

# The Fit of National and Organisational Cultures in International Scientific Literature

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*Abstract: Culture is a „frame-concept” that the different disciplines filled with various meanings. Therefore, a generally accepted definition is still to be created. In this age of globalization, owing to the very nature of the cross-cultural economies, certain elements and dimensions of organizational culture (eg. scale of values, priorities, knowledge-transfer, emotional factors, identity, etc.) appear with steady features across borders, creating a kind of global(ised) culture. At the same time, special factors promoting change receive more and more emphasis too, accentuating the importance of locally embedded decisions. Factors of both kinds can contribute to, and enhance organizational functioning by conveying comparative and competitive advantages to participants of economic life.*

*Keywords: complexity of culture and economy, national social and organisational culture models and researches*

## 1 Introduction

Accurately defining/ the role of culture in the modern economic and organisational context is difficult not only because of the framework character of the concept, but also due to the limited validity of the causal relationships that originate from the complexity of the global economic systems.

The term “culture” may be traced back to the Latin verb „colere” (cultivate). Cicero (B.C. 106-43) used the term for the first time metaphorically, when he extended its meaning to cover the „cultivation of the spirit”. („Cultura animi philosophia est.” in English: Philosophy is the cultivation of spirit. Tusculanae Disputationes, B.C. 45) The metaphoric basis of extending the meaning is the fact that the transformation of things provided by nature through the intervention of men appears in the content of the term and with this a gradual edging away may be observed from the basic interpretation.

In the Medieval Age the meaning of “culture” was limited beyond the agricultural aspects to the area of religion. The original positive connotation became neutral,

or in the religious sense it may be good or bad, depending on what its subject is: whether it is God, or some kind of pagan godship, demon, etc. In the late Medieval Age the term „cultus vitae” already indicated the characteristic lifestyle, social order that was distinctive of an ethnic group. (Wessely, 1998)

Among others the humanist concept of the renaissance age may be considered as the turning point of the changes in the secondary meanings. Extensions of the meaning that overbridge the ages were born.: The individual culture appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a meaning that refers to civilised men. The concept of the collective culture appeared in Germany of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to which the culture of the group is not the sum of the individual cultures of its members, but the group partially possesses its culture in a collective manner.

In this very same age the concept of the manifestation of culture appeared and it gradually covered the cultural products, the results of the activity of civilised men (printing, development of sciences, education, etc.). It is a prerequisite of manifestation that the accumulated creations have to appear as a system that is independent from the system, the elements of which have a complex relationship with each other. Thus the history of culture up to a significant extent is the history of these creations and relationships.

The different narratives, backgrounds, ideologies, historic events, new economic and cultural paradigms continue to further enrich the terms with different features even today (Aristoteles, B.C. 384-322). However, it is important to note that in the area of organisation sciences the scope of meanings of the term “culture” does not include a judgement of value any more.

The purpose of present study is to introduce, on the basis of the international literature, the culture typologies and the related researches in the context of national and organisational cultures. The culture in our days, in regard to its emphasis shifts may be an impact factor that has a different prominence than before. The recognition of the supporting or retreating role of the national and organisational context, along with its analysis may be a fate deciding step in developing the processes that facilitate the operation of the companies. The distinguished implication of the examination, measurement methods that can be traced back to various culture models may provide assistance in supporting the different management areas that are connected to culture, in raising the efficiency of the organisations.

In this study I introduce national and organisational models, starting out from general cultural researches and typologies, which focus especially on the following key terms: human factor, value priorities and explicit-implicit dimensions. I also examine some methodological means in connection with the theories introduced.

## 2 Development of the dimensions of culture

The power of culture exerted on the formation of organisations is connected to the recognition of the significance of the human factor as being the primary value carrier. The scientific research activities of the past decades have proven that the human factor and the issue of the priorities of the value are inseparable from each other.

The focus points are the following on the basis of the table:

- Historicity, chronology
- Human factor, value priorities
- Research methods and means

Accordingly the systematic grouping of the different culture researches, typologies, theories is practically an impossible task. On one hand because the authors apply a confusing diversity of approaches, there is no single method for examining culture, and on the other hand the exploration and analysis of the different dimensions and factors display conceptual and chronological overlaps along with the intertwining of the specific dimensions and the societal and organisational approaches.

In the researches of the founders of the general cultural theories, e.g. Brinkerhoff, White, Schreyögg, Goldman, Bassis, Gelles, Levine, Hofstede, Trompenaars, Rosengreen, the following cultural elements appear in a summarised way: beliefs, values, norms, symbols, rituals, technique, language, heroes, art, literature, politics, economy, human and natural sciences, thinking patterns, basic assumptions. (Rudnák, 2010)

Most of the models had been established as the description, which contains the most important and relevant facts of the given context by being validated through empirical means.

The main purpose of the culture models is to collect the specific elements, based on which the examined cultures may be compared.

There are several organisational typologies that originate from the context of the societal level of culture researches. Starting with the 80's culture research activities started to focus on the problem scope, impact mechanisms of the way the organisational culture is embedded into the national culture. One of the most well-known grouping of the literature dealing with this issue (integration, differentiation, and fragmentation) is attached to the names of Martin and Meyerson (1987).

### **3 Models of national culture**

The connection of the levels of the different cultures are probably shown most spectacularly by those culture theories, which emphasise that the layers of the cultures are built upon each other and the connections of the subset. The organisational culture's macro culture among others is the national culture of the country, where the entity operates.

#### **3.1 The box model of Scheuss (1985):**

From inside towards the outside it shows the following layers:

- Individual culture: the cultural standards of the individual
- Enterprise culture: the cultural standards of a company
- Sector culture: cultural standard of a professional community
- Societal culture: cultural standards of an entire society

In regard to its attitude similar models had been developed by Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders, with the difference that in addition to the subsystems there is also a space of movement, which reflect the other properties, elements that are characteristic of the given organisation. E.g, the historicity of the company, the defining personalities, founders, etc.

#### **3.2 Kluckhohn's approach to national cultures**

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) examined five communities that were living in the 50ies in the South-West part of the United States. Based on their results they defined 6 main aspects:

1. The basic nature of human
2. The relationship of humans towards nature,
3. The relationship of humans towards other people
4. Human existence, relationship towards work
5. The time horizon of human activities
6. The perception of space by humans

From among the results of the initial basic researches the effects of Kluckhohn (1905-1960) may be traced in the theories of several subsequent researchers, among others in the theory of Schreyögg (1992) as well. The cultural dimensions originating from the scientific area of anthropology have been further extended, e.g. in the theory of Hofstede, or they had been integrated into the scientific theories of Schein as well.

### 3.3 Introduction of Hofstede's model

Hofstede's onion model that symbolises culture consist of four layers (1994), which according to the concept are less explicit from the outside towards the inside from layer to layer , while layer the most inner part is implicit:

- I. The physical or manifested products of culture: literature, music, fine arts, architectural creations+foods, dressing, etc. are external, well visible layers, these are called symbols (Culture 1)
- II. Real or imaginary heroes, who have properties that are highly appreciated in the given culture, who represent exemplary behavioural models that reflect the value order of the given culture (Culture 2)
- III. Rites, collective activities, behavioural forms, which are important from the aspect of the society. These may be also directly perceived (Culture 3)
- IV. The essence of the culture, its most interior layer is represented by values, the general tendencies concerning what we consider as good and what we consider to be bad, they cannot be directly perceived, sometimes not even for the carriers of the culture. This means that it is a group specific value system, the collection of learnt forms of behaviour (Culture 4)

One of the basic concepts of his theory is that culture is the influence of the community on the individuals' thinking and acting, it is a so-called „mental programming”, which means that the collective consciousness of people living in different culture groups is created through the mental programming of the cultures (e.g. national cultural level). The ideal and the accepted values define socialisation, behaviour, the attitudes, learning and the personality features.

Hofstede was looking for a scientific method that will allow expressing those features in “number”, which explain the differences between the cultures. In his work „The consequences of culture” he provides the summary of a statistical analyses of questionnaire based researches and personal experiences. The four dimensions developed on the basis of the examinations makes the comparative research and analysis of the national cultures possible.

The original theory analysed the cultural values along four dimensions:

1. Individualism, collectivism, IDV:
2. Avoiding uncertainty, UAI:
3. Power distance (societal hierarchy) index, PDI:
4. Masculinity-feminity (task orientation vs person orientation), MAS:

These offer a typology for organisational cultures based on two aspects: who will bring the decision and as regards what in the course of organisation and what rules

have to be followed for achieving the targets set; where the distance of power (DP) (small/large) and the avoidance of uncertainty (AU) (weak/strong) form the two axes.

- (village) market (DP - small, AU - weak: they rather work next to each other, autonomy)
- family (DP - great, AU - weak: personality oriented, slightly bureaucratic)
- pyramid (DP - great, AU - strong: complete bureaucracy, position equals power, hierarchy)
- well-oiled machinery (DP small, AU - strong: operates in a process oriented, calculable, stable environment)

Later on the range of dimensions was extended with two other factors:

5. Long term orientation, LTO: (Hofstede-Bond, 1988)

6. Fondling vs restricting, „self-control index” IVR:

According to Hofstede the roots of the organisation cultures are deep, they are in the societal value order of the national cultures. The more unified a culture is within a given national community, the more probable it is that its values are reflected in the organisational culture as well.

The cultural dimensions theory of the Geert Hofstede is widely used even today in the researches of paradigms, inter-cultural philosophy, national economy, communication between the cultures, national values of international marketing business and in the consulting industry. His theory is the basis and inspiring element of the World Values Survey.

### **3.4 Trompenaars' culture theory**

A similar analogy may be found in the works of Trompenaars (1953-...). He (by profession a corporate consultant) developed his theoretic researches and culture model for the simplification of the life of companies that operate in an international environment. He started out from his belief that we are unable to understand different cultures. He made efforts to determine a method, the purpose of which is to map and describe the cultures – primarily from the aspect of the business world – in order to provide practical guidance, for the leaders and managers for their work done in an international environment. During his researches he set up an own inquiry system, in which each dimension is directly connected to business practice.

The theory of Trompenaars, introducing the layers of the culture (1995) started out from the theory of Schein (1985), and as regards separating the explicit and implicit forms of manifestations of culture it is similar to the onion model of Hofstede.

The 3 culture layers of Trompenaars from the outside towards the inside:

- symbols of the objective, deeper layers, (explicit level)
- norms, values (that may be both explicit and implicit)
- axioms, assumptions, efficient cohabitation with the environment, (automatic, unconscious, only implicit)

He based his analysis on a sample consisting of 15 000 individuals, 75 % of which were managers and 25 % of which were employees, who implemented administrative tasks. In the course of compiling the sample he contacted in more than 50 countries companies of different sizes and different profiles in different sectors. His research method was qualitative: in his questionnaires after describing a brief case, the question asked had to be answered, based on the own opinion of the person asked.

As a result of his researches he defined the dissimilarities of national cultures along seven dimensions, from among which some contains the previously introduced aspects of the initial anthropological researches:

- *Universalism-particularism*: According to the universalist concept the rights and obligations refer to everybody, everywhere and in all the situations, while according to the particularist concept the application of the rights and obligations depends on the human relations, relationships
- *Collectivism-individualism*: examination of the decision and of the target setting, in the individualist culture the individual interests enjoy priority and after defining these the parties may reach an agreement through negotiation and by looking for a compromise. In collectivism the interest and welfare of the group or community is superior compared to those of the individual, therefore they enjoy priority even at the expense of the individual interests
- *Neutral-emotional*: Based on this dimension it is possible to separate those culture, in which the open expression of the emotions is accepted, thus the members of the community may establish deep and honest relations with each other even in the short term, or it is the characteristic of the „poker face” societies that they are cold and refraining in their inter-personal relations (part of the masculine-feminine dimension)
- *Specific-diffuse*: There are cultures where the boss-subordinate relationship is above all and it defines the interactions of the individuals and there are others, where outside the workplace the boss and his subordinate, as individuals have relationships with each other of completely equal rank (e.g. situation in the questionnaire: do you think it is acceptable that in the football team of the city your subordinate should be the captain of the team?)

- Status: In the given society the basis of power, of gaining recognition is represented by the achieved results, successes or age, gender, possibly societal class

-Time: Trompenaars employed the concept of sequential and synchronous time, which refers to the rate of work implementation. In sequential time concept based cultures the individual implement the different tasks one after the other, in the order that is defined to them. Characteristically they pay attention to the defined schedule and they do not like if it is disrupted by unexpected events. In the synchronous cultures there is no schedule prepared in advance, the workers deal simultaneously with several tasks and they flexibly adapt themselves to the unexpectedly occurring problems.

- Nature: This dimension examines the general world view of a culture, what is the opinion of the members of the culture about their own lives, fates, with such assumptions as e.g. „it depends only on me what will happen with me”. The cultures, where they place the emphasis on peaceful coexistence with the nature, where people consider even themselves to be a part of the nature are labelled external oriented. In these cultures establishing the internal balance, ensuring external stability and ensuring general harmony with the nature receive a great emphasis. Those cultures are internal oriented, where the people consider themselves to be superior compared to the nature, their environment, and they try to limit, direct the nature. The members of the society consider that their own fate is in their own hands and they want to prove this.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1934- ) the Brit management philosopher created their organisational models along task and personality oriented dimensions (1993). The basic focus was the way the workers see the mission, the objectives of the organisation and their own roles within it.

- The model also presents four organisational culture types in a co-ordinate system. The positive direction of the vertical axis is the 'striving to equalness', while its negative direction shows the extent of 'hierarchical order'. The positive direction of the horizontal plane represents the categories of the 'task', while its negative direction represents the categories of the 'person'. The metaphoric names of the areas defined are the following: *Family culture*: Personal relations are central, power oriented (See e.g. the power culture of Handy) small family enterprises e.g. in Belgium, Spain, Japan, India
- *Incubator culture*: It considers the performance of the individual to be more important than that of the organisation, professional knowledge is central, even on the side of the leader, the employees get their status based on their knowledge, an innovation oriented culture, fast reaction to the changes of the environment, its characteristic features are risk



undertaking, competitive spirit, entrepreneurial attitude, the importance of informal relations, team work, efficient problem solving, it is performance oriented, it is not hierarchic, the organisation provides a framework for self-realisation, e.g. Sweden, USA Silicon Valley

- *Directed rocket*: project oriented, task focused, impersonal, specialists, teams, temporary organisations, parallel work implementation simultaneously even in several projects, problem focused, practical individualist, colleagues that are not loyal to the organisation, but they are loyal to the project
- *Eiffel-tower culture*: Hierarchy is important, however the decisive role is not attached to the person, but to the position, role culture (See e.g. Handy) e.g. Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands

## 4 Models of organisational culture

While starting with the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the primary values of developing modernisation brought about by industrialisation were growth, accumulation, making efforts to perform, the newest post modern age is characterised by placing in the foreground the so-called post-material values. In other words at the higher level of societal, economic development the focus among others have shifted towards values that point beyond themselves (value-rationality), the up-valuing of the quality of life, its higher level appreciation and a higher degree of social trust.

The changing, shifting of the mentioned value priorities are mapped by the organisational structure and in the culture and it appears with new interpretations in the philosophy of the organisations. The phenomena among others may be associated with the reinterpretation of the social framework of social responsibility undertaking and “money as the motivator” (Mérő, 2007).

### 4.1 The model of Deal and Kennedy

The model of Deal and Kennedy (1982) is one of the initial descriptive organisation typologies, therefore it does not belong to the group of theories that follow the grouping introduced before. As regards its structure, and its certain elements it is similar and it contains some elements of the subsequent typologies as well. The horizontal plane reflects the extent the organisation and the employees are ready to undertake risks (low, high), while the vertical plane shows the speed or slowness of reaction connected to their own work. The established four culture types are the following:

- *Bread and play* (fast reaction, low risk): Team work, keeping together
- *Process* (slow reaction, low risk): Hierarchic, safety is the primary issue, it reacts to external changes with difficulties
- *Risk undertaking* (slow reaction, high risk): e.g. research companies
- *Macho* (fast reaction, high risk): The basis of respect is success, power

## 4.2 The iceberg Model

Bleicher (1994) and Schein (1992, 1999) developed systems that are similar to the national culture models of Hofstede and Trompenaars, which had been introduced previously. The common focus of these theories is grouping according to the implicit - explicit aspect, which is the basic idea of the iceberg model of Goldman (1990) as well. The main difference lies in these theories' focus being the organisation itself.

The iceberg symbolises the entire (organisational) culture in such a manner that the 1/9th portion located above the water level represents the explicit contents, while the much bigger portion located under the water represents the implicit contents. In the most inner core of the iceberg, at the bottom, the widest area is the unconscious level of beliefs, hidden assumptions, thoughts and behavioural patterns. Going upwards the middle part, that is still under the water, is the level of values and norms. Those factors can be found here, which directly influence the attitudes, the human behaviour forms. These two interdependent areas built upon each other are "invisible": They contain the normative characteristics of the organisation. The smallest "iceberg" piece that appears on the surface is the area of the visible, directly perceivable characteristics of the culture. The aggregate of those observable elements of the organisational culture can be found here, which we are aware of, e.g. the ceremonies, rituals, lingos, language usage, dressing, traditions, etiquette, etc.)

Comparing the theories of Bleicher developed for organisational culture and of Schein developed for (national) culture it can be concluded that the elements that belong to the three levels are practically identical. The categories of the invisible, unconscious, self-evident, most inner levels of the culture reflect the anthropologist approach of Kluchohn in the organisational and societal context. The layer of the middle values and norms are characterised by both researchers as a partially conscious area (located between the explicit and implicit fields). The visible (explicit) level in the organisational culture theory of Bleicher is represented by the "artificial formations" existing with the company: e.g. production procedures, technology, knowledge of the art, human behaviour.

This very same level is in the concept of Schein the category of cultural (manifestations and creations", as regards the societal culture it includes: the technique, art, visible and audible behaviour patterns).

It is characteristic of the typologies that appeared in the 90ies that the assumption, beliefs, values that had been set up in the theories and which had been classified under dimensions are interpreted according to a different aspect system and relationships.

### 4.3 Quinn's classification of organisational cultures

The first model of Quinn (1999) concerns the kind of values the enterprises take into consideration in order to improve their efficiency. The horizontal planes of the matrix cover the "focusing inward, outward" aspect, while its vertical planes cover the „flexibility, strict control" aspect. The organisational culture types and their characteristics, presented by the co-ordinates:

- *Rule oriented*: Formalized operation, hierarchy, the primary value is stability
- *Supporting*: Mutual trust, teams keeping together, strong cohesion
- *Innovation oriented*: Fast reaction to the impacts of the external environment, flexibility, risk undertaking, creativity, growth oriented (See e.g. incubator, risk undertaking cultures)
- *Target oriented*: Rational planning, centralised, the primary values are profit and performance

The reconsidered second version of the model is attached to the name of Quinn and Cameron. (2006) The horizontal dimensions of the matrix represent "inward focusing" (that is internal focus or integration) and „outward focusing" (that is external focus or differentiation). The end points of the vertical co-ordinates are: „flexibility" (capable of adaptation, changing, multi-faceted) and „stability" (strict control, unchanging). The connected four organisational culture types are the following:

- *Hierarchy*: It is built on stable and controlled rules, instruction authority scopes, impersonality, accounting, the leader is the organiser and co-ordinator, rationalized, even operation, foreseeability, positions, standards, the practice of „laying everything on paper". Values: logics, obedience, order, formality, etc. e.g. large organisations, public sphere (e.g. Eiffel tower, pyramid)
- *Clan*: Supporting, consensus, mutual trust, common targets, co-operation, awareness of belonging together, loyalty, care, the importance of human resources, partner relationships even with the clients, the leaders are the mentors. Values: courteousness, reasonableness, moral integration
- *Adhocracy*: Information societies, their innovative organisations, fast reactions, entrepreneur spirit, creative ecologies, there is no hierarchy, it is not centralised, individualist, high level of risk undertaking, temporary work groups, task orientation, experimenting, the significance of new knowledge, freedom and encouraging experimenting, initiating by the

individuals. Values: charisma, autonomy, (See e.g. “incubator and directed rocket”)

- *Market*: Target oriented, rational, meeting the competitive challenges, profit oriented, ensuring the consumer base, the leaders are responsible for achieving productivity, efficiency. Values: competition, self-advocacy (See well-oiled machinery)

The organisational culture types of the different theories do not fully cover each other, only the partial elements may be compared. It is a significant criterion that there is no organisation that has exclusively the characteristics that are listed under the typologies. Usually the combination of several types occurs in the operations of the real organisations.

## Summary, conclusions

The culture typologies develop simultaneously and they reflect the characteristics of the changes that take place within the economy. E.g. the system oriented, holistic approaches and the descriptions of the knowledge based, innovative enterprises of the innovative age, and their elements do appear even in several models. E.g. adhocracy, incubator, clan, risk undertaking, family, etc.).

Even the cultures existing within the organisations cannot be considered to be homogenous, but it is divided into further subcultures, which e.g. are connected to teams, divisions, work processes or projects. These may be named under a collective name as subcultures. (Opresnik, 1999) The members of the subcultures share same values, they follow the same norms and in their formation specific identity consciousness may play a role - e.g. such special communication, regular interaction, characteristic interpersonal relations, - , on the basis of which it defines itself as a specific group.

Hence, the differences of the national cultures shown by the research results may be explained by values, while the different cultures of the organisations that belong to the same nation may be explained by the “practice”. They placed between the two culture layers the professional culture, which may be connected both to the values and to the practice. (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, Sanders, 1990, in: Kovács, 2006)

The existence of the basic, deep-rooted value preferences of the national and organisational cultures and their matching may play a decisive role in the development of economic life. The connections form a “very differentiated-integrated” system (Csikszentmihályi, 2008), similarly to the interrelationships of culture and the economy. In the course of international and domestic researches the examination results of the cultural dimensions and their dominance that appears on the societal and on the organisational level, their main features may

have not only positive, but also negative impacts on the operation of enterprises, among others on the behaviour of the people working in the organizations, the possibility of influencing the decision making processes or the focus and adherence to co-operative strategies.

The characteristically specific combination of the features of the national cultures may allow the enforcement of the competitive and comparative advantages of the organisations in the environment of the world economy. However, it is often difficult to compare the results obtained with the aid of various methodologies, means of examination originating from culture research. The approach presented in this paper could highlight the complementing nature of these results.

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