
**Impact of cultural differences between German, Polish and
Swedish cultures**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis was commissioned by Comatec Oy. Comatec is a Finnish Engineering company looking to expand their operations to Germany, Poland and Sweden. The study aims to provide insight to possible cultural differences and features which will be useful when working with people from the subject cultures.

The thesis was based on the cultural dimensions and theories from Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede. Three representatives from the three target countries were interviewed regarding their culture. The interview questions were based on the theory and additional more practical questions were also asked.

A clear correlation with the practical interview results and the existing theory was found. The theory and interviews support each other. The overall results are practical and give a general overview of what to expect when communicating with people from the target countries and how to behave with them.

The study meet its goals and touched on all the main aspects of culture. The interview sample size could have been larger in order to reduce the possible distortion by "exceptional" personal opinions. It would be recommended to do a study of the same size individually for each culture in order to get more specific results for the culture in question and have a larger sample size of interviewees from one culture.

Keywords Culture, Polish culture, German culture, Swedish culture

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän opinnäytetyön on tilannut Comatec OY, joka on suomalainen insinööriyritys. Yritys aikoo laajentaa toimintaansa Saksaan, Puolaan ja Ruotsiin. Työn tarkoituksena oli selvittää kohdemaiden mahdolliset kulttuurilliset erilaisuudet ja ominaisuudet jotka voivat aiheuttaa ongelmia liiketoimintakommunikoinnissa.

Työ pohjautuu Edward T. Hallin ja Geert Hofsteden teoriaan ja kulttuurikäsitteisiin. Jokaisesta kolmesta kulttuurista haastateltiin kolmea kulttuurin edustajaa. Haastattelukysymykset pohjautuivat teoriaosuuteen ja niiden lisäksi esitettiin käytännönläheisempiä jakokysymyksiä.

Haastatteluiden vastaukset valtaosin yhtenivät teorian kanssa. Kokonaisuutena yhdistetyt tulokset ovat käytännöllisempiä ja teoria sekä haastattelut tukevat toisiaan. Tulokset antavat selkeän yleiskatsauksen siitä, mitä voi odottaa kommunikoidessaan näiden kansalaisuuksien kanssa ja kuinka liiketoimintakumppaneiden kanssa olisi soveliaista käyttäytyä.

Työn tavoitteet saavutettiin ja tarkasteltujen kulttuurien pääpiirteet saatiin selville. Haastateltavien määrä olisi voinut olla suurempi, jotta yksityiset mielipiteet olisivat erottuneet selkeämmin kulttuuristen mielipiteiden joukosta. Olisi suositeltavaa tehdä vähintään tämän työn suuruinen jatkotutkimus erikseen jokaisesta kulttuurista. Tämä toisi vielä tarkempaa tietoa jokaisesta kulttuurista ja antaisi mahdollisuuden suuremmalle saman kulttuurin haastateltavaryhmälle.

Avainsanat Kulttuuri, puolalainen kulttuuri, saksalainen kulttuuri, ruotsalainen kulttuuri

Sivut 57.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Comatec Group launched an internationalization project on 1.1.2016 called IntCom. The project will be executed in 2016-2018. The goal of the project is to develop both the internal and external competencies, including the cultural competency-of the whole group and thus allow the expansion of business operations abroad. The first target countries are Sweden, Germany and Poland. The project will create a new business concept which will ensure the competitiveness of Comatec Group in the foreign markets and increase the amount of commissions coming from abroad.

Comatec Group has ordered a cultural education package from HAMK which will start in the beginning of 2017. This report will be used as a preliminary introduction to the subject at large and to the specific cultures which the project concerns. The report will introduce the concept of culture in general, use different cultural theories to explain cultural differences and include practical information of the cultures involved from interviews.

According to Edward T. Halls Iceberg Model culture can be divided into two different categories: the explicit visible culture and the implicit less visible culture. The cultural aspects in the explicit category are easy to spot even by outsiders and if asked about one's own culture these are the things which come to mind first. Explicit cultural aspects are the national heroes, everyday objects, artefacts, customs and manners. In the Finnish culture heroes, would include: Väinämöinen, Mikael Agricola and Jean Sibelius, everyday objects and artefacts would include: sauna, mämmi, the Finnish national folk costumes and the Finnish midsummer celebration, customs and manners would include: the Finnish sauna culture, the Finnish coffee culture, Finnish greetings and general acts of politeness. These things are rather self-evident and can be observed or researched very easily. Knowledge of these things is considered a good thing, but the lack of knowledge is very seldom shunned upon as people from the culture will gladly tell a foreigner about their history and customs.

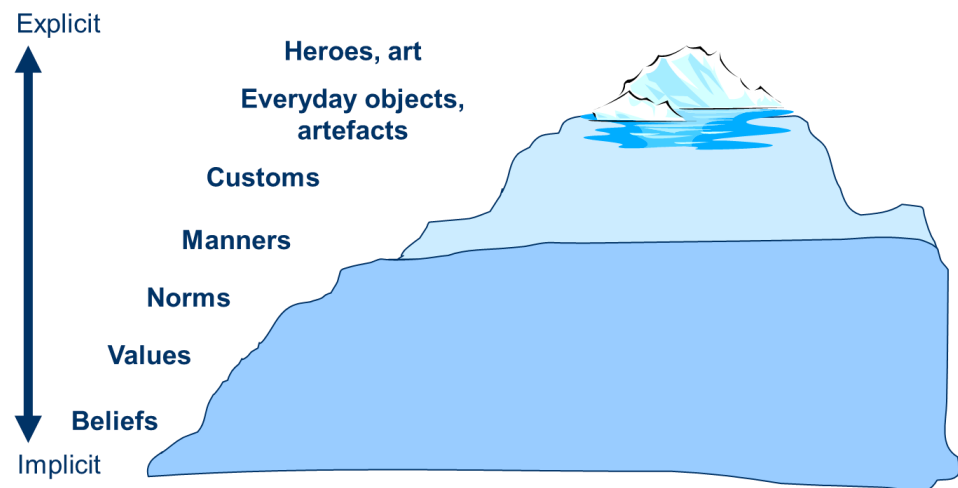


Figure 1 The Figure represents Edward T. Halls Cultural Iceberg concept from 1976, this specific figure was taken from Cross Cultural Communication course presentation by Harri Tuomola, HAMK, International Business

Most people overlook or do not understand the implicit aspects of culture even though they are often the cultural aspects which cause problems when communicating between different cultures. The reason why these aspects are so often overlooked is the lack of awareness of the effect of one's own culture on their own behavior. People never become self-aware of these aspects when they only communicate with people who share the same cultural background. These aspects are often seen as basic good behavior and not viewed as just a culturally accepted set of norms. This is why these implicit aspects are the main cause of cultural misunderstandings and conflicts. These aspects vary greatly from one culture to another. Certain behavior can be seen as extremely good behavior in one culture and completely unacceptable in another. A good example of this would be eye contact in Finnish culture and in Chinese culture. Finnish people see eye contact as a very good thing when having an official conversation such as a job interview or business negotiations. Good eye contact in Finnish culture means that the person is interested in what the other party is saying, the person is reliable and confident and they are actively participating in the conversation. In Chinese culture having uninterrupted direct eye contact is viewed as dominant behavior or defiance. Chinese people use most eye contact when they get angry in order to show that they are displeased. Eye contact is considered especially inappropriate if the other party is viewed as lesser such as an interviewee in a job interview.

Due to the hidden and touchy nature of the implicit side of culture it is vital for any person to know the basics of these aspects when dealing with foreign cultures. This is especially true in business as in many cases business relations are built upon personal relations and good impressions. A company which does not trust the representatives of another company or are offended by them, will be reluctant to conduct business or make favorable offers.

It is easier to acknowledge that distant cultures are different and mentally prepare for this. This is why many people have the worst culture shock with cultures which are geographically close to their own culture. This geographic sense of similarity often leads them to assume that they are from

close by, that the person is already quite familiar with the culture and they will most likely assume that they have different explicit aspects, but they do not mentally prepare to face the implicit differences. Culture is tied to geography to some extent as cultures from the same area have been in contact with each other in the past and have adapted some traits like religion or ideals from each other. This makes the cultures seem similar on the outside, but deep down they might be completely different. Most countries in Europe are pretty similar, they are Christian, they have democracy, they share a lot of history, they believe in equality and freedom. This makes them all look somehow familiar to other Europeans and makes them assume that because they are so similar they must behave the same way.

The main reason why the assumption that one culture is very similar to one's own culture is so harmful, is the lack of cultural awareness and knowledge of one's own culture. This will lead to a situation that the person facing these differences believes that the way he is operating and thinking is the correct way and the other people are strange and wrong. This is mainly due to the fact that the person does not recognize that certain aspects such as eye contact or negotiation methods are tied to both parties' cultures. They do not recognize the cultural aspect and try to find a solution, but they conclude that the other party is just plain wrong. This will lead to cultural conflicts as both parties will start to feel that the other party is both incorrect and rude.



Figure 2 from Cultural Conflict website <https://culturalconflict.wordpress.com/2013/11/24/cross-cultural-misunderstandings/>

Cultural conflicts are most often caused by simple misunderstandings. Cases where they are intentional or malicious are very rare. A friendly gesture in one culture might be hostile in another. The lack of cultural awareness is the clearest cause for these misunderstandings. One should first acknowledge their own cultural view which they get from their own culture

and then they can more easily understand foreign cultures. This way one gets a more personal, objective and relatable view on foreign cultures. This should allow the person to admit to their own opinions and habits which they have inherited from their own culture and recognize them from other cultures. Being able to recognize the differences allows the person to solve possible conflicts with minimal hostility. Recognizing cultural differences also allows for better understanding of foreign cultures. If one observes these foreign habits they will not only view them as foreign and strange, but they will wonder why are they different from their own habits. Understanding the cause for foreign habits will increase the likely hood of acceptance or at least of healthy discussion about the issue.

The theory used in the thesis will mostly focus on the cultural dimensions of Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede. They are some of the most well-known cultural researchers and have developed well rounded and comprehensible cultural dimensions to explain the differences between cultures.

These examples like all the examples in this report are extremes and generalizations. The reason why extremes are used in cultural studies is that if one does not use extremes and generalizations it is nearly impossible to see or explain cultural differences. This will not be explained separately on any generalization in the report and the reader should take this into consideration. This means that, if the report would say for example that Finnish people are not very good at small talk, not every single Finnish person is terrible at small talk, but when they meet a foreigner the foreigner should take this into consideration and not be surprised or offended if the Finnish person is not as talkative as the person is used to. So the statements in the report do not apply to every single person from said culture, but they should be taken in to consideration, because most likely they apply to some extent to the vast majority of people from said culture.

1.2 Comatec

Comatec Group is Finnish engineering company. The company does not manufacture anything. They provide various engineering services for other companies. They provide engineering services in the following areas: mobile machinery and special vehicles, rolling stock, cranes and load handling, electromechanical systems and components, marine industry, process industry, material handling systems, and energy industry.

They provide the following services: product development, design and sales support, sourcing and production support, delivery and commissioning, operation, service and maintenance services. The service capabilities of the company focus on the entire technical service chain. This means that the company can do everything from designing the solution to long term maintenance and everything else in between. Comatec can offer full service packs for customers, individual services or tailor their service pack to cover some other areas of their expertise. If the customer wants Comatec can take over the entire management of installation and commissioning projects. This means that Comatec will take full responsibility for the entire project

beginning with the feasibility study and all the way to the commissioning and warranty inspection periods in the end.

The largest service by assignments for Comatec is the design service. Comatec's strongest areas of design expertise are: hydraulics and pneumatics design, mechanical design, electrical and automation design, programming services, product safety, testing services, technical calculations, life cycle analyses, project management service. The design service is supported by the other services that Comatec offers. This means that the company can choose to order as much or as little as they need.

The company has capabilities in: mechanical design, hydraulics and motion control, electrical and automation design, programming services, testing, technical calculation, safety engineering, life cycle support and project management services. The core competences of Comatec are formed by automation, mechanical and electrical design. The company has been operating since 1986.

Comatec Group consists of Insinööritoimisto Comatec Oy, Rantotek Oy, Insinööritoimisto Metso Oy, Oucons Oy, Insinööritoimisto Kisto Oy and Comatec Estonia OÜ. The company has currently 17 offices in Finland and one in Tallinn, Estonia. The main office is in Tampere and the company employs 400 people. Their largest customers include Metso, Sandvik, John Deere, KONE, Cargotec and Valmet.

The values of the company are: "Customer Satisfaction, Profitability, Growth, Constant learning, Ability to cooperate". (Comatec English website).

The mission of Comatec is: "We help clients produce investment goods in a more profitable way. Comatec Group's clients are technology companies that produce machinery and equipment and related services. The services offered by the Group include design services (mechanical, electrical and automation design) and expert and project management services. Clients benefit from our services by obtaining complete, lasting design solutions, created cost-effectively and on schedule, that will serve their own product and production processes over a long period. The company's financial performance is based on comprehensive marketing, outstanding technical design skills and experience, in-depth understanding of the concept of quality, appropriate pricing for individual clients and sectors, and long-term partnerships." (Comatec English website)

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

The research question is "What are the biggest differences between the Finnish culture and the Swedish, German and Polish cultures and how should Comatec Group take these differences into consideration?" Answering this research question should provide Comatec Group with the necessary knowledge- of the cultures related to their project, to conduct business effectively and reduce the possible conflicts.

The main objective of the thesis was to give the Comatec employees involved in the cultural training a basic understanding of culture in general and the cultures in question. The main focus was on explaining the difference of the German, Polish and Swedish culture compared to the Finnish culture. To achieve this the author must also go through the basic concept of culture and the various aspects within it. This was done in order to ensure the comprehensive nature of the thesis even to readers who have had little or no cultural training before reading it. Explaining culture in general was not specifically mentioned in the research question, but the author felt like it was a necessary secondary object. This objective had to be achieved before proceeding to the primary objective.

1.4 Research Methods

The author used qualitative research in this thesis. The decision of conducting qualitative research instead of quantitative research was made based on the nature of this work. The author conducted interviews with 3 representatives from each culture. The representatives were interviewed by the author online via Skype.

As the thesis is culture related the way one observes culture is based on one's own culture. For example, for a Finnish person Finnish people are not that silent and for a Spanish person, Spanish people are not that talkative. People often view their cultural traits as average or just slightly above or below average if they compare them to other cultures. When asked about other cultures people often tend to exaggerate. For example, if one would ask a Finnish person how talkative the Spanish people are they would tell you that Spanish people are extremely talkative.

The second reason the author chose to conduct qualitative research is to ensure the understanding and clarity of the questions. A question from describing a characteristic of a culture with the numbers ranging from 1-4 could give reasonably accurate answers, but this does not take in to account that how well the person understood the question. Due to the intangible and mysterious nature of culture it is difficult to create questions which would provide legitimate data without knowing the cultural competence of the recipients. In an interview situation, the interviewer can clarify and explain the questions in multiple ways to ensure that the interviewee understood the question correctly. A qualitative research method also allows the author to interpret whether the interviewee is answering based on personal preference or based on more cultural aspects.

2 CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 Defining culture

Culture is a difficult subject to define. As it was mentioned before culture can be divided to implicit and explicit aspects. The explicit visible culture can be easily observed, compared, understood and analysed. These are the aspects which foreigners pick up on first and they are seldom a cause of cultural misunderstandings.

The implicit aspects of culture are more difficult to observe, compare and understand. This is especially true in some high-context cultures which have developed unspoken and very delicate ways of communication. The implicit aspects of culture can be considered more vital for communication than the explicit aspects as going against these aspects or misinterpreting them might lead to unintentional rudeness and misunderstandings. The importance combined with the discrete and unnoticeable nature of these aspects make them the most important ones to learn.

Both cultural aspects often differ greatly from one culture to another. Some cultures greatly value poetry and art while others value military might and industrial achievements. These aspects are explicit and can easily be observed by looking at the types and importance of national heroes, cultural works such as art and poetry and the general interests of the people. What might be the single most popular thing in one culture might not even be popular in another.

The differences in implicit aspects are often only observed when there has been a misunderstanding and even a conflict. This is due to the fact that the interacting cultures can have very different ways of interpreting one interaction. For example, if a Finnish person has a conversation with a Russian person and does not speak the name of the Russian and does not show any emotion during the conversation. The Russian will interpret the Finnish person as rude and that the Finn does not like the Russian. The Finn is not showing emotion or using the Russians name as this is considered a polite and formal way when speaking with strangers. Without cultural awareness and knowledge these kind of situations can be quite common, especially when two people, who have not travelled much and have only met foreigners in their own country, meet. (Beyond Culture, Edward T. Hall, 58-69, 1976)

No aspect can be measured and calculated with absolute truth. There is no scale of 0 to 100 of cultural aspects. No culture is completely 0 in one aspect or completely 100 in another. All cultures can be compared with each other, but when doing such comparisons, one has to always take in to account their own cultural background and knowledge. The biggest mistake most people make when comparing cultures is judging the foreign culture they are dealing with. This is often unintentional, but this mentality hinders the progress of understanding and will result in conflicts. The correct mentality is to think that why is this culture different rather than which one is better.

These cultural differences can often be avoided or reduced when the two interacting parties have a similar social, economic, educational backgrounds and similar amount of travelling experience. These factors will make both parties more similar and closer to each other which will leave only the cultural and personal differences. They will most likely find a lot of common things and thus get along better. If they happen to come to a cultural conflict they will most likely recognize it to some extent and be more willing to overlook it than two people with completely different backgrounds.

When people assume that their cultures are very similar and that they have very similar backgrounds they also assume that most of the differences and conflicts are caused by personal issues. This will lead to personal conflicts that will most likely escalate to a greater degree. When there will be two groups of people from two different cultures this will most likely put them at odds with each other. The discontent between the groups will start from individual misunderstandings. Maybe one person will think that their foreign colleague is lazy and has to be constantly told to work, while this colleague thinks that every time they do something this other colleague comes up to them to complain about nothing. These individual incidents will increase and eventually most of the members of both groups have had similar negative experiences. The situation starts to escalate when the groups start discussing and sharing these negative opinions. The other group will start viewing the other as lazy while the other sees the opposing group as bossy. This will severely hinder the efficiency of the workforce. They will be much less motivated, they will spend their time and attention on the conflict, they will include the higher administration to solve the problem, they will not work well in mixed groups and eventually some might even resign or refuse to work with their foreign colleagues.

As Comatec will be dealing within Europe and with people who have very similar educational and professional backgrounds, the cultural conflicts which they will face will most likely not be very severe or easily noticeable. However, if these conflicts are not addressed and understood they can escalate over time and create “us them”- mentality. Thinking that you are just the same as the other person due to similar backgrounds and region will often lead to minor cultural incidences festering underneath to create a larger spread issue. Even if it does not result in issues it can result in undesirable results and poor efficiency. For example, some cultures prefer a very hands-on management style with constant monitoring and feedback while others prefer light guidance and a set of rules which they are free to work in individually. (Culture’s Consequences Second Edition, Geert Hofstede, 15, 2001)

Cultural competence is not a skill that you have to constantly have in your mind and try to analyse every single small interaction with a foreigner. There are simply too many variables that influence the behaviour of the individual. Even completely knowing yourself and where your ideals come from takes a long time. One might think that they know themselves and that their ideals are purely their own, but most of our opinions and thoughts are heavily influenced by our past. Identifying your own ideals and their origin gives you the foundation to build up understanding of others. It is a skill

that allows you to understand when the conflict is about to happen, why it happens and how to deal with it. Even if the other party is not culturally capable or aware one can deal with the situation accordingly. If one knows that in the other party's culture their way of greeting is not acceptable they can try to mimic the greeting of the other party. Cultural competence might not give you the absolute correct answer to every cultural interaction, but it will give you the skills and knowledge to deal with them as well as possible. (Beyond Culture, Edward T. Hall, 69, 1976)

2.2 Edward T. Hall

Edward Twitchell Hall Jr. born on 16.5.1914 in Missouri USA and died 20.7.2009 in New Mexico USA. Edward T. Hall's interest in cultural issues originate from the time when he was working in the Hopi and Navajo reservations in the 1930s. He graduated as a bachelor of anthropology from the University of Denver in 1936. He earned a master's degree from the University of Arizona in 1938 and a doctorate from Columbia University in 1942. He commanded a black regiment in the Army Corps of Engineers in world war 2, in the Philippines and Europe. (New York Times, Edward Hall, Expert on Nonverbal Communication, Is Dead at 95, an article about Edward T. Halls life)

Edward T. Hall wrote his first book "The Silent Language" in 1959. He was conducting research on which he based his book on while he was working at the Washington School of Psychiatry. (New York Times, Edward Hall, Expert on Nonverbal Communication, Is Dead at 95, an article about Edward T. Halls life)

Edward T. Hall gathered most of his research on his travels and while he was teaching in various universities such as Illinois Institute of Technology in the 1960s. He is widely regarded as one of the leading cultural experts and his theories are known across the globe.

2.2.1 Monochronic and Polychronic Concept of Time

The concept of time varies from culture to culture. Some cultures see it as a clear linear continuum while others view it as a constant stream which is made up of individual moments. According to Edward T. Hall time can be divided in to Monochronic and Polychronic time concepts. They are also referred to as M-time and P-time. (The Dance of Life, Edward T. Hall, 46-58, 1989)

The major difference between these two concepts of time is how they view time. M-time views time as a linear continuum, but time is viewed as precious and precise. It is seen as a limited resource and each important thing is appointed its own time in schedules. There is very little overlapping between important events. This means that people that come from cultures which follow the M-time concept have great difficult on working on more than one major task at the time. Each appointment is subject to the schedules

and time constraints. If the scheduled time is not enough to conclude the business of the appointment, then another follow-up appointment will be made. In M-time concept it is seen as very rude and bad to take longer in one appointment, deviate from the schedule to finish the first appointment and then arrive late in the second appointment. Because this time concept relies very heavily on schedules arriving late from one appointment will cause a disturbance for the person you are supposed to meet next. This means that if you are running late, but want to still conclude the upcoming appointment the person you will be meeting will also be late for their second appointment after yours. The other option is that the person will cancel your appointment completely and reschedule it or you will have part of the appointment as soon as possible, but reschedule the unfinished part for later. In both cases the person who is late is causing an issue for the person in the second appointment. Either they will force them to be late themselves or inconvenience them by taking up two appointments instead of just one. Being late is considered rude and very unprofessional in cultures that follow the M-time concept. The cultures often value the schedules over the task at hand. If the tasks last longer than originally thought or if a person had to spend time on another task, it will be considered a waste of time.

Cultures that follow the P-time concept have a more relaxed attitude towards time itself. It is often viewed as almost as an infinite resource. People from P-time concept following cultures are often better at managing multiple tasks and human contacts at the same time. They give each the most attention they can while people from M-time concept cultures try to focus their full attention on a single task. These cultures also value the current task at hand and human attraction over schedules and time constraints. Due to this very specific meeting times are not followed and the given times are just vague estimates when the next appointment should take place. Edward T. Hall writes in his book *The Dance of Life* the following: “An Arab will say, “I will see you before one hour,” or “I will see you after two days.” What he means in the first instance is that it will not be longer than an hour before he sees you, and at least two days in the second instance.” (*The Dance of Life*, Edward T. Hall, 46, 1989).

Being exactly on time is not expected in most cases as both parties understand and even expect that they will have other appointments that take longer or some unexpected circumstances that will require their attention before the agreed appointment. As all people within the culture follow this time concept the delay in their schedule due to a “delayed” appointment is not seen as an issue. In these cultures, it is viewed as necessary to give your full focus for the appointment at hand rather than worrying about making it on time for the next appointment. This means that the appointment will last until both parties are satisfied with the results. ongoing appointments are seldom rescheduled and appointments which one could not make it to will be rescheduled instead.

In a Polychronic culture making time for more important people in one’s life is a sign of respect and importance. If there is a scheduled appointment with an acquaintance, but a cousin that one has not seen for months sud-

denly appears at the doorstep one should cancel the before scheduled appointment. If one says to the cousin that they are too busy at the moment this is a sign of disrespect and shows the cousin that they are not very important. The later the sudden quest comes and the more important the cancelled appointment is the more respected and important the sudden quest will feel. This also translates to business terms. For example, when a long lasting customer suddenly comes up with an urgent order, but the company already has another order to fill. If the company chooses the long lasting customer's sudden order it will greatly boost their relationship and this customer will become even more loyal. If the cancelled or postponed customer is also from a Polychronic culture they will not be as greatly offended, but if they will be from a Monochronic order this will most likely be the last the company will ever hear of them.

The hindrances of M-time concept are very difficult to acknowledge by people from these cultures. Due to the very strict reliance on precise schedules all unexpected events will often have significant consequences. This means that if one is late for an appointment due to even things out of their control like a car crash or a strict traffic control operation the responsibility is still on the individual who was late. They will get the blame and have to face the consequences. This is viewed as very inhumane by cultures who follow the P-time concept. The M-time concept does not recognize the unpredictable nature of life. This does not only influence being late or being on time. It is reflected on all appointments and how they are concluded. For example, a doctor might have a patient and it is expected to be just a routine check-up, but the issue is more mysterious and severe than the doctor originally thought. Due to the severity of the problem the doctor cannot reschedule the patient and because they are not sure what could be causing this issue they cannot redirect the patient to a specialist. This means that the doctor will either have to delay the next patients' appointment or rush with the first appointment. But most often the doctor does not make either decision, but a compromise. According to Edward T. Hall an American from an M-time culture can often suffer from stress in the Middle East and Latin America which have a vast majority of cultures that follow the P-time concept. (The Dance of Life, Edward T. Hall, 46, 1989)

This stress will also influence to the doctor to some degree and will undoubtedly decrease the quality of his work to some extent. The doctor will treat the current patient as long as it takes, but deriving from the schedule will bother the doctor and pressure them to trying to work as quickly as possible. This is a very inhumane way of dealing with a very human issue. It is not the patients fault that the diagnose takes so long, nor is it the doctors fault. Both are subject to strict schedules and thus both have to suffer as minor or major consequences that they might have from deviating from their schedules. For this reason, it is not entirely the doctors fault that he is hurrying, but the patient is the one who suffers from it. Due to the interrelated nature of each person's schedule the delay will also have a negative effect on other people like the other patient whose appointment will be delayed.

In most cases the issue with schedules, and the problems they cause when an appointment takes longer than it should, is not so severe as in the authors

example about the doctor. People from M-time concept following cultures also like to organize their tasks in order and to complete them in the predefined order. If they get suddenly swamped with multiple new unrelated tasks they will feel overwhelmed since they have to reorganize the tasks. The added tasks will also slow down the current tasks and the reorganizing will take time away from actually completing the tasks at hand. This sudden change will also increase the stress levels of the person. The issue of increased stress levels for the involved parties and the decreased quality of work will hinder the results of any employees when they face unexpected consequences. This means that rebuilding a company and starting over if it suddenly faces massive unexpected financial issues or physical loss of property is extremely difficult for companies who are very strongly influenced by M-time culture. This often means a complete change of goals and strategies which will take time due to the bureaucratic nature of companies who follow M-time concept. The change will take longer and be more difficult as the new situation is unexpected and creating accurate schedules for a sudden unexpected situation can be extremely challenging. This means that unless the company adopts a more P-time orientation to the current situation the rebuilding process will be very difficult and ineffective.

The issue with cultures following the P-time concept are very obvious for people who come from a culture which follows the M-time concept. The largest and most obvious issue is scheduling an appointment so that neither party has to wait for the other for a long time. This is simply not possible in most cases since both parties are expected to be more or less late. People from M-time concept cultures would find these kind of “scheduled” appointments and delays very unorganized, ineffective and even impolite. Despite the obvious arguments this kind of system works if everyone follows it with a similar mind-set. Everyone is more or less late, but everyone is also much more forgiving or even indifferent about the other party being on time. The second thing that people from cultures that follow the M-time concept will find offensive is the fact that people from cultures that follow P-time concept can often do many things at once. If you are for example having a meeting one person might write emails on their laptop one might search information and one might be talking. This would seem very rude for people from cultures that follow the M-time concept. They would think that these people doing other things do not care about the meeting and are just focusing on their own things. However, this is not true, the two people doing other things are also listening to the talker and will participate to the conversation when they have something to say.

The biggest benefit of following a Monochronic schedule is that people do not have to waste their time waiting for others. The schedule is clear and undisputable. This leaves little room for error and misunderstandings. In an ideal M-time situation a person can hop on a bus that comes to the stop exactly at 7:15 arrives to the desired destination at exactly 7:52 and the person walks exactly 20 minutes to the next appointment and is ready for the appointment sitting in his chair by 8:15. The M-time concept relies on all parts of the schedule being on time and when they are it minimizes the waiting times for all parties and increases efficiency. It also makes it easier for

employers to evaluate the employees and their pay by monitoring when they exactly come to work and how long they work. It also helps individuals structure larger projects and creating a clear plan which will be executed in a predefined and logical order. This will reduce waste as all materials and work phases have been designed to be executed as soon as possible with the required equipment and materials arriving just a bit before time ready for the work phase they are used for. Ideally this will reduce the inventory costs and speed up the whole process.

The most obvious benefit of being less concerned with schedules and more focused on what you are doing at this moment is that the culture is more human oriented. There is room for error and unexpected situation in these timetables. These people are also less stressed since they do not have to worry about upcoming appointments as much and if they are running late it is not an issue for them or the other party. This allows them to work more efficiently when in unexpected situations as it will not differ much from their normal situation. The second benefit is that these people can work on multiple tasks simultaneously. They can write down notes, search for related information and listen to a person leading a meeting. It is a skill that will again help them in unexpected situations. If they are suddenly swamped with a multiple new tasks they can keep a balance between them and not feel overwhelmed by the sudden increase in their workload. Due to these traits people from P-time concept following cultures are often much more flexible and can react quicker and more efficiently in unexpected situations.

Neither concept can be universally considered superior or inferior. Both time concepts have their own positive and negative sides. They work better in different circumstances. Where the other time concept struggles the other one strives. However, they do not function well together and if there are two parties following opposite concepts either one or hopefully both will adapt to the other concept to find a middle ground which will suit both parties. If neither party refuses to adapt to the opposite concept doing business becomes near impossible and both parties will suffer as a result. Understanding and open communication in such situations can alleviate the situation and make the other party understand your point of view a bit better.

2.2.2 High and Low Context Cultures

The most common form of communication throughout human history has been through spoken language. Even before the first writing on the limestone tablets from Mesopotamia humans had been communicating with each other for thousands of years. Unlike written communication face-to-face verbal communication has many aspects which can determine the meaning of the message. The information left out of the spoken message can be considered context. The way a phrase is spoken can determine if it is merely informative, humorous or even hostile. The way different cultures communicate differs greatly. Some give a clear informative overview of the issue being discussed while others do not necessarily even mention the main issue, but the other person must understand the main issue from the non-spoken communication. These differences can be categorized as high and low context communication styles. How high context a culture is can be

determined by how much knowledge you need about the subject at hand and the culture before the conversation. Without the required knowledge the message will not be properly transmitted and the person receiving the message has to often interrupt the conversation to ask more specific questions.

How high or low context a culture is can often be determined by the age and isolation of the culture. In the beginning all cultures have been low context cultures. Cultures are developed by a group of people living in the same area for a long period of time. In low context communication style the emphasis is on clear, short and informative communication. The words are most often used in a literal sense and need little interpretation or context. In most instances the required context to understand the message is given in the message. As the focus of low context communication style is on understanding this style is most often seen in young cultures or cultures who have a population that lives far away from one another and who have been in contact with foreign cultures. In the case of young cultures, the people have not been living with each other very long compared to other cultures. This means that communication might be inefficient and the messages have to be very clear to counter this. For cultures with a spread out population communication with others than your immediate family is often very rare so the messages have to be clear and understandable. Due to the people not meeting each other very often the fact that the message has been clearly understood for both parties is essential. Because people meet each other seldom they often have to share a lot of different news on every meeting. This means that there is not a lot of time to explain every single thing slowly, but the communication has to be efficient. Being in constant contact with other cultures means that your own culture does not develop so independently and communication with these cultures is essential. If both of these cultures would be very high context the communication would be slower and more difficult. To make sure that both cultures understand each other as well as possible the messages have to be clear and comprehensible for both cultures. (Beyond Culture Book Edward, T. Hall, 105-116)

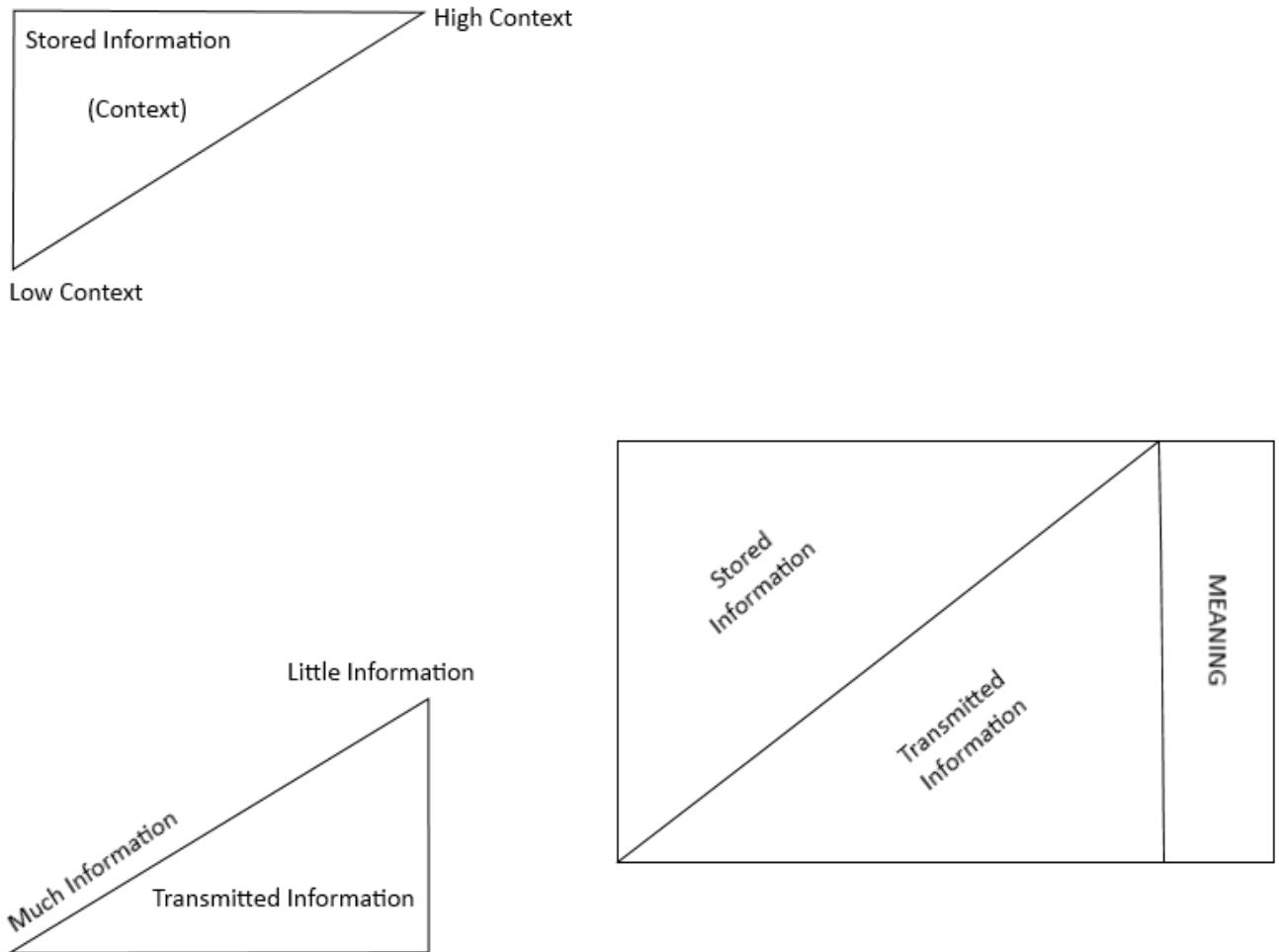


Figure 3 a recreation, of a figure from *The Dance of Life*, Edward T. Hall, 61 1989, made by the author

If a culture has existed for thousands of years in relative isolation the culture has had no need to use simple and effective means of communication. As they have been mostly communicating among themselves they have had no need to simplify their communication or make it more comprehensible for others. The culture has developed certain traits which determine the actual meaning of their spoken communication. They do not go straight to the point and give all the detailed information about the issue at hand. They talk around the issue while giving subtle, but very clear hints to the other person about the meaning of their discussion. The other person should pick up on these hints and understand the topic. If they do not, they can be seen as not very smart. Even if the person who should share the information talks about the issue too directly it can be seen as offensive. This would mean that the person sharing the information assumes that the other person is too stupid to understand it without a very detailed and simple explanation.

In business life the differences of high and low context cultures can be observed very clearly. Understanding the messages from the other side is an important basic skill, but knowing how to sell the product to the opposing side can be considered at least as valuable. Knowing the culture one is going to be in business with is extremely essential. The style of selling can vary

drastically. Low context cultures often value very quick type of selling where the sales person gives important information of the company he represents and the product he is selling. This will either lead to a sale quickly or it will be considered a failure. In high context cultures the sales process is different. The sales person has to first make a human contact within the desired customer company and establish a relationship with them before selling the product itself. Developing this relationship will take time and the company will not expect to receive an order quickly. They are aiming to get a long term customer that will guarantee revenue for a longer period of time rather than making a quick profit. This is explained very well in an example about a French sales man in Edward T. Hall's book *The Dance of Life*. Hall writes about his French colleague who had established long lasting personal relationships with his customers. The process could last up to two years and it consisted of a high context routine. This routine was developed by meeting the customer repeatedly and getting to know the customer. As the relationship became closer both parties knew each other well and their interaction became more high context. The company this French sales man worked for was bought by an American company and he got a new American manager as his boss. The American boss could not understand why this French sales man could not just meet the client and sell the product on the first or second visit. He thought that the visit has been a failure if it took longer than he liked and he could not let the French sales man take his time with developing long term relationships before selling the product. In France the customers are not loyal to the company, but to the sales person. If the sales person changes the company, the customers follow. In this example the differences of the two cultures is obvious. The new American owner did not only loose a sales person, but all the clients who were this sales person's clients. This is a very costly mistake for the new owner as they did not only loose a very competent and knowledgeable employee, but they also lost multiple clients. If this was just one individual case for the company and the clients weren't the most important ones it can be seen as a costly lesson, but if this happened to multiple sales personnel or the clients were among the most important ones it could have easily led to the end of the newly acquired French operations. (*The Dance of Life*, Edward T. Hall, 65-67 1989)

High and low context communication does not only develop in traditional ethnic cultures, but also in company cultures. A new company has very low context communication style in the beginning as the employees are just getting used to each other and their new working environment. The terminology would be more official and universal. All actions would be explained clearly and in great detail. Over time when the company would develop and so would the culture within the company. As people would be working in close proximity daily for a long period of time the communication would develop. More and more basic knowledge would be left out of the conversation and the employees would even refer to certain tasks with unofficial terms. Without being thought these terms outsiders would find it very difficult to know what the employees are discussing. This might seem inefficient or unprofessional to outsiders, but it actually increases efficiency and teamwork. This will create a sense of belonging to a larger group and working towards a common goal. The development of high context communication is organic and it cannot be forced, but it can be sped up. A company can

speed up the process by giving certain tasks, equipment or work areas new more unique names. This will be most likely met by initial hostility as the new names might seem pointless and complicated, but if the names will be accepted over time they will become a part of the day to day workplace language.

2.2.3 Space in Culture

Everyone needs personal space and how much personal space one needs is often seen as a personal trait. However, this is not entirely true, there are very large differences in both social and personal space between cultures. What can be considered a warm welcome in one culture can be viewed as an invasion of personal space in another. The space an individual needs has multiple layers and variables. The personal space required does not only mean not physically touching the person's skin and it does not always have only a single clear cause. The space which is considered personal varies greatly between relationship with the person. Many would not feel comfortable having a hug from a stranger they met 20 seconds ago, but they would expect it from their sister who they have not seen for two years. There is no clear defined personal space for each culture, but the approximate size of its various aspects can be defined and compared. Personal space is also defined by the surroundings. One might not feel comfortable shouting to an acquaintance five meters away in school, but would happily shout hello to a neighbour getting his morning newspaper 20 meters away. The required social and personal space within each culture has its own unwritten rules. It is essential to learn these approximate rules when one is involved with a foreign culture for a long period of time. If one has no clue of these aspects, comes from a very different culture and does not take them in to consideration they can unintentionally behave in an extremely rude manner. If one is too pushy and does not pay enough attention to personal space they can be seen as extremely pushy, rude, awkward and even dumb. If a person acts too distant they can be seen as cold, arrogant, elitist, foreign, incomprehensible and dumb. These rules are never absolutely clear and thus most likely the best way to learn these rules is to understand the basic importance of them and observe how people from the foreign culture behave in different situations. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 114-116)

Edward T. Hall divides the space concept in to four different zones: intimate, personal, social, and public zones. He uses these zones in order to clarify the meaning of personal space in these situations. Even though the space concept is divided between these four zones the need for space is relative between all of them within a culture. In most cases a culture that is more loud and closer on a personal level will also be louder and closer in public zones. All four zones have been further divided into far and near phases. The distance of the phases is further influenced by personality and environmental factors. For some people being close to others just feels more natural than to others. Environmental factors such as a dimly lit room or a very noisy area naturally bring people closer together for practical reasons. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 116) These zones cover social interaction. There are cases like sitting in public transport which cross over to

spaces which can be seen as uncomfortable in social situations, but they are accepted for practical reasons in these cases. In tight spaces the space required significantly decreases and even in some cases disappears. In a crowded Japanese train people are often forced to sit or stand in extremely close proximity, but this would not be acceptable behaviour elsewhere. (An example of a crowded Japanese train https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNMao5AQIUk&ab_channel=takashima)

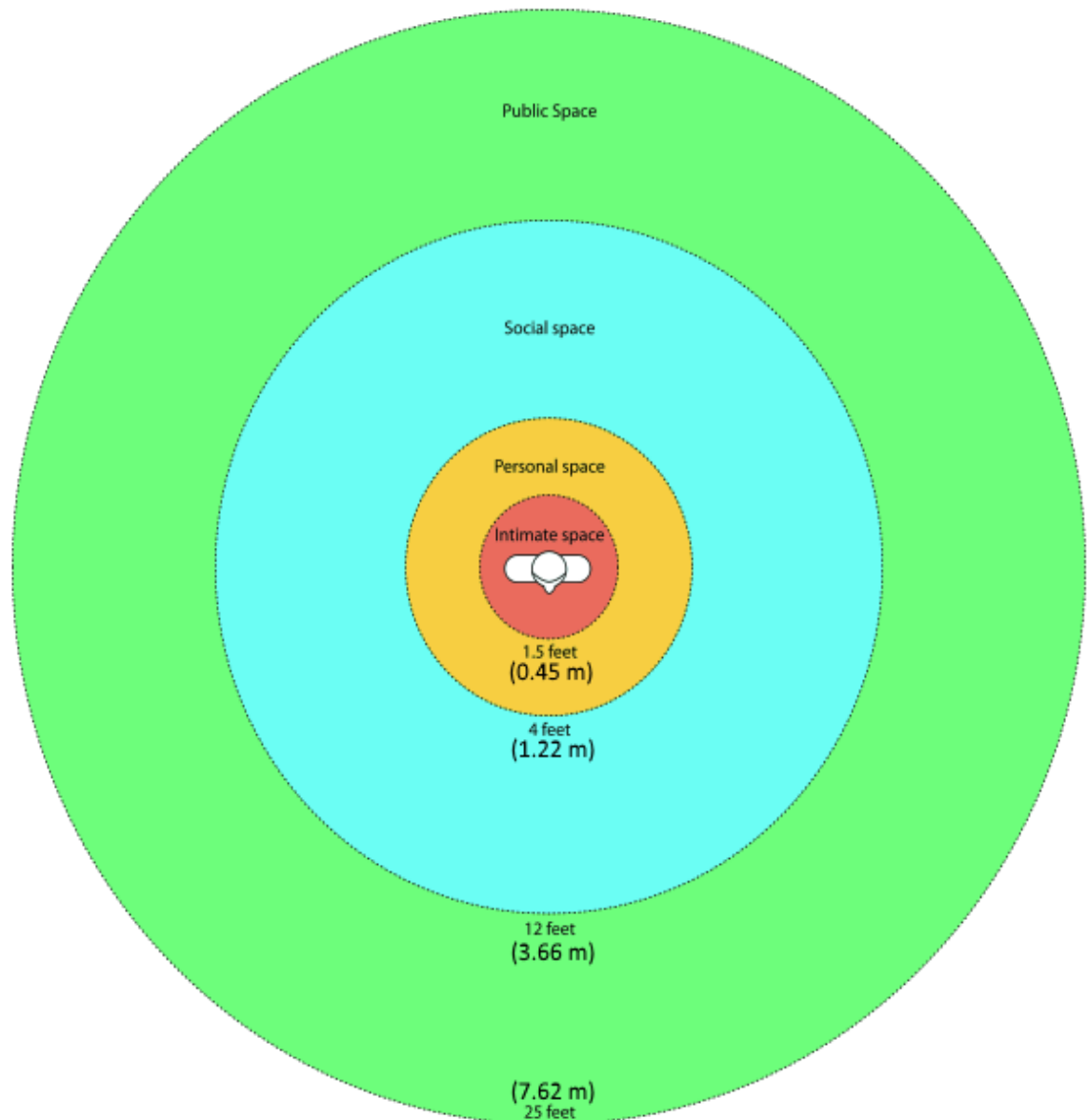


Figure 4 about the four space zones from website <https://laofutze.wordpress.com/category/comparing-cultures/> Distance in meters added by the author.

The intimate distance is the most personal and is associated with the strongest feelings. The close phase is touching the other person. There is at most 15 to 20 centimetres in between the people. This phase is most common in sexual, compassionate, loving and physical confrontations. Speaking or looking is not important in this phase. The extreme proximity to the other person means that smell and physical touch will be the most heightened senses. This phase is often only prolonged in the most extreme cases such

as sexual intercourse, embracing and wrestling. The far phase is still extremely close, but physical contact is not necessary. The distance in this phase is at least between 15 to 20 centimetres. In this phase the feelings are still very intimate and both people are at least within an arm's reach of each other. This space is often considered very personal by many western cultures like American culture. If strangers or not very close acquaintances enter and stay in this phase the American will feel extremely uncomfortable. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 117-118) Finnish people feel the same way and this phase can only be entered when greeting after which ideally both parties should fall back to a more appropriate distance. Even greeting in such close proximity is often viewed as strange, but tolerable if the greeting is quick and the other party is a foreigner.

The personal distance is reserved only for the close acquaintances of the person. The close phase of this zone is between approximately 45 to 76 centimetres. The largest difference between this phase and the intimate zone is the lack of physical contact. Physical contact can still happen, but it is far less likely and it involves mainly just the hands. This phase is only reserved for the closest people such as a spouse or close family. The most visible example of this phase is a couple walking hand in hand. This distance is more practical than the intimate zone since the people are less likely to bump in to each other, but they are still within the arms reach. The far phase is between 0.76 and 1.22 meters. This is out of physical reach. At this distance people can still recognize facial features and marks on the skin. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 119-120)

Social distance is most often used when there is enough space and the people who are chatting are not very close. The close phase is between 1.2 and 2.1 meters. Conversation at this distance starts to be relatively loud and it can be overheard from around six meters. The voice level varies from culture to culture. At this distance an American speaks more silently than a Spaniard or Russian but louder than a Japanese person. This distance is most commonly used when impersonal business is discussed or when there is a casual informal gathering. Some marks and subtler facial features are not easily observed in this distance. The far phase is between 2.1 and 3.7 meters. Conversation at this distance is often relatively loud especially in noisy areas. This phase often allows the other party to continue doing something else. As the people are not close to each other physical contact is not expected and the other person has available space to continue working on something else. Occasional eye contact and talking has to be maintained in order to show the other person that you are still listening. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 121-123)

The public distance is the farthest social interaction distance according to Hall. The close phase of this distance is from 3.7 to 7.6 meters. This distance is relatively large and thus voices must be louder when talking. The far phase is from 7.6 meters and beyond. At this phase distinguishing facial expressions can be difficult and actors often tend to exaggerate them. Spoken voice has to be loud in order to get the message across clearly. As the body language is more difficult to distinguish people often focus on their pronunciation and articulation with extreme care. If a message is misheard

or misunderstood at this distance it will most likely be left uncorrected by the speaker. This distance is often used for public figures or speakers. (Hidden Dimensions, Edward T. Hall, 123-125)

2.3 Geert Hofstede

Geert Hofstede was born on the second of October 1928 in Haarlem, Netherlands. From 1945 Hofstede studied in technical college for two years which includes an internship of one year. During the internship Hofstede went on a voyage to Indonesia and worked as an assistant ship's engineer. This was the first time he left Holland and is one of the earliest reasons which led him to change his career from an engineer to a cultural researcher. The same year as he graduated Hofstede continued his studies in Delft Technical University. His studies lasted six years and on 1953 he graduated with a master's degree mechanical engineering. He also served in the Dutch army as a technical officer for two years. For ten years after his military service Hofstede worked in professional and managerial jobs in three different Dutch industrial companies. (Geert Hofstede personal Website CV <http://geerthofstede.com/geert-hofstede-biography/geert-hofstede-cv/>)

Hofstede had a strong engineering background due to his studies, military service and occupational background. However, Hofstede changed his vocation when he graduated with as a doctor of social studies from Groningen University in 1967. This new profession paved the way for his famous research. (Geert Hofstede personal Website CV <http://geerthofstede.com/geert-hofstede-biography/geert-hofstede-cv/>)

In 1965 during his doctor studies, Hofstede founded and managed the personnel research department in Europe. This is where most of the data Hofstede used in his studies comes from. With his position he had access to thousands of people from dozens of different cultures who shared educational and professional backgrounds. This was an ideal position for Hofstede as this allowed him to focus on the pure cultural differences and minimizing the other background related differences in his studies. He worked in this position until 1971. (Geert Hofstede personal Website CV <http://geerthofstede.com/geert-hofstede-biography/geert-hofstede-cv/>)

2.3.1 Power Distance

Power distance is a cultural dimension which describes the power or influence of one individual relative to another within a culture and how it is handled. The concept also touches equality very closely as equality is the measure of how equally power and other positive things are distributed. The distribution of equality within society can be measured in wealth, laws, rights, rules, social status, prestige, power, physical and mental capabilities. If some of these things favor a group of people over another it means that there is inequality. These privileges are not intertwined and a person with a lot of wealth can have a worse social status and less power than a less wealthy person. In essence inequality is normal, because in order to achieve true

equality there could be no freedom of choice. For example, in order for everyone to have the same opportunities to amass wealth all jobs should pay the exact same salary, every person should have the same working hours, all salary should be paid in a universal hourly wage etc. The literal meaning of the term equality is not the buzzword we commonly hear in the media when it is discussing about privileges, but it is more neutral and complex. Equality in itself cannot be seen as good neither the lack of it or inequality can be seen as bad. Power distance explains how a culture defines the amount and type of inequality which is acceptable. This inequality exists in all cultures and most companies. In most companies this inequality is necessary for streamlining operations and organizing large workforces. If everyone would have equal power in a large organization managing projects and getting results would be extremely difficult if not impossible. In his studies Geert Hofstede found out that the power distance is mostly determined by societal factors. (Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations 2nd edition, Geert H. Hofstede, 79-83, 2001)

In practice power distance has also visible aspects within cultures, especially in cultures with very high power distance. From birth these cultures teach their children that they are not equal and that everyone has their own place within the hierarchy. The social standing within the hierarchy can vary by age, gender, wealth, family history, education, religion, profession, ethnicity and by many more other things. The clearest example of this is the respect towards elders in most cultures. The difference between the power distance and the way and amount of how elders are respected varies greatly. For example, in Finland, which is quite low in power distance, elders are respected and younger people are expected to give them a seat in public transport or help them if they fall. This amount of respect does not transfer over to working life. Older employees are only more valued than younger ones due to the knowledge they have acquired over the years. If the employee would be old but new to his job he would be treated the same way as other new employees. In China, which is a high power distance culture, the respect towards the elderly is much more imprinted within the culture. Taking care of and respecting the elderly is mandatory and neglect will bring shame and can also lead to legal punishments. This also translates to working life. The older employees are valued not only for their professional knowledge, but also their age. They often get more active roles when representing the company and are situated closer to the center in the seating order and when taking pictures. Younger employees also respect older co-workers and managers on site and are more willing to listen to their advice opposed to the advice of a young manager. (Article How China respects its elders, http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/3605#.WFf_7huL-QuU) (Article China's children are legally bound to respect their elder, <s://www.ft.com/content/d33fdde0-ffc9-11e5-99cb-83242733f755>)

The amount power distance of within a culture can be relatively easily observed. It is incorporated within all aspects of culture. It can be already observed when greeting. In most low power distance cultures all people greet each other for example by shaking hands, but in many high power distance

only certain people shake hands with each other and the order in which people greet each other is important to high power distance cultures. For example, the difference between Finnish low power distance greeting compared to Russian high power distance greeting. In Finnish culture all people shake hands and the order is not predefined. In Russian culture only men shake hands and they are the ones who greet each other first. This difference does not mean that Russian women are not respected or that they are somehow inferior to men, but it is due to the different roles both genders take within the highly hierarchical society. Men are seen as the representatives of the family and most often deal with external affairs such as dealing with problems that involve other people while women are in charge of mostly internal matters such as taking care of the household matters and organizing them. The household matters are not purely on the women and the external matters are not purely on the men, but each have their own responsibilities and help out the other when needed. (Russian Power Distance <https://geert-hofstede.com/russia.html>)

In a work place which is in a low power distance country the subordinates are more likely to voice their concerns with their managers and employers. This can be seen in Finland with the worker's unions and within most work places. Managers are seen more as guides and advisors rather than overseers who watch each work phase closely and dictate every move of the employee. Each subordinate also carries the responsibility of their own work. In a high power distance culture, the employer is only accessible through the managers and even then the employer is still very far above the subordinates. Subordinates cannot openly bypass the hierarchy without punishment. The subordinates have very little free roam over their work and the managers keep a close eye on their work. The manager also carries most of the responsibility and is thus motivated to ensure that their subordinates do the job properly. The subordinates also think differently in both groups. If the managers would watch over every move of the low power distance workers and they could not talk to anyone above them, without going through a complex hierarchy they would most likely feel like their work is not valued and that they are being oppressed. On the other hand, if a subordinate from a high power distance culture would be left to work on their own without managers watching over them they would feel like the managers don't care. And if the managers would come shake the hands of each employee and talk to them like equals the employees would lose their respect for the manager and would be reluctant to follow their rule.

2.3.2 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the cultural dimension that defines how concerned people are with ambiguity instead of risks. Uncertainty is the feeling of not knowing what will happen next and not being able to identify any specific greater threats. Uncertainty avoidance defines how people in a culture react to unknown risks and variables.

Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance will feel more anxiety when there is uncertainty. They will try to find and face possible threats rather than ignore them. Higher uncertainty avoidance cultures often tend to measure, quantify and minimize the risks involved. When making agreements they often want to have formal documents and common set of rules in order to avoid possible misunderstandings or misrepresentations if issues occur. The goal of high uncertainty cultures is not getting rid of risks or avoiding them, but to clarify the issue at hand as much as possible and taking educated calculated risks.

Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance will not anxiety even if they are surrounded by multiple different risks. They often accept risks and do not shy away from them. They do not actively face the risk and try to overcome it, but rather accept it when they are forced to face it. An example of this behavior would be low job security. A person living in a low uncertainty avoidance will not worry too much for the stability of their workplace and is more capable for searching for a new job when they lose their current job. This risk might not be foreseeable and thus the person in question cannot prepare for it. Due to the low uncertainty avoidance the person will feel less anxiety when face with the possibility of losing their current job and after they lose it. (Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations 2nd edition, Geert H. Hofstede, 145-148, 2001)

2.3.3 Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism and collectivism are cultural dimensions that measure how group oriented cultures are. Individualism means that a culture is more focused on the individual and collectivism is that the culture is more focused on larger groups which individuals are only part of.

The more individualistic a culture is the less it is concerned, by the social merits of one person. With social merits the author is referring to a person's contacts, the person's lineage and their specific standing within a society. Individualistic cultures are more focused on personal achievements and personal skills. A person who is related to a well-known scientist is not viewed as any smarter than the rest of the people in an individualistic culture. Individualistic cultures tend to trust in the neutrality of people and the commonly agreed rules. The idea that everyone is seen as an individual makes following rules easier. This means that people often trust strangers to act according to the norms and do not rely heavily only on their close family and friends. This translates to lower corruption rates and less nepotism. Choices are mostly made for the good of the individual and thus justifying bribes or nepotism is more difficult and uncommon. Taking a bribe or hiring a person just because you know them is seen as amoral and a selfish act. There are no large groups of people that the individualistic cultures divide their contacts to. Each person is seen as they are purely based on their own merits rather than the merits of the larger social group they belong to.

Individualistic people often get along better with new people than collectivistic people. They see each person as an individual and thus see each person as valuable. For them it is easier to set themselves at the place of the other unknown person and thus they are more likely to be polite and value this person more.

Collectivistic cultures focus on larger social groups rather than the individuals within them. A person's standing is strongly tied to their contacts and relations. A person who has very well-known or powerful relatives is more respected than a person with less important relatives. It is common in collectivistic cultures to ask about the profession, social standing or even relative wealth of a person's parents or other close relatives. For a collectivistic person it is at least as important to know where a person is from as to know what they are now. Collectivistic people divide people into groups there is the in-group which includes friends, family and even acquaintances and then there is the out-group which includes everyone else. The people that belong to the in-group treat each other very well. They are polite, often exchange gifts and try to help each other out as much as possible. Collectivistic people often disregard the out-groupers. They are treated with little politeness and collectivistic people often do not try to make a good impression on them. If these people reach a better relationship with a collectivistic person, they are elevated to the in-group status. This status often extends to the entire in-group especially with marriages. This means that if a person marries into a collectivistic family the whole family and their close contacts, become part of the person's in-group and vice versa.

Collectivistic people often think of things from the point of view of their own in-group rather than their individual point of view. This can be seen very clearly with corruption and nepotism. The thinking behind these actions often comes from the idea of strengthening your in-group and your own status within it. A collectivist official who takes a bribe doesn't view it as a selfish act that is wrong against his organization, but instead views it as a transaction which benefits his in-group and more specifically his family. The same goes with nepotism, if an official in a place of power is looking for another person to work in the same organization they often hire from the in-group. This results in the in-group gaining more power and thus it is more capable of influencing decisions and so the whole in-group benefits from this.

2.3.4 Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity and femininity can often be mistaken with male and female related aspects or the social standing of genders. These culture dimensions are not about the status of genders, but they are more focused on the stereotypical behavior of the genders. The different focuses the genders have, have been monitored in Hofstede's studies within IBM. They have found that women are more focused on social goals while men are driven by more ego oriented goals. These differences also extend to cultures and these cultural aspects tell whether a culture is more focused on social issues or ego based issues.

Masculine cultures focus more on ego based issues. They are more competitive and driven. They have a clearer focus and often strive to advance and move forward. The leaders within masculine cultures make their standing very clear and often try to further grow their own image. Values for more masculine cultures are less focused on feelings and more geared towards reason and visible gain. To simplify masculine cultures, focus on goals and they want to achieve more tangible goals and out do their previous goals. Masculine cultures are not afraid of conflict and if a conflict needs to be caused in order to reach a goal then it is deemed acceptable. The leaders in masculine cultures portray themselves as strong leaders with a set mind and strategy. They do not openly take criticism or feedback and are more concerned with their status rather than openly changing their mind. The decision making process is not always done by the leader alone, but the feedback of others is done behind closed doors. In public these advisors might be present, but all credit is given to the leader and these advisors will complement the leader and undermine their own authority to boost the leader's authority. When mistakes are made the leaders will seldom take the responsibility and learn from it. It is more important to shift the blame to someone else or external factors in order to keep up their appearance. In political terms masculinity can be compared to authoritarian political systems.

Feminine cultures are based on social values. They are not focused on purely achieving better and better results all the time. The way they achieve these goals is more important to them rather than just the end result. Feminine cultures value things like equality, openness, personal freedoms and the well-being. If these things cannot be achieved when trying to achieve a goal the goal must be changed, the input has to be changed, a compromise between the value and goal must be found or the goal can also be deemed not worthy of the effort and sacrifice. Leaders in feminine cultures are often close to their subordinates. They are more open to criticism and accept it even publicly. The leaders are expected to take responsibility for their actions and if they do it properly their mistakes can be forgiven and they are given a chance to redeem themselves. In feminine cultures the opinions and values of others should be taken in to consideration. Feminine cultures try to stay away from conflict and produce harmony by acceptance and understanding. In political terms femininity can be compared to a democratic political system. (Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations 2nd edition, Geert H. Hofstede, 279-307, 2001)

2.3.5 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

Long-term- and short-term orientation are cultural dimension which describe that do cultures value the current or past over the future. Long-term oriented cultures value the future above the past and the present, while short-term oriented cultures value the past and the current over the future.

Long-term orientation can be observed by economic and social behavior of people within a certain culture. In these cultures, it is common to plan well

ahead. Goals are achieved by creating milestones along the way and going through them to reach the end goal further down the line. For example, if the end goal would be starting a family a person would first want to reach financial stability, find a mate, get common accommodation and only then start thinking of more immediate issues related to having children. A person from such culture would most likely start saving money for the child already when they get a job in order to pay possible education fees and such.

This also translates to business and national culture. Long-term oriented nations and companies value persistence and future profits. They build to expand and last. Making changes to national or company policies is geared towards the future and these cultures want to know as much about changes ahead of them as possible. Making a quick profit now, but risking persistence is not viewed as a worth-while risk as the profit will come in time anyway. Employees within these organizations are measured by how well they are performing overall throughout their career instead of focusing only on short bursts of time. This results in a more cooperative work environment. Saving money is viewed as a wise choice and essential in these cultures. Saved money results in more financial persistence and allows for more opportunities in the future. It is also important to be able to adapt to the ever changing future. Having a strong financial foundation helps with this greatly.

Short-term oriented cultures value the current and the past over the future. Due to the changing future these cultures view the current and past as more important than the future. These cultures are more focused on seeing short term goals filled and getting immediate gratification rather than building a system that will benefit them in the future. Thus on a personal level free time is more valuable for short-term oriented cultures than long-term oriented cultures. People from short-term oriented cultures want to spend time with their families and friends as soon as possible while long-term oriented people want to work towards being able to spend the best and as much time as possible with their families and friends in the future.

Short-term oriented culture can be seen also on a national and company level. On this level investment are not seen as worthwhile if they do not provide a benefit within a short span of time. People working within these organizations are often measured by how quickly they can produce as much benefit for the organization as possible. This results in more competition. In these cultures, spending money is viewed as more important than saving it. The benefit of having money in the future is not worth the inconvenience of not having the things you want right now. Stability is viewed as more important than adaptability. Thus, older traditions are respected even if they would not be so useful or applicable anymore.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

This section will explain and analyze the data the author collected through his interviews. The interviews were conducted to find out the relevance and validity of the theory section of this work in practice.

3.1 Research Information

The interviews were conducted to three representatives of each culture, German, Polish and Swedish cultures. So, all together there are nine interviewees. There were 12 standard questions and some additional questions depending on the interviewee. The questions were based on the 12 cultural dimensions found within the theory section of this work. From Edward T. Hall, the dimensions included are Monochronic and Polychronic, High- and Low Context and Space in Culture. From Geert Hofstede, the dimensions included are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism and Collectivism, Masculinity and Femininity and Long- versus Short-Term Orientation. The questions were divided under the titles of the theory, but this was only used to simplify the interview and result processing for the author. The interviewees were not told the titles of each series of questions. Most questions have a value from one to four. Putting a numerical value for the answers helps the interviewee to comprehend the question more easily and allows the author to more easily compare the results. The author chose these values as it does not give the replicant an easy neutral option and thus forces the interviewees to think more thoroughly about their answers. The numerical values are not absolute truths and are accompanied by more detailed explanations. Each interviewee was asked the same questions, but some questions needed to be clarified with a follow-up question. The amount of explanation and given context varied between the interviewees. Some interviewees needed more explanation and clarification while others gave full answers without any further explanation.

The goal of the author was to get comprehensive answers without influencing the interviewee and keeping all the interviews consistent. Each culture had at least one interviewee from Comatec's own professional fields. Most of the interviewees wanted to stay anonymous and only one person stated that they allow their name to be written in the final work. The author will however not mention this person's name in the thesis as it would not seem fair to name only a single interviewee.

3.1.1 Monochronic and Polychronic Time Concept Questions

“In your culture is time seen more as a linear timeline or a circular one(Flexible)?” The question is based on Edward T. Halls Monochronic and Polychronic dimensions and how they view time. Monochronic cultures view time as limited resource on a linear timeline while Polychronic cultures view it more as a flexible thing which they have in abundance. The question aims to figure out in a more fundamental level how each culture handles time in general.

The first part of question two is “On a scale from 1-4 how strict are set schedules in personal life? (1 Very loose – 4 Very strict)” The second part of the question asks the same question, but about professional life. The

questions are divided in to two so the interviewees can differentiate their personal preference and how they are expected to act within a culture. This helps to avoid the possible misunderstanding of the interviewee thinking about the question purely from their own personal life and sheds some light on possible differences between personal and professional life. Professional life was not limited to purely working life, but also covered public life in general such as doctors' appointments, studies etc. This was explained as a follow-up explanation to each interviewee.

3.1.2 High- and Low-Context Question

“On a scale from 1-4 how explicit is communication within your culture? (1 Very vague – 4 Very literal)” The third question is based on Edward T. Halls High- and Low-Context cultural dimensions. The question focuses on communication on a more practical level. The aim of the question is to identify the abundance or lack of context given while communicating. The question was not easily understood by all interviewees and it was accompanied by a follow-up example of “reading between the lines”. To simplify the question using this example the author asked how common is reading between the lines within the interviewees culture. This simplification was used as it is perhaps the most well-known representation of how explicit communication is.

3.1.3 Space in Culture Questions

These two questions are about Edward T. Halls cultural dimension Space. Question number four was: “In your culture on a scale from 1-4 how important is personal space? (1 Not important – 4 Very important)”. The question was followed up by an explanation that the question concerns both physical and verbal personal space. The addition of this explanation was deemed necessary by the author as the cultural dimension of Space includes both the social and physical personal space. The verbal space was explained the same way as social space within the explanation, but the word verbal was used instead of social as the author thought that this would be a simpler and commonly understood term.

Question number five had multiple levels, but the author tied the question in to one as most interviewees answered most of the levels after hearing the first part of the question. The first part of the question was: “At which stage does verbal or physical contact become unacceptable? (What is acceptable/recommended behavior?)”. The question about acceptable and recommended behavior was tied in to the original question as most interviewees started to answer the question automatically after hearing only the first part of the question. There was a follow-up question “How about in professional life?” which was asked in order to make a clear distinction between the personal preferences of the interviewee and the more official and widely accepted behavior within the culture.

The aim of the question was to find the boundaries of the acceptable behavior and what was not only acceptable but expected behavior. This was asked

in order to get clear practical answers of how one should behave within the culture in question. The question was used as some actions in one culture not only polite, but necessary actions within one culture can be considered strange or disrespectful in another culture. An example of this was also given after the explanation. The example used was handshaking with women in Finnish culture and Russian culture. In Finnish culture men are expected to shake hands with women while in Russian culture it is seen as strange behavior.

3.1.4 Power Distance Questions

These questions are about Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension Power Distance. None of the questions had set follow-up questions or explanations which were asked from all interviewees, as all of them are very self-explanatory with self-explanatory numerical ratings. The author decided to ask three separate questions about this dimension as the questions are not too close to each other so that the interviewees would answer more than one question at a time and due to its nature Power Distance can be viewed as one of the most important dimensions to comprehend in order to effectively operate within a foreign organization. In its essence Power Distance directly relates to the authority, hierarchy, authority and how they are divided within a culture. This also translates to business culture within a culture.

Question number six, the first question about the subject was: "In your culture from a scale of 1-4 how high authority do superiors have? (1 You can never disagree with a superior - 4 You can openly disagree and discuss differences with your superior)". This was a very self-explanatory question with a self-explanatory rating and none of the interviewees required further explanation. Most interviewees automatically explained their answer in detail, but if they did not or the explanation was not clear enough the author asked for more detailed examples.

Question number seven, the second question is: "On a scale from 1-4 how is power divided within your culture? (1 Power is only distributed at the top of the hierarchy – 4 Power is distributed equally throughout the hierarchy)". The question was focused on the executional power of different stages within a hierarchy. The aim was to find out how subordinates are expected and how they prefer to work within an organization. If the interviewees did not automatically give any explanation for their given rating the author asked clarification on how subordinates wanted to operate within an organization. The follow-up question was closely tied to the preferred managerial style of the subordinates. The extremes being constantly supervised and given strict clear instructions or just getting a general guideline on how to achieve the set goal and getting some progress checks at predefined times. A simplified version of the follow-up question was: "Do subordinates prefer to have free rein over their work with little involvement of the managers or do they prefer to get clear instructions and high involvement from the managers?".

Question number eight, the third and last question about Power Distance was: “On a scale from 1-4 how is responsibility distributed within your culture? (1 Responsibility is only set on the leaders - 4 Responsibility is set equally to everyone in the hierarchy)”. The question aims to find out how responsibility is divided throughout the hierarchy. The question was further explained by asking how well and which people take personal responsibility within a hierarchy. The follow-up question aims to make a clear division of responsibility and who it is assigned to. Also, the question was asked in order to find out that do the people who are assigned the responsibility actually keep the responsibility when something goes wrong or do they try to move the responsibility of the failure to other people.

3.1.5 Uncertainty Avoidance Question

Question number nine is about Geert Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance. The question was: “In your culture on a scale from 1-4 how concerned are people with the future? (1 Not at all as long as everything is fine now no worries – 4 Very concerned people often prepare for the worst-case scenario)”. The question was quite self-explanatory and did not need too much further explanation. When further explanation was needed, the author gave practical examples of the common opinions of how worried people are about their health or job security and larger things like conflicts or the economy. The explanations were used in order to clarify that the question was about the common opinions within the culture and not how worried the interviewee is at the moment about such things.

3.1.6 Individualism and Collectivism Question

Question number ten is about Geert Hofstede’s Individualism versus Collectivism. The question was: “In your culture on a scale from 1-4 how important are the merits of your parents to others? (1 Very important- 4 Only your own merits matter)”. The question aims to find out how collectivistic or individualistic the culture is. The importance of one’s background is one of the key elements of individualism and collectivism. It can define to which group you belong to or it can be just a trivial matter brought up just as small talk. This is one of the clearest differences between an individualistic and collectivistic culture and thus it was used. An example used to further explain the question was that when introducing yourself to a new person are they more interested in your social background or your own accomplishments.

3.1.7 Masculinity and Femininity Question

Question number eleven is about Geert Hofstede’s Masculinity versus Femininity. The question was “In your culture on a scale from 1-4 how common is it for leaders to display their power (1 Very common – 4 Not common at all)”. How masculine or feminine a culture is can most commonly be seen by the actions of their leaders and the reactions these actions get. An example of this could be that a prominent politician in your nation rides around

in a luxury cars, brags about his hunting trips and behaves in a dominant way during public speeches and events. The author asked the interviewees that how they and their countrymen would react to this or similar scenarios as a follow-up question. The question was quite well understood and the follow-up question and explanation helped to further clarify the answers.

3.1.8 Long- and Short-Term Orientation Question

Question number twelve is about Geert Hofstede's Long- versus Short-Term Orientation. The question was "In your culture on a scale from 1-4 how important is it to save out salary for later? (1 Not important better spend it now - 4 Very important just by essentials now and save the rest)". The question was very straightforward and clear thus no one needed any examples in order to clarify it. A follow-up question was asked where the interviewees were asked that what do their countrymen most often save money for. The answers across cultures were quite similar, but the importance of saving clearly varied and so did the general attitudes towards saving.

All the results represent how the interviewee views the general opinions of their own culture. The answers are not purely personal opinions and this was made clear during the interview.

3.2 German Interview Results

The results from the German interviewees. There were three German interviewees. All interviewed Germans had lived in Finland and were in close contact with Finnish people through work, family or friends.

3.2.1 Monochronic and Polychronic Time Concept Questions

All German interviewees answered that they view time in a linear fashion. One interviewee said that some Germans can view it as a circular one, but he referred to young Germans who might not follow the traditional German lifestyle.

All interviewees agreed that set schedules in working life are extremely strict. One of the interviewees gave an example where he told that being even one minute late is not acceptable and it will result in a serious discussion with your supervisor.

In personal life two interviewees completely agreed that schedules are also very strict. The third interviewee also agreed with this, but they said that there can be personal exceptions and this is most common amongst young people. The interviewees said that German people do not like to wait on others and prefer to arrive five or more minutes earlier than exactly on time or a bit a late.

3.2.2 High- and Low-Context Question

The interviewees all agreed that the communication for Germans is clear and explicit both in personal and working life. However, Germans assume that in working life people bring their own knowledge to a discussion and more common things do not need to be explained in order to save time. When instructions are given, they are given very clearly and thoroughly.

3.2.3 Space in Culture Questions

All interviewees viewed personal space as important for Germans. However, they said that there are regional differences between German attitudes towards personal space. They said that people from Bavaria are relatively open and require less personal space than people from Swabia. He said that Bavarians might talk to strangers more openly, but this is not common behavior in the Swabian region.

The things that the interviewees deemed as acceptable behavior in personal life were handshakes for both genders, women hugging each other, a tap on the shoulder between men and addressing not well known people formally. When people get very close they can hug each other. The general theme was minimal physical contact.

Acceptable topics for small talk are usually general like, studies, work, hometown etc. Personal problems or personal life are not discussed with more distant people. Discussions about family and relationships can be only had between friends.

In professional life the same rules apply, but they are even more strict. Germans believe that one should not bring their personal problems to work. There are no differences in communication between genders. Very close colleagues can hug each other, but one can never hug their superiors. The basic western handshaking rules apply to Germans. The handshake should be firm and brief, during the handshake eye contact should be made, both parties should be standing up and under normal circumstances the handshake should be done using the right hand.

3.2.4 Power Distance Questions

The authority of the supervisors is relatively strict in Germany. However, with newer smaller companies and office jobs the power distance can be lower than in general. The interviewees gave examples of companies where the employees could openly discuss issues with their supervisors. Open discussion is even encouraged in some of these types of companies. However, this is not the case in older and larger manufacturing companies like the German car manufacturers. They have strict company policies and hierarchy. This also applies to retail companies where one of the interviewees was

working. They said that openly disagreeing with your supervisor is strictly forbidden.

All interviewees agreed that on a general level the hierarchy within German companies is strict. However, they said that in newer and smaller companies it is less strict than in larger more well-known companies.

All the interviewees agreed that responsibility is distributed quite equally throughout the hierarchy. They said that each employee is responsible for their own actions, but the managers are responsible for their underlings and thus have more responsibility than their employees.

3.2.5 Uncertainty Avoidance Question

Two out of the three interviewees thought that Germans worry about the future a lot and one thought that they worry about the future quite a lot. The interviewees said that Germans worry about what could be the next bad thing that might happen and try to have security in their future. Uncertainty about their future causes stress and anxiety.

3.2.6 Individualism and Collectivism Question

Two out of the three interviewees thought that Germans are not interested at all about the background and achievements of one's parents. One interviewee thought that they are mostly not interested. The interviewee said that younger people are often asked about their parents and background, but Germans do not ask these things from older people. Germans respect personal achievements and if they see that you have just inherited or were gifted everything by your parents you lose respect.

3.2.7 Masculinity and Femininity Question

The interviewees thought that it is very common or common for leaders to display their power. They said that people respect wealth as they view the person as hardworking. However, Germans respect values and ideas over wealth. They also said that other Germans will most likely be jealous about others if they show off their wealth.

3.2.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation Question

All interviewees said that Germans save a lot of money. They said that people save money for large future purchases such as cars, houses etc. They said that people who do not save money are viewed as irresponsible people without any vision or goals. Some people might even call them stupid.

Germans also have a saying similar to the Finnish saying: “Ei ne suuret tulot vaan, pienet menot”, which roughly translates to: “Not a large income, but low costs.”. This saying means that a person does not have to earn a lot of money, but they should live within their own means. It also means that a person who is strict with their personal budget should be able to afford even more expensive things as they have managed their budget carefully and saved up for such investments.

3.3 Polish Interview Results

The results from the Polish interviewees. There were three Polish interviewees. One common factor which might influence the Polish interviewees answers is that they have all been or are currently working for Finnish companies and have Finnish colleagues. Therefore, the author specifically asked the interviewees to answer the questions from a Polish perspective and asked follow-up questions if the answer was unclear or the interviewee sounded uncertain about his answer.

3.3.1 Monochronic and Polychronic Time Concept Questions

Two of the Polish interviewees answered that Polish people view time as clearly linear. They further explained that for Polish people everything has a beginning and an end. One of the Polish interviewees said that time is viewed more as circular, but when asked to explain more the interviewee just said that this is just how they feel. The other two gave more comprehensive and consistent answers to this question. So, to sum up the answers time is seen more as linear rather than circular.

All interviewees agreed that schedules are important for Polish people in their personal lives. The interviewees said that it is better to arrive on time rather than late and the agreed times are quite accurate.

All interviewees said that the schedules are even more strict in the professional life. They said that if in personal life one should on the agreed time in professional life it is better to be a bit in advance.

3.3.2 High- and Low-Context Question

All interviewees said that Polish people prefer to be more direct and explicit in their communication. One said that information during communication should be very clear and in great detail. One of the interviewees elaborated that communication with Polish men is straight forward and clear, but with women there is more reading between the lines. They said that the difference between how Polish men communicate compared to Polish women is quite significant. They said that ladies give more indirect messages like hints and suggestions rather than just plainly saying what they mean.

3.3.3 Space in Culture Questions

In question number four the Polish interviewees were somewhat divided. Two agreed that personal space is not so important, but one answered that it is quite important. The two who thought that personal space is not so important said that even though it is not so important some space should still be kept. They said that Polish people do not like silences in between conversations and small talk is common.

All Polish interviewees said that a handshake is completely acceptable behavior and expected even between both genders. The other answers varied slightly, but this was further explained by some of the interviewees. Some said that people can discuss even more personal subjects with strangers quite openly, but others disagreed. Others said that a hug between women is completely fine and but when men do it amongst themselves or to women they should be quite close acquaintances. One interviewee said that hugs are only acceptable between very close friends or family members. One interviewee said that women can kiss each other on the cheek and that Polish greetings are often warm and welcoming. Another interviewee said that all kisses should only be saved for romantic relationships. However, the same interviewee specified their own answers and the differences between others. They said that there is a significant difference between younger and older Polish people. They said that younger Polish people are much more open and amongst them hugs and cheek kisses while meeting are more acceptable and even common while for the older generations warm welcomes should only be saved for close relations like old friends, family and romantic relationships. Some of the interviewees mentioned that giving gifts is important for Polish people. The idea is the main thing that matters when giving gifts and smaller gifts are common. More lavish gifts can be given on special occasions, but still it is considered to give smaller gifts more often rather than giving some special gifts only on very rare special occasions.

Acceptable small talk topics again vary between the age groups. For younger Polish people, even personal matters like family topics, personal events, relationship status etc. For older Polish people, small talk should be kept on a more general level and the conversation partner should not try to inquire or pressure the other person in to a very personal conversation. Distinguishing who exactly belongs to younger Polish people and who to older can be difficult and also depends on the age of the other party, but one interviewee advised to keep the conversations on a more general level at first and if the Polish person feels more comfortable about discussing more personal matters they will bring them up themselves. They said that not discussing personal matters with someone automatically is better than trying to get someone to discuss them who does not want to. However, in general Polish people have a relatively laid back attitude towards small talk.

All interviewees agreed that the professional communication for Polish people is more strict. They all agreed that a handshake is the best way to greet people at work. and that hugs kisses are not recommended. They can be only seen as acceptable between equal colleagues in a less official situation. Like the Germans the basic western handshaking rules also apply to the Polish. The handshake should be firm and brief, during the handshake eye

contact should be made, both parties should be standing up and under normal circumstances the handshake should be done using the right hand. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the Polish gift giving culture also applies to working life. Gifts among colleagues are common and expected. Also, when dining with people from work the bill should be split among the diners and it is always better to pay a bit more than you ate just in case that you do not pay too little. When dining with clients it is important that the host pays for the meals and during meetings refreshments like coffee, light snacks and refreshing drinks should also be present. Refreshments are also expected in a company's internal meetings too and not having them might look to the employees that the company does not care about them.

3.3.4 Power Distance Questions

The answers were quite consistent except one interviewee seemed to contradict themselves. All the others said that the superiors have high authority except one. The person who thought that it was not high at all still said that superiors should be treated with respect and superiors and older people should be addressed formally using their last names. The rest agreed that the authority is quite high and that if there are disagreements or suggestions to the superiors they should only be discussed privately. One of the interviewees who said that the authority is quite high said that the difference between Finland and Poland is very big, Finland having a lower authority and Poland a stronger one. The interviewee said that they were positively shocked of the Finnish hierarchy when they moved from a Polish company to a Finnish one.

All interviewees agreed that power is mostly distributed to the superiors, but they also consult their subordinates before making decisions. The subordinates are listened to in a more general level or the ones related to the decision can be asked about their thoughts or suggestions.

Again, all interviewees agreed that responsibility is generally distributed more to the superiors. The subordinates do not want to take responsibility, however often if something goes wrong the higher-ups will find a person who will be made responsible and they will most likely be one of the subordinates. Thus, there can be seen distrust between the management and the operatives. Because of the distrusts and the chance of one of the employees getting blamed for a managerial error Polish people prefer to have all contracts in a clear written form. This includes all official work related issues and is quite specific. These contracts should serve as a deterrent to the higher-ups to pin the responsibilities of failures to the employees and also clarify the employees' specific role within the organization.

3.3.5 Uncertainty Avoidance Question

Two out of the three interviewees thought that Poles worry about the future quite a lot and one thought that they worry about the future a lot. The interviewees said that how concerned Polish people are with the future mostly

depends on their current personal economic situation. If they have a lot of money they fear that they might lose it all or if they have too little they worry about how will they afford future living costs and investments. The interviewee who said that Poles are very concerned said that unfortunately they themselves are also very concerned.

3.3.6 Individualism and Collectivism Question

All the interviewees agreed that a person's background is very important for Poles. The last name of the person is important as it tells the social standing of their family and the person's background. People often ask about parents when they meet new people. The wealth is commonly shared among the family. The average wages in Poland are relatively low so it is very difficult for young people to have enough money for cars or own apartments. Thus, the parents help with or completely pay for these expensive things.

3.3.7 Masculinity and Femininity Question

Two of the interviewees agreed that it is very common for Polish leaders to display their power, but one said that it is extremely rare. The two who said that it is extremely common said that leaders are expected to be right and lead the way thus displaying their power is expected and will gain them more respect. The interviewee who answered that it is extremely rare said that good leaders do not display their power. This can be interpreted as his own personal opinion as he was unable to tie it with the general Polish opinion.

3.3.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation Question

All interviewees agreed that saving money is important for Poles. Two thought that it is important and one thought that it is extremely important. Two interviewees said that money should and most commonly is saved for a worst case scenario. Some of the interviewees said that money is also often saved for large future investments like cars, apartments, children etc. They also said that saving money for such things can be difficult as the average wages in Poland are quite low compared to the living costs.

3.4 Swedish Interview Results

The results from the Swedish interviewees. There were three Swedish interviewees. All three Swedish interviewees had Finnish friends and most had either worked for a Finnish company or with one.

3.4.1 Monochronic and Polychronic Time Concept Questions

All Swedish interviewees agreed that they view time as linear except one. One said that they are personally quite flexible with time. They also specified that Swedish people are optimistic about time and are running from one appointment to another hoping to reach all of them on time.

All interviewees agreed that schedules in personal life are quite strict. They said that for personal things schedules are not exact, but when others are involved the schedules should be followed. One also noted that in their personal life schedules should be followed, but the “academic quarter” is acceptable. This means that the schedules should be followed with 15 minutes’ accuracy. So being within 15 minutes of either side of the appointment is acceptable. Others were a bit stricter with their schedules.

In professional life, all of the Swedish interviewees were much more strict with the schedules. The mentioned that the schedule does not only concern them, but everyone around them and thus a small personal delay might cause other people complications. One recommended that if there will be changes to the schedule they should be informed in advance as soon as possible.

3.4.2 High- and Low-Context Question

The Swedish interviewees were quite divided by this question. One said that there is quite a lot of reading between the lines and in direct messages in Swedish culture. Another said that in their daily life there is a bit of reading between the lines, but in a working environment everything is explained in great detail and even more so when dealing with foreigners. The third said that Swedish people say everything straight as it is and that there is no reading between the lines. However, his answer might be influenced by the fact that he is from Northern Sweden closer to the Finnish border and thus his way of communication is also closer to the Finnish way. He also mentioned at some point that Swedish culture is very similar to Finnish culture and to some answers he said that they are just like in Finnish culture.

3.4.3 Space in Culture Questions

Once again the Swedish interviewees were quite divided with this question. They mostly thought that personal space is quite important or not so important. They also said that conversations can be relatively open and a lot of small talk is expected. One of the interviewees said that personal space is extremely important, but again this is likely due to his proximity to Finland.

All Swedish interviewees agreed that a handshake is a good start with new acquaintances no matter their gender. They also said that there is not much difference between the genders. The interviewees also agreed that hugs are acceptable between friends, family and very close friends. One noted that a woman should be closer to be hugged by a man than a man being hugged

by a man. The interviewees drew the line on a kiss on the cheek and said that this would make most people uncomfortable. They said that good small talk topics would be weather, general non-political or non-tragic events, sports, general family questions like how are they etc.

Topics which should not be brought up even among most friends include religion, difficult illnesses, personal problems, politics or sexual problems. They specified that with very close friends most of these subjects are fine to discuss except religion and politics as they might cause disagreements and they are regarded as matters of personal opinion.

In professional life, a handshake should always be used in the first meetings. Closest colleagues are often viewed as friends and thus are treated the same way as other friends. Even though the colleagues would rarely or never meet on their free time if their relations get close at work they should be treated like normal friends instead of just like average co-workers. Personal things can be discussed with co-workers, but they should be positive. Hobbies in general are good topics like hunting, sports, cars etc.

3.4.4 Power Distance Questions

All Swedish interviewees agreed that it is completely acceptable if not even expected to share disagreements and thoughts about normal work related issues with superiors. Only more personal or special issues should be discussed with the superiors privately. They also agreed that the superiors will respect the employees more for sharing their disagreements and ideas with the superiors. They are seen as valuable employees who take personal initiative and interest in the subject. They said that in general the organizational structure between superiors and employees is very flat, but that in larger international organizations it might be a bit stronger and disagreements with the superiors could not be discussed there as freely.

The interviewees said that power is distributed quite evenly throughout the hierarchy. The employees are given a goal and instructions, but how they want to achieve the goal is up to the employees themselves. One gave an example that even in large companies like Ikea they value the ideas from the ground floor employees. The companies do not only give the employees freedom, but also expect initiative to achieve the goals independently and try to figure out problems instead of just waiting for new instructions.

The interviewees were more divided with this question. One said that the responsibility scales with the salary so higher earning superiors have more responsibility than lower earning subordinates. The others said that it distributed more evenly throughout the hierarchy and that everyone is responsible for their own actions and mostly take the responsibility they were given.

3.4.5 Uncertainty Avoidance Question

Two of the Swedish interviewees agreed that Swedish people are either very or quite concerned with the future. They said that Swedish people worry less when there is nothing wrong at the time and that they try to make the best out of the current situation. One said that people are not so worried about their future.

3.4.6 Individualism and Collectivism Question

All the interviewees agreed that a person's background is not important at all. They specified that asking questions about one's background and parents can even be seen as rude by some Swedes. The only scenarios where this would be normal or acceptable topic would be as not so serious small talk about family history or common subjects and if a young Swede brings their new partner home the parents will want to know about the family background of the new partner.

3.4.7 Masculinity and Femininity Question

All the interviewees agreed that it is inappropriate for superiors to show off their wealth or power. Two said that it is extremely rare and one said that it is quite rare. The interviewees said that this kind of behavior would make people think that the person is stupid and people would laugh at them behind their back. One gave an example that if a politician would be showing off their wealth with expensive luxury houses and Rolex watches people would be disinclined to vote for them and they would lose their credibility. Opinions and ideas are valued more than wealth and power.

3.4.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation Question

All Swedish interviewees agreed that saving money for the future is important. Two said that it is quite important and one said that it is extremely important. They said that it is always good to have investments or own housing. One also said that due to small pensions it is extremely important for Swedes to save up money for the future.

4 ANALYSIS

The was done by comparing the interview results of the author with the corresponding theory results of Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede. The comparison did not include anomalies from the interviews as they represent to misunderstandings or personal opinions rather than the general view of the culture in question.

4.1 German Culture

4.1.1 Monochronic and Polychronic

According to both the results and theory Germans are Monochronic. Time is valuable for Germans and timetables should be followed very tightly. Being late is considered a grave offense and thus everyone should be ready for the appointments and deadlines well in advance. The interview results for this subject were unanimous. Time is also seen as a finite resources and thus unmet schedules are viewed as a waste of time.

Germany is often used as the example of a Monochronic culture as they are one of the most Monochronic cultures in the world. Differing opinions can be traced to foreign influences and are most commonly found among the younger generations as seen in the interview. However, the general opinion of the culture is still very much unchanged and very strongly Monochronic. (BLOGONLINGUISTICS, Chronemics: monochronic and polychronic cultures)

4.1.2 High- and Low- Context

German culture is considered low context both by the theory and the interview results. The interviewees all agreed that communication is mostly clear and precise. This is even more so in working life as the instructions should be given clearly in order for the employees to follow them clearly. However, Germans assume that with a certain level of education or expertise the person should bring their own knowledge to the conversation and thus if the person is assumed to have a good grasp on the subject most basic and common things are left out of the instructions. (Leadership Communication, Barrett Deborah, 194-199)

German culture also has very little in the way of reading between the lines and the general communication is quite straight forward and efficient.

4.1.3 Space in Culture

According to the German interviewees personal space is relatively important for Germans. The communication with strangers is formal and distant. Warm welcomes are saved for close family and friends. People respect others personal space and expect others to respect theirs. They do not want to discuss private matters with strangers. The personal space required in working life is even larger and the lines should not be crossed. In working life communication will be very formal, but this is also due to the power distance.

4.1.4 Power Distance

Power distance in Germany according to Geert Hofstede's studies is quite low. However, the interview results tell that the power distance is quite high. The difference is most likely caused by the differences between the companies the interviewees have been working in. Hofstede's results are based on his interviews with IBM employees, while the authors results are from three different Germans from three different companies. The interviewees mentioned that in some companies the power distance is extremely low and the employees can openly disagree and discuss with their supervisors, while in others the completely opposite is true. They themselves answered that in general the hierarchy in Germany is strict. However, the authority is based on the knowledge and ideas of the superiors and not just their position, thus the high authority does not mean that Germany has a High-Power Distance. (Hofstede's website German culture)

As Hofstede's sample is much larger it is more reliable and less likely to be influenced by "individual cases", but the fact that it is done within just one company can also hinder the results. Since Power Distance is strongly also tied to company culture and can clearly be seen there working for IBM in Germany will have an influence on the results. The degree of the influence is not possible to measure without having a comparable study done in various German companies.

The interview results also agreed with Hofstede's results as the interviewees said that German employees have the power to influence their own work and bear the responsibility for their own actions. Their answers reflect that the employees are respected within the German work environment and have opportunities to advance their own position. These results are similar to Hofstede's results. However, the interviewees again pointed out that this varies from one company to another, but their answers were based on the general situation within German culture.

As a conclusion, German culture has a relatively strict and clear hierarchy where the individual employees respect their superiors. However, in turn the employees are respected and have power within the hierarchy. The interview results from the German interviews, as a whole are in line with Hofstede's findings.

4.1.5 Uncertainty Avoidance

Both the interview results and Hofstede's results tell that Germans have high uncertainty avoidance. Germans are concerned with the future and they feel anxiety about uncertainty. They worry about the possible bad things that might happen in the future and try to prepare for them in advance. They rather prepare in advance for possible problems than wait for them to happen and then react to them. They prefer to make accurate and extensive plans in order to minimize risks and thus prepare for unexpected and undesirable situations. (Hofstede's website German culture)

4.1.6 Individualism and Collectivism

Germans are more individualistic according to both the interview and Hofstede. The families standing within a society does not strongly determine a Germans personal social standing within a society. Germans value personal achievements over inherited “glory” or wealth. People who have not achieved anything by themselves and live through the success of their family get little respect and are seen as lazy and stupid. Germans prefer to make their own personal loyalties instead of sticking to ideas of their parents. Individual with strong reasonable personal opinions and achievements are well respected by Germans. (Hofstede’s website German culture)

4.1.7 Masculinity and Femininity

German culture is considered masculine by both the interviewees and Hofstede. Germans value personal achievement and wealth. Wealth translates to hard work for Germans and this is well respected. If the portrayed wealth is known to come from the family without much or any personal work this is not respected. This is especially evident among younger people as they have had less time to earn money and if one seems to be wealthy others want to know that did they earn this wealth by themselves or were they just gifted everything. Germans are very achievement driven and that is the best way to earn the respect of Germans.

4.1.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

Germans are very long-term oriented. This is shown both in the interview results and Hofstede’s own results. The importance of saving money for the future is clear. People who save money do so in order to prepare for the a possibly rough future and financially gain from it by investing the money on something that will yield profit over time. Germans view others who do not save money as irresponsible without goals, vision or a future. People who save money are considered hard working valuable members of society who can and will take care of their family in the future.

4.2 Polish Culture

4.2.1 Monochronic and Polychronic

According to external sources Polish people are rather Polychronic, but the results from the interviewees Poles are more Monochronic. The differences might be due to the differences in perception. All the interviewed Polish people were working in Finnish companies and as such their opinion and experiences concerning this subject might have been influenced. They said that schedules are strict or extremely strict, but this contradicts with the other sources. According to one of the sources the younger Polish business

people are more aware of the importance of schedules, but they are embarrassed to admit that sometimes people have to wait for others. This is largely due to multiple tasks overlapping and the constant change in the timetables. According to Krzysztof Wach Polish people are not strict about time, but this does not mean that they are necessarily unpunctual. This leads the author to believe that Polish people are not as strict about schedules as for example Germans, but they strive to reach them and are embarrassed if they do not manage to meet the deadlines. The strong conviction about the importance of schedules by the interviewees might be due to not wanting to say anything bad about their culture. Wach also later specifies in his presentation that Polish people are more Polychronic while he categorizes Germans as Monochronic. (Cross Cultural Business Behaviour, Richard R. Gesteland, 263-267) (Wach Krzysztof, presentation) (Bridgman Timothy J., Poland's Hidden Multiculturalism)

The varying results are unfortunate as the data is more difficult to interpret, but based on the external source material and the answers, the author would categorize Polish culture as more Polychronic than Monochronic. The difference is most likely caused by personal preferences and perception rather than an objective view of the culture in general. However, this is useful information as it tells that Polish people respect schedules, but perhaps are more lenient in following them.

4.2.2 High- and Low- Context

All the Polish interviewees agreed that Polish culture is quite low context and the theory mostly agrees with this. Poles are listed as mostly low context by Krzysztof Wach, but they remain above Finns according to him. The interviewees said that communication is clear and informative. One interviewee further explained that men communicate in a very low context way while women communicate in a higher context fashion. The interviewee said that women often use indirect messages and you should try to read between the lines a bit more when communicating with them. (Cross Cultural Business Behaviour, Richard R. Gesteland, 263-267) (Wach Krzysztof, presentation) (Bridgman Timothy J., Poland's Hidden Multiculturalism)

4.2.3 Space in Culture

According to the Polish interviewees Polish people are not very concerned with personal space. Personal space is respected and expected, but to a lesser extent than for example in Finland. Silences are avoided and thus small talk is very common. Polish people can discuss even quite personal matters relatively openly with strangers. This does not mean that they tell everything about their lives to anyone they meet, but less important yet still personal subjects can be freely shared. Polish greetings among friends are warm and hugs can be given if friends are close enough. Personal space is emphasized in working life, but still greetings and communication is warmer than in Finland. (Cross Cultural Business Behaviour, Richard R. Gesteland, 263-267)

4.2.4 Power Distance

Power distance in Poland according to the interview results and Geert Hofstede's studies is quite high. Employees must respect their superiors and cannot openly discuss and disagree with them. Their authority is high and if there is something an employee wishes to correct or share with the superior it must be done privately. Polish people strongly believe in hierarchy and the employees expect clear instructions on what to do and how to do it. The hierarchy does not need to be further justified or explained, but when it is in place it must be followed. The individual employees do not have very much power to decide what goes on within the workplace or what they themselves should do, but they respect it if the manager listens to their opinions and takes them in to consideration when making the decisions. (Hofstede Geert, Website Polish culture)

Polish employees do not want to take responsibility as the decision-making power is mostly out of their hands. They want to have clear contracts in order to protect themselves for being blamed for something that is not their responsibility. The superiors like to take credit from success. However, it is not uncommon for the higher-ups to find an employee to pin the blame on if something goes wrong.

4.2.5 Uncertainty Avoidance

All the interviewees agree with Hofstede that Poland has high uncertainty avoidance. Polish people tend to be concerned about the future and feel great anxiety about uncertainty. They try to prepare for the worst and often expect it. This is further shown by their desire to get written contracts and have rules. The subject is close to the carefully written rules and documents at their work. This way they try to avoid bad things if something unexpected and negative happens. This might also mean that until proven to work new ideas or methods might be seen as too risky and thus resisted. (Hofstede Geert, Website Polish culture)

4.2.6 Individualism and Collectivism

The interviewees agreed that Poland is a more collectivistic society while Hofstede's studies regard it as individualistic. The Polish interviewees regarded the importance of one's family background as extremely important to their social standing within the society. This answer was unanimous and all regarded it as especially important. They also said that it is common for parents to share the wealth with their children. Hofstede mentions a contradiction with the high individualism relating to the hierarchy. He explains that it is important for managers to show everyone that they are important within the hierarchy despite their placement within it. The importance of family background can be related to the importance of hierarchy as it is used as the most common way to determine a person's social standing within the society and its hierarchy. (Hofstede Geert, Website Polish culture)

4.2.7 Masculinity and Femininity

All the Polish interviewees, except one, completely agreed that a superior can and should display their power. This is in align with Hofstede's results as Polish culture is categorized as being masculine. Showing off your wealth gains the superiors respect and is expected of them. They are also expected to be correct and showing uncertainty or weakness is not respected. Polish people can be competitive and this drives them to achieve results. When successful it is common to show the success off as this gains respect amongst others. (Hofstede Geert, Website Polish culture)

4.2.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

The results of interviews contradict with Hofstede's results. The Polish interviewees agreed that saving money for the future is important. However, some mentioned that it is not easy as the average wages are quite low compared to the living costs. Hofstede describes the Poles to not commonly save much for the future and that they prefer quick results. This does not correlate with the interview results, but the description of valuing traditions does. Polish people respect their heritage very much and are proud of it. The difference between Hofstede's result and the interview result might be due to the interview sample being too homogenous as all the interviewees worked for Finnish companies. However, they did not work for the same company and to the authors knowledge did not know each other. (Hofstede Geert, Website Polish culture)

4.3 Swedish Culture

4.3.1 Monochronic and Polychronic

The Swedish interviewees mostly agreed on that Swedish people are Monochronic. They value schedules and appointments should be made on time. One of the interviewees mentioned that they personally are more flexible in their schedules. This goes in line with the general view of the Swedish culture. They have clear schedules with start and end times. The schedules should be followed and they are especially strict in professional life. In personal life, they are less strict and Swedes are more forgiving regarding to personal appointments. Some of the interviewees mentioned that Swedes are optimistic about time and often rush from one appointment to another hoping to make all of them just in time. (BLOGONLINGUISTICS, Chronemics: monochronic and polychronic cultures)

4.3.2 High- and Low- Context

The Swedish interviewees were a bit divided regarding how high- or low-context their communication is, but on average they replied that their communication is quite straightforward. This is the same result as the general

view of the Swedish communication style. Swedes tell their opinions relatively straight, but especially in personal life there can be some need to read some messages between the lines. In professional life, however Swedes are more direct and precise especially when dealing with foreigners. (BLOGONLINGUISTICS, High- and low-context cultures)

4.3.3 Space in Culture

The answers of the Swedish interviewees were again quite divided, but in general they answered that personal space is quite important. Swedes prefer to have a lot of physical personal space and not to engage in conversation with strangers on the street. When they do have conversations they use a lot of small talk and for some more common personal subjects are perfectly acceptable. (Wilde Amy, Swedish Etiquette on Personal Space)

When meeting people for the first time it is advisable to shake hands with all of them, but after getting to know the others and becoming friend's hugs can be used to greet them. There is little difference between genders except that if the acquaintances are different genders it is advisable to be closer before hugging than same gender acquaintances.

4.3.4 Power Distance

All the interviewees and Hofstede's studies agree that Swedish culture has low power distance. The Swedish interviewees very strongly agreed on this regarding all aspects. The Swedish hierarchy structure is very flat and employee's opinions are not only respected, but also valued. Swedes place a lot of emphasis on initiative and the ability to work alone. They do not like bossy management style and prefer to get goals and assistance when necessary rather than be given specific instructions on work phases. Responsibility is also divided well throughout the hierarchy with the power, but more salary also translates to more responsibility. However, responsibility is taken and can be traced back to individuals rather than just finding someone to blame. (Hofstede Geert, Website Swedish culture)

4.3.5 Uncertainty Avoidance

In general, the Swedish interviewees categorized Sweden to have low uncertainty avoidance just like Hofstede's. The interviewees specified that as long as everything is fine now they do not stress or worry about the future. However, they were not completely carefree and somewhat worried about the future. They also further specified that Swedish people prefer to do the best with any given situation rather than worry about what bad might happen next. (Hofstede Geert, Website Swedish culture)

4.3.6 Individualism and Collectivism

All the interviewees agreed with Hofstede's results that Swedish culture is very individualistic. They said that only personal merits and achievements matter and that others should not be judged by their parents. They said that it might even be rude to try to pry about someone's parents and their social standings. They said that family can be brought up in small talk and the close family is more important in Swedish society than your last name and lineage. (Hofstede Geert, Website Swedish culture)

4.3.7 Masculinity and Femininity

All the interviewees agreed with Hofstede's results that Swedish culture is very feminine. They said that showing off one's success and wealth would lead to others losing respect for the person and think of them as a fool. In Swedish culture conflicts, should also be resolved with discussions leading to mutual understanding or a compromise instead of trying to outlast the opponent in a long argument. Swedish people are more concerned by the current actions, values and ideas of a person rather than their wealth and past achievements. They are not very achievement driven and prefer to seek a life of fulfilment by enjoyment rather than outperforming others. In general, Swedish people are not very competitive. (Hofstede Geert, Website Swedish culture)

4.3.8 Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

All the Swedish interviewees agreed that saving is very essential, but Hofstede's results show that Swedish culture is very much in between the two orientations. The results are possible due to Swedish people being strict with their own money they can be more short-term oriented in other areas. Swedes mostly save money for houses, cars and other large investments or for retirement days due to poor pensions. Swedish culture leans a bit more towards long term oriented rather than short term oriented, but not enough to make any decisive conclusions. (Hofstede Geert, Website Swedish culture)

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

All the recommendations given are based on the average results of the conducted interviews and the related theory. This does by no means mean that they apply to every single person who you meet from a certain nationality. If a large study of a hundred people would be conducted and all hundred would completely agree the hundredth and first person you would meet might have completely different views and preferences. Culture is an important part of a person's identity and determines behaviour to a certain extent, but should never be taken as an absolute truth. Thus, one should first try to more carefully "test the waters" before following all recommendations to the letter. These recommendations should provide the reader with

the basic knowledge of how to best deal with people from these three nationalities.

5.1 German Recommendations

The main things to consider when dealing with Germans are punctuality and believably showing your expertise. Keeping these two things in mind will give the best impressions to the Germans you are dealing with. One important note about Germans is that there are large regional differences. If you are planning to go to a specific part of Germany it is advisable to find more information specifically about that part and its customs.

Greetings at first should be done by a firm, but not too hard handshake. Hugs are not recommended at all, except if the relationship grows to be extremely close or if the German seems to be exceptionally comfortable with physical contact. Kisses of any kind should be left to more intimate relationships, even though younger female Germans might accept a cheek kiss from a foreign female.

Conversation can be brief and small talk is not necessary, but it is acceptable if there is nothing else to talk about. Discussion about the subject should be done in a quite direct way, but if you are dealing with a person with similar or greater knowledge about the subject there is no need to go too much in to detail or dwell on the basics. Talking too much about the basics to a person with more knowledge will bore them and make them question your own knowledge. It is better to just briefly touch on some basic things to map out the person's general knowledge about the subject and then proceed to discuss the matter at hand if the person seems knowledgeable enough. When discussing the subject the discussion can be quite detailed

If you are running late for appointments you should always call ahead, but the German has most likely arrived well advance and thus has been already waiting for you before the agreed time. It is advisable to also arrive well before time. Approximately 30-15 minutes would be good depending on the situation. If the meeting is personal instead of work related, then the meeting times can be more flexible depending on the person and type of meeting you are going to. This is especially true when meeting younger Germans.

In a work environment Germans respect the authority and hierarchy. However, superiors should not try to base their authority on the hierarchy, but rather try to convince others by their own expertise and try to listen to their opinions. Superiors should not too directly try to manage the moves of each employee, but rather give them the goal and assist them in reaching it if necessary. Too hands on management will make the employee uncomfortable and think that the superior does not trust or value his own work. Responsibility for one's own actions should be taken and will be expected also from the employees.

Germans value solid plans and are not comfortable with uncertainty. Plans should be carefully laid out and they should have backup plans or countermeasures in case something goes wrong. Before making plans the risks and

possible successes should be carefully assessed in order to create as situationally aware plan as possible.

Germans are very individualistic people and one should not bring up the merits of one's family in conversation unless the Germans specifically bring the subject up. This can be seen as rude to ask and if a person tells about the success of their family they can be seen as stupid for boasting with the deeds of others while themselves being uncappable of achieving anything of value.

If you are in a superior position it is acceptable and encouraged to show off your personal success and achievements to a certain degree. This should inspire admiration and respect amongst the Germans and possibly encourage the employees to work harder to themselves reach the same. Germans are competitive and showing off your own success should trigger a sense of competition within them and possibly motivate them to work towards beating your achievements.

Germans are long term oriented and saving money is respected. From a company point of view this can be seen as not taking too big risks and having a stable income. Just trying to make quick, but risky profits with high chances of losses will be seen as reckless and stupid behaviour. As superiors are looked up to it is important for them also to spend money on worthwhile things which will either yield a return on their investment or keep its value just in case of some unforeseeable economic issues.

5.2 Polish Recommendations

The main things to remember with Polish people are warm welcomes and communication. Despite their individualistic tendencies Polish people greatly value personal relations and good connections.

When meeting a Pole for the first time it is advisable to greet them with a firm handshake. There should be no hugs or kisses except in close relationships. A kiss on the cheek is acceptable by two female friends. Men should not initiate a kiss on the cheek, but should do so if a woman initiates one. Conversations and small talk are essential. Silences should be avoided as they will make the Polish conversation partners uncomfortable. In private conversations, even some more personal subjects can be discussed, but it is not advisable to pry a previously unfamiliar person about their family life if they do not want to seem to discuss it. Good topics would instead be positive current events, weather, hobbies, sports and other rather light hearted and general topics. In professional life, the communication will be similar, but stricter. The warmer welcomes should be saved just for the closest colleges or business acquaintances.

Despite being Polychronic Poles value being on schedule. They always strive to be on schedule, but especially with personal meetings being a bit late is quite common and acceptable. In business meetings, however this is not appropriate and if someone will arrive late they should call about it and

inform in advance. It is advisable to arrive to business meetings 15 minutes early or on time.

One important note about communicating with Poles is the culture of giving and receiving gifts. Gifts are advisable to give to most friends or acquaintances who you have dealings with often. The gift giving culture also extends to working life and gifts to colleges, clients and business partners should be given. When dining with a group of Poles you should split the bill and it is better to pay a bit more than you ate for just so that you are not underpaying. When dining with customers the host always pays. When having meetings snacks and drinks should always be available. This will show the people present that the company values them.

Polish people respect hierarchy and thus they have a high-power distance. Employees should not openly disagree with superiors and should bring up differences only in private. The superiors should give clear instructions and monitor that they are followed. If proper instructions are not given or they are not monitored the employees might feel like the superior is not interested in the task or that they are trying to slack. The power is divided to the top of the hierarchy and employees should not deviate too much from the given instructions. This will cause the superior to think that the employee is trying to undermine their authority and does not respect them. This will most likely lead to problems with the supervisor in the future. Responsibility is also divided closer to the top of the hierarchy. As the superiors give precise orders and supervise that they are followed closely the responsibility mostly falls on their shoulders. However, they prefer to take credit to themselves whenever possible and if there are problems find a worker to pin the problems on. This is one reason why Polish employees value specific contracts and rules in their working life. These rules and contracts should help to protect them from any superior trying to pin a problem on their shoulders. Polish people worry a lot about the future. This also reflects in their desire for specific rules and agreements. They are placed in order to protect from the worst-case scenario. Rules and agreements also reduce anxiety as they are written proof of how to deal in certain unpredictable situations. Poles will feel anxiety towards an unknown future and try to prepare for the future as well as possible. They prefer to stick to old and tired methods instead of trying to constantly find new ways of doing things. If you have a new concept you should explain it clearly and try to assure the people that it is safe and the risks are minimal.

Polish people are individualistic people with a collectivistic twist. They value family background greatly. The achievements and social status of one's parents are always asked when getting to know a new person. This allows the Poles to determine the social standing and worth of their new acquaintance and place them within the hierarchy. Poles are also very people oriented and personal relations and contacts are important for them. Giving gifts is also a way to make these contacts feel more important. The employ-employer relations are based on mutual benefit rather than a personal relationship.

Polish culture is very masculine and Poles appreciate competition and results. Polish superiors like to show off their wealth and achievements. This gives them respect amongst the employees and motivates them to work harder towards reaching similar goals. Polish leaders are also expected to be correct and thus you should not openly disagree with them. They do not easily back down as this would be a risk towards their authority and credibility. Poles strive towards achievements, because they are competitive.

Polish people are short-term oriented, but they tend to save money for future investments. They strive towards reaching results quickly. They also respect traditions and they are proud of their heritage. It is advisable to get to know Polish culture a bit before going to Poland in order to use it as a topic for small talk. Asking questions about Polish heroes or their medieval history will provide a lot of opportunities for more small talk and will gain you respect with your Polish conversation partners.

5.3 Swedish Recommendations

Swedish culture is feminine and has low power distance. It is important to strive towards equality and neutrality when discussing with Swedes. One should not try to out boast their conversation partners. Swedes are strong believers in democracy and equality. These things should always be taken in to consideration when discussing with a Swede. You should not go against these principles as it is seen as rude and offensive.

Swedish people are mostly Monochronic and value set schedules. In personal meetings being a bit late is often acceptable, but in work related meetings it is completely unacceptable. It is advisable to arrive approximately 15-5 minutes early.

When meeting a Swede for the first time it is advisable to start the greetings with a simple handshake. The handshake should not be very loose or too strong as too strong handshake will be interpreted as dominant behaviour while a too loose one will be seen as uninterested behaviour. When the relationship becomes, warmer hugs can be acceptable between both genders, but Swedes advice to try to read this from the body language of the Swede you want to hug before attempting the hug itself. Some Swedes are very open and bubbly while others value more personal space. The Swede themselves will usually hug you first if they feel comfortable enough so it is advisable to wait for their initiative. Personal space is mostly important for Swedes, but conversation topics can vary from personal life to more general subjects. This again varies from one extreme to the other while some Swedes are open others prefer to keep their private lives private. Again, it is advisable to listen to the subjects the Swede is comfortable talking about, before trying to pry them about their personal lives. Asking too private questions too early will be seen as rude and intrusive behaviour. Swedish people are quite straightforward and will let you know if you have crossed the line or offended them. In professional life when discussing with foreigners Swedes will be direct and clear. However, there may be some need for reading certain messages a bit between the lines in personal life.

Sweden has low power distance and high femininity and this is reflected throughout the culture. Swedes do not like to be told what to do and how to do it, but they prefer to be told the goal and let them achieve in the way they see best. A less intrusive management style works best with the Swedes. More information about the task can be given, but it should be done in the form of guiding or teaching rather than just as new orders. Swedes also have a low hierarchy and value equality greatly. Superiors should not try to boost their ego or status and always must at least take the employees opinions and suggestions in to account. It would be better to have open conversations or meetings with employees where they could share their opinions and these could be implemented or further discussed. Even if the suggestions would be bad they should not be flat-out rejected, but they should be developed and try to turn them in to better ones, or then try to reason with the person and try to find out what benefit they find in their suggestion. This way the management style most suitable for Swedes is a political one where the leaders just have the job of managing things, but power and responsibility is divided quite equally throughout the hierarchy.

Swedes prefer to not worry about the future too much and enjoy the moment. They believe that as long as everything is fine there is no need to worry and that they will try to do the best in any situation when it comes. This is also reflected so that Swedes do not greatly crave for rules and regulations. They are also quicker to adapt to changes and new innovations as they do not worry about possible consequences too much. If the innovation seems useful enough now they expect that the benefit should outweigh possible negatives it might have in the future.

As Swedish culture is very feminine showing off one's power and wealth is frowned upon. Swedes will see this kind of behaviour as petty and stupid and will lose respect towards the person. Leaders should lead by example rather than trying to increase authority by boosting their own standing. Achievements are valued, but not expected or required. It is more respectable to try to fit in with people rather than try to set oneself above others. Trying to elevate oneself above others will be received negatively by all others. Conflicts should also be resolved democratically by finding a common solution or compromise after hearing out both parties. Even if it takes long time to come to a mutually acceptable solution Swedes deem it necessary and will prefer this over a hasty solution where one or both parties are dissatisfied. This can also be seen in working life where people should take the concerns of others well in to consideration. This also often translates to longer meeting times as every person must be heard and their suggestions taken in to account.

6 CONCLUSION

This study was devised in order to find out possible cultural differences and characteristics between German, Polish and Swedish cultures that might influence Comatec Oy's market entry to these countries. The author conducted research in to each nations culture in order to find out possible noteworthy differences. The author chose a qualitative study method as it will

provide the best results with cultural questions. Cultural issues leave a lot up for interpretation, but the author tried to minimize this by directing and making it clear during the interviews that the questions regard their national thoughts not individual ones. Qualitative study also allows for the chance to present follow-up questions in order to get as much useful data as possible. Some of the interviewees were more talkative and informative than others thus the author pressed this advantage and asked them a lot more specific questions and follow-up questions.

The theory section touches on the very basics of culture and how it influences our everyday life. This aims to demonstrate that even though culture is often difficult to comprehend or visualize it still has a very profound impact on our everyday life. Cultural dimension theories from Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede were used by the author as they are some of the worlds most renowned cultural experts. Their cultural studies served as the basis for this study and were later incorporated to the practical part. The study explains the basics of their cultural studies and introduces the reader to their most important cultural dimensions.

The study included interviews with three representatives from the three different nationalities. These interviews were conducted in order to find qualitative information about the subject cultures and to verify or disprove the validity of the cultural theories in practice. The three interviewees were presented with 12 standard questions in addition to a number of more specific additional questions. Some interviewees were asked more questions than others, if they brought up new subjects or if their answers were inconclusive or incomprehensible. The sample size of the interviewees could have been larger, but due to time constraints and the difficulty of getting all the interviewees to answer and to analyse these results the sample size was left at three per culture. The results listed in the study are direct results from the interviewees and are analysed in the current situation section. All the answers are not written down word to word, but their content has all been included in the study. Only one interviewee agreed to have their name published in the study, but due to this none of the names will be published. The author sees no value in writing down just a single person to represent the interviewees.

The author compared the interview results with country specific theory in the analysis section. The section points out possible differences or various interpretations in order to clear out misconceptions. The analysis section best combines the theoretical knowledge with the practical knowledge. The information gathered through the interviews is simplified in this section in order to make the comparisons more comprehensible. The more detailed analysis of the interview results were presented in the current situation section.

The recommendations section puts together all the theory and practical information gathered and turns this information to practical suggestions. The goal of this section is to provide comprehensive and accurate information on how to behave with people from the nationality in question and what kind of behaviour to expect from them. The information in this section is

general and cannot be applied by the letter to every single person of the nationality in question, but it provides a broad general overview how people from this culture generally behave and expect others to behave. Following these guidelines and keeping a watchful eye to your surroundings the reader will be able to communicate with representatives from the culture well and will most likely not be shocked by some things they do. The point of avoiding culture shock also applies to the culture as a foreigner might act in a way which is completely inappropriate in the local culture just, because of their ignorance. The more people know about a culture the less shocked they will be about cultural differences and the easier they will accept the differences. The section does not introduce any new information, but rephrases previously given information or clarifies it in order to be of more practical use.

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