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Intercultural Communication

The influence of culture on communication
in international environments

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❖ INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON COMMUNICATION IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT: Description of cultural- and communicational theories. A study of how the communication functions between Alfa Laval Thermal in Lund, Sweden and its Market Companies in Paris, France and Moscow, Russia. Suggestions on how intercultural communication could be facilitated. A brief description of Russia and its history.

Foreword

Lund, August 1998

Camilla Ehnar

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

We live in a more and more integrated world where many people operate in an international environment and a vast amount of goods are traded over the national boarders. More companies than ever operate on a multinational level and have subsidiaries in many different countries. More and more students study in foreign countries and people travel abroad for their holidays. The world has changed in many ways the last decades and even though we live in a largely international world people carry their cultural heritage with them.

How does the cultural heritage effect the interaction between people of different nationalities? How does culture influence the way we communicate? How can intercultural communication be facilitated? These are some of the questions that I will try to answer in this essay. I will do this by looking at theories of communication and culture and applying these to a study carried out in a Swedish multinational company. My hope is that my findings will serve as a guide to those who work in an international environment and that they will be able to avoid some of the most commonly made mistakes.

1.1 Background

This essay is an examination essay for a Masters of Science degree in land surveying at The Institute of Technology in Lund. The essay is also written for Alfa-Laval Thermal where the author is employed as a marketer in the HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) department.

1.2 Problem approach

To reach an understanding of a country or region it is vital to have an insight into what determines the way in which it functions. To communicate efficiently with people one has to understand their way of thinking and their methods of communication. The language is one obstacle on the way but there are other differences that can prevent people from understanding each other. Our different cultures have a large influence on the way we see our world and culture differences can lead to communications problems.

The environment in which a company acts can be seen as made up of two different sides that interact. Triandis, who is a well known author in this field, chooses to call these two sides objective and subjective culture[1]. The objective culture exists of all material aspects in our society such as roads, buildings and consumer products. Subject culture is what we have in our heads, a person's subjective image of her society, where our values and thought patterns play a large role. A country's culture, social rules and religion stem from the subjective culture. To simplify, the subjective culture can be said to be made up of the "untouchable" aspects in a society and it is mainly the subjective culture that form the attitude of people. Together these two sides make up the boundaries for the integrated environment, in which people live and work, and to successfully interact with people and organizations of another nationality than one's own it is essential to have an understanding of the specific environment in which one wants to operate.

1.2.1 Core problem

A company's ability to communicate is essential to how well one is able to reach current and future clients. However it is not only the communication towards the market that is important, the ability to internally communicate can determine how successful a company can be. The focus of this essay will be to discuss the communication process functions in an intercultural environment. An efficient and correctly directed communication will facilitate a company's interaction with its customers, subsidiaries, employees and other parties. When operating in an international environment there are several aspects to be considered when discussing communication. How can the misunderstandings caused by language barriers be decreased? Does the cultural background of the sender and receiver effect how the message is interpreted? If this is the case how can any misunderstandings be lessened or eliminated?

To be able to understand how culture affects communication is necessary to have an understanding of the communication process. Questions that need to be answered regarding this are; is the receiver, e.g. customer, conscious of the fact that a message is being sent? A problem with all communication is if the receiver is at all conscious of the message that the sender is sending. If the intended receiver of a message is unaware that a message is being sent there does not exist any communication. To be able to solve this problem it is important to understand why the receiver does not notice the message. However there is more to successful communication than getting the receiver to notice that a message is being sent. Does the receiver understand the message as the sender intended it? If the receiver interprets the message as something else then was intended the sender and receiver would not fully understand one another.

In this essay I will focus on communication in an international environment. Many companies are today operating over the borders and I believe that this will increase even further in the future which makes it important to have the right tools to handle the new communication situations that arise.

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[1] Lundberg P. (1991), *Utbildning och träning för interkulturell kommunikativ kompetens*, p. 10

1.2.2 Part problems

To analyze and solve the core problem it is necessary divide it into different parts that together will help answer the questions posed. The questions asked will be analyzed with the help of the theory discussed in this essay together with the case study executed in Lund, Paris and Moscow.

Are there any communication problems between Alfa-Laval Thermal in Lund and the Market Companies in Paris and Moscow?

Russia and Sweden are two countries that have different culture, religion and history. Sweden has had a market economy for many years while Russia has had a plan economy until very recently. This probably affects how business is run and how people communicate with one another. The Marketing Company in Moscow is a Swedish company and this can have an influence on how communication works. Does the Marketing Company have a Swedish culture or is it Russian values and norms that dominate?

Sweden and France have a slightly more similar background than Sweden and Russia. France has, like Sweden, had a market economy for many years and Alfa Laval has been active in France for over a hundred years. How does the communication function in this case? Does the Marketing Company have a Swedish culture or do French norms and values dominate? Is the French view of Swedish people the same as the Russian view?

How does cultural belonging influence the way people communicate?

Culture is usually seen as the kind of food eaten in a country, the way of dressing, music, different traditions etc. However culture is also made up of aspects that can not be seen, e.g. the way of thinking, politeness codes and gender roles. Does culture create barriers towards members of other cultures? To what extend does culture influence the way people behave? The world is becoming more and more integrated but has this lead to an erosion of culture differences or has it strengthened cultural loyalty? To be able to successfully communicate the role of culture must be understood and an effort to avoid obvious cultural mistakes must be made.

What has shaped modern day Russia?

In Russia both sides of the environment mentioned in the core problem have gone through almost revolutionary changes during the nineties which render it difficult to obtain a clear picture of the present situation. It is however vital to have a background to what has shaped the Russia of today if an understanding of the Russian people and their culture is to be obtained. Change is occurring at a fast rate but the history and seventy years of communism still have a large influence.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to analyze the current communication situation in an international Swedish company using a case study carried out at the head office in Lund and at the Market Company in Moscow, Russia. This case study has also been supplemented with interviews carried out at the Market Company in Paris, France. General suggestions for facilitating intercultural communication will also be made.

1.4 Demarcations

A case study involves a great deal of research in order to be useful and this makes it necessary to minimize the area in which the case study is to be performed. My first intention was to make a case study of the market situation in Moscow but since this city is very large this task would have been too vast to carry out in the limited time that I had at my disposal. Another objection against such a case study is that the level of detail would be very low considering the large amount of aspects having to be considered and this would have rendered the case study little practical use in answering the questions posed in the Problem discussion. Instead I decided to study how the communication process functions between the head office of a Swedish Company in Lund and its Market Company in Moscow. My reason for this is that I believe that I can perform a more detailed case study if I concentrate on a limited area.

The case study has during the work with the essay been supplemented with interviews, similar to the ones carried out in Moscow, executed in France. The reason for this was that I felt a need to broaden the case study and see if the view of Swedish people differed between different cultures. Another reason was that I wanted to see if different cultures saw different difficulties in the intercultural communication. As the study in France was mainly carried out as a reference to the Russian study I chose not to describe French history and French society as I did the Russian.

Intercultural communication is a vast and still rather unexplored territory. In my essay I do not strive to give a complete picture of the topic since this would be an almost impossible task. Instead I want to give the reader an awareness of intercultural communication and hopefully awaken his/her interest for this.

1.5 Perspective

This essay has been written from the perspective of the international Swedish Company Alfa-Laval Thermal but my ambition is that the essay will be useful to other companies operating internationally. The theory used in this essay is described from a management perspective, which is also the perspective that most theories are based upon.

The teachers and students at The Institute of Technology in Lund, Sweden constitute another important target group for this essay. Some of these may not have any knowledge of Alfa-Laval and this is the reason why I include a description of the company in the essay.

In discussing communication and culture I assume that some of the readers will have no or very little knowledge of this area. I therefor chose to start my discussions regarding this at a relatively elementary level so that those not already familiar with the subject will have a chance to follow the discussion.

Chapter 2

Method

After having determined the purpose of the essay the next step is to decide how the questions posed in the problem approach are to be answered. The choice of mode of action is an important part of the essay and this will be discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Overall mode of action

2.1.1 Frame of reference

My frame of reference is influenced by the knowledge that I have gained during my years at the School of Economics and the Institute of Technology in Lund. My background and values also effect the way in which I see the problem area. Other influencing aspects are my earlier working experiences as well as experiences from living abroad in my childhood.

The frame of reference that I have effects the way in which I look at the problems defined in this essay and this is something that is difficult to avoid. I am aware of this and have tried to remain as neutral as possible both in the discussions and in the analysis. In interviewing experts and other parties concerned with the problem area I have let other peoples opinions influence the direction of this essay with the hope that this will give the essay greater width.

2.1.2 Choice of theory

Study of theory constitutes an important part of writing an essay as this gives deeper understanding of the problems to be discussed and analyzed[2]. My choice of essay subject is mainly concerned with culture and communication and therefor I needed theories that treat these subjects. I will start with cultural theories in the first theory section and in the second section I will describe the communication process. In the cultural section the background to how cultures evolve and how they are expressed will be described. How communication functions and what influences it will be included in the communication chapter.

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[2] Halvorsen K (1992), *Samhällsvetenskaplig metodik*, p. 9f

2.2 Practical mode of action

2.2.1 Collection of information

<u>Primary material</u>

Primary data is defined as data collected by the author of the essay. The primary data in this essay has been collected through interviews with employees at Alfa-Laval Thermal (Business Unit HVAC) in Lund, Alfa-Laval in Moscow and Alfa Laval in Paris.

<u>Secondary material</u>

Secondary data is defined as data collected by someone other than the author him/herself. Secondary data can consist of literature, articles, surveys, television programs etc. Secondary data within the problem area defined in this essay has been collected at the University Library in Lund, the library at the school of economics Lund, the public library in Lund, magazines, leaflets and product brochures at Alfa-Laval

Secondary data was searched in the following way:

- Through internal databases at the libraries mentioned above
- Through Libris, a database where literature from all Swedish research libraries is stored
- Through Artikelsök (Article search), where references to a vast number of articles can be found
- Through the World Wide Web

Search words, both English and Swedish, used either in combination or individually were for example; communication, marketing, culture, Russia, international, etc. The search gave a moderate result and a large amount of the material found was very general and was only partly concerned with my problem area. However, this information gave me an initial overview and helped me to narrow my search for more, to me, relevant information.

The data about Alfa-Laval has been obtained directly from the company (information leaflets, product manuals etc) or through their Internet homepage. Some information has also been obtained from an essay[3] written at the Institute of Technology in Lund.

<u>The Case Study</u>

The method for analysis chosen in this essay is a case study through which the possibility to perform a detailed and multidimensional study of a specific area is achieved. I study one environment only and make an attempt at understanding the elementary and distinctive features in this environment. The methodology of a case study is best suited for an overall approach and understanding a problem's total complexity.

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[3] Sajland Johnny, "Logistik och kostnadskonsekvenser vid ett eventuellt införande av material AISI 304L på lödda värmeväxlare", 1994 (Maskinteknik, LTH)

The choice of the number of cases to be studied is, amongst others, a question between width and depth of the study. To achieve a deep study rich in different aspects I chose to study one specific company and how it's employees deal with communication and cultural differences. One disadvantage with this approach could be that the case studied is to specific in character to be of interest to other actors in similar situations. However, even if the results of one study isn't general a thoroughly well performed case study, which is theoretically well founded, can give abstractable results which can be made interesting to other actors and this is my intention.

Chapter 3

Culture

Today culture is often discussed. Our world is becoming more integrated and the society in which we live could be characterized as multicultural. But what is culture and how does it effect the way we are? In this chapter I try to answer these questions by presenting theories of culture. By learning about how culture is formed and how it is expressed we can approach other cultures with more understanding and interest.

3.1 What is culture?

The number of different definitions of culture that exists today shows the complexity that the phenomenon culture is made up of [4]. One traditional description of culture is that it is the picture of reality that a group of people share and that help the individual decide how to behave[5]. In this definition culture includes rules for interpreting reality and for behaviour that is accepted or not accepted in this reality. Some authors in his field underline that culture can not be explained isolated from the social reality in which it exists. Culture is not a static phenomenon but changes over time and it is used to systematize, explain and legitimate the world that the individual is surrounded by. Culture can be said to be a mirror of the present society it represents

The two anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn have examined the notion of culture and they have come up with a description that sums up this notion. This description has become one of the most accepted general descriptions of what culture is. This definition comprises both the apparent and the non-apparent aspects of culture and it also brings attention to the continuous process of change in culture.

"Culture exists in patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of future action."

(Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952 s.181)

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[4] Lundberg (1991), *Utbildning och träning för interkulturell kompetens,* p.12 f.
[5] Usunier J-C (1996), *Marketing across culture",* p.5

3.2 How is culture learned?

Most anthropologists and researchers of culture are of the opinion that culture is taught and learned and not inherited. Hofstede, a acknowledged behaviorist researcher, calls the patterns that rule how we think, feel and act *mental programs* and these are learned during our lifetime. The mental programs can be seen as a collective phenomenon that is shared by all people who come from the same social environment. The programming of people commences early and continues through the school years, in working life and in the society. The collective program which binds one group of people together separate them from people with other mental programs. However a persons behaviour can not be foreseen solely from his or her mental program but other factors such as personality also effect behaviour.

People can identify with and belong to different groups and categories at the same time. Apart from national belonging people can identify with different regional-, religious-, ethnic-, language-, social- and organizational categories. The gender of a person also affects the way in which identification in society is made. All the groups that an individual belongs to effects the mental programming and the message from these groups do not necessarily harmonize with each other.

Culture should be separated from, on the one hand, human nature and on the other individual personality. All people share human nature and this is inherited through the genes while personality is the composition of mental programs that is unique to every human being. Personality is partly inherited and partly learned. By learned is meant that personality is affected by culture and of unique personal experiences.

3.3 The expression of culture

Culture can be divided into different categories according to the level of appearance[6]. It can be seen in directly visible objects such as clothes and food, but a large part of culture is made up of things that can not be seen, for example thinking patterns and values.

Hofstede (1991) explains the manifestations of culture using symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The shallowest aspect of culture is represented by symbols and the deepest aspects by values, with heroes and rituals lying somewhere in between. Symbols could be words or gestures that can be identified by those who share the same culture. Heroes are people who best represent the culture and who have characteristics that are highly thought of. Rituals are activities performed collectively in the culture, for example religious ceremonies. Hofstede calls these three customs because they are visible even though the cultural content may be invisible to those who do not share the culture. The core of the culture is made up of values and these are more difficult to get a grip of. Values are mostly permanent while the symbols of culture can change over time. Values are adapted at an early age and are usually considered to be "normal" to those belonging to a culture[7].

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[6] Lundberg P. (1991), *Utbildning och träning för interkulturell kommunikativ kompetens*, p.10 f
[7] Hofstede G. (1991), *Organisationer och kulturer - om interkulturell förståelse*, p.54

Another way of looking at cultural expression is by dividing culture into three levels. The first is represented by open behaviour e.g. clothing and hairstyle, which can be said to be the exterior culture, i.e. that which others can see clearly. The other level is made up of values and norms e.g. work moral, values in an organization, routines and way of working. The level of formality in an organization is an example of this second culture level. The third level is human behaviour on a deeper level and this can be the way people se moral in a culture. The components and aspects of these levels are usually taken for granted by those who share the same culture and other cultures way of seeing things is often perceived as being strange and not "normal"[8].

3.4 National- and organizational culture

Some authors (e.g. Deal & Kennedy 1983 and Schein 1985) see organizational- and national culture as the same thing and mean that they both have clear boundaries and consists of a number of individuals who cooperate. Both cultures give their members a set of values and cognitive maps on how to handle the world around them. However, Hofstede means that it is wrong to look at organizational and national culture in this equal way. He argues that the cultural manifestations have different values in the two culture systems. In national culture it is the values that largely influence how the culture is shaped while the organizational culture is more influenced by customs.

Cultural authors have different opinions on how much the organizational culture effects the individual. Some authors argue that organizational culture modifies or even eliminates the effects of national culture and that people working in the same company are similar to each other even though they come from different national cultures[9]. If this were true it would imply that companies do not have to adjust their organization to the country in which they are active. However, there are other authors who mean that the national cultural differences remain regardless of the organizational culture in which the individuals are active. The conclusion of the latter is that there is no universal organizational form that works in every country.

3.5 Cultural dimensions

The same elementary problems occur in all societies regardless if they are modern or primitive. The difference lies in how these problems are solved. The different ways in which problems are solved can be used to categorize the different cultures into groups.

3.5.1 The four dimensions of Hofstede[10]

Hofstede performed interviews with employees at a large international company (IBM) in the seventies and based on his findings there he tried to describe national cultures. He divided general differences in culture and attitudes into four elementary dimensions. With the help of these dimensions differences can be measured.

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[8] Ekstedt E. et al (1994), *Kulturell friktion - konfliktkälla och förnyelsekraft i en integrerad ekonomi*, p. 75
[9] Adler N.J. (1991), *International Dimensions of organizational behaviour*, p.58
[10] Hofstede G. (1991), *Organisationer och kulturer - Om interkulturell förståelse*, p.45ff

These four dimensions are; power distance, individuality/collectively, masculinity/femininity and insecurity avoidance. For every dimension there are two opposite extremes and reality lies somewhere in between these two.

A fifth dimension was later identified when further surveys were performed in Asia. This dimension is long-term/short-term and expresses the way in which people look at life. A long-term perspective means that people plan ahead and try to see the consequences of their doings while a short-term perspective person lives in the present and does not plan very much for tomorrow. However this dimension is not further discussed in this essay, as it is not fully integrated in Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions.

Dimension A "Power Distance"

This dimension measures the extent of acceptance that less influential members of the society have of uneven distribution of power. In a society with a high power distance the power will be centralized in the hands of a few and title, status and formality are of importance. High respect is shown to those in leading position and they also show their power by visible status symbols e.g. luxury cars and expensive clothes. The young are expected to obey the elder, which is learned at an early age. The hierarchy in organizations with a high power distance is often strong and the companies are top directed. Examples of countries with high power distance are the Philippines and Malaysia.

In countries with a low power distance people more or less view each other as equals. Children are seen as individuals whose opinions should be taken seriously and they are encouraged to become independent and active participants in society. Flat organizations are most common in countries with low power distance and in the working life the boss is usually view as a co-worker and not as an all-knowing executive. In the organization the employees are encouraged to take their own initiative and not just follow orders. Examples of countries with low power distance are Denmark and Austria.

Dimension B "Individuality versus Collectivism"

This dimension measures how important individuality is to the members in a society. Loose social bonds characterize an individualistic culture where each and everyone are expected to take care of themselves and their closest relatives. On the contrary, in a collective culture there are strong social bonds between people and the good of the group is prioritized before the individual. In a collective culture people expect to be taken care of and protected in exchange for loyalty. There is a connection between national wealth and the level of individuality. Most rich countries are individualistic while poor countries usually are collective.

Individualists are made by encouraging children at an early age to take their own initiatives. Children who grow up in small households soon develop a personal identity that gives them uniqueness. They are taught to have opinions and to stand up for themselves. Every individual is judged based on personal characteristics and not from group belonging. In an individualistic culture the individual is independent in relation to the companies they work for.

A distance is kept between working life and personal life in individualistic societies. Free time is highly valued in an individualistic culture. Examples of individualistic countries are the United States and Australia.

On the contrary a collectivist is brought up learning that it is the groups opinion that matters. In collectivist cultures it is important to live in harmony with the group which results in a conflict avoiding behaviour. If a group member does something wrong it is regarded as a shame to the whole group. Disloyalty towards the group is among the worst crimes that could be committed. The group members strongly depend on each other for materialistic, practical and psychological needs. Examples of collectivist countries are Columbia and Taiwan.

In an individualistic organization the decision process is quick due to decisions being made without a lot of negotiation. People are free to make their own decisions without always having to ask their superiors. However in a collectivist organization the implementation process is quicker because issues are thoroughly discussed in the group before any decision is taken.

Dimension C "Masculinity versus Femininity"

In masculine countries performance, heroism and materialistic success are of importance. On the contrary, in feminine countries relations, modesty, care for the weak and quality of life are considered to be important aspects in society. In masculine societies gender roles have a stronger hold than in feminine societies. Men and women have different roles in a masculine society; men are ambitious, competition guided and self controlled while women are nurturing and caring. Gender roles overlap each other in feminine societies, women have a working career and men and women are jointly responsible for the children. Feminine societies are usually referred to as "welfare societies" where the weak are cared for. The United States and other Anglo-Saxon countries e.g. Great Britain are seen as masculine countries while many Asian countries usually are classified as feminine countries.

Children are raised to be ambitious and competition prone in masculine societies. Recognition, high salary, advancement possibilities and challenges are regarded as important aspects in working life. The employees are awarded according to their performance and the boss is decisive and dynamic.

The feminine society encourages modesty and solidarity in the children. In working life good relations with superiors, cooperation and employment security are important aspects. Reward is paid out according to need and solidarity. The feminine leader is less visible than the masculine and he/she is intuitive rather than decisive. Conflicts are solved with argumentation in a masculine organization while compromise and negotiation is more common as conflict solvers in feminine organizations.

Hofstede revealed a somewhat paradoxical observation when he in his studies found that there was a higher frequency of ambitious successful women in masculine culture compared to feminine cultures. The reason for this was assumed to be that although women in high positions are more accepted in feminine societies than in masculine women in feminine societies are less ambitious and career prone than women in masculine societies.

Dimension D: "Insecurity Avoidance"

The fourth dimension measures to which extent people in a society feel threatened by unfamiliar situations. In a country with strong insecurity avoidance differing ideas and behaviour are not accepted and people feel stress and anxiety if they are confronted with insecurity. To avoid this they try to create stability using clear rules and stable career possibilities. This leads to a society full of regulations, norms and different security nets. The citizens are often negative towards authorities against which they feel they have little power. In organizations the management have to give clear directives in order to avoid creating uncertainties and insecurity. Individuals stay longer in the same employment in insecurity avoiding cultures.

In countries with weak insecurity avoidance the citizens do not fear the unknown as strongly. The need for stable routines and security nets, both in society and in organization, is not as important as for insecurity avoiding cultures. Formal rules are only decided when this is absolutely necessary which results in few general rules in the society. The organizations are able to be flexible and innovations have room to develop. It is also easier to implement new ideas in countries with weak insecurity avoidance. The management can put more time into strategical planning while management in strong insecurity avoiding countries has to deal with daily problems to a larger extent.

3.5.2 The six dimensions of Adler[11]

Adler uses six dimensions to describe cultural orientation in society. These six are; how the individual is viewed, relations to the world as a whole, human relations, activities and orientation in time and space.

The Individual

How the human nature is viewed varies between different cultures, some believe that the human being is evil in nature, others believe in the goodness of the human race while there are those who declare that humans posses both evil and good sides. In societies with a negative view of the human nature people tend to mistrust and feel insecurity towards others. While in societies with a positive view of human nature people feel safe and trust their fellow men and women. This elementary view of people affect how relations work in business life. In cultures where the human is believed to be good buyers and sellers trust that agreements will be honored and written contracts are not always drawn up.

Different societies and organizations differ when it comes to belief in the human capability to change and evolve. In organizations where the management believes in their employees' ability to evolve and learn new things of resources are put into education so that the employees can handle new tasks. In organizations where this belief is not as strong there is a larger tendency to employ new people to deal with new tasks instead of training the existing staff.

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[11] Adler N.J. (1991), *International dimensions of organizational behaviour*, p.120

Relations to the world

This dimension describes how different cultures view the world. This concerns questions such as if humans superior to nature, live in harmony with it or do they surrender to it? In some cultures it is believed that humans can control and affect nature while in other cultures it is believed that humans are in the hands of nature and controlled by a higher power. These differences can be seen clearly when a culture's way of cultivating the land is looked at. Some cultures believe that it is right to use artificial fertilizers if this increases the wealth while in other cultures it is important to live in harmony with the environment and follow the conditions set by nature. The attitude towards nature also affects the way organizations view their surrounding world. A central question for the organization is if it can affect its surroundings or not.

Human relations

This dimension has the same meaning as Hofstede's dimension individualism/collectively (see page 12).

Activity

This dimension is concerned with if the members of a culture are prone to activity or to being. In activity prone societies the citizens are very goal oriented and the goals are reached by actively working for them. This results in a society that awards citizens who succeed with promotion and salary raises. In other societies being oneself is regarded as the most important aspect and citizens in these societies tend to take the day as it comes. They believe that ideas should come spontaneously and not be forced to appear. Employees can not be motivated to do a good job by offers of a reward in the future.

Individuals in a society aimed towards being tend to be more passive than individuals in a more active society. These individuals let changes happen and do not actively try to hasten or effect them in order to achieve short termed results. Organizations must adjust their motivation factors to the actual culture's way of seeing the world. Raising the salary has different effects according to what is prioritized in the culture. In active cultures employees work harder if they are rewarded with a higher salary while this in a passive culture is an incitement to work less because they now get the same salary for less time.

Time

This dimension deals with the way people regard time. Cultures can be past-, present- or future oriented. In past oriented cultures traditions are very important and no changes are made unless the are in line with these traditions. In future oriented cultures people are not concerned with what has happened but instead they see to future profits when a decision of change has to be taken. People belonging to present oriented cultures tend to live here and now and do not worry about either the past or the future.

<u>Space</u>

This dimension concerns how different cultures regard space and how space is used. In organizations this is concerned with if conference rooms, offices or factories are regarded as public or private spaces. Whether or not the employees are allowed to walk into the manager's room without awaiting permission or if conferences held behind closed or opened doors are aspects in this dimension.

3.6 How culture affects management, organization and motivation

3.6.1 Management

Management is viewed differently in different cultures. Opinions on how a good leader should be and the missions he/she should have differ but most cultures agree that a leader must be able to inspire and influence his/her employees' attitudes, behaviour and way of thinking. Researchers in this field have therefor, to a large extent, concentrated their work on studying how leaders in different cultures behave to motivate his/her employees in different situations and environments[12]. Their cultural belonging affects the attitude and behaviour of people in leading positions.

Adler discusses "Theory X" and "Theory Y", theories invented by McGregor a British researcher in the field, which describe how the way leaders see human beings influences their mode of leadership. Theory X leaders mistrust their employees and their ability to be autonomous and take own responsibility. These types of leaders believe that it is their responsibility to lead, steer and survey the employees to motivate them to work. Theory X leaders base their beliefs on that the dominate motivators for the employees are the basic needs of security and safety. Theory Y leaders, on the other hand, think that freedom, autonomy and responsibility are motivators for people. They believe that the employees have an ability to take responsibility and that they will work even if they are not surveyed. Therefor this type of leader will give the employee free hands in performing his/her task and they believe that self-fulfillment and appreciation are the fundamental motivators

Researchers in line with McGregor argue that leaders should give their employees responsibility of their own work and the possibility to make their own decisions[13]. This motivates the employees in knowing that they can affect their work and that the leaders have confidence in them. These theories are built on that leaders see human beings as good and trustworthy[14]. The leaders can therefor delegate tasks, allow the employees to structure their own work and they will not have to survey and control the performance. They use goal-oriented methods instead of control, i.e. they see to the end result. More leaders should be both goal – and individual oriented, by caring for the employees and the ready-made product at the same time.

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[12] Adler N.J. (1991), *International dimensions of organizational behaviour*, p.149 ff.
[13] Bruzelius L.H.. & Skärvad P-H.(1989), *Integrerad organisationslära*, p.221 f.
[14] Adler N.J. (1991), *International dimensions of organizational behaviour*, p.151

Another way of describing modes of leadership is to study how leaders take decisions[15]. A democratic leader can either be consultative or sympathetic depending on how much possibility to influence is given to the employees. An autocratic leader makes all the decisions him/herself and then gives orders to the employees. A consultative leader asks the employees for ideas and opinions but takes the decision him/herself after having considered the employees' proposals.

A sympathetic leader discusses problems with the employees and decisions are taken together with them. In this situation the leader does not have any more influence over decisions than the employees do. In addition to the above mentioned types of leaders there also exists a fourth type, the delegating leader who gives the employees the right (within certain limits) to make decisions themselves to reach agreed goals.

Most leadership theories are of American origin and are not suitable for all cultures[16]. Leaders active in multinational organizations have to be aware of this and adjust their style of leadership to the cultural belonging of their employees. If this is not considered serious problem can arise. Some cultures want authoritarian leaders while other prefer democratic leaders who take decisions together with their employees. In countries with large power distance the employees expect to be lead and will feel stress if they are forced to make their own decisions. Leaders are most important in masculine countries with a large power distance and strong insecurity avoidance. Leaders have a less dominate role in collectivity cultures or cultures characterized by weak insecurity avoidance and feminism. In masculine countries with high power distance there is a large gap between the superiors and the employee, equality is not a goal and deviations from norms are rare. The contrary is feminine cultures with low power distance where democracy is striven for by allowing everybody to be a part of the decision making process.

3.6.2 Organization

Our cultural background affects the way in which we assume how an organization should be. According to Hofstede it is primarily how a country views the dimension power distance and insecurity avoidance that affects how problems are viewed and solved in an organization. When a business is to be organized one must first clarify who is going to be in charge and take decisions and second the rules and procedures that are needed to obtain the goals must be decided. The individuals view of power distance affect the power division in the organization and the insecurity avoidance determines which and how many rules that are necessary. The other two dimensions, individuality/collectively and masculinity/femininity, affect the view of the people in the organization rather than the shaping of the organization.

An organization should be shaped so that it satisfies the cultural needs of the members. Hofstede mentions four organizational models, "pyramid of people", "well oiled machinery", "village market" and "(big) family".

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[15] Yulk G.A.(1994), *Leadership in organizations*, p.54 f.
[16] Morden T, "International culture and management", Management Decision 1995 no2
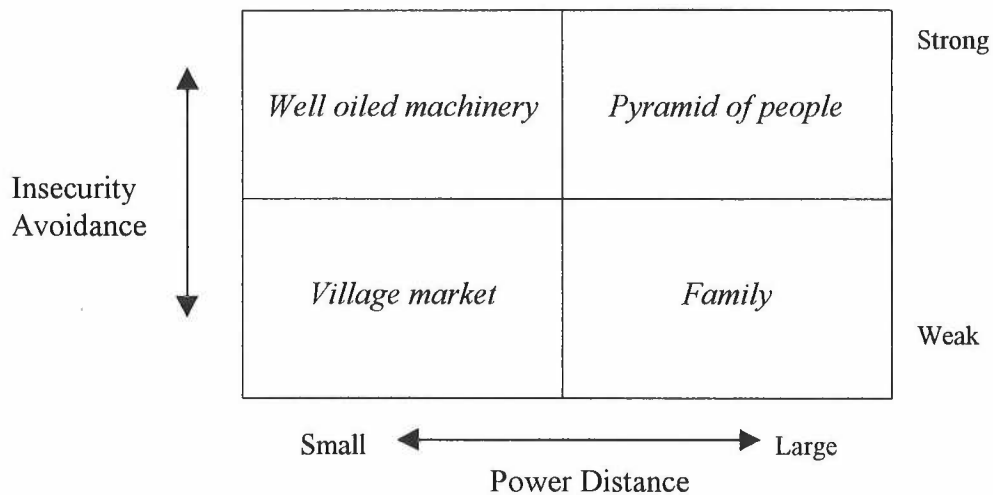
Figure 1, Organizational models according to Hofstede

The first model, pyramid of people, can be seen in countries with a large power distance and strong insecurity avoidance. According to this model power is concentrated and activities are well structured. In countries with a strong insecurity avoidance but a small power distance the well oiled machinery is often chosen and according to this model problems are structured but without the concentration of power. Countries that use the village market as model are countries with a national culture of small power distance and small insecurity avoidance. Here neither concentration of power or structuring of activities exists but instead problems are solved as they appear and the organization is characterized by a flat organization with short power distance. The last model, family, is common in countries with large power distance and low insecurity avoidance. The manager in these organizations is viewed as the almighty father and problems are solved with reference to him. This type of organization could be characterized as power concentration without a clear structure of the activities.

A problem that can arise when to organization cultures are brought together, i.e. through a merger, is a tendency to resist that, which is new. A certain behaviour in one culture could seem strange to the other culture and people could feel that "this is not how we do it here" and this can cause friction between the two cultures. Here it is important to have clear goals and strong leaders with sharp years.[17]

3.6.3 Motivation

Theories of motivation have been developed to show which factors have the largest effect on people's will to work. How a land is placed in Hofstede's four dimensions affect which motivators that are the most efficient[18]. The view of insecurity avoidance and masculinity/femininity are most important for motivation patterns in different countries. Hofstede discusses the motivation theories of Maslow, McClelland and Hertzberg, which are the most famous.

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[17] Interview with Else Andersson-Lehn, Tetra Pak 980428
[18] Hofstede G. (1991), *Organisationer och kulturer - Om interkulturell förståelse*, p 155 ff.

Maslow's theory of need

Maslow divides the needs of human beings hierarchically from lower to higher according to how elementary they are. At the bottom of the hierarchy, and therefor the most elementary, are the physiological needs. These are followed by security and safety, belonging, appreciation and at the top self-fulfillment. Before an individual can move up the hierarchy the needs of a lower level has to be satisfied. It is not possible for a person to strive for appreciation when he/she is starving. First the hunger must be satisfied and then higher need can be seen to. Hofstede is however critical to Maslow who he considers to be to influenced by his own cultural heritage and Hofstede means that people from other countries than the USA can give different importance to needs. Hofstede also ask the question whether Maslow has overlooked certain needs that are of important in other cultures but that are not known to Maslow. Examples of this could be respect, harmony and fulfillment of obligations.

Hofstede consider self fulfillment, i.e. the individuals strive to realize his/her own creative potential, to be built on an individualistic way of thinking while in collectivist cultures the interests and honour of the group are regarded as more important. The importance and placing of needs have an influence on what motivates people in a culture. In feminine cultures where the insecurity avoidance is weak people are motivated by belonging and performance while individuals in a masculine society, dominated by strong insecurity avoidance, are motivated by appreciation and security.

The three motives of McClelland

McClelland has studied what it is that makes people do things, i.e. dominating motivators in different countries[19]. He found three types of motives: performance motives, belonging motives and power motives. McClelland mean that it is the performance motive that is primarily the driver when people act. This motive is strongly correlated to the combination of weak insecurity avoidance and strong masculinity, which is typical for the USA and other Anglo-Saxon countries. Individuals in cultures with weak insecurity avoidance and strong masculinity are willing to expose themselves to risks and consider fast visible results important.

Notions like provision based salary, compensation according to merit and bonus all stem from masculine societies where individual achievements are emphasized and rewarded[20]. While in feminine societies the employees are motivated by quality of work and individual rights. Here cooperation between colleagues is emphasized as opposed to competition

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[19] Hofstede G. (1991), *Organisationer och kulturer - Om interkulturell förståelse*, p 155 ff

[20] Morden T, "International culture and management", Management Decision 1995 no2

<u>Hertzbergs motivation- and hygiene theory</u>

Hertzberg says that some elements, the so called real motivators, have a positive motivation potential while other elements, the so called hygiene factors, only can have a negative motivation potential[21]. The real motivators include the work itself, performance, recognition, responsibility and promotion. While the companies' policy and administration, surveillance and management, salary and working conditions are hygiene factors. These factors can not by themselves motivate the employees but are necessary for the real motivation factors to function.

The hygiene factors are conditions in the environment that need to be fulfilled in order for the individual not to feel uncomfortable while the motivation factors are directly related to the assignment[22]. If the employee feels that the assignment is satisfying he/she also feels motivated to carry it out.

As a conclusion it can be said that most motivation theories are of American origin and are therefor heavily influenced by the American culture. They reflect the environment in which the authors themselves grew up and performed their research. There does not exist any universal motivators but these must be adjusted to each individual country. It is up to companies that establish themselves in foreign countries to find out which factors motivates the inhabitants and this in order to motivate their employees to perform satisfactory work.

3.7 How cultural differences can be handled

Leaders in different countries can have different mental models of how a company should be and function and this can cause problems in cooperation over the national boarders. Management in multi cultural organizations must make decisions on how to handle cultural differences and there excists several views and strategies on how to do this. Many leaders are blind to cultural differences even though they exist and influence the way people act in organizations[23]. This attitude decreases the possibilities to conquer the cultural differences i.e. minimize the problems they create and maximize the advantages they offer.

Another way to deal with cultural differences is by *ethnocentrism*[24]. According to this view humans consider his/her culture to represent the best and most suitable way of living. In ethnocentric organizations cultural differences are noticed but only as a source to problems. The organization members consider their own way of working to be the best and all others to be inferior. These types of companies usually centralize power and use the same style of leadership, work methods and performance criteria in their divisions abroad[25]. The opposite of ethnocentrism is polycentrism where individuals see to every individual country's specific unique culture and characteristics. Polycentric companies realize that they must give their local leaders rather large autonomy in order for them to deal with their employees in the best way.

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[21] Hofstede G. (1991), *Organisationer och kulturer - Om interkulturell förståelse*, p 155 ff.
[22] Bruzelius L.H. & Skärvad P-H. (1989), *Intergrerad organisationslära*, p. 201 f.
[23] Adler N.J. (1991), *International dimensions of organizational behaviour*, p.151
[24] Trompenaars F. (1995),*Riding on the waves of culture.Understanding cultural diversity in business*, p. 3
[25] Astley W.G. & Brahm A.R. (1989), *Strategy, Organization, Design and Human ...*, p.24

3.8 Summary and reflections

Our world is becoming more and more integrated and many companies today operate over the national borders. This has lead to frequent contacts and co-operations between people with different cultural backgrounds. Their cultural background effects the way they behave, think and feel. These differences can, if not considered, lead to misunderstanding and mistrust.

National culture has developed during a very long time and it is reasonable to believe that it has a larger effect on people than organizational culture. Hofstede showed in his survey that even if people from different countries are a part of the same organization they will behave according to their own national culture. This implies that companies establishing must adjust their organization form, styles of leadership and motivators to the national culture in question.

The theories described in this chapter are mostly of American origin, which most probably have influenced how the phenomena of culture are portrayed. I try to bear this in mind when I later apply these theories in my case study. Since these theories are the most spread cultural theories today I feel that it is inevitable to use them even though some of them might be angled from an American viewpoint.

Chapter 4

Communication

Communication is a part of our daily lives and can take on many different forms and features. With the development of new communication media e.g. the Internet the world is no longer divided by artificial and arbitrary geographic boundaries, instead the world is becoming one economic and political marketplace[26]. However people's cultural background still forms us as individuals and to be able to understand people of another nationality and culture it is vital to have an understanding of how the communication process can differ. In one culture a certain gesture have a defined meaning but to someone with another background the gesture can have a totally different meaning and the message is not interpreted in the way it was intended. In this chapter I will describe how the communication process works and important aspects when engaged in international or intercultural communication will be emphasized.

4.1 The communication process

Communication is a form of human behaviour that has been created from the need to interact and connect to other human beings[27]. It is our ability to efficiently communicate with each other that has, amongst other things, helped us develop from the Stone Age to the modern society we live in today. The human being is the only race that use written language to communicate and we are also the only race to communicate in structured sentences.

All communication more or less follows the same steps, portrayed in the model of the communication process below (figure 1). This model points out the key factors in communication. The communication process starts with the sender who sends a message. The message is encoded e.g. into speech, writing or pictures. After being encoded the message is transmitted through a media, e.g. telephone, article, letter, television program. When the message is observed by the receiver, the intended or somebody else, he/she decodes the message to give it meaning. The way the message is decoded is coloured by the receiver's knowledge and experience and this has a large influence over how the message is interpreted. The next step is the feedback from the receiver to the sender. This feedback can vary from an unconscious decision not to give a response to a strong outspoken reaction.

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[26] Hugenberg, LaCivita & Lubanovic, "International business and training: Preparing for the global economy", Journal of Business Communication April 1996
[27] Samovar L & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p. 9
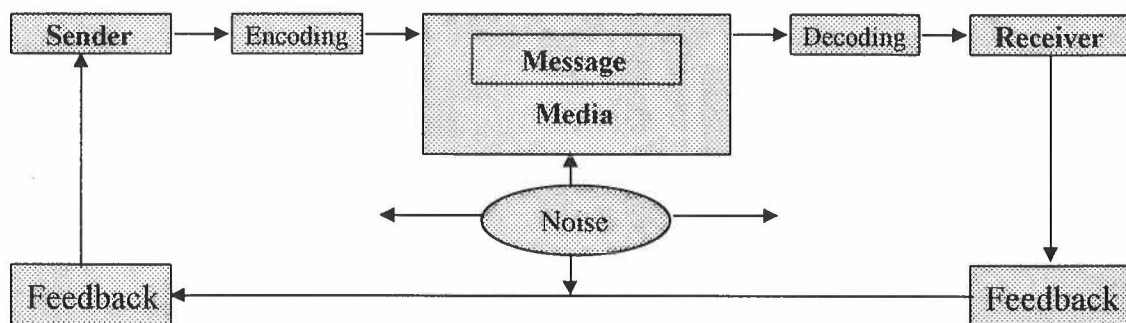
Figure 2, The communication process (source Kotler (1991) *Principles of marketing* p. 423)

Through all the different stages in the communication process there is noise disturbance. By noise is meant anything that hinders the process from functioning properly and this could be disturbance, e.g. a playing radio or a stressful situation, when the sender is sending the message or the receiver is receiving it. If the noise is very dominant the receiver may not even be aware that a message has been sent and he will not respond to it. An example of the latter is the minimal attention we give to all the advertisements we see on television, many of these pass us by without us noticing them at all.

The communication process can be a one-way communication or a two-way communication. When watching television or reading the newspaper it is a one way communication, the sender sends a message to the receiver who in turn does not send a message back, at least not at the moment of reception. In a two-way communication the receiver takes the role of the sender when having received a message. The message send is often a response to the message received but it could also be a new topic. In advertising the one-way communication has been dominant and still is in most areas but with the development of the Internet the two-way and interactive communication has entered the scene and opened new possibilities. Here the target receiver can respond immediately to a message send by, for example, a company.

Communication across cultures functions according to the communication process with the difference being that the sender and receiver have different ways of encoding and decoding messages. Here the social and cultural environment must be taken into account when applying the communication model.[28] This will be further discussed below.

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[28] Beamer L., "Learning Intercultural Communication Competence", Journal of Business Communication,

4.1.1 Verbal Communication

Verbal communication encompasses all that is spoken in the communication process and the thinking process that lies behind. The verbal process is what we often think of when hearing the word communication but it is important to keep in mind that the communication comprises much more than just the spoken word.

An obvious difference when communicating with people of other nationalities than one's own is the language. Language is the primary vehicle by which a culture transmits its beliefs, values, norms and worldview. Language gives people a means of connecting and interacting with other members of their culture and a means of thinking[29]. Languages are not only different in sound and words but also in context and explicit/implicit aspects, which will be described later on.

Another difference in intercultural communication that should be recognized is the transfer of information, i.e. the media in the model. Different cultures use different ways of transferring information. For example Germans rely heavily on facts and written words while the French are more interested in style and the way things are expressed[30].

All of us are more or less prone to believe that our way of seeing the world and interpreting signs is the correct way. We often do not consider that other people may have other ways of seeing things that they, in turn, believe is the correct way. Understandably this can lead to various misunderstandings when two people from different backgrounds meet and try to communicate. The mental processes, forms of reasoning and approaches to problem solving that are dominant in a community or nation are to a large extent influenced by culture[31]. It is not only our language that differ but also the way we think and we need to be aware of this difference if we want to be successful in our communication over the cultural barriers.

4.1.2 Non-verbal Communication

Above the verbal communication has been discussed, however, large parts of the communication process is made up of that which is not spoken i.e. non-verbal communication. The non-verbal communication has also been called the "silent language" of a culture and members of a culture often depend on it to share information[32]. The non-verbal components in communication comprises the following topics: gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and gaze, posture and movement, touching, dress, objects and artifacts, silence, space, time and paralanguage[33].

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[29] Samovar L & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p.18
[30] "Intercultural communication is more than black and white", Communication World Oct 1995
[31] Ibid, p. 18
[32] Hugenberg, LaCivita & Lubanovic, "International business and training: Preparing for the global economy", Journal of Business Communication April 1996
[33] Samovar L & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p.18

In intercultural communication it is vital to be aware of the fact that the non-verbal communication can take on a very different meaning. Every symbol takes on significance because of the past experience a person has had of it. An example of this is eye contact. In the United States it is regarded as proper to maintain good eye contact when speaking to somebody while in Japan and other Asian countries looking somebody in the eyes while conversing is regarded as rude and disrespectful. Non-verbal expressions have much in common with language, it is something we learn within the boarders of our own culture and pass on as part of the cultural experience. It is our cultural background that helps us give meaning to the symbols we encounter. It is important to understand that what is a kind and polite gesture in one culture could be regarded as impolite and even rude in another.

4.1.3 Context

All communication takes place within some kind off context, social or physical. Within a culture the members are tuned in to their culture's context and this does not hinder the communication. However when turning outside one's own culture the context can play a more important role. The anthropologist Edward T. Hall has made extensive studies into context and he has categorized cultures as being either high-context or low-context cultures[34]. In real life cultures vary in the range between low-and high context (se figure 2 below).

• Japanese	**High-context cultures**
• Arab	
• Greek	
• Spanish	
• Italian	
• English	
• Russia	
• French	
• American	
• Scandinavian	
• German	
• German-Swiss	**Low-context cultures**

Figure 3, High- and low-context cultures
(Source Samovar L & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p.24)

A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded explicit transmitted parts of the message[35].

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[34] Samovar L. & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p. 24
[35] Ibid, p. 253

The low context (LC) message is just the opposite of this, here most of the message lies in the verbal message itself and the non-verbal components play little or no importance. In high-context cultures, e.g. Japan and Taiwan, people tend to have a large awareness of their surroundings and they do not rely solely on verbal communication as their source of information. By one estimate Japanese people only understand each other clearly about 15% of the time[36]

There are four major differences in how high- and low-context cultures affect the setting. First, the verbal messages are important in LC cultures. The information lies in the verbal message and not in the environment and because of this or as a result of it people tend not to learn how to perceive information from the environment. Second, people from LC cultures who rely primarily on verbal messages are perceived as less attractive and less credible by people from HC cultures. Third, people in HC cultures are more adept at reading non-verbal behaviour and the environment. Fourth, people in HC-cultures have an expectation that others are also able to understand the unarticulated communication; hence, they do not speak as much as people from LC cultures.

4.2 Intercultural communication

4.2.1 General

As I mentioned in the above, intercultural communication contain additional obstacles to those found in the communication between people of the same nationality/culture. Intercultural misunderstandings arise because one individual tends to judge another's behaviour on the basis of his or her own basic cultural values and beliefs[37]. Characteristic for intercultural communication is that the sender and the receiver come from different cultures and this alone is sufficient to identify a unique form of communicative interaction where the role and function of culture must be taken into account[38].

Apart from verbal and non-verbal communication a third aspect of importance for intercultural communication is the values that are shared within a specific culture. Values determine what we think is right, good, important, beautiful etc. Often the values dominant in one culture are regarded as universal absolutes to its members and it can sometimes be difficult to accept that values differ between cultures.

4.2.2 Sub cultures

When we think of different cultures the thing that often comes to mind is different nations and their cultures. However cultures can be found at many different levels and subcultures can be found within one culture. Intercultural communication occur in a variety of situations ranging from interactions where people come from widely differing cultures to situations where people have the same cultural background but belong to different subcultures with different values and perceptions. An illustration of these levels of cultural differences can be seen below (figure 3). Obviously the largest differences are found

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[36] "Intercultural communication is more than black and white", Communication World Oct 1995
[37] "A further step towards internationalization", Industrial and Commercial Training nr 10 1995
[38] Samovar L. & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p. 20

between cultures in different parts of the world. Until fairly recently these cultures evolved independently of each other and therefor show differences. Moving down the scale the cultures become more and more similar. E.g. people from the U.S. and Britain share the same language. Within a society people tend to belong to different groups according to their beliefs and way of life, e.g. political belonging and hobbies. However, these people share the same background and cultural base.

• Western/Asian	**MAXIMUM**
• Italian/Saudi Arabian	
• U.S. American/Greek	
• U.S. American/German	
• U.S. American/French-Canadian	
• White Anglo-American/Reservation Indian	
• White Anglo-American/African American, Asian American, Mexican American or Urban Indian	
• U.S. American/British	
• U.S. American/English-Canadian	
• Urban American/Rural American	
• Catholic/Baptist	
• Male Dominance/Female Equality	
• Heterosexual/Homosexual	
• Environmentalist/Developer	**MINIMUM**

Figure 4, Compared cultures, subcultures and subgroups compared on a scale from minimum to maximum sociocultural difference (Source Samovar L & Porter R (1997), *Intercultural communication*, p.22)

4.2.3 Gender[39]

Gender influences how individuals are treated and perceived across the world. Culture effects how people are socialized and further leads to expectations of what role(s) members should assume at various stages of their lives. Most countries are today based on patriarchal societies where the prevalent attitudes and beliefs to a large extend are masculine. In the western world the role of women has changed during the last century, today more and more women have their own professional career and are no longer dependant on a man for their economic support. However women are still over represented in low status and poorly paid jobs.

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[39] Based on Hugenberg, LaCivita & Lubanovic, "International business and training: Preparing for the global economy", Journal of Business Communication April 1996

The role of women can differ between cultures and this can influence how women are addressed by men and vice versa. When operating in an international environment it should be kept in mind that the relation between men and women might not be the same everywhere. Some countries are more patriarchal than others are.

4.4 Summary and reflections

To be able to function competitively in the global economy it is important, if not to say essential, for companies and other actors to improve their understanding of the communication process and how it is influenced by cultural belonging. As was described in the above it is not only language that differs between countries but also non-verbal language and context. It can be difficult to understand the meaning of what someone is saying due to this, even if the conversation in a language mastered by the participants (i.e. English).

A first step towards an increasing understanding between cultures is to have awareness that there are differences. The awareness itself helps actors in international environments to have a more humble attitude towards other's beliefs and values. To listen and observe when in a new environment lessens the difficulties and helps in reaching understanding.

Chapter 5

The case study

To answer the questions posed in the introductory chapter I needed to perform a case study. This study was carried out in France, Russia and Sweden where I interviewed 15 people regarding intercultural communication. In this chapter I present how the case study was carried out and how the results will be handled.

5.1 Choice of study method

When an examination is to be carried out a choice of which method to use must be made. There are three main methods that can be used; quantitative, qualitative or a combination of the two. Quantitative data gives information about numbers and ratios and is very useful in many areas but it does not give an insight into attitudes, motives and coherence. Qualitative methods, however, seeks to answer why an individual has behaved in a certain way. With qualitative data the investigator tries to describe peoples experiences on the basis of their behaviour. In a quantitative examination the respondent answers with the investigator's words, e.g. often questionnaires with preprinted words are used. On the contrary the respondents own words are used to answer questions in a qualitative examination. Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Lesser understanding of reasons of behaviour is, as mention above, a disadvantage with the quantitative method. The advantages of this method is that the investigator receives more precise answers due to that more precise questions are asked, the answers can not be varied in a large extend and this facilitates the extraction of statistics. In a qualitative study the investigator can go into greater depth than with a quantitative study which is an advantage if different phenomena are to be understood. A disadvantage, however, is that the answers are more difficult to analyze since the answering form is less restricted.[40]

Before the method of examination is decided it is important to clearly define what it is that is to be examined. In my examination I wanted to find out how communication works today between Alfa-Laval Thermal in Lund and the Market Companies in Russia and France. The respondent's suggestions on how to improve the communication is another aspect that I hoped to extract from the interviews. The questions that I wanted answered involved abstract aspects such as emotions, culture and attitude, which I believed were best found using a qualitative method and I choose to execute this in the form of interviews.

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[40] Seymour D (1992), *Marknadsundersökningar med kvalitativa metoder*, p.20ff

A qualitative interview is a form of conversation where the interviewer and the respondent meet face to face, however, an interview differs from an ordinary conversation since the interview has a precise purpose[41]. The greatest disadvantage with interviews is that they take a lot of time, which limits the number of interviews that can be carried out.

5.2 Choice of people to be interviewed

The respondents in the case study consist of the following.

- Employees at Alfa-Laval Thermal in Lund, Sweden
- Employees at Alfa-Laval in Moscow, Russia
- Employees at Alfa Laval in Paris, France

The respondents in Moscow and Paris all had frequent contacts with the head office in Lund Sweden. This was the criterion they were chosen on. In Lund the respondents all had or had had frequent contacts with the Market Company in Moscow. I was not able to interview every body with these criteria due to time limits and people's busy time schedules.

5.3 The interviews

In working out the questions (see 5.5) to be used in the interviews I used the so-called funnel technique[42]. This technique means that the interview is started with general questions and continues with more and more specific ones. The reason for this is to avoid that the answers to the general questions are coloured by the answers to the more specific ones. Another reason for starting with general questions is that this gives an opportunity to connect to the respondent and establish a contact that can facilitate the rest of the interview.

Another important aspect in forming the questions is that they should be understandable to the respondents, that is they should not contain unfamiliar or difficult words and they should be rather short. I tried to avoid questions to which the respondents could answer by just saying yes or no. People tend to answer yes in a higher ratio than no when asked something[43].

The most common mistake made in forming questions is making them leading, that is that they effect the respondent to answer in a certain way[44]. I have tried to avoid this in my questions but in some cases it is necessary to ask somewhat leading questions in order to focus the respondents' attention on some aspect that might otherwise have passed by unnoticed. To make the respondent feel comfortable it is important to connect answers to earlier questions when asking new questions as this shows that the interviewer has listen

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[41] Seymour D (1992), *Marknadsundersökningar med kvalitativa metoder*, p.20ff
[42] Rosengren K-E & Arvidsson P.(1992), *Sociologisk Metodik*, p.167
[43] Seymour D (1992), *Marknadsundersökningar med kvalitativa metoder*, p.156
[44] Ibid, p.167f

and taken an interest in what the respondent has said[45]. Another aspect that should be considered is avoiding the word why in interview questions as this word can be regarded as an expression of dislike[46].

5.4 The interview procedure

In an interview it is of great importance that the respondent from the start has a feeling of confidence and trust towards the interviewer. Further it is also important that there is a certain degree of contact between the interviewer and the respondent and that the interviewer shows interest in what the respondent says.[47]. To accomplish this I started the interviews by explaining that I was writing an essay on marketing communication as an examination assignment at the Institute of Technology in Lund (LTH). I informed the respondents that their identity would remain anonymous and that no special knowledge of communication or culture was required in order for them to answer the questions.

I explained to them that it was their own experiences that I was interested in. The purpose of the interview was not fully explained, as I did not want this to influence how the respondents answered the questions. The interviews were carried out at Alfa-Laval's offices in Lund, Paris and Moscow. Before commencing the interview I asked the respondent if he/she had any questions and I underlined that he/she could interrupt me anytime during the interview if anything was unclear.

I started the interview by asking for the respondent's age and education, this to later see if there existed any differences between the answers corresponding to age or education groups. The questions were posed in the order listed in the questionnaire. If the respondent did not clearly answer a question I tried to get a fuller answer by asking additional questions such as "Could you develop that further?" or "What do you mean when you say.....?". I ended the interview by asking if the respondent wanted to add anything to the answers that he/she had already given.

The interviews lasted between 15 to 60 minutes, depending on how thorough the respondent answered the questions. I registered the answers by writing them down on paper. I totally made 15 interviews with employees at Alfa-Laval in Lund, Paris and Moscow.

After having performed a number of interviews I started receiving similar answers from the respondents and this is a sign that saturation has been achieved. The fact that new interviews no longer, or only marginally, give further information indicates that the examination is completed[48].

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[45] Seymour D. (1992), *Marknadsundersökningar med kvalitativa metoder*, p.177
[46] Ibid, p. 182
[47] Dahlström E. (1970), *Intervju- och enkätteknik*, s. 44
[48] Eneroth B. (1984), *Hur mäter man "vackert"? Grundbok i kvalitativ metod*, p. 171

5.5 The interview questions

Age:
Sex:
Education:

1. How long have you been employed at Alfa-Laval?

2. Have you been employed elsewhere before Alfa-Laval?
3. What are your assignments at Alfa-Laval?

4. Do you easily understand other people?

5. Do you feel that others understand you? If not, what is it that they do not understand?

6. What is your experience of Swedish/Russian people and Swedish/Russian culture?

7. Do you communicate in the same way with someone of another nationality as you would with someone of your own nationality? If not, how does this differ?

8. In your experience what in communicating with someone from another country is the most difficult?

9. How do you think communication between people of different nationalities could be facilitated? Improved

10. Have you experienced any difference between communicating by direct contact (face-to-face), Telephone, fax/email? If yes, in what lies this difference?

5.6 Analysis of the interviews

In order to come to any conclusions from the material gathered during the interviews it is important to have a method of analyzing the data. Susan Spiggle has described different stages that can be used for the analysis and interpretation process[49]. This article is mainly directed at consumer research, which does not correspond entirely to the interviews made in this essay. However I still choose to use this method because it helps to sort data and categorize it and this is something that needs to be done in any case study involving interviews. Spiggle also points out that that the different stages in her method do not need to be followed strictly but the researcher can apply the ones that he/she finds most useful in the actual study.

According to Spiggle's thesis there are two processes in drawing conclusions from data. *Analysis*, which breaks down extended and complex data into smaller pieces, and *interpretation* which is the interpretation of the analysis into something understandable and useful.

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[49] Spiggle S., "Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research",
Journal of Consumer Research

5.6.1 Analysis

The analysis is made up of seven operations in which data is processed. These should not be viewed as different steps in the process, instead they are in themselves smaller processes that are not independent of each other but can be carried out in a non specific order. The seven operations are:

Categorization: Here data is classified according to characters and phenomena found in the data. Important here is to classify the data so as it could be an example of more general phenomena.

Abstraction: This operation is built on the results from the previous operation. Here earlier defined categories are grouped into more general conceptual classes. This can be said to be a sort of open coding without close preciseness and instead it gives a generalization of the data.

Comparison: With this operation differences and similarities in the data are studied and hopefully give guidance to further research. Systematical comparison gives the logical principles in drawing conclusions from data. The comparison commences early in the analysis process where data is abstracted and categorized.

Dimensionalization: Here characteristics of the categories are identified. The difference between this operation and abstraction is that here a component is closely specified and valued according to it's importance for the study.

Integration: This includes creation of theory that brings the analyst past identification of themes to producing a complex, conceptual and integrated theory that develops alongside the analysis process.

Iteration: This operation concerns going through the data repeatedly as the name implies. This is done so that earlier operations coincide with the ones to follow.

Refutation: Here the analysis is critically examined. The purpose of this being a confutation of the results that has been reached. This operation can bring about a modification of how the study is interpreted. In addition this helps to make the study credible to the reader.

5.6.2 Interpretation

In the analysis data is both processed and manipulated. In order to make it understandable the data must be conceptualized which is what is done in interpretation. Interpretation represents a synthetic and enlightening totality, similar to deciphering a code. As an aid the researcher can in his/her interpretation use the opinions and experiences of others. Using figurative expressions and metaphors is an excellent way of making data more understandable. In addition to this Spiggle does not give any further guidelines on how to interpret data.

5.7 Criticism of the case study

Spiggle mentions refutation as an operation in the analysis. This means that the researcher consciously and critically looks at the investigation/analysis being performed. I am aware that the number of interviews performed may not be high enough to come to a general conclusion but I believe that the fact that I have performed interviews in both Sweden, France and Russia eliminates some of the one-sidedness that otherwise might have been the case.

When I asked the respondents in Russia and France of their opinion on Swedish people and culture I especially told them that I wanted their honest opinion and that they should not withhold any negative aspects due to me being Swedish. However I believe that it is difficult to be totally honest about a culture and it's people when talking to someone representing that culture. Another aspect that which might have effected the results from the French interviews is that these were executed in French and the author does not master this language as well as English. The explanation to the respondents may not have been as complete as the ones given in English and Swedish in the interviews in Lund and Moscow.

Chapter 6

The results of the case study

In performing a qualitative study there is always the risk of in end having a large quantity of individual answers with no real structure[50]. I came to the conclusion that I could handle the collected data in two ways, I could study the answers one by one and see if any tendencies were revealed or I could study the answers that each individual gave and give an interpretation of how the individuals differed. I chose the first option as I believe this would give more information and help me answer the purpose. In this chapter I will comment the results of the interviews and present my conclusions of these.

6.1 Discussion of the results

In this section I will describe the results from the interviews. This is what Spiggle refers to as categorization in her article. A certain comparison will also be made as I emphasize differences when they occur and I believe that they are of importance. In this section I will only give an overview of the results along with comments on these. The results are presented in the same order as the questions were posed. A complete reference of the interview results can be found in appendix 1.

Questions 1-3: The Age, Sex, number of years in the company and work assignments of the respondents were noted. I also asked if the respondents had working experience from other companies.

The majority of the respondents participating in the case study were of a relative young age, 27 to 32 years. Only a few were over 35 years old. Most of the respondents had been with the company less than five years, only a couple had worked 15 years or more in the company. The majority of the respondents were male. The assignments the respondents had varied. Many of the respondents were sales engineers. Managers, marketers and one assembler also participated. Most of the respondents did not have long work experience from other companies. The Russians had the most experience here, mostly in State organizations. The main reasons for these questions were to start a conversation and make the respondents relax. The questions were general and not difficult to answer and it is often advised to start out an interview in this manner.

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[50] Halvorsen K. (1992), *Samhällsvetenskaplig metod*, s. 131

<u>Questions 4-5: Do you easily understand others? Do others easily understand you?</u>

All respondents felt that they understood others easily and most of them also felt that they were easily understood. Many respondents reacted with surprise when I asked these questions and answered in a way that I interpreted as if they felt that it was obvious that they understood and were understood by others. Another interpretation could be that this is not something that they've given much thought before and when asked about it the reaction was surprise and a resolute answer. However after talking a little while about it several respondents pointed out that it was difficult to know if others understood them well. They also said that these two questions were difficult to answer.

<u>Question 6, What is your experience of Swedish people and Swedish culture? (Posed to the French and Russian respondents)</u>

The respondents gave the following description of Swedish people and their culture. They said that the people were helpful, reliable, rational, open minded, organized, hospitable and easy to have relations with. They felt that they could trust their Swedish colleagues. At the same time they gave the picture of Swedes being rigid and not very emotional. The French respondents also said that Swedes are less flexible and not as prone to creative solutions as the French are. The culture was describes as welcoming, quiet and proper but also a bit inbound, even cold. One Russian respondent commented that Swedes, in comparison with Russians, do not use a lot of gestures when talking. One respondent said "Swedish people are Swedish people" and by this referring to that the Swedes he had met had lived up to the picture he had of them. Overall the Russians respondents gave a somewhat more positive description of Swedes than the French respondents did.

<u>Question 6, What is your experience of Russian people and Russian culture? (Posed to the Swedish respondents)</u>

The respondents described the Russians as open, kind, helpful, emotional and warm. Several thought that in the Russian culture family ties are important and the respondents had noticed that people in Russia help each other out in a larger extend than they do in the West. One respondent suggested that this could be due to the hard times that Russia has gone through. Loyalty was something that almost all the respondents mentioned. They perceived the Russians as being very loyal once they got to know somebody and this was something that also applied to customer relations. The Russians were also described as being bad at making decisions and unwilling to take own responsibility. Bad discipline and pride were two other characteristics mentioned.

The Russian culture was described as more relational than the Swedish culture. It was also mentioned that the presence of religion is much larger in the Russian culture.

<u>Question 7, Do you communicate in the same way with someone of another nationality as you would with someone of your own nationality? If not, how does this differ?</u>

When asked if they changed their way of communication (or their behaviour) when meeting someone of another nationality the respondents gave both positive and negative answers. Several pointed out that they try to adjust to the <u>person</u> they are speaking to and not so much to that person's nationality. A few said that they did change their behaviour i.e. by

trying to learn about the other person's culture in order to better understand them and avoid problems. Quite a few respondents said that they treated everybody in the same way regardless of his/her nationality. However some of these added that they sometimes adjusted their clothes, how fast they spoke or how well they listened to the specific situation.

<u>Question 8, In your experience what in communicating with someone from another country is the most difficult?</u>

The most difficult, in communicating with someone of another nationality, is language according to almost all of the respondents. It was pointed out that most "cross national" communication is in English and this is most often not the maternal language of the people communicating. Some things can not be translated exactly into English and this could lead to misunderstandings. It was also mentioned that people's different backgrounds and experiences could influence how they expressed themselves and this in turn effected how easy it was to understand one another. Some respondents mentioned "Non-verbal" communication as a difficulty. Different cultures have different gestures and their meaning is not always clear. One respondent mentioned that not knowing if one is behaving in a correct way in a new culture was a great difficulty.

<u>Question 9, How do you think communication between people of different nationalities could be facilitated?</u>

Several suggestions on how to facilitate intercultural communication were given. Some respondents mentioned that being prepared before meetings and learning about the other person's culture could make communication easier. Several respondents mentioned that it was easier to understand others when meeting them face-to-face, however here it was pointed out that this is not always possible. Education on cultural differences was also mentioned as well as spending time in another country.

<u>Question 10, Have you experienced any difference between communicating by direct contact (face-to-face), Telephone, fax/email? If yes, in what lies this difference?</u>

Most respondents agreed that communication face-to-face constitutes the easiest form of communication. Misunderstandings more easily arise over the telephone or over e-mail. One respondent said that e-mail is best for confirmation of things already discussed. One advantage with e-mail that was mentioned was that information reaches the receiver even though he/she can not be reached over phone or by visit. E-mail also allows time for formulation, which is not always the case with telephone or direct contact. One disadvantage with e-mail that one respondent pointed out was that a direct response can not be achieved. The responder can wait with his reply in another way than is possible with telephone or direct contact. A Swedish respondent pointed out that he had experienced that direct contact was of greater importance in the East than in the West.

6.2 Analysis of the results

In the analysis of the interviews I will use the theories described earlier and try and find parallels in my own findings. This is not specifically described in any of Spiggle's operations. She does not mention an evaluation on the basis of theory as a method of analysis. However I feel that this is useful since it constitutes a bridge between theory and reality. A theory does not fill any purpose if it can not be applied in real life. Another aspect could be that the understanding of the theory is larger if parallels to the actions and thoughts of people can be seen.

6.2 1 Culture

6.2.1.1 Signs of culture

Signs of culture are becoming less and less visible in our modern society. People from different countries dress more similar, designer trends echo all over the world and many clothes companies are active internationally offering the same products in many different countries. We also eat more similar, i.e. today McDonalds can be found almost everywhere. Clothes and food are, amongst other visible attributes, what Hofstede refers to as *symbols* and they are together with *heroes* and *rituals* the visible signs of culture. As a result of a dominant American film industry together with a more or less boarder free music industry we also share many heroes over the national borders. The heroes of today are often international heroes. However many of the respondents mentioned that gestures and body language were sometimes difficult to understand and this is also classified as symbols according to Hofstede. Some visible signs of culture are disappearing while some are still noticeable. Since we appear to be more similar it might seem as the cultural differences do not exist anymore. Here it should be kept in mind that culture is much deeper than the appearances we first encounter.

The *values* of a culture are more difficult to see. They are often strongly connected to the way people think and what they perceive as right and wrong. Values also govern how people view the role of family, work and social relations. These values are often taken for granted by the culture's members and due to this it can be difficult to pinpoint them. An example of different values could be the role of religion in a society. In Russia the religion has a more central role in peoples life compared to in Sweden. One of the reasons for this could be that the practice of religion was oppressed during the seventy years of communism in Russia.

6.2.1.2. Hofstede's dimensions

The French respondents said that they perceived the Swedes as rigid and unemotional. The Russian respondents also used unemotional to describe the Swedes. It seems as if it's important to hide one's feelings in the Swedish culture. Similar tendencies can be found in Germany and England. In the latter the expression "stiff upper lip" is used to describe that feelings should be hidden. Maybe it is a Germanic heritage to hide one's feelings. This difference in culture can easily lead to misunderstandings.

When a person does not show any or few feelings it can be interpreted as if the person does not feel anything. To someone from a culture where feelings are expressed a person who shows few feelings can come across as a cold, even heartless, person.

In Sweden people have a tendency to be more law-abiding than in France. The French are, according to Hofstede's grid (appendix 5) more individualistic than the Swedes. Also there is a larger power distance. Maybe this creates a need to rebel against the power, i.e. authorities? An example of this was noted when the author visited France. In the offices and in the canteen at the Market Company there were big signs forbidding smoking but no one took any notice of these and stood smoking right in front of the signs. This would probably not have happen in Sweden where it is most likely that someone would remind the "offender" of the ban against smoking.

An interesting observation is that both the French and the Russians viewed the Swedes as not being flexible. According to Hofstede Sweden has a small power distance and I would have guessed that this would lead to a larger flexibility as people are given a relatively large responsibility for their own work. The French also described the Swedes as lacking in creativity and this is another characteristic not in line with a small power distance. New ideas should be easy to implement in such an environment but according to the French and Russian respondents these assumptions are wrong regarding the Swedes.

Both France and Russia are more centralized than Sweden. This is in line with them having a higher power distance. The power is concentrated at one point and decisions are taken here. In Russia this could be a heritage from the Mongols and the "Golden Horde"(see Appendix 3, section 3.2) where the leader ruled from one central point using local delegates to carry out his wishes. In France it could perhaps be traced back to Napoleon. In Sweden there is no clear tradition of centralization and effort has been made to avoid a strong centralization.

As well as being centralized Russia also has a collectivistic character. This was of course more dominate during the communistic era but is still quite strong today. This could be partly due to the agricultural heritage. To cultivate the land in harsh environments it was necessary to work together. This leads to strong social bonds. This was something that was remarked by the Swedish respondents. The Russians help each other in a larger extent than in Sweden. With a almost non existing welfare system the Russians have survived by creating a net of relations that help out in tough life situations.

It should also be noted that most Russians were educated in a different spirit than their Western counter parts. The Marxist/Leninist ideology emphasizes other goals and another way of life than a market economy oriented ideology. However the hardships and changes that the Russian people have had to endure have rendered them very flexible and they are often able to adjust quickly to new situations.

I classify all three countries as masculine with Russian lying closest to the feminine boarder and France furthest away. Performance and material success are important in a masculine country and this is more or less true for all three countries. Russia has become more masculine since the fall of communism with individual success gaining in importance. Sweden has a strong developed welfare system, which is a sign of a feminine culture but I still feel that Sweden is masculine due to the importance of materialistic values and

professional success. In Russia many women have a high education which one would think indicates a feminine culture but Hofstede found in his research that this was not true. Women in a feminine culture do not prioritize long studies and a career. It was more common to find women with a career in a masculine culture.

Insecurity avoidance is smallest in Sweden. People are given responsibility and are trusted to make their own decisions. France and Russia are more hierarchical. The Swedish respondents noted that Russians are not good at taking responsibility and making decisions. The boss takes responsibility and the employees expect to be given directives. A need for rules and norms indicates an insecurity avoiding culture according to Hofstede. In Russia this could be a heritage from the communistic era where most things were centrally decided.

6.2.1.3. Adler's dimensions

According to Adler a culture can be described according to six dimensions. I will here discuss the dimensions that the respondents touched in their answers or that I noticed myself during my visits.

One of the dimensions concerns the relation to the outside world. In Sweden there is a big concern about the environment and there are strict regulations on environmental care. The Swedes also put effort into making the outside environment look nice. In Russia this is not very usual. It seems as if Russians do not care so much about the outer world. Their lawns and public places are not cared for. One seems more concerned about inner values and the home itself. Also the work for the environment is not as developed here. France is found somewhere in between these two cases. In France lawns and parks are very cared for but the French are more acceptant towards environmental pollution. I think that this can be traced back to religion. Sweden has a protestant heritage that advocates a puritanical lifestyle including cleanliness and strictness. In Russia it is the Orthodox Church that is dominant and it emphasizes inner values[51]. France is mainly catholic and this together with the Latin character tends to live in the present.

Another dimension is concerned with activity. This dimension has a lot in common with Hofstede's dimension masculine/feminine. An active culture is characterized by goal oriented citizens who work actively to reach these goals. All three countries described here more or less belong in the active niche which is in line with them being characterized as masculine in the above.

The view of time is another dimension used by Adler to characterize cultures. In Sweden it is very important to be on time and many activities are time planned. It is regarded as impolite to arrive late, even if it is only ten minutes. The French have a wider view of time. It is not as important to arrive on the exact minute. If invited to someone's home in France it is even expected that the guests arrive late. In Russia the view of time lies somewhere in between the two described.

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[51] Interview with K-G Karlsson 980525

6.2.1.4. Motivation Theories

Basic needs are a priority and according to Maslow the needs of one stage has to be fulfilled before the next can be entered. Russia is today meeting challenges of rebuilding their society and change from communism to capitalism. This could maybe be another reason for the lack of interest for the esthetics of the exterior, other needs have to be satisfied first.

According to McClelland cultures with weak insecurity avoidance and strong masculinity are driven by performance motives and people in these cultures are willing to expose themselves to risks to reach their goals. Both Sweden and France fit in this category. Russia fits partly, the masculinity is however not as strong here.

6.2.2 Communication

The functions encoding and decoding in the communication process differ between cultures. Respondents touched this subject when they pointed out that background and experience effect how people communicate. The media used also varies. The ratio of verbal / non-verbal communication differs and this can be said to constitute two media, verbal language and body language. Gestures used differ and the same gesture can have different meaning in different cultures.

6.2.2.1 Verbal and non-verbal language

Language was said by the respondents to be the largest difficulty in intercultural communication. One language can not automatically be translated straight into another. Some of the meaning can be lost on the way. It is not only the words that differ but also the context. In high context cultures most of the information lies in the non-verbal parts and if this is translated to a low context language the non-verbal information is lost.

The way of discussing is another aspect that influences intercultural communication. Russians have a tradition of long discussions and determination and perseverance in discussions is taught at an early age in school[52]. This is something that Westerners are not accustomed to. During a meeting in Moscow I noticed that the Russian participants tended to embellish their presentations while the Swedish participants kept their presentations short and very to the point. This is a difference that should be kept in mind and patience is a key word for Westerners negotiating with Russians.

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[52] Welsh D, "Hospitality, Russian Style: Nine Communication Challenges", Cornell Hotel-and-Restaurant-Administration-Quarterly Dec 1992 n6

The non-verbal communication and the differences in this aspect was mentioned by many respondents. People interpret the behaviour of others on the basis of their own behaviour. This can lead to misunderstandings. The French are more expressive and emotional in their interaction with other people. They also speak their mind and criticize others more easily than Swedes. A Swede, judging this on the basis of Swedish behaviour, could feel offended and run over by this. He/she might take it more personal than it was intended from the French person.

6.2.2.2 Intercultural communication

One respondent said that it was difficult to "read" Russians (the ones that the respondent had met). This could be partly due to differences in the non-verbal language. Sweden is classified as a low context culture according to Edward T Hall while Russian and French, in comparison to Sweden, cultures show more of the characteristics of a high context culture.

Both the Russian and the French respondents said that it was easy to understand Swedes. Low context cultures use mainly verbal expression and this could help facilitate communication. The French respondents also mentioned the Swede's lack of creativity. People from high context cultures often perceive those from low context cultures as being "less attractive", maybe the French see this as a lack in creativity. Russians are usually less verbal than their Western counterparts[53] which is a sign of a high context culture.

France, Russia and Sweden are closer to each other culture wise then if they were to be compared to an Asian or South American country. In this essay I have only looked at culture on a national level. The respondents might very well belong to different subcultures within their national culture. However I did not detect any such patterns when I asked my questions and I did not expect this as my questions were rather general in nature and did not enter into areas where subcultural belonging would show itself

6.3 Summary and reflections

Theory is always just a generalized picture of a reality, which in practice is more complex. Still theory can help us see connections more clearly and to create and overview of reality. In analyzing my results I found that the results from the interviews are in many aspects in line with the theories discussed in chapter 3 and 4. The cultural traits that the respondents described fitted fairly well with the dimensions of Hofstede and Adler. Signs of high- and low context cultures could be seen in the interview answers and these also fitted with the theory.

My intention is not to generalize or reinforce stereotypes but to acknowledge that there are differences between cultures. If we are aware of these differences and understand the reasons why they exist it is much easier to meet foreign cultures with humbleness and understanding.

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[53] Welsh D, "Hospitality, Russian Style: Nine Communication Challenges",
    Cornell Hotel-and-Restaurant-Administration-Quarterly Dec 1992 n6

Many of the differences between cultures concern how we view the world, i.e. religion, and in how we express ourselves, i.e. verbal language and non-verbal language. Despite these differences the respondents seemed to communicate well with their foreign colleagues and no large obstacles seemed to be present in this communication. Most of the respondents interviewed for this essay are used to interact with people of another nationality than their own. This has most probably rendered them experience and habit in doing so. This indicates that knowledge about other cultures helps in avoiding problems in communication. Having a shared goal is another aspects that can facilitate intercultural meetings. In the case of the respondents in this essay they all work for the same company, the same "team", which I believe also contributes to lessen friction.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

The main goal of writing an essay is to give an answer to the purpose and come to some conclusions. In this chapter I present the conclusions that I have come to during the work with this essay. My hope is that the reader's interest for intercultural communication has been awakened and that this important subject will continue to be discussed and research.

7.1 Suggestions on how intercultural communication could be facilitated

In a world where many companies are operating in an international environment both external and internal communication is subject to the problems that can emerge in intercultural communication. The ways of the head office in a multinational company can not automatically be implemented in another country or culture without taking into consideration the local conditions. Different cultures value different thing and that, which is perceived as a correct and suitable behaviour in one culture is not necessarily so in another. Different things have different importance. For example, Russians usually complain about how mechanized our western world is[54]. In the West we do usually not speak about personal matters in business life but this is however something that is of great importance if one wants to establish a good business relationship in the East. In their culture trust is based on a personal relationship.

From the results of my interviews together with the theories portrayed I have arrived at the following three suggestions on how intercultural communication could be improved. These three suggestions are Open-mindedness, Education and Flexibility.

7.1.1 Open-mindedness

Open-mindedness is the ability to meet new situations with interest and free of judgement. This enables people to take things for what they are which is a great advantage in relations with people from other cultures.

When we meet other people, especially those of another nationality than our own, it is important to keep in mind that others may have different way of seeing the world. One of the main reasons for misunderstandings in intercultural communication is that people tend to judge other people's behaviour on the basis of their own cultural background and experience. This is something that is often done unconsciously, i.e. we are not aware that

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[54] Interview with Klas-Göran Karlsson, 980525

we make these kind of judgements. The usual reaction in this case is that we view the observed behaviour as strange and not "normal". In order have better relations with fewer misunderstandings we need to keep in mind that our own view of the world is not the only one. It's important not to view the ways of others as wrong and our own as universally right. Another culture's values and social rules could be based on another reference of what is right, wrong, suitable and accepted and they can in turn view our behaviour as peculiar.

To avoid these prejudgments we need to take a step away from our own frame of reference and meet people with an open mind and without judgement. We should try and view cultural discrepancies as different ways of describing the same thing. However this can sometimes be difficult since our own cultural norms and social codes constitutes security for us. Another aspect that also makes it difficult is that we are not always aware of the judgements we make. To become open-minded one has to work actively in order to make progress. One needs to keep in mind that no culture is universally prevailing and a lock on right and wrong hinders us from meeting each other with understanding and respect.

People are born with different presumptions to open-mindedness. However, I believe that the ability to be open-minded is something that, to a certain extent, can be learned. One way is through gaining experience of other cultures, i.e. visiting foreign countries and reading books. Another way is to challenge the stereotypes that we all have to some extent. To critically judge them and try and understand their origin can help to lessen their impact on our behaviour. I have heard a saying that I feel can help us to achieve a more opened mind, "Strangers are friends that you have yet to know".

7.1.2 Education

Education is the number one weapon against ignorance, which is most often based on fear. By learning about other cultures one develops an understanding and hopefully also an interest for these. Education can also help us avoid the most obvious cultural missteps. It helps to make the contact over the cultural boarders more fluent and functional.

Most of us have, consciously or not, a perception of how people from certain countries are. Stereotypes could for example be that the Italians are very temperamental and eat pasta and that the Finns are quiet, harsh and drink vodka. Stereotype images of people hinder us in our interaction with them. Education can help us to challenge the stereotypes we have of different people. Becoming aware of one's own stereotype images of other cultures is an important step towards intercultural understanding. If one is not aware of this it is difficult to change. Two or three stereotypes of one culture, or even a dozen, do not equal an understanding of that culture. For people operating in international environments the danger is that communication with members of the culture may be limited to the inflexible dictates of the stereotypes.

To communicate competently across cultures one needs tools, ethnographic as well as communicative ones. Learning about other cultures could be done in many ways. Reading books, talking to people who have visited the country, traveling oneself etc. One good way to learn is to use the opportunity to ask people living in the country about local norms and rules. Questions often reveal attitudes that are important for understanding the culture. These could be attitudes towards time, status and role, obligations in relationships, responsibility and the decision-making process, the role of law, and the role of technology.

Asking about what should be avoided and what is considered to be polite is a good way to avoid some cultural missteps.

When we do not understand the norms and behaviour in a culture we often feel insecure and sometimes uneasy. To lessen these feelings one should try to find common grounds between the new culture and one's own in order to feel more at home in the new environment. Spending time in a culture different from our own can help us develop tolerance and understanding towards new situations. We also widen our horizon of how life is to be lived.

On a more practical level education about different cultures is something that the individual company can arrange. Educating their internationally active personnel on how to meet new cultures and about the specifics in cultures commonly interacted with can lessen the mistakes and misunderstandings. Often there is a lot of knowledge on this subject within the company but it is not always shared with colleagues who might need it.

7.1.3 Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to adjust to the present situation so that relations, work, processes and happenings function as smooth as possible. Being flexible is being aware that it is not possible to use the same methods in all situations.

When presenting new ideas and projects to an audience with a different cultural background than one's own it could be useful to try and adjust the presentation i.e. by taking into consideration the audience's background and way of communicating. This could be achieved by consulting someone familiar with intercultural obstacles or a local representative. Different people need to be convinced differently. It is not matters of using the arguments we think are good but of using the ones people can understand and are willing to listen to.

Time was a cultural dimension discussed earlier in the essay and the view of time can vary a lot between cultures. If the view of time in one's own culture is very strict it can be difficult to understand why people, with another cultural, arrive an hour late to meetings etc. Being able to adjust to the situation and to have an awareness that others view time differently helps to give patience and to feel at ease in these types of relations. This of course goes for the opposite situation when someone from a culture with a flexible time view interacts with someone from a culture with a strict time view.

Flexibility is often concerned with giving up some control. If we want a clear view of everything and need to plan most of our activities it's difficult to be flexible. By letting go of some of our control and taking things as they come we can become more adjustable. Prestige can be a hinder to flexibility. We do not want to give up our own ideas even though we realize that someone else has a better one. Sometimes compromise is necessary even though we have to let go off what we believe is best.

7.2 Conclusion

To have a strong corporate culture constitutes a good communication platform in multicultural environments. A clear corporate culture gives people a frame for their daily work and it helps define the goals. This in turn can facilitate relations with colleagues with different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural competence can be defined as *the ability to adjust to other cultures and successfully interact with people of a different background than one's own.* To achieve this I suggested three important aspects in the above. It is not easy to meet new cultures without fear and anxiety but acknowledging that we have these feelings can be a first step to a successful encounter. We need to be aware that we have to work on becoming interculturally competent. The most efficient way to learn is to meet and enter into new cultures.

In spite of all theory and the discussion in this essay it should be mentioned that foreigners are usually meet with tolerance when visiting a new culture. Differences are usually viewed as a spice in the social relation, as long as they remain small and do not enter into sensitive areas. Foreigners are usually allowed a few mistakes that would not have passed by if having been made by a countryman.
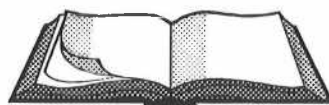
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1.The Interviews

In this section I present the answers that the respondents in Lund, Paris and Moscow gave during the interviews for the case study. In accounting for the answers I use quotation marks when I express the respondents words or sentences, this to clearly separate what is my own words and what is those of my respondents. For the discussions of these results please see chapter 6.

1. Interviews made in Moscow, Russia

Age: 27, 31, 31, 32, 35, 37 years
Sex: 4 male, 2 female
Education: All had higher technical education, one also had a degree in economics

1. How long have you been employed at Alfa-Laval?

Five of the respondents had worked at Alfa Laval between 1-3 years. One respondent had worked for 15 years. This respondent had worked at the Potok factory before Alfa-Laval took over in the beginning of the nineties.

2. Have you been employed elsewhere before Alfa-Laval?

All had worked in other companies before Alfa-Laval, mostly in scientific institutes.

3. What are your assignments at Alfa-Laval?

5 sales engineers
1 database developer

4. Do you easily understand other people?

All the respondents said that they had no difficulties in understanding other people.

5. Do you feel that others understand you? If not, what is it that they do not understand?

All the respondents said that they hoped that other understood them but several of them pointed out that this is very difficult to say.

6. What is your experience of Swedish people and Swedish culture?

Swedish people:

- Helpful
- Reliable
- Open at first contact but then tend to become more closed and reserved
- Think before they act
- Rational
- Organized
- Not very emotional
- Easy to understand

Swedish Culture:

- Relaxed atmosphere where one feels comfortable
- Beautiful surroundings
- Quiet
- Flat organizations

7. Do you communicate in the same way with someone some one of another nationality as you would with someone of your own nationality and? If not, how does this differ?

One respondent said that she adjust the way she communicates to the person and not to the nationality. Two respondents said that they did not change the way they communicated in regard to this aspect. Another respondent said that she thinks good of all people and this affects the way she communicates.

Three of the respondents said that different kinds of knowledge and experiences influence the way people communicate and that people of different nationalities therefor could use different ways to communicate.

The most significant difference that all respondents mention was language. One respondent said "When communicating with someone in another language than ones native language there is a difference in how fast and precise one can express oneself".

8. In your experience what in communicating with someone from another country is most difficult?

All respondents said language as a first response to this question. One respondent pointed out that some things can not be translated into another language and are therefor difficult to express. Another respondent mentioned that all nationalities have their own informal language including gestures and dress code. One respondent said "People think differently and have different living conditions which influences how they are". One respondent also viewed speaking over the telephone as very difficult.

9. **How do you think communication between people of different nationalities could be facilitated? Improved**

   One respondent suggested "Ask people to speak slowly". Another said preparations before meeting people of another nationality could be useful. A third said, "if people are meet with respect there is usually no problem to communicate". Several respondents mentioned that meeting people face to fact usually facilitates communication.

10. **Have you experienced any difference between communicating by direct contact (face-to-face), Telephone, fax/e-mail? If yes, in what lies this difference?**

- When communicating through e-mail it is best that you have meet the person before otherwise there could be problems since messages are usually short and read through quickly
- Speaking over the telephone can be difficult when communicating in a foreign language (i.e. not your maternal language)
- Personal contact is the best because reactions can be seen and this helps understanding
- Prefer e-mail as this medium gives time to formulate the message

2. Interviewguide, Sweden

Age: 29, 32, 47, 54 years
Sex: 3 male, 1 female
Education: 2 technical college, 2 Master of Science

1. **How long have you been employed at Alfa-Laval?**

   Two of the respondents had worked 4- 5 years and the other two had worked for 25- 29 years.

2. **Have you been employed elsewhere before Alfa-Laval?**

   Three of the respondents had not worked elsewhere. The fourth respondent had worked three years in a pharmaceutical company.

3. **What are your assignments at Alfa-Laval?**

   Three respondents worked as marketing manager and the fourth worked with After Sales.

4. **Do you easily understand other people? If not, what is it that you do not understand?**

   All respondents said yes to this question. One respondent added that "I think so but I can not be completely sure".

5. Do you feel that others understand you? If not, what is it that they do not understand?

All respondents gave a positive answer. However more comments were given to this question than the previous one. One respondent said "If I am not understood I continue to explain until I am". Another pointed out that even though he thought that other understood him he said it depended on "how well they know me". A third said," People's different backgrounds and experiences influence how well they understand me".

6. What is your experience of Russian people and Russian culture?

People:

- Large human resources, people have a high education
- They are close to us. More alike then e.g. Germans
- Open
- Kind
- Want others well and often wishes happiness on others
- Help each other
- Bad at making decisions, waits until someone else does it (important to give straight answers if manager)
- Strong family connections
- The elders are often humble and easy to convince, a result of communism?
- The younger are more aggressive and dominant
- Once you know someone they are very loyal
- Personal contacts are very important if not necessary
- A bit impatient, they want to do everything at once
- Proud, try things themselves before they ask
- Difficult to decipher, read their expressions
- No discipline
- No consideration

- They have a need to assert themselves.

Culture:

- Human relations are important, a result of hard times during communism?
- Religion is visible
- A large administration, notes and papers for everything
- The borders between different departments are strong, integration is weak or non existing
- The society is still centralized
- Business relations are more like friendship and trust and loyalty are important. Not keeping one's word is worse than e.g. late delivery
- Relations are of importance, personal background is often discussed whereas in the west price and performance are the important aspects in business

7. **Do you communicate in the same way with someone some one of another nationality as you would with someone of your own nationality and? If not, how does this differ?**

One respondent said "I try to adjust to the culture of the other person and I listening and asking questions about the other person's background". However the respondent underlined that these were only small changes. Another respondent said, "I do not change. I try to be the same person always". However it was added, "I adjust my clothes to the situation". A third respondent said, "Yes. The customer often expects an older representative and it can sometimes be difficult to be taken serious if you're young. It's important to let the customer talk and show interest".

8. **In your experience what in communicating with someone from another country is the most difficult?**

All the respondents mentioned language. One respondent said, "Communication is often in English but this is often not the maternal language of the people speaking". Another respondent said "The background of a person characterizes the communication, if the difference is big there is a risk of misunderstanding". A third pointed out "When interpreters are used it is difficult to know if the translate everything you say or if some things are changed, they are sometimes a filter". Yet another respondent said that the most difficult was "Getting feedback. Has the other person understood what I have said?". The reason for this was, according to the respondent, that it is difficult to read the body language of someone from another culture.

9. **How do you think communication between people of different nationalities could be facilitated?**

- The respondents gave the following suggestions:
- It's important to speak directly to the person you wish to communicate with and show concern.
- Have knowledge about the background of the person you're speaking to.
- It's important to sense the situation and to position oneself on the same level as the person that one wishes to communicate with.
- Meeting people face to face. It is always easier to solve misunderstandings if you know the person.
- Use the phones rather than mail.
- If the same language is spoken (but this is almost impossible)
- Listen and observe. Body language contains a lot of information.

10. Have you experienced any difference between communicating by direct contact (face-to-face), Telephone, fax/email? If yes, in what lies this difference?

One respondent said "Telephone is better than mail but direct contact is the best". Another said "Over mail no direct response can be achieved". Another response was "I prefer the phone. The reactions can be noticed which is not the case with mail". One respondent said "Mail is artificial, people care less and throw over the responsibility on others".

It was also pointed out that "Direct contact is of greater importance in the east than in the west". Yet another respondent said, "Mail gives bad feedback. It's important to vary the communication channels".

3. Interview guide, France

Age: 27, 28, 31, 31,47 years
Sex: 1 female, 4 male
Education: solicitor, high school, 2 higher technical education, business school

1. **How long have you been employed at Alfa-Laval?**

   Four of the respondents had worked between 2-7 years. One respondent had worked for 20 years.

2. **Have you been employed elsewhere before Alfa-Laval?**

   Three of the respondents had worked with summer jobs before joining Alfa Laval. Two had previously been employed, one as a sales engineer and the other in a steel company.

3. **What are your assignments at Alfa-Laval?**

   The respondents had the following assignments Commercial assistant, assembler in the factory, manager in the factory, sales engineer, manager

4. **Do you easily understand other people?**

   All the respondents replied yes to this question

5. **Do you feel that others understand you? If not, what is it that they do not understand?**

   All the respondents replied yes to this question

6. What is your experience of Swedish people and Swedish culture?

People:
- Friendly
- Hospitable
- Easy to have relations with
- Rigid
- Professional
- Trustworthy
- Calm
- Takes many thing seriously
- Open minded
- Not very emotional
- Diplomatic
- Have tact
- Not very flexible

- Less creative
- Not open to new solutions
- Willing to take risks

Culture:

- proper and clean
- calm
- secure
- easy to be in as a foreigner
- Rules have a greater importance
- People respect one another
- Welcoming

7. Do you communicate in the same way with someone some one of another nationality as you would with someone of your own nationality and? If not, how does this differ?

One respondent said, "Maybe in the beginning when I do not know the other person all that well. After a while when a relationship is established I treat them in the same way that I would a countryman". Another respondent said at first that he does not change his way but adds that one "has to be diplomatic and "listen" to the situation". A third said, "I can't think of any difference. Maybe I speak a bit slower". Yet another respondent says that he adjusts to the other respondent, "I try to get into his/her culture". Another response was "No not completely, I try to understand how people think, place myself in their situation".

8. In your experience what in communicating with someone from another country is the most difficult?

All the respondents mentioned language as being the largest obstacle to overcome in intercultural communication.. One respondent pointed out geographical distance as being a hindrance, "It's difficult to get through what you really want when there is a geographical distance between you and the one you are communicating with". Another respondent did not see any difficulties. One respondent said, "It's easier to communicate when using technical terms but it gets more difficult when one wants to express nuances". Another difficulty that was mentioned was culture, "you can never be sure if you behave in a correct way" one respondent said.

9. How do you think communication between people of different nationalities could be facilitated? Improved

The respondents made the following suggestions:
- Exchange between countries. "Spending time in another cultures teaches you to be humble and understanding towards others".
- Presenting oneself and one's background when meeting people. A strong company culture helps to lessen the problem.
- Learn about other cultures.
- Try to understand the behaviour of others.

10. Have you experienced any difference between communicating by direct contact (face-to-face), Telephone, fax/email? If yes, in what lies this difference?

One respondent said, "Communication with email is much easier since there is time to reflect over formulation and words". Another response was "Telephone is much quicker and you get answer directly but there is no time to think over formulation". Most respondents agreed that the telephone is the most efficient way to get quick answers. One respondent said, "Face to face is the best way to reach understanding". Another said, "Mail is difficult because it's hard to express myself in writing in another language (English)". Yet another said, "Direct contact is best but not always possible. Mail is good for confirmation. Misunderstandings often arise when only mail is used".

2. Russia

Russia is one of the world's largest countries spanning from Europe to Asia. Within its borders it comprises a vast variety of landscape, people and traditions. The last decade has been marked by turbulent changes effecting the life's of the Russian people. A system of communistic rule and plan economy has been left behind and given way to a market oriented society with general elections and democracy. In the following I give a short background to the Russian society and the country.

2.1 Climate and Geography[55]

The Russian landscape, that comprises 17,075,200 sq. km, is very much effected by the varied climate. In the winter time almost the whole Russian coastline is frozen while the summer can give temperatures as high as 40 degrees in Moscow, the Russian climate is a typical inland climate characterized by a high temperature difference between summer and winter. Another important characteristic of the Russian climate is dryness that makes farming difficult in some areas. It has been said that the lack of agricultural possibilities is the reason for the Russians preference for collective solutions in the society[56].

There are six major natural regions in Russia. First there is the 'wooded steppe' which is the most densely populated and agriculturally productive of the natural regions. This region stretches to the east of Moscow and continues to Novosibirsk.

To the north of the wooded steppe stretch three regions, each progressively colder and damper than the other. From the south to the north these regions are the mixed forests, which encompasses Moscow, the Tayga and the Tundra. The so-called mixed forest region is typically transitional with deciduous trees increasing in dominance from north to south. The presence of leafy trees in this region together with the long summers has allowed the formation of brown-earth in this region. The tayga, or coniferous forest, is by far the largest of the natural regions, covering more than half of the country. It has long and harsh winters but in the summer time the temperatures rise enough to allow for the growth of trees. The Tundra forms a continuous strip along the entire Arctic coast of Russia. Its southern edge is the tree-line, since beyond it the summers are to cold to allow the growth of trees.

South of the wooded steppe lies the steppe itself which is characterized by the black earth. Little of the original vegetation remains and this region is on of the fundamental and distinctive of the country's natural regions. The black earth is one of the most productive soils in the world. The last natural region is the semi-desert that is found just north of the Caspian Sea and this region is small in comparison to the above five mentioned. This area is dry and is less suited for agriculture.

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[55] Auty R. & Obolensky D. (1976), *An introduction to Russian History*, p.7-13
[56] Klassson K-G (1998), "Är Ryssland Europa? En genealogisk studie"

2.2 Population[57]

The population of Russia was in July 1997 estimated to 147 305 569 persons. The population is age structured in the following way, 0-14 years 20%, 15-64 years 67% and 65 years and over 13%.

The population consists of different ethnic groups were, of course, the Russians have a strong domination of 81.5% of the population. The other ethnic groups consist of Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 3%, Chuvash 1.2%, Bashkir 0.9%, Belorussian 0.8%, Moldavian 0.7% and other 8.1%.

2.3 Education and religion

The level of education in Russia is relatively high. The literacy rate is 98% for the population as a whole. The percentage of the population with a high school degree is 78[58]. Many continue their studies at the university and during communism many also continued into research resulting in a well-educated work force.

Most Russians belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Islam is the second biggest religion especially in the southern parts of the country. Other religions such as Catholicism and Protestantism exist but are not as common.

2.4 Economy

The transaction from planned economy to market economy has largely effected the Russian economy this last decade. Despite being a vast country with a wealth of natural resources, a well-educated population and a diverse, but declining, industrial base Russia has experiences many difficulties. The only major economic success during the last years was the victory in the fight against inflation, which fell from 131% in 1995 to 22% in 1996. The restruction of the social welfare programs and a needy tax reform have not gained any success. The industry has now been largely privatized (75%) while the agricultural sector has remained more or less the same since the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Another large problem that Russia faces is the growing crime rate, which is coloured by the Mafia and a wide spread corruption. Many enterprises continue to operate without hard budget constraints, which results in barter trade and increased inter-enterprise debts. According to official statistics, the Russian economy declined, in 1996, for the fifth year since the beginning of the reforms.

The true size of the Russian economy is hard to estimate. This due to that the unreported economic activity constitutes a considerable part, estimates say 20-25% of GDP. The Gross National Income per capita has been estimated to 2 650 USD (Nov.'97)[59].

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[57] CIA Worls Factbook '97, http://sunsite.sut.ac.jp/asia/russia/ciarussia.html

[58] "Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Ryssland", Info.blad från SIDA

[59] "Sveriges utvecklingssamarbete med Ryssland", Info.blad från SIDA

3. The history of Russia[60]

3.1 Ancient Russia

The verifiable Russian history started approximately 1200 years ago with the tribes who lived in the territory of present day Russia. In the early part of the ninth century the Varangians, a Scandinavian people, crossed the Baltic Sea and settled in Eastern Europe. This people were lead by the semi legendary warrior Rurik who together with his people settled I Novgorod. Rurik's successor Oleg gained control of Kiev, a Slavic city that had arisen on the Dnepr River. With this attainment of rule over Kiev the first establishment of a unified, dynastic state was made.

In 988 prince Vladimir, the great-grandson of Oleg, baptised his pagan realm. This was an important milestone in Russian history since it put an end to the Muslim attempts at converting the Russian people to Islam. It is said that Christianity was chosen by Prince Vladimir after having gone through different religions and found one that suited his the best.

3.2 Under the Mongols[61]

In the second half of the century the Kievan Rus fell to the armies of Genghis Khan. Batu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, launched an invasion into the Kievan Rus' and destroyed all major cities apart from Novgorod and Pskov. The regional princes were made to send regular tribute to the Tatar State, known as the Empire of the Golden Horde. Not much happened during the next century but around the turn of the 14th century Moscow slowly gained importance. Under the lead of the Muscovite prince Dmitri Donskoy the Tatars were challenged and defeated but this was a short victory and it would be until 1480 before Moscow was strong enough to throw off the Tartar rule for good.

3.3 Ivan the Terrible

Ivan IV was born in 1530 and he was the last descendant of Rurik in the Kremlin. Ivan IV ruled his empire with an iron hand and he had territorial expansions as one of his main goals. He conquered Kazan, Astrakhan and West Siberia. He also consolidated the Russian land around Moscow and subjugated the great feudal overlords to the monarch's will. As he got older Ivan's temper got worse and in 1581 he killed his own son with an iron rod.

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[60]Based on Uspensky Gleb (1993), *The Insider's Guide to Russia*, p.19-31

[61] Homepage of Russian National Tourist Office, http://www.interknowledge.com/Russia/

3.4 Peter the Great

Peter was the youngest son of Tsar Alexis and he took the power by defeating his sister Sophia in 1698. After taking the throne he started his program to recreate Russia in the image of Western Europe. He made large and disrupting changes amongst others he introduced military conscription established technical schools, simplified the alphabet, changed the calendar and changed his title from Tsar to Emperor. He met a lot of opposition especially from the nobility. Peters own son Alexis was sentenced to death for treason because he did not agree with his father's doings.

After his death in 1725 not many of Peter's reform lasted and it would be until the rule of Catherine the great before Peter's desire to make Russia into a great European power was achieved.[62]

3.5 The Palace Revolutions

Five years after the death of Peter the Great the throne was offered to Anna of Corland who was the second daughter of Ivan the Terrible. She accepted the proposal, which had a condition that she would give up two thirds of her power, and took the crown. Once she was installed she tore up the agreement and made herself empress. Anna did not rule herself but instead she left this to her minister Biron (who was also her lover). After Anna's death in 1740 Biron was overthrown in the first palace coup of the eighteenth century and he was sent to Siberia. The throne was taken over by Peter the Great's daughter Elizabeth who had arrested the real heir Ivan VI (who was just a child) and his ministers. Elizabeth brought along many changes and was rather modern for her time. Some of the things she did was releasing political prisoners and abolishing the death penalty and torture of lifelong convicts.

3.6 Catherine the Great

Catherine the Great who was the spouse of Peter III (son of Elizabeth) was born in a minor German state as Princess Sophie. Catherine came to the throne as one of the most educated Russian rulers She soon forced her husband, the real heir to the throne, to abdicate and she ruled Russia on her own in the same spirit of sovereignty that had marked the reign of Peter the Great. She was, unlike Peter the Great, an enlightened despot engaged in writing comedies and corresponded with Voltaire and other philosophers, she also engaged in large building projects and domestic reforms. However after the French revolution in 1789 she became more conservative and reversed many of the liberal reforms she had made in her early reign. Catherine died in 1796 leaving the throne to her son Paul who was a weak monarch and ended his days by being strangled in his own bedroom in 1801.

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[62] Homepage of Russian National Tourist Office, http://www.interknowledge.com/Russia/

3.7 The Napoleonic Wars

The nineteenth century started with war for Europe. The two most powerful leaders at the time Napoleon and Alexander I went to war first in The Coalition Wars which was Britain, Austria, Sweden, Naples and Russia against France. This war ended with victory for Napoleon in 1805 at Austerlitz and resulted in the Peace of Tilsit. Russia and France divided Europe into spheres of interest and secretly agreed to fight side by side in any European conflict. Russia was pleased with these arrangements and soon after declared war on Britain and seized Finland that at the time was a Swedish province.

The Franco-Russian Alliance was short-lived and this was due to Napoleons wish to conquer all of Europe. Alexander I wanted to extend his empire to encompass Constantinople and this was not in line with Napoleons plans. There were also personal disagreements between Napoleon and Alexander I this due to Alexander's refusal to agree to a marriage between his sister and Napoleon. France invaded Russia in 1811 and Napoleon swore that he was going to crush the country. This culminated in the battle at Borodino and resulted in Napoleon seizing Moscow and the retreat of the Russian army. Now Napoleon made a mistake in letting his army come to a stand still and this made him loose the one thing that had made him a winning man so far, the discipline. After a couple of months the cold in combination with a lack of food and shelter drove the French army out of Moscow. The Russian army hurried them on and the war turned around. Two years later Alexander I rode into Paris at the head of his army.

3.8 The Decembrists

The young, mostly noble, Russian officers who came to Europe were struck by the vast difference between Russian and European social life. When they returned to their home country the contradictions and injustices in their society that they had been oblivious to before effected them. The liberal ideas they had absorbed in the countries that they had occupied led to the formation of the Union of Salvation which was a secret society comprising 200 members. They wanted social change and when Alexander I died in 1825 they made their move. Troops were gathered in St. Petersburg in December (thereof the name Decembrists) but they were to suffer a great defeat against Nicholas I troops who were much better organized and disciplined. However the revolt inspired generations of radicals all the way to 1917.

3.9 From 1825 to 1917

Nicholas I never forgot the December revolt and remained conservative throughout his reign. He increased his empire with the Caucasians but lost the Crimean wars against the British and the Turks in 1853-56. This defeat which coincided with the emperor's death market the beginning of a new time, a time of reforms and revolutions.

Alexander II accomplished some of the changes that the Decembrists had vowed for. He abolished serfdom, he adopted a number of decrees which made Russia liveable to people of all classes, local government was turned independent giving people of low class better opportunity to safe keep their rights.

However these reforms changed very little in practice and the life of peasants remained hard. Alexander was also a warrior and under his reign Turkey, Romania and today's former Yugoslavia was conquered. Alexander II reign was abruptly ended when he was murdered by terrorists and his son Nicholas II who was to become the last Czar in Russia succeeded him.

3.10 1917

Nicholas II, who was not a very strong leader, was forced to abdicate in February 1917 by the Duma and the power was passed on to a so-called Provisional Government. This Government was to rule until a constitutional assembly could be elected and convened.

On the evening of October 24th Lenin wrote the historic letter in which he called for an immediate revolt and deposition of the Provisional Government. The Party's Military-Revolutionary Committee gave orders to the commanders and commissars of the Red Guard unit and they began their offensive the same night. The Central Telegraph was seized and nine of the ten risible bridges over the Neva were taken by nightfall. The following day the offensive continued while the Provisional Government conferred in the Winter Palace. The Provisional Government was asked to surrender but did not answer this call and the Winter Palace was attacked. Moscow was now in the hands of Lenin and his revolutionary force. Although Lenin and the Bolsheviks enjoyed substantial support in both Moscow and St. Petersburg they did not have control over the rest of the country. The bourgeois population refused to accept the new communistic rule and it would take a civil war lasting three years and taking 15 million victims before the Red Army won and the future Communistic rule was secured.

3.11 The Soviet Era[63]

This era was characterized by social and cultural change during its first years. Lenin decided to partially turn to market economy and he introduced his New Economic Policy, NEP, with which he hoped to help the country recover from three years of destruction. The country was marked by a sense of optimism and opportunity.

Then Lenin died in 1924 and after extended struggles within the Communist Party Joseph Stalin stood as victor. He almost immediately made changes, amongst others he abolished the NEP and introduces plan economy in its place, he collectivised agricultural lands and created state-run farms, art and literature were put under tighter control and religion was strongly repressed. 1936 Stalin reported that socialism had won totally and irreversibly.

When Hitler invaded Russia on June 22 1941 the Soviet Union found itself unprepared for the conflict. The Soviet Union and Germany had made a non-aggression pact in 1939 and Hitlers attack came as a surprise. The war would be four years long with a casualty of 32 million people before Russia triumphed together with the allies on September 2 1945.

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[63] Homepage of Russian National Tourist Office, http://www.interknowledge.com/Russia/

Once the war against the fascists was won Stalin declared that the war against capitalism must go on. There grew an iron wall between Western and Eastern Europe. The threat of being exposed to a nuclear attack by the West (USA) made it crucial for the Soviet Union to create an equal forceful weapon and the rearmament was a fact on both sides of the iron wall.

Stalin dies in 1953 and the power was taken over by Nikita Khruschev who was to dominate the political scene for eleven years. He denounced Stalin and Stalinism at a Party Congress that meant that the country would slowly move towards a milder society with less rigidity. Khruschev started the space program that resulted in putting Yury Gagarin in orbit and made the Soviet Union world leader in this field together with USA.

In 1964 Khruschev was illegally put aside and Leonid Brezhnev took over the leadership of The Soviet Union. His leadership was marked by a determined emphasis on domestic stability and an aggressive foreign policy. The country experienced a decade of stagnation and pessimistic political climate. When Brezhnev died in 1982 he was succeeded first by Yuri Andropov, the head of KGB, and then by Konstantin Chernenko. Neither of them survived long and in 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev took over as General Secretary. With him the country would go through large and almost revolutionary changes.

Gorbachev's new politic was grounded on the two words Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) which have come to be symbolic for the change in the former Soviet Union. The new openness led to, amongst others the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the same year the first open elections since 1917 were held. In 1990 the Soviet Union began to fall apart. Its constituent republics began to issue declaration of independence and soon became independent countries. By the end of 1990 the Soviet Union was replaced by a Commonwealth of Independent States. On December 25 Gorbachev resigned, after having been subjected to pressures from the parliament, and on new years eve the Russian tricolour replaced the Soviet flag on the Kremlin.

4. Company description, Alfa-Laval[64] [65]

4.1 History

Alfa-Laval was created in 1877 by Gustaf de Laval. His invention was the separator that could separate cream from milk. Oscar Lamm Jr. joined as a partner in 1878. AB Separator was founded in 1883 and under the leadership of John Bergström the company gained world wide recognition. USA was one of the first international markets that the company entered into and it was followed by Austria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, France, Italy and Russia. The establishment outside Sweden tightened the competition and stimulated a continuos development of new ideas in the form of a high rate of innovations. The name Alfa-Laval became the name of the company in 1963. The separators had been called Alfa-Laval before and this after the founder Gustaf de Laval and The Alfa patent (a component in the separator).

Milk is probably the word that springs to mind for a lot of people when they hear the name Alfa-Laval and in the beginning it was the dairy industry who were Alfa-Laval's main customers. The separator was the beginning product but milking machines were introduced at the beginning of the 1920's.

The separator can be used for other products besides milk and at the end of the nineteenth century a yeast separator was introduced. During World War I the shortage of lubrication oil lead to another use of the separator, a separator for oil purification. These different fields of use for the separator secured its position on the market.

In the 1930's AB Separator started producing plate heat exchangers and with this the foundation for the expertise in heating, cooling, refrigeration and heat recovery was created. These are the areas for which Alfa-Laval is well known in the world today.

4.2 Alfa-Laval Today

Today Alfa-Laval offers key competencies in Separation, Heat Transfer, Oil & Protein and Flow Technology. The customers come from a wide field including process industries; food, chemicals, shipping, oil production and treatment, waste water treatment and power generation.

An important milestone in the company was the fusion with Tetra Pak in 1991. Alfa-Laval together with Alfa-Laval Agri joined Tetra Pak and formed the group Tetra Laval. The total number of employees is 37 800 and the group has total sales of 12 700 Million Swiss Francs.

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[64] Alfa-Lavals homepage, http://www.alfalaval.se
[65] Sajland Johnny, "Logistik och kostnadskonsekvenser vid ett eventuellt införande av material AISI 304L på lödda värmeväxlare", p. 3
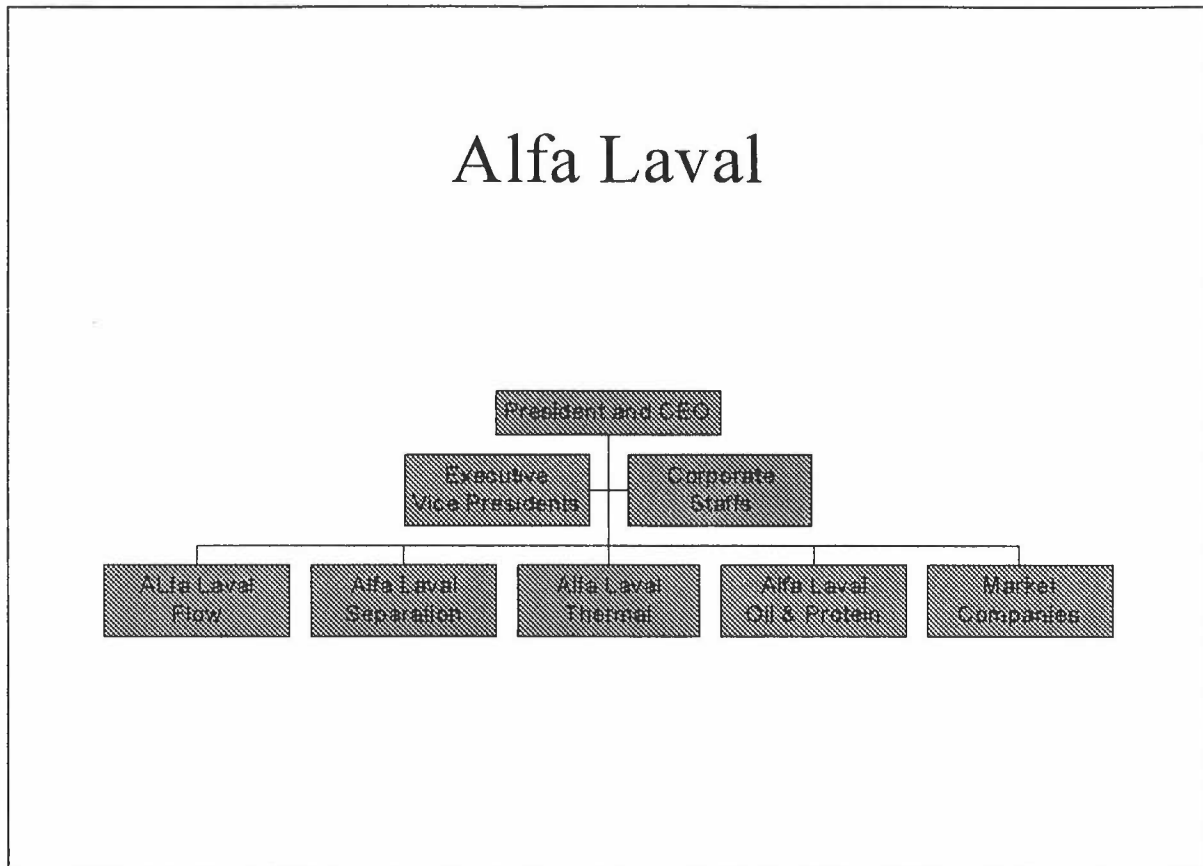
Figure 5, Organization Chart, Alfa Laval

4.3 Alfa Laval Thermal

Alfa-Laval Thermal, which is the essay is carried out, manufacture a number of heat exchanger e.g. plate-, tube-, spiral- and leaded heat exchangers. Alfa Laval Thermal stands for 25% of Alfa-Laval's total sales. The production takes place mainly in Lund but there's also production at Cetetherm in Ronneby Sweden and at Artec in Alone, Italy, which are both fully owned subsidiaries to Alfa-Laval.

The main function of the Market Companies is to sell Alfa Laval Thermal's products. The Head Office in Lund supports the Market Companies with marketing-, technical- and logistical support.
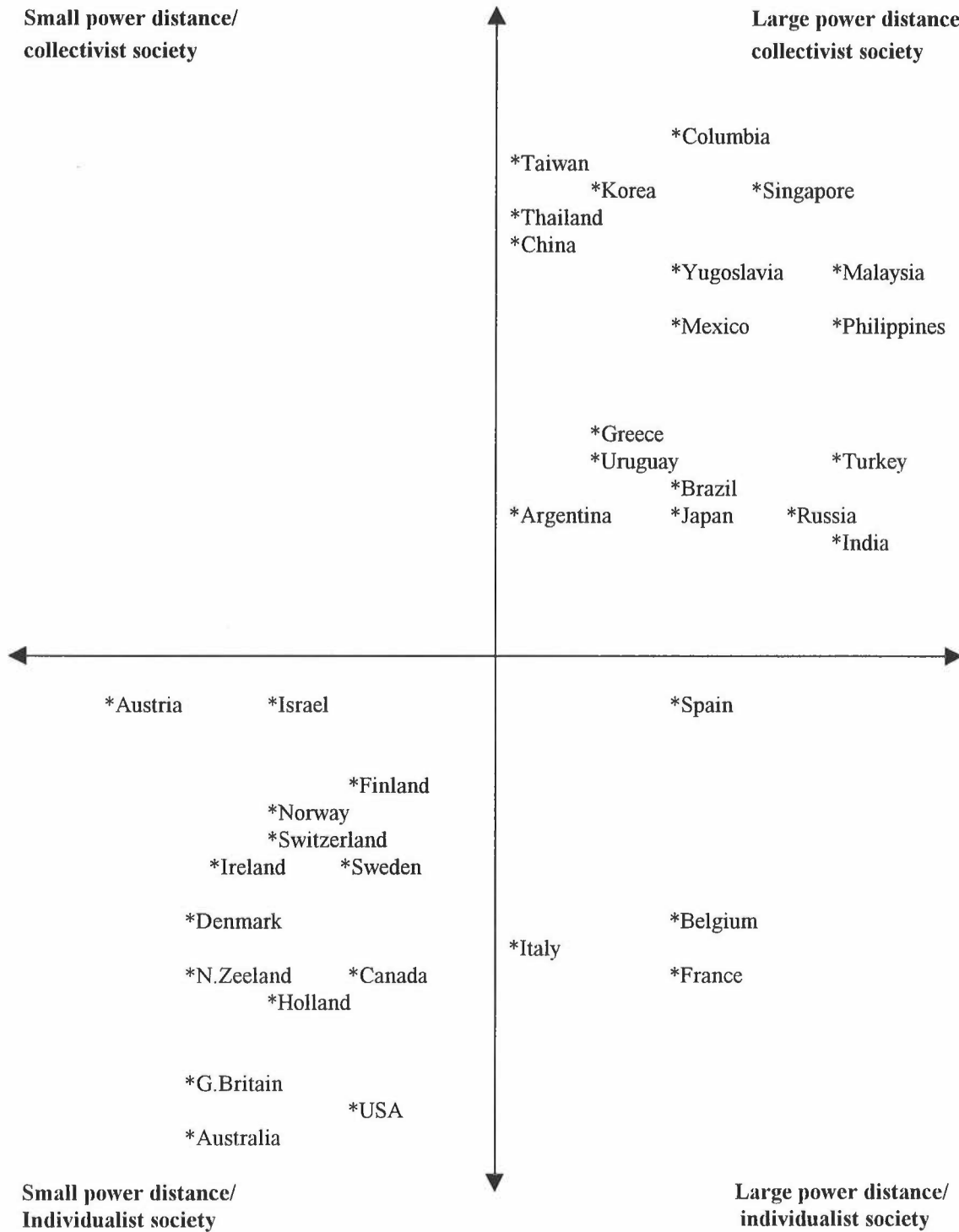
5. Hofstede's Grid

Small power distance/
collectivist society

Large power distance
collectivist society

*Columbia

*Taiwan

    *Korea   *Singapore

*Thailand

*China

    *Yugoslavia   *Malaysia

    *Mexico   *Philippines

    *Greece

    *Uruguay   *Turkey

     *Brazil

*Argentina   *Japan   *Russia

              *India

*Austria   *Israel   *Spain

       *Finland

    *Norway

    *Switzerland

*Ireland   *Sweden

  *Denmark   *Belgium

*Italy

  *N.Zeeland   *Canada   *France

    *Holland

  *G.Britain

     *USA

*Australia

Small power distance/
Individualist society

Large power distance/
individualist society

Figure 6, Map of countries ranked on power distance and individualism indices (source Usnier *Marketing across cultures* based on Hofstede 1980)