

Intercultural management assignment

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Cross-Cultural Management in Practice Cross-Cultural Management in Practice Culture and Negotiated Meanings Edited by Henriett Primecz Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary Laurence Romani Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden Sonja Sackmann University of Bw Munich, Germany Edward Elgar Cheltenham, UK • Northampton, MA, USA © Henriett Primecz, Laurence Romani and Sonja Sackmann 2011 All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

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to improve the cooperation process Sylvie Chevrier 5 The intercultural challenges in the transfer of codes of conduct from the USA to Europe Christoph I. Barmeyer and Eric Davoine 6 When American management system meets Tunisian culture: the Poulina Case Hela Yousfi 7 Corporate communication across cultures: a multi-level approach Lisbeth Clausen 8 Engineering culture(s) across sites: implications for cross-cultural management of emic meanings Jasmin Mahadevan 9 Negotiating meaning across borders (finally!): Western management training in Eastern Europe Snejina Michailova and Graham Hollinshead 10 Intercultural integration in Sino-Brazilian joint ventures Guilherme Azevedo v 1 18 29 41 53 64 77 89 101 112 vi Contents 11 Divorcing globalization from Orientalism: resembling economies and global value added Iris Rittenhofer 12 Culture and negotiated meaning: implications for practitioners Sonja A. Sackmann, Laurence Romani and Henriett Primecz Index 125 139 155 Contributors Guilherme Azevedo recently completed his PhD in Strategy and Organization at McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

His research gravitates around the concepts of globalization and culture and includes studies on international business, organizational anthropology, anthropological perspectives of globalization, interpretation of cultures and business development in emerging economies. He has taught at undergraduate and MBA programmes in Brazil and in Canada. Christoph Barmeyer is Professor of Intercultural Communication at the University of Passau, Germany, and Affiliated Professor of Ecole de Management (EM)

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Contributors ix Jasmin Mahadevan received her Master's Degree in Languages, Business and Cultural Studies (Diplom-Kulturwirt) with a focus on Southeast Asia from the University of Passau, Germany, and her Doctoral degree in Cultural Anthropology and Intercultural Communication from the LudwigMaximilians-University in Munich, Germany. She is Professor of International and Cross-Cultural Management at the School of Engineering, Department of Business Administration and Engineering (BAE), at Pforzheim University, Germany, and Head of the BAE Programme International Management.

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She has been teaching Cross-Cultural Management since 1995 in different schools and countries at different levels (BSc, Master, Postgraduate, MBA, PhD in different programmes. Henriett has published several papers in Hungarian and international journals, for example, *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, *Journal of Asia Business Studies* and *Organizational Research Methods*. She is currently involved in organizing a stream with Loong Wong and Bettina Gehrke for the 7th Critical Management Studies Conference with the theme of ‘Critical View Across Cultures’.

Iris Rittenhofer is Associate Professor and head of the Cultural Research Unit at ISEK, Aarhus School of Business and Social Sciences, Department of

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In particular, she investigates the theoretical contributions that feminist organizational studies can make to cross-cultural management research, using a bi-paradigm approach. She is also working on the development of pedagogical tools for cross-cultural management education. She recently published *Relating to the Other* (2010, LAP Publishing) and her other publications appear, for example, in *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, *Organizational Research Methods* and several book chapters.

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Contributors xi Organization Sciences, and is Director of the Institute Developing Viable Organizations. Her research, teaching and consulting

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His PhD thesis focused on the constructions of Finnish cultural identity in crosscultural interaction, building on the experiences of project managers of largescale, international engineering projects. He is currently a project manager in a large European Union-funded research project, which is focused on developing cross-cultural innovation networks. His current and future research interests lie in applying the cultural perspective to studying

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Hela Yousfi is Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Organization at Paris Dauphine University (DRM), France. She received her PhD from the University of Nanterre at Paris in 2006. She is specialized in the field of sociology of organizations. She teaches graduate courses on crosscultural management, strategic management and organization theory. She has conducted research and published on the topic of culture and management practices transfer in North Africa and the Middle East, including Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. She is also an experienced trainer in intercultural management.

Her work has also centred around issues such as culture, institutions and economic development, trust and crosscultural cooperation and culture in critical management perspectives. Acknowledgements We benefited from the contributions and support of a number of people and institutions in developing and writing this book and we would like to take this opportunity to offer our thanks. First of all, we would like to thank the contributors' excellent input and hard work in this task. They follow us in our endeavour to build a coherent book from the diverse, interesting and strong papers they first wrote.

We know how hard or even painful it is to cut a good paper into almost half. Despite this, we asked them to do so because we believe together with the publisher that for teaching purpose short cases are best suited. Several

times this meant asking the authors to rewrite a different summary of the empirical material and the analysis, in addition to implications for practitioners. We are thankful for the contributors' willingness to receive and consider our editorial comments, for the energy they put in the rewriting process and finalization of the chapters into a coherent unity.

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number 421-2009-2020). Laurence Romani would not have been able to
contribute to this volume without their support. Introduction

This book is a collection of ten cases that deal with real life cross-cultural
issues and also discusses implications for practitioners. The cases are based
on field research revealing challenges and benefits from working across
countries. In a succinct way, they provide both illustrations and insights on
how to deal with actual cross-cultural issues. Topics cover, for example,
international collaboration across organizations and within multinational
companies, organizational culture in international joint ventures, as well as
knowledge transfer. WHAT ARE THE USES AND BENEFITS OF THE BOOK?

Practice-oriented studies on intercultural interactions have been repeatedly
called for, because students and practitioners often consider predefined

constructs or cultural dimensions too abstract, remote from practice, or lacking recommendations for dealing with and solving intercultural conflicts and misunderstandings (Blasco, 2009; Cant, 2004; Earley and Peterson, 2004; and more generally Burke and Rau, 2010). Influential models such as Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension framework have been developed for cultural issues at the national level of analysis and for the purpose of comparing national cultures.

The implications of these models for interactions in practice are not straightforward. When working together, people need to find concrete and creative solutions that help them deal with their differences; they need to go beyond the comparison of management practices across countries.

Consequently, this volume provides cases that show how organizational members deal with their differences by mutually constructing their social reality, thus overcoming – or augmenting – their culturally based differences.

In addition, the concluding chapter summarizes major insights from the cases and proposes nine strategies on how to successfully handle cultural differences and their related dynamics in practice. WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS EDITED VOLUME? While editing this book we worked with the authors to condense their findings xiv Introduction xv into accessible and readable texts for the benefit of students and practitioners alike, without compromising on theoretical and methodological rigor.

TEN CASES SHOWING CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE The results are ten succinct and straight-to-the-point cases. They bridge theory and practice, they are close to the experienced reality of people and thanks

to interpretive investigations they show how theoretical constructs apply in practice. The cases present success and failure stories in cross-cultural management. The qualitative in-depth studies display situated knowledge along with the participants' own explanations and are thus a rich source of inspiration.

Although such studies are published in academic journals, an edited volume for students and practitioners, containing rich qualitative case studies, has been missing since Sackmann (1997). A CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CULTURE AND NEGOTIATED MEANINGS By offering a study of a German-Japanese joint venture, Brannen and Salk (2000) contributed to confirm the idea that (organizational) culture emerges and develops through interactions between members of different cultural groups rather than being the juxtaposition or imposition of one culture onto the other.

The emergent culture is called a 'negotiated culture'. In this volume, we consider not only partners who are present and negotiating to find an agreement, but also individuals and groups actively reinterpreting their environment, or aspects of this environment, and thus taking part in the very dynamics of cultural changes. A POWER PERSPECTIVE FOR THE STUDY OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS We argue that the power balance between interacting partners needs to be addressed because this balance (or the lack of it) affects how culture and cultural differences are talked about and how meanings are negotiated through interactions.

Moreover, since power is often implicitly present, participants of intercultural interactions and researchers do not necessarily address it; instead xvi Introduction they try to explain misunderstandings, conflicts or smooth relations with cultural reasons. Power discrepancies can exist between headquarters and subsidiaries, between different professional groups in an organization, or they can take the form of opposition between technical knowledge and client knowledge. Openness toward others and willingness to take their view into account will partly depend on people's power position in the intercultural relationship.

NINE STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERCULTURAL INTERACTIONS The learning we can derive from these cases is condensed in the last chapter of this volume into a model presenting nine strategies for effective intercultural interactions. These strategies address expectations, understanding and actions to be considered when dealing with multiple cultures in practice. The model takes into account both the people involved in interaction and their environment. It provides a guide in intercultural situations where negotiation of meaning and power imbalance are part of the interaction.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS In the first chapter we introduce the reader to the philosophical and methodological background of studying culture in an interpretive way and we underscore that this approach differs from the assumptions and knowledge developed by the use of cultural dimension constructs. Using illustrations from the ten case studies, we describe the theoretical framework of this volume. First, we explicate the view that

meaning is negotiated and that culture is socially constructed and reinterpreted in interaction.

Second, we present the construct of ‘ meaning system’ as an alternative to cultural dimensions, hitherto among the few available tools to talk about cultural differences across countries. Finally, we insist on the need to consider power imbalance in crosscultural interactions, since it is an influential part in the negotiation of meanings. The first case by Sara Louise Muhr and Jeanette Lemmergaard (Chapter 2) reports a study of an individual consultant traveling from his North-European home to developing countries.

The frequent traveler’s challenge is how to deal with constantly changing work environments and varying cultural influences. While constantly on the road, rarely in familiar places, he has to struggle with solitude and constant change in addition to his work. Muhr and Lemmergaard argue convincingly that spaces of generic culture – so-called ‘ non-places’ – Introduction xvii provide cross-cultural workers with a sense of familiarity and identity.

Airports and airplanes can be similar all over the world, they do not impose specific culture, requiring little attention to read and understand the place once a person is familiar with the generic setting. It is these non-places that crosscultural workers can use to cope with working across multiple cultures.

In Chapter 3, Sampo Tukiainen presents collaboration between a Finnish parent company and a Polish subsidiary in two large infrastructural projects. The case offers a report of a successful earlier collaboration and investigates how it is possible that conflicts emerged in a second project involving the same group of people.

It reveals that beyond cultural differences, individual and organizational strategic interests collided. The Finnish headquarters brought the technical know-how to the Polish partner who actually had an advantage in local market knowledge, managers had divergent agendas and both organizations wanted to lead the project. This case underscores the problematics related to the possibilities for automatically extending prior success to future collaboration. It is also an example of collaboration between members of a Western country and a post-socialist one after the economic and political transition.

The case in Chapter 4 deals with collaboration between French and Vietnamese partners in the context of a non-governmental organization (NGO). Employees from both countries work together on development projects, such as services to farmers, reducing malnutrition and micro-finance. Sylvie Chevrier describes the possibilities of smooth cooperation, although the partners had very different views, for instance, on individual autonomy, empowerment and work ethics.

French workers assumed that close supervision was a sign of lack of trust; this is why they gave autonomy and expected initiative from their Vietnamese colleagues. In contrast, their colleagues found them distant, offering little support and exchange on details of the project. At the same time, the Vietnamese were seen by their French partners as incoherent when they were respectful of the social rules of their communities. The author shows that divergences in sense-making systems are at the root of the

misunderstandings and she explains how to reach a position that values and builds on this cultural diversity.

The case by Christoph Barmeyer and Eric Davoine (Chapter 5) explores the transfer of codes of conduct from the American headquarters to French and German subsidiaries. The authors underscore that it is not only cultural differences and legal frameworks that influence the interpretation and thus the adoption of the code; they also show that other issues need to be considered such as the kind of relationship between headquarters and subsidiaries, or the presence and intent of active unions.

They reveal that despite the successful diffusion and official adoption of the code, the code has a different ethical and legal value in France and Germany, or none at all, because adaptations to local legal frameworks were not made. xviii Introduction In Chapter 6, Hela Yousfi addresses the tension between diffusion of universal management systems, or best practices, and the need for local adaptations. The case presents a successful introduction of ‘American’ management techniques in a Tunisian company.

On closer examination the interviews show, however, that the very success of the introduction of these techniques depended on their reinterpretation in terms of a ‘Tunisian’ sense-making system. The author highlights that the techniques used were able to meet locally defined expectations of ‘good management’ and to overcome deficiencies in certain local business practices. The case illustrates the potential implications of globalization, as well as the importance of local culture and the adaptation of global methods to a local context.

Another success story is the interaction between a Danish company and its Japanese subsidiary after fundamental changes in the company's market strategy (Chapter 7). Lisbeth Clausen analyses the collaboration through the lens of communication and shows the different levels of communication between the parties involved. She reveals the negotiations taking place between the headquarters and the subsidiary, and the various levels of culture (national, professional and so on) that influence their interaction.

This case also points to societal trends in Japan and to the important role played by bicultural persons who can act as translators between people from both cultures. The case by Jasmin Mahadevan in Chapter 8 shows that cross-cultural work is not only happening at the national level and that the cultural boundaries that one needs to bridge are also changing. The case deals with collaboration between German and Indian engineers who apparently denied and minimized their national cultural differences, and stressed in contrast their shared professional culture.

The author opens our eyes to the cultural dynamics that come into play at different levels: the national (Indian versus German) and the professional level (engineers versus managers and human resources professionals). She also reveals that these boundaries are changing depending on the context. For example, she shows how in a period of uncertainties, German engineers could change their discourse and present Indian engineers as being very different and becoming a threat for the future of engineers in the German sites.

Chapter 9 relates to a project directed to Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, just after the political and economic transitions. Bulgaria was supported by Western European states as the beneficiary of a program providing management education. Snejjina Michaliova and Graham Hollinshead show that the very first part of the project was a sort of blind drive: the educator had neither information of the knowledge that was needed or the knowledge that participants already had, nor did they have any local knowledge.

The case addresses fundamental issues linked to knowledge transfer and reveals how the project gradually changed the form of knowledge that was transmitted to become more successful. Introduction xix In Chapter 10, Guilherme Azevedo reports of two joint ventures between Chinese and Brazilian organizations. He shows that intercultural cooperation is feasible despite large cultural differences (China and Brazil can be seen as cultural antipodes). Based on ethnographic observation, the author suggests that effective cooperation can be built upon the construction of a sense of proximity and through micro-dynamics of integration.

Although the informants acknowledge that interactions between people with such different cultural backgrounds may not always be easy, they indicate that good intentions and the dynamics of their concrete actions can eventually lead to fruitful cooperation and a successful joint venture. Chapter 11 offers an analysis of ‘ globalization’ in corporate language use, denoting ways of thinking and perceiving the transforming relations between home and foreign markets.

Iris Rittenhofer explores shared cultural patterns of perceptions and meaning production through two cases: the visualization of a global company and the discourse of an expert advising how to prepare for global markets.

Unraveling these perceptions of globalization, she shows implications for strategy development processes: the way organizations see (or imagine) foreign markets will impact their globalization process. In the closing Chapter 12 we summarize the managerial and practical implications of the ten cases and propose nine strategies for dealing with inter- and cross-cultural differences at work.

These include expecting differences rather than similarities when different cultures are involved and we stress that cultural frames that are in a given context need to be identified and understood from the perspective of the native participants. Acting as an interpreter and translator of meaning may foster mutual understanding and such practice may be aided by identifying and building on common grounds. Respect for others is important while refraining from judgment, appreciating existing differences and learning from them add value to cross-cultural work.

At the same time a common vision, purpose or goal will help overcome cultural differences while working toward that shared goal. Next to these strategies it is also important to be aware of the larger context in which interactions take place. HOW DID THIS BOOK COME TO BE? The three editors are themselves boundary spanners between different academic domains and divergent cultures. Familiar with both the fields of organization studies and international management, we could see similarities and points of contact

between these two academic fields. One important link is the study of the interconnection of culture and management.

This topic has been well researched both in the positivist paradigm with cultural dimension frameworks, and in the interpretive paradigm with intercultural interaction studies. xx Introduction Yet, few cross-references exist and consequently very limited crossfertilization between these two streams of research. Our object became to raise the awareness of the importance and value of different paradigms among researchers working with culture and management, by revealing how many different streams and research traditions currently exist (see Primecz et al. 2009). Together with Katalin Topcu, we organized a track at the European Group for Organizational Studies annual conference in Vienna (EGOS 2007) that led later to a call for papers for the special issue of the International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management (issue 3, volume 9, 2009). In both instances, we received a large number of submissions, most of them submitted by interpretive researchers. This is when our idea of an edited volume started.

We wanted to promote the visibility of interpretive research in cross-cultural management and provide hands-on, applied cases and illustrations of cross-cultural management that could be used for teaching purposes. We actively worked on completing the range of studies represented in this volume to include cases related to various geographical locations (North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia) and treated by researchers of various origin (Europe, South America and Africa) and interpretive research traditions.

Our professional training, teaching, research and consulting experiences have influenced this volume in many ways, starting from the various networks in which we diffused the call for papers, to the goal we had of including cases linked to rarely covered geographical areas (such as Eastern Europe or North Africa). We hope that our edited volume will not only provide exciting reading but also become a useful resource for practitioners, students of crosscultural management, and colleagues alike. REFERENCES

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Cultural Complexity in Organizations: Inherent Contrasts and Contradictions, Newbury Park, CA: Sage. . Culture and negotiated meanings: the value of considering meaning systems and power imbalance for cross-cultural management Laurence Romani,* Sonja A. Sackmann and Henriett Primecz

What can we expect when a Brazilian and a Chinese company decide to form a strategic alliance and, for the first time in their corporate history, develop a joint-venture project? We imagine significant cultural differences, potential clashes due to their dissimilar national and organizational cultures, and the risk of a premature termination of the venture (based on, for example, Hofstede, 2001; Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997).

Similarly, when a German organization transfers some of its technical operations to India, we understand that the personnel department in Germany would argue in support of cross-cultural management training for the engineers who would be working most closely with their counterparts in India. In addition, when we learn of the success of a project between the headquarters in Finland and its subsidiary in Poland, we expect their second collaboration also to run smoothly. The case studies included in this edited volume will demonstrate that, in practice, these expectations may be misleading. BEYOND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

These expectations may be misleading because they are based upon assumptions and knowledge that do not apply in the respective situations. These expectations rest quite frequently upon the notion of culture that has been developed in the international management literature. For example, they suggest that North Americans are individualistic and Chinese are

collectivistic, that culture can be measured, and that it has an impact upon human behaviour in predictable ways. This abundant literature on cross-cultural dimension frameworks (see Nardon and Steers, 2009 for a review) has revealed the influence of culture on management (see Kirkman et al. 2006). The literature also 1 2 Cross-cultural management in practice shows the differences in practices and preferences between countries on a national level of analysis, as well as how its instruments enable comparisons between countries. In brief, cultural dimension frameworks (such as Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al. , 2004, Trompenaars, 1993; Schwartz, 1994) aim to compare national cultural differences on a general level; however, they cannot adequately predict or explicate what happens when people actually meet and interact with each other.

In this volume, you will find the case of successful intercultural integration in two Sino-Brazilian joint ventures. It underlines the fact that, depending upon the situation and one's specific agenda, people may or not wish to emphasize cultural differences. This implies that knowing about cultural differences (such as the ones depicted in the cultural dimension constructs) does not suffice in predicting and managing cultural clashes or the lack thereof. Another case shows that German engineers resisted cross-cultural management training because they identified with Indian engineers.

They saw them as fellow engineers and colleagues, and did not see a need for explicitly addressing cultural differences between the two countries. We learn in another case that, despite the similarities in partners and projects, a successful intercultural collaboration is no guarantee of future success. This

chapter (among others in this volume) also reveals that when people talk about cultural differences they do not necessarily mean the differences as suggested in cultural dimension constructs; they imply and express power inequalities instead. A FOCUS UPON INTERACTION RATHER THAN COMPARISON

Cultural dimension constructs are used foremost for comparisons. They inform us about an average behaviour or preference in a given country; however, they are limited, if not misleading, when used to explicate interactions. When employees of Chinese and Brazilian companies begin working together, they are not ‘comparing’ themselves with each other; they are interacting with each other and trying to solve the issues at hand. Although they are, indeed, influenced by their cultural background(s), individuals do not mechanistically enact their country’s culture scores upon researched cultural dimensions.

So what do they do? We shall demonstrate that they negotiate. By introducing the notion of culture and negotiated meanings, and using examples taken from previous research and the ten case studies, this chapter provides the theoretical framework for the volume. We first explain that our approach is interpretive, and focuses upon interactions; this means that it builds upon very different assumptions and research methods than the cultural dimension literature. In our approach, cultural differences between countries Culture and negotiated meanings 3 re explained by the construct of meaning systems. Since we focus upon interactions, we argue that power issues need to be considered in order to understand cross-

cultural management in practice. THE ADVANTAGE OF USING AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH There are many advantages of using an interpretive approach to cross-cultural management: for example, a focus upon interactions and, thus, actual interpersonal management practices (a level of analysis that is closer to our experienced reality rather than a mean for a nation) and investigation methods accessible to individual managers.

We shall further address this latter point below. Consider, for example, an international business negotiation meeting. Using a questionnaire and video recording, we can collect a large amount of data that reveals information about the purpose of the meeting, the place, the profiles of the persons in interaction, as well as specifics about verbal and nonverbal interactions. This is very rich and valuable information; however, if we also consider meanings attached to this meeting, we gain a very different picture. For example: what did a negotiation meeting mean for the different partners?

Was the meeting equally important to all the persons in interactions? Were there previous meetings and how did the participants experience those? What is associated with the meeting location: did the meeting take place on neutral ground? How do the participants relate the arguments advanced by the other party, and what were the consequences? This example points to the advantage of adding the investigation of meanings to the study of human interactions since they are both tangible and critical parts of their actions.

This highlights the influence of the context upon the interaction, the significance of the interaction, the potential power struggles and many other

aspects that participate directly or indirectly to what is happening at the meeting. A questionnaire is a powerful research tool; however, it is made of predefined questions and builds upon categories that do not necessarily fit with the respondents' points of view. Value surveys are also compelling means of investigation, yet they cannot tell us how people actually enact these values in, for example, an intercultural interaction.

Conversely, participant observation and interviews allow us to come closer to what people do and how they think in practice. Human beings constantly interpret what is going on around them; they use meanings to make sense of what they are experiencing, and their current and future actions are based upon these interpretations. Therefore, it is essential to understand the meanings with which people associate what they do, the situation in which they find themselves, and the way in which their 4 Cross-cultural management in practice partner acts and reacts to what it is that they are doing.

Accessing these meanings requires investigating how people make sense of what is going on around them, and requires an interpretive approach.

INTERPRETIVE CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN A NUTSHELL

Interpretive research is rich in diverse streams and methods (see Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Hatch and Yanow, 2003) that cannot be addressed in this brief introduction. We choose to focus upon defining characteristics of interpretive cross-cultural management research, especially those in contrast to cultural dimension constructs. Unravelling and Understanding the Actors' Perspectives

The centre of the analysis in interpretive studies is people embedded in their socio-cultural reality: their experience, their ways of thinking, their sensemaking and how they talk about it – that is, their lifeworld¹.

Researchers endeavour to see the world through the eyes of the people whom they are investigating, grasping the rationale of their actions and making sense of them (as in Verstehen²). They aim to comprehend the insider's view, since this view is indicative of the socio-cultural reality of the person and, thus, of the society in which she lives.

One consequence of this is that researchers are not concerned about whether the sense given by the person(s) is either the right or the best one. The aim is not to reach an external and generalizable knowledge; rather, it is to unravel and understand the world from the perspective of the acting persons, situated in their own local context and, therefore, understanding the society in which they live. As an example, a multinational company had tried repeatedly to implement Total Quality Management (TQM) in its Moroccan subsidiary when it suddenly worked in a very successful way.

The investigation by d'Iribarne (2002) reveals that this change was triggered by the employees' new interpretation of the TQM principles. Was it the 'correct' interpretation, in line with the context in which it had been developed in Japan? The answer is not at all; however, the implementation of TQM was no less successful. The employees' new interpretation referred to the 'Zaouia' (a pre-Islamic form of community), which stands for a community with a strong (exemplary) leader and moral principles.

This happened when a new chief executive officer (CEO) personally and rigorously applied the TQM principles and when a parallel was drawn during corporate training between TQM principles and precepts of the Qu'ran. This combination of an exemplary leader (new CEO), moral guidance (TQM Culture and negotiated meanings 5 and Qu'ran principles) with a community (the organization) resulted in employees using the metaphor of the Zaouia and successfully adopting and implementing TQM. Interpretive researchers do not test a theory or a model with hypotheses that either will or will not be supported.

Instead, the definition of the investigated problem, and the relevant constructs and meanings emerge: the interpretive researchers progressively understand and develop them. Researchers who were investigating the adoption of TQM in this Moroccan organization did not know in advance about the implicit use of the metaphor of the Zaouia. By carefully listening and analysing the way employees were talking, researchers progressively came to this explanation. The outcome of interpretive works can be seen as transferable (Guba and Lincoln, 2005) rather than generalizable.

The adoption of TQM principles across the world is not linked to the Zaouia; this result is not generalizable. However, the revealed adoption process is transferable: employees are more likely to adopt TQM when its principles and implementation can be interpreted and understood in a culturally meaningful way. The case by Hela Yousfi presented in Chapter 6 underlines the same process: 'foreign' management practices are successfully implemented when employees can (re)interpret them in a (culturally)

meaningful way (see also the work by Brannen, 2004 on recontextualization). Meanings are Dynamic and Emerge in Context

The meanings people give to a situation are socially constructed and depend upon the context. Irrmann (2008) gives the example of a failed negotiation between Finnish and French interlocutors, even though all premises for success were present. The French seller confronted by the silence of the Finnish client interpreted it as an act of suspicion and hesitation. The French seller tried harder to convince the Finnish client who, in turn, interpreted this very act in a negative way. In fact, silence in itself does not mean anything: the sense – or meaning – of silence is socially constructed.

It means what we have learned to associate it with, and the sense that people in an interaction tend to give to it. Irrmann argues that it is a common communication pattern in Finland to remain silent for some time in order to show consideration for what has been said, thereby, showing interest. He points out that another pattern tends to prevail among French interlocutors: interruption, instead of silence, indicates interest. The interpretation of an action or a situation is partly linked to the socially constructed meanings attached to it and partly to individual meanings: the meanings we give from our personal life experience and identity.

Individual meanings develop over time: through socialization in various settings and groups (such as a family, gender, religion, town, nationality, 6 Cross-cultural management in practice profession and so on). Meanings that develop in an interaction are, thus, embedded in their context (social and personal); they are socially constructed. The context of the interaction is

meaningful, as is the way in which interviewees tell their story. In the study of expatriate tales about cultural encounters, Gertsen and Soderberg (2010) show how narrating – telling the story of a particular event – is not neutral.

This is a social act, a retrospective interpretation, which often takes part in identity construction (see also Soderberg, 2006). Sara Louise Muhr and Jeanette Lemmergaard use this approach as an example (see Chapter 2).

The stories of an international consultant reveal how he copes with being an outsider and insider simultaneously. He uses ‘non-places’ (airport lounges, international hotel rooms, in other words, impersonal spaces) to preserve his identity.

The narration of his assignments is not a neutral descriptive story; it is also a story structured around – and influenced by – his use of space (culturally embedded and non-places) and his identity issues. In sum, researchers need to consider the context of the interview, the way in which the story is told, who is the storyteller and in which context the story told has taken place. Therefore, there are always multiple ‘contexts’ to be considered and they are all parts of meanings. Interpretive studies pay attention to processes because interactions are dynamic.

The way in which people make sense of what is happening is dynamic; the context may be changing and former interactions influence the new ones. For example, Snejjina Michailova and Graham Hollinshead show us in Chapter 9 that the content of management training delivered in Bulgaria after the fall of the Berlin wall changed subsequently from a perspective of simple knowledge transfer from Western Europe to Eastern Europe to a much

stronger involvement of local meanings. Meanings such as good management and entrepreneurship are not transmitted; rather, they are (re)created and negotiated.

Meanings are always in a process of becoming since they depend strongly upon the context of the exchange. For example, entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe in the 1990s did not mean the same as it did in Western Europe; it most certainly did not have the same positive connotations. Trainers needed to adapt to the local context, and to the local reality of the trainees. Trainers and trainees developed the forms of knowledge that were transmitted. In sum, interactions are a dynamic process, leading to a change in sensemaking and meanings throughout this process. In Dialogue

Meanings cannot be collected by controlled observation of behaviour (such as in a laboratory), nor can they be collected by large-scale questionnaire studies: they emerge in dialogue. Researchers need to ask people, learn to understand the words they use and the meanings attached to them in the specific contexts of the interaction, observe how the subjects utilize or organize their environ- Culture and negotiated meanings 7 ment and so on. This implies that interpretive studies apply predominantly qualitative methods (such as interviews, participant observations, text analysis and narrative analyses³).

Since meanings are not directly accessible, it is through a dialogue with expression that we can reach them that is to say, words, images, organization of space, time or discourse. In a text, meanings are implicit and the researcher needs to progressively bring underlying meanings systems to

the forefront. This can be done in a dialogue, including the contexts and the text. The researcher asks questions and searches for answers, taking into consideration the contexts in which the text has been developed as we have shown in the previous section.

Researchers gain a preliminary understanding in this interaction with the text and continue their dialogue until they have reached interpretations (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, p. 62) that are found to be relevant and convincing to interviewees or other researchers. In Chapter 10, for example, Guilherme Azevedo wants to understand the successful cultural integration of Sino-Brazilian organizations. A preliminary question is: why did cultural integration happen in their case when it did not in so many other collaborations? A causality expressed by the Chinese interviewees is: 'working with Brazilians is easier ... because we treat each other as being on the same level'. The interpretive analysis predominantly searches for patterns rather than causality and explanation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, p. 61). Consequently, the researcher does not stop at the interviewees' explanation of causality, but searches for similar ways in which interviewees organize their respective narratives. Guilherme Azevedo demonstrates that the members of the international joint venture develop shared meanings that Chinese and Brazilians are closer to each other than one might usually expect.

This pattern appears repeatedly in the observation notes and transcriptions of the interviews. But how does this sense of proximity contribute to the cultural integration? By continuously interrogating the text and its context of

production, Guilherme Azevedo shows that this sense of proximity supports the micro-dynamics of integration, thus, the actual cultural integration of the organization. Since ‘texts’ are, for example, the transcriptions of interviews and notes on what one has observed in the field or on what informants have said in informal conversations, this method is very accessible to practitioners in contrast to large databases.

In their interactions with colleagues or clients, practitioners can develop the technique of dialoguing with this ‘text’, by carefully listening to what people are saying, posing questions and observing what people actually do. They need to go beyond the spoken words and search for patterns. For example, Romani (2010) shows that Japanese interviewees repeatedly say that their Swedish superiors are being nice. This is a pattern. Questioning this pattern requires asking what the interviewees actually mean by the word ‘nice’ during, for example, a lunch conversation.

A second pattern then emerges: a ‘nice’ supervisor is contrasted with a ‘directive’ one. The next step is then to 8 Cross-cultural management in practice ask the interviewees (and their ‘text’) what they mean by ‘directive’. Moving from one pattern to the next, a clearer picture progressively emerges informing us about the Japanese interviewees’ views on leadership. Reflexivity Reflexivity is used by interpretive researchers to investigate how their text (data) has been collected and analysed.

They systematically think about the conditions of their research during the investigation, their choice of theory, the way in which they use theory and their analyses. In brief, they critically and consciously reflect upon every

aspect that is part of their research, which influences their analyses and the conclusions they reach. In order for their conclusions to be accepted as relevant, researchers need to show this reflexivity to the same extent as statisticians need to detail their analyses. Reflexivity is a key aspect in the development of interpretive analysis; it is a necessary condition for validity and reliability.

In order for managers to better understand meanings while conversing with their employees in a corporate environment, it is also important to perform this reflexivity. Under what conditions did the conversation take place? Could the person talk freely or did the hierarchical difference impede what was said? What was surprising or touching during the interview? Why did I draw this conclusion after the interview? Do other colleagues share my opinion? These are some of the questions that can help you begin a reflective process.

In this succinct presentation of the interpretation of texts and the search for meanings, we have underlined a number of aspects, such as the centrality of the lived experience, the meanings attached to it, the importance of contexts, the necessity to search for patterns in texts and researchers' reflexivity. These are central aspects of interpretive research, such as those presented in the following case studies. The theoretical framework of culture and negotiated meanings is yet another. **CULTURE AND NEGOTIATED MEANINGS** The study of interactions between different cultures in management studies encouraged a view on culture as being dynamic.

For example, with the negotiated culture approach. The Negotiated Culture Approach Inspired by the concept of negotiated order (see Strauss, 1978), the negotiated culture approach posits ‘ patterns of meanings and agency in the organization Culture and negotiated meanings 9 arise from the interactions and negotiations of its members’ (Brannen and Salk, 2000, p. 456). Brannen and Salk (2000) show that members of a German-Japanese joint venture had to face different problems contingent to the various phases of the development of production.

Some differences in (national or organizational) cultural practices (that is to say, forms of decision making and locus of responsibility) resulted in the crystallization of issues. These issues led to the development of negotiated solutions and, consequently, the development of a specific organizational culture. In brief, they show that organizational culture development is foremost linked to salient issues and their resolution rather than the cultural (national) profile of those (people or organizations) involved in the interaction.

By studying a Danish-Japanese collaboration and addressing the organizational culture and communication level, Clausen (2007) provides another illustration of the negotiated culture perspective. She shows how the terms of the collaboration are negotiated as a function of external constraints and emerging issues linked, for example, to entry barrier, distribution and global brand strategy. The organizational culture that emerges contains aspects of both partners (Danish headquarters and

Japanese alliance partner) and, depending upon the negotiated solutions that were found, idiosyncratic new ones as well.

In this volume, Lisbeth Clausen pursues another study on corporate communication between Danish and Japanese partners. She shows (see Chapter 7) how various levels of culture can influence the communication process and participate in the emergence of practices through ongoing communication. Different Forms of Negotiation: Conversation and Reinterpretation The cases illustrate in this volume several forms of negotiations that lead to the emergence of corporate practices of negotiated culture and intercultural management practices. For example, negotiations take place between organizations, headquarters and subsidiaries, professional groups and individuals. They can touch upon knowledge or technology transfer, strategy and communication, and corporate social responsibility. Three chapters address intercultural issues and how culture develops with negotiated meanings in a way that is different from a direct negotiation between present business partners. Chapter 6 reveals how foreign management practices are reinterpreted in a Tunisian organization, leading to change and new meaning associations.

This form of reinterpretation is also addressed in Chapter 5. Chapter 2 shows that the negotiation can take place between a single individual and her environment, with the case of an international consultant who gives a very private meaning to non-places. Chapter 11 reveals that, with the absence of a negotiation partner, meanings are neither developed nor changed and become disconnected from reality. This shows that Western meanings about

10 Cross-cultural management in practice the ' non-Western' are reproduced in a way that no longer matches the contemporary, complex and multidirectional business reality. They are lacking a reinterpretation.

MEANING SYSTEMS Since a nation is so diverse that it seems impossible that people may share similar meanings through their diversity (location, religion, age, social group, political affiliation, ethnic group, family status and so on), many interpretive researchers feel reluctant to consider that meanings or sense-making can be linked to the population of a country.

However, we know from our experience that similarities do exist between people who grew up in the same country. Currently, the cultural dimension frameworks are useful constructs to point out these similarities. We also know as we demonstrate in the following cases that cultural dimensions are ill-suited for explaining situations of interpersonal interactions (see also Brannen and Salk, 2000; McSweeney, 2009). A few chapters in this volume build upon a stream of research that d'Iribarne (1989) initiated and which uses the alternative notion of meaning systems⁴.

Meaning Systems Rather than ' Shared Meanings' Consider, for example, the following statement: ' Robin Jonsson is competent'. What does competent mean for you? Could it mean that this person possesses the skills to do her job properly: that she is capable and qualified? Could it also mean that you believe this person knows the requirements of the job and can act autonomously? And does it also mean that you will trust this person's analysis of a professional situation and allow her to bypass procedures if she deems it appropriate?

Sylvie Chevrier reveals in Chapter 4 the interre