of a databank of respondents.

Geert Hofstede's research on cultural differences among nations was based on response files from IBM. A criticism often voiced is that his research tells a whole lot about IBM but little about the rest of the world. Nothing is less true. People do not give their values when answering questions, they just give answers. Few people are acutely aware of their cultural values. So in order to find these values, groups of respondents in different countries should be quite similar and differing only in one point: their nationality. Only then can variation in answers be attributed to national (or regional) cultural differences.

Information about the organizational culture of IBM can only be obtained when the culture of IBM is compared with the cultures of other organizations.

Another often voiced criticism is that the employees of IBM represent a special cohort of people in different societies. That's true but that is just what we need. IBM had in those days, during the 1960's and 1970's, according to all accounts a strong organizational culture. In addition, it had a very strict function classification. This meant that IBM employees of the same function group around the world could be properly compared and therefore nationality was the major discriminating feature.

Indeed, the IBM results for Mexico may not apply to indigenous tribes in desolate areas far away from industrialized and urban centers. Should you wish to know more about such cultures in comparative terms, then you should compare them to other groups living in desolate areas under similar conditions.

It makes no sense to compare the values of a German engineer with a farmer in Tabasco and claim the differences are due to cultural differences between Germany and Mexico.

For organizational culture, other requirements apply. Instead of one organization with subsidiaries in many countries, one should focus on many organizations in one country. The results of the research will then not be affected by national cultures. Hofstede and his team started with a number of organizations in the Netherlands, but could not find a sufficient number of participating organizations. After all, the organizations had to pay to partake and had no guarantee that something useful would result from it. As the national cultures of Denmark and the Netherlands are quite similar, support was sought and found from Danish organizations.

### ***Databank of organizations***

It has already been pointed out that the variety of (parts of) organizations should be highly diverse in order to conduct proper research on organizational culture. In addition, there has to be a minimum number of participating (parts of) organizations, to ensure sound statistical processing. In the case of culture, such exercises should not be conducted using the answers of individual respondents but using the average answers given by different groups of respondents. This requirement has often been overlooked by researchers. You'll find more about this in: *"Culture's Consequences"*, Geert Hofstede, 2001, page 16.

### ***Databank of questions***

The challenge for Hofstede and his research team was to identify and formulate questions that would cover work reality to the largest extent possible. In order to make this happen, the research team did the following:

- They distilled a large number of questions from available literature about organizational culture.
- They conducted a large number of in-depth interviews in all organizations that partook. From this wealth of information additional questions were formulated.
- Moreover the research fellows came up with even more questions by using a deductive approach.

From the questions thus attained a 200-item questionnaire was devised.

### ***Try-out***

A small preliminary research round was conducted to test all questions. As it was meant to conduct quantitative data collection, scales had to be developed on which respondents were asked to tick off their answers.

The main objectives of this test round was to check whether the questions were well-understood and whether the answers differentiated sufficiently to conduct proper statistical analysis.

After the try-out, around 100 questions were included in the final questionnaire.

### ***Data collection***

The respondents were asked to fill out the paper-and-pencil questionnaire. These were then put into a database to facilitate statistical analyses.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, which produced a wealth of information about culture, numerous characteristics were identified which could impact culture.

### ***Creating a model***

The objective of the research was to explore a model on organizational cultures, in the same vein as Geert Hofstede had done for national cultural differences.

The result of the analysis indeed produced six autonomous dimensions and two semi-autonomous dimensions, plus many more yardsticks. See section 3.2 and 3.3.

#### ***2.4.2 Proper research by others***

We have not yet come across other proper research in this field. But the world is big and we are small, so it may well be that such research has been conducted numerous times. If not, then it will certainly happen in the near future. What can we predict about models resulting from such parallel research?

First of all, it will be unlikely that scholars will use exactly the same questions as Geert Hofstede et al. used; why would they? The number of questions that can be formulated to develop a model on organizational culture is infinite.

Secondly, as a consequence, each model would be different. What applies to models properly developed on national cultures, should then also apply to models properly developed on organizational cultures. Other properly devised models on national culture correlate strongly with Hofstede's model, whether they be developed by Shalom H. Schwartz or others. The same should be true regarding organizational culture. The content of each dimension may differ somewhat. Dimensions may be clustered in a somewhat different order. But as long as scholars ensure that the large variety found among the answers is described with the smallest number of autonomous variables (dimensions), there should be a great deal of overlap. This will apply particularly if the new research will be conducted in Denmark and the Netherlands.

### 2.4.3 Validation and revalidation

We have seen that national culture is one of the factors shaping organizational culture. It is therefore essential that organizational culture scans in other countries are validated once enough data from a great variety of (parts of) organizations has become available. The only proper validation that was so far completed, for Germany, did not reveal many differences, with the exception of one item that belongs to the realm of national culture: In Germany, respondents rated the importance of work versus social life twice as high as in Denmark and the Netherlands.

Organizational culture has more volatile characteristics than national culture. It is therefore advisable to revalidate the questions and the model every five years. The re-validation we conducted for the Netherlands did not show a need for major adjustments. Re-validation for other countries will be conducted when a sufficient number of scans have been executed.

It is rare that management techniques and tools are re-validated when used outside their country of origin. This is a great omission. Geert Hofstede has pointed out time and time again that management techniques are culture specific. What works in the United States may not work in France - and what works in Japan may not work in Sweden.

Organizational culture as a tool of management may also be culture-specific in different countries. There is definitely a need to conduct research before applying our tools in other countries, so why hasn't it been done by us?

Firstly, it is not easy to organize such proper research across borders. Secondly, Hofstede's research has revealed several connections between national and organizational culture. Thirdly, we are acutely aware of the cultural specificity of management techniques, after all, we started from the consequences of national culture on managerial philosophies, tools and techniques already in the beginning of the 1980s. Thus, despite the need to validate the model in different countries we were able to compensate for such an omission by our know-how about differences among national cultures.

A small example may clarify this.

#### **Example:**

*We carried out a cultural audit within a multinational comprising ten subsidiaries in as many countries. In two countries a characteristic of organizational culture stood out which was unidentified in the other eight countries. In France and Norway, subordinates did not dare to give their direct boss negative feedback. Our message to top management was: "In the case of France, this is to be expected, no worries. In the case of Norway, however, there is 'something rotten in the state'. The American manager there has apparently scared the hell out of his staff, because their behavior is untypical for Norwegians."*

It will be clear by now that there are many pitfalls when it comes to organizational culture. In Annex 4, we have grouped some pitfalls for those who want to verify whether they will get value for money when involving practitioners on organizational culture and change management.



