

Interkulturelles Management: Friktionen und Fallen in internationalen Projekten

Methodischer Rahmen und Erfahrungen mit der Ableitung konkreter, operationalisierter Handlungsempfehlungen

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Key Messages for today / State of Science

- **Cultural differences can be measured by empirical means**
- **Dimensions lay the grounds for a structured and comprehensive approach**
- **Insights can be used for backward analysis**
- **Insights may have prescriptive character**
- **The challenge is to make it operational**
- **The challenge is to have it sustainably implemented**



■ How to describe cultural Differences?

- Again, you feel there are differences, but how can you describe them in a *structured* and *comprehensive* way?
- Hofstede's research: one approach among others
- IBM: Why does one and the same process work perfectly fine in one country – but not in another?
- As a result, Hofstede identified four (five, six) dimensions to measure cultural differences
- Quantifiable indexes



Hofstede's cultural Dimensions

1 Power Distance

To which extent do people obey formal positions and orders?

2 Individualism

To which extent are individuals independent?

3 Masculinity

How 'result-oriented' is a culture?

4 Uncertainty Avoidance

How well can a culture deal with uncertainty?

5 Long-term Orientation

How far ahead do you think? How far do the constraints of tradition go?

- Trompenaars, Hall, Meyer et al



Hofstede: you can measure and compare!

Scale from 1 (very low) to 100 (very high). Differences of 10 points between two countries show a significant difference in workplace, attitudes and behaviors).

Dimensions	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity	Long-term orientation
Countries					
Germany	35	65	67	66	31
Netherlands	38	53	80	14	44
UK	35	35	89	66	25
France	68	86	71	43	-
Italy	50	75	76	70	-
Sweden	31	29	71	5	33
Russia	95	75	47	40	-
U.S.	40	46	91	62	29
Japan	54	92	46	95	80
China	80	40	15	50	114
South Korea	60	85	18	39	75
South Africa	49	49	65	63	-
India	77	40	48	56	61
Mexiko	81	82	30	69	-
Brazil	69	76	38	49	65



Challenge: Making it operational

- **Again, a sound framework for analysis**
 - Now you know where the differences are
- **But you still have to make insights operational and applicable**
- **And: be aware of stereotypes and generalizations**
 - There is no such thing as an average Indian or typical German!





India

(a mentality hard-wired totally differently)



Profiling (1)

- As a German you
- **Show little power distance**
 - You are not familiar with protocol
- **Rate high on individualism**
 - You assume your partner is in the position to make decisions
- **Rate high on masculinity**
 - You are performance- and results-oriented
- **Dislike uncertainty**
 - You prepare extensively for the meeting
- **Rate low on long-term orientation**
 - You focus on this problem at hand

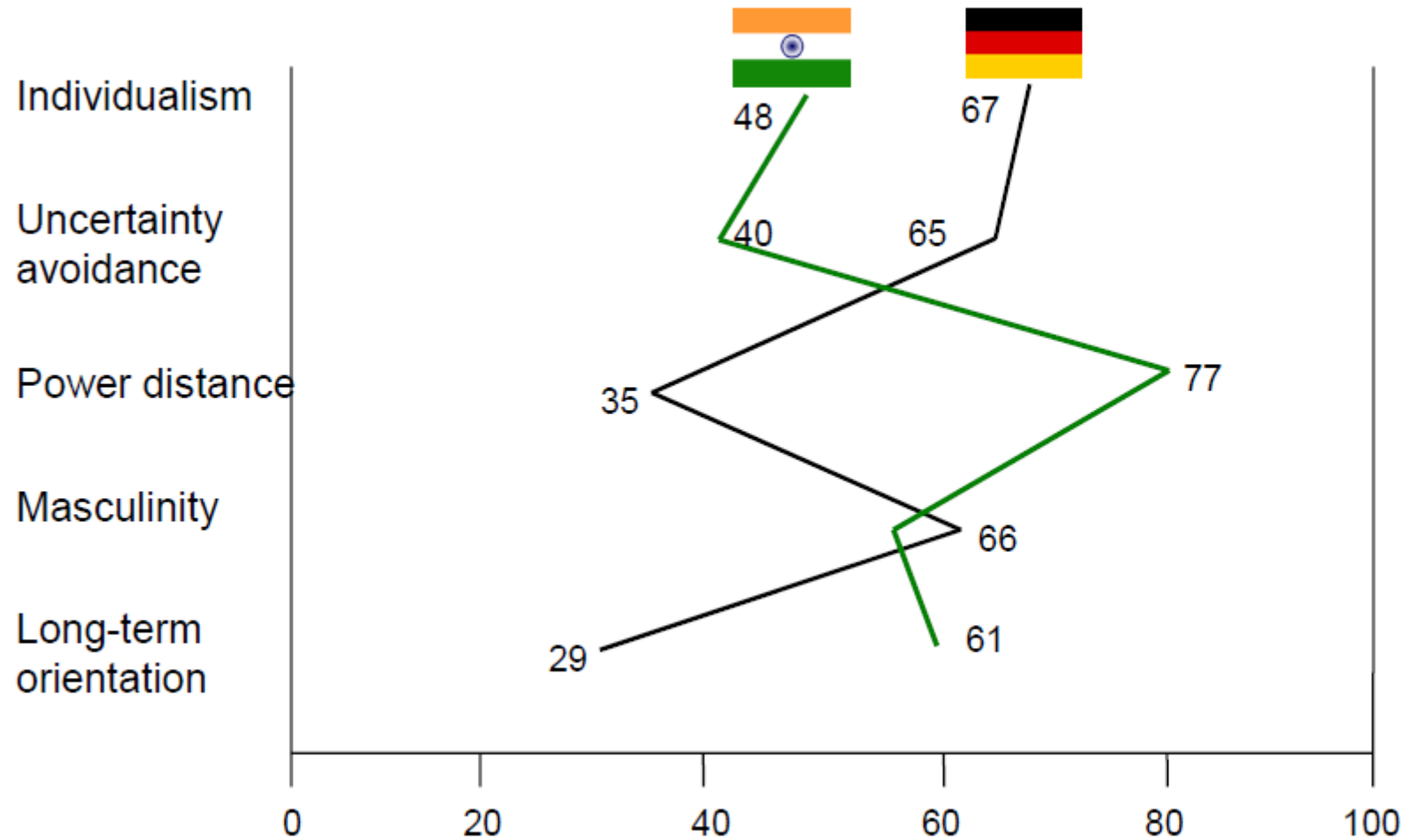


Profiling (2)

- **An Indian**
- **Shows high power distance**
 - Has to obey protocol and acts within a narrow area of authority
- **Rates high on collectivism**
 - Has to balance it out with others – and assumes you know this
- **Rates low on masculinity**
 - Is rather relationship- and harmony-oriented
- **Is less concerned about uncertainty**
 - Doesn't feel the strong need for planning and structure
- **Rates high on long-term orientation**
 - If it doesn't work this time, it will somewhere in the future...



Profiling (3)



■ India: An Example for a Drama (1)

- **You apply all what you learned about meetings, decision making and agreements. In brief, you:**
 - Prepare for the meeting properly, structured and in detail
 - Clarify goals, options and constraints beforehand
 - Travel to India (travel, jet-lag, chaos, heat, humidity, germs, spices, traffic...)
 - Deeply discuss the concept/topic with your counterpart
 - Invest much time, heart blood and devotion
 - Highlight, re-consider and confirm all the details
 - Feel great because you see shaking heads
 - Summarize carefully
 - Gain a commitment (at least, you think so) and shake hands
 - Consider it done



■ India: An Example for a Drama (2)

- **So far theory and expectation. In reality you might be irritated by**
 - Indian negotiation folklore
 - Participants coming in and getting out
 - Some leaving and without notice, some not coming back
 - Partners writing emails while you talk to them
 - Or accepting lengthy phone calls, even private ones
 - The absence of an agenda or structure
 - People freely jumping to other details – and jumping back
 - Counterparts not being prepared for the meeting
 - Participants being late for the meeting
- **In brief, you witness all the things you simply do not know from home**



■ India: An Example for a Drama (3)

- Much of the former **(both Indian and German!)** can already be explained by Hofstede's dimensions!
- Let's now assume you successfully finish your walk through this bazaar. But the story goes on!
- The very next day you come to work, just to learn that all or some commitments are neglected
- What has happened over night?
- Let's have a look!



India: An Example for a Drama (4)

- **Some explanations are:**

- You misinterpreted the body language: shaking the head does not mean commitment **power distance** **collectivism**
high context cultures
- You overrun and overwhelmed people – Indians do not feel the need for extensive preparation **uncertainty avoidance** **masculinity**
 - In addition, Indians are more pragmatists than theorists
 - And: Indians make decisions freely *in* the meeting, not *before*
- Indians have a hard time in admitting deficits, freely mentioning concerns and bad news or just saying “no” – they simply don’t have the tools for doing so **power distance** **collectivism**



■ India: An Example for a Drama (5)

- **Some more explanations are:**
 - Indians have to get in sync with their peers and superiors – and assume you are aware of this **collectivism**
 - Consistently, any commitment is given under this constraint
 - An Indian individual can hardly give a commitment alone
 - Reality flows and things constantly change – any agreement is consistently relativistic and by nature of little sustainability
 - uncertainty avoidance**
 - polychronic time**
 - high context cultures**
- **Indians do not have a reconciliation mechanism for such a situation ('rowing back')**
- **One way out then is to neglect handshakes – one thing you should never do in a German environment!**



India: An Example for a Drama (6)

- **Summary:**
- **Sources of harmful conflict are manifold**
- **An open mindset and bridging is mandatory**
- **Functional thinking with narrow areas of responsibility**
- **Even in case face-to-face works out great there are organizational challenges**
- **Patience, openness and willingness to learn**
- **Some Indians know and understand Western style**
- **A remark on the IT development cycle: ‘works as designed’ problem**
- **Strong QA right from the beginning – and continuously**



■ Making it operational: One-Pagers

- One-Page Insight Summary for Indians
- Don't misunderstand German distance or 'arrogance'
- Never take challenging personal
- Expect Germans to come straight to the point – little warming up
- If you want to impress Germans, show you are a 'structured' and well 'organized' thinker & contributor
- When faced with a problem, look for solutions (instead of returning two problems)
- Bring each item to an end before moving on to the next one
- Do only one thing at a time
- Dedicate your full concentration on your partner
- And "stick" to agreements – and dates – unless explicitly revised
- Be *prepared* and be *timely* – understand what is important to Germans

- **Something you can refer to**
- **Simple for operative use**
- **The result is important**
- **But even more: the process that leads to them**
- **Condensed result of a 1½ year process**
- **Designed for both parties**



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One-Page Insight Summary for Germans (1)

- **Understand collectivistic dynamics and protocol**
- **Understand that decision making and consensus building happen differently**
- **Your partner may not be in the position to make decisions immediately**
- **Know that any criticism might be understood as being personal**
- **Do not 'punish' for bad news**
- **Encourage decision making**
- **Do not misuse shared inside information**



Additional Dimensions: 24 in total

- Hofstede's dimensions explain 60-70% of observations
- Other authors offer different dimensions
- Consistency: redundancies require consolidation
- Validity: each of varying relevance

		PDI	IND	MAS	UAI	LTO	IVR	MVP	LHC	UVP	IVC	NVA	SVD	AVA	ART	COM	EVA	PER	LEA	DEC	TRU	DIS	SCH	
Hofstede	PDI																							
Hofstede	IND																							
Hofstede	MAS																							
Hofstede	UAI																							
Hofstede	LTO																							
Hofstede	IVR																							
Hall	MVP																							
Hall	LHC																							
Trompenaar	UVP	S	S		S	M		M																
Trompenaar	IVC					M																		
Trompenaar	NVA	S	M						S															
Trompenaar	SVD	S	S				W		S	M			S											
Trompenaar	AVA	S	M	M					M					S										
Trompenaar	ART					M		S																
Meyer	COM		S																					
Meyer	EVA																							
Meyer	PER																							
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Experiences that make you go ballistic

- **Be ready for the unexpected!**
- **It might go far beyond what you can imagine**
- **Stay cool and think before reacting**



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- Insights may have prescriptive character
- The challenge is to make it operational
- The challenge is to have it sustainably implemented
- **Operationalization: condensed and referenceable one-pagers**



Workshops

- 1** Intercultural Issues
- 2** Leadership/Management/Senior Management Expectations
- 3** Sabotage – Collaborative and Non-collaborative Behavior
- 4** Customer- and Process-Orientation
- 5** Business Strategy and IT





Thank you!

