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CULTURE AND “HAPPINESS”- SOME REFLECTIONS

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Summary:

1. Happiness can be defined as “the deepest attainable inner peace”.
2. Happiness requires some notion of constraint. Civilization over time takes the shape of increased impulse control.
3. It also requires a degree of autonomy. A feeling by people that they are in control of their own lives
4. Those societies with strong concepts of constraint and autonomy within their cultures are markedly happier than others. They are also markedly wealthier. The ‘network’ countries - which also share a strong value of ‘Femininity’ are a standout example
5. Societies that do not have strong values of internal constraint and autonomy are markedly less happy.
6. But all is not lost for hierarchical societies – Governments can take resolute ‘Top down’ action to reinforce a narrow interpretation of rule of law and institutions enforcing the rules. This can restore a sense of being in control of their life to people.

Keywords: Culture, happiness, constraint, Mental Images, autonomy.

1 A personal and biased preface.

Riding my bike I frequently pass a hastily chalked slogan on a wall halfway to my usual destination.

It says: ”All you need is less”.

It always triggers my curiosity. What exactly does that mean? Is it a modern version of the advice given by the oracle of Delphi in Ancient Greece: “ Meden Agan” : “Nothing in excess”?

How, I thought, is that related to the definition of happiness I remember from my student days, put forward by a favorite teacher. A definition that resonated so much that after 50 years it still sounds very true: “happiness is the deepest attainable inner peace”. Could it be I thought, that restraint in the gratification of needs is an important element in getting to peace of mind?

I also recall the way a famous culture expert described the development of civilization. Norbert Elias in his book: “ The Civilizing Process” , (Elias, 2000) described the process of civilization in terms of the development of self-control. The higher the level of civilization the higher the level of restraint, stability and flexibility.

You can see how things have evolved by, looking back in time. In his book, “Goede manierlijke seden (1546)” for example Erasmus made the following recommendations for good behavior (Erasmus, 1546).

- “Do not blow your nose with the same fingers with which you reach into the shared dish;
- Vomiting is no disgrace provided you don’t get it over other people.

Our view of what is acceptable has come a long way since then.

Ok I thought, but if civilization requires constraint in at least part of the world, is this a universal truth. ?

Is this concept of constraint valid for cultures that, for instance, are (in) famous for excessive use of alcohol at parties?

People in my course often ask for advice on how politely to tell someone from these cultures that they have had enough. Well, recently I found myself in the position of a participating observer.

My wife and I decided to make an all-inclusive three week cruise (Only for research purposes of course!).

On this trip, “all inclusive” meant what it implied. All you can eat. Exquisite meals, including lobster, crab and huge Angus steaks; alcohol, including delicious cocktails and a butler to fulfill every need.

I was keen to see the effects of this concept on the behavior of our fellow passengers and whether I could see any cultural differences.

It is always a good idea to start with some introspection. How easy would it be to restrain my gluttony and to limit my consumption? It is always difficult to avoid the trap of self- deception so on the advice of my external conscience (my wife) I chose an objective measure: “weight”.

The disappointing reality. After only two weeks I had some difficulty in buttoning up my trousers.

Conclusion: Opportunity creates a challenge. It is one thing to be in favor of self-restraint if temptation is absent. It’s not on the table or in the fridge.

It’s another thing to have the discipline to say no when seduction is presented on a plate. Ask Bill Clinton.

When it comes to comparing cultures, we have to recognize that, whatever the culture, there are always some people who are more restrained.

But the question here is if we can see broad group tendencies.

The first group I looked at were Americans. How did I know they were Americans? Well, easy enough, I thought. They are the ones eating with a fork only. Most of them are overweight. Especially the men. They started drinking beer and cocktails early in the morning and continued till late in the evening. I saw that most Canadians were somewhat more constrained. How did I know they were Canadians? Well they made that clear immediately. They wanted to distance themselves from their neighbor to the south, the country that is led by the man whose name is not to be mentioned.

Then I realized that I was about to fall into the trap of generalizing from a random sample, without even being sure if the people I assumed to be from a certain nationality were indeed from that cultural group . Exactly the behavior I reject in my work as an intercultural specialist.

2 The Measurement of Happiness

I had to go deeper. If I were to measure the link between constraint and culture, I had to look at data. In particular, data from two research projects.

2.1 World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard & Sachs, 2018)

The UN General Assembly passed in a resolution in 2011: “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development”. The resolution urged member nations to measure happiness and well-being and called happiness a “fundamental human goal.” At this meeting, the first “World Happiness Report” was published. It has been published yearly with the exception of 2014.

The 2018 report had data from 156 countries. Key elements considered to be important for happiness were: *GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.*

2.2 OECD Better life Initiative: Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (OECD, 2011)

The second major piece of research is the Better Life Initiative of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.

One critique of the UN focus on “happiness“ is that research does not always distinguish between ‘happiness’ and ‘well-being’.

In most research projects, happiness means a “state of mind”, such as being satisfied with your life. Well-being is used in the meaning of what benefits or harms you. This might include issues beyond happiness like the *meaning of social contacts and friendship*.

The WHR and SWB 2018 Rankings of countries are as follows:

WEF ranking 2018

- 1 Finland
- 2 Norway
- 3 Denmark
- 4 Iceland
- 5 Switzerland
- 6 Netherlands
- 7 Canada
- 8 New Zealand
- 9 Sweden
- 10 Australia
- 11 Israel
- 12 Austria
- 13 Costa Rica
- 14 Ireland
- 15 Germany

SWB ranking 2018

- 1 Denmark
- 2 Canada
- 3 Norway
- 4 Switzerland
- 5 Sweden
- 6 Netherlands
- 7 Australia
- 8 Israel
- 9 Finland
- 10 Ireland
- 11 Austria
- 12 USA
- 13 New Zealand
- 14 Luxemburg
- 15 UK

Conclusions from the rankings

These reports allow us to draw some clear conclusions about this type of research where the individual is the main point of reference:

1. Subjective Well-being tends to be stable over time and
2. Both rankings are very similar
3. Well-being Is strongly related to personality traits

A number of studies have found that the SWB constructs are strongly related to personality traits. Especially the “big five”- the key personality traits accepted by professional psychologists: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. (for explanation see Notes (*5))

Summarizing the influences of personality traits on happiness:

- Happiness was most strongly predicted by extraversion, low neuroticism and high Conscientiousness.
- Distinguishing elements: Emotional stability (low Neuroticism), social and physical activity (high Extraversion), and constraint (high Conscientiousness).

Again a confirmation that constraint is in a positive way related to happiness.

Critical remarks

Some critical remarks about the 2 ranking systems:

1. Happy individuals but not happy nations

The happiness indicators of both ranking systems measure life satisfaction as perceived by individuals. The score for each country is calculated as the mean value of individual responses.

But critics claim that this mean value is not a true measure.

Happiness is seen as an individual matter. “Happiness is an individual choice that is independent of the society. It is not something to be measured using variables that capture a nation’s well-being. This means therefore that one cannot really talk of a happy or unhappy nation, but of happy or unhappy individuals”

2. It measures how people evaluate their life as a whole rather than their current feelings.

The Nobel price-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman 2012) added a completely different dimension to the thinking of happiness. Based upon his research he found that people are in essence very bad in understanding and balancing the difference between past, present and future experiences of happiness. The problem is according to Kahneman is that in research the happiness question is mostly not related to how people feel now, (He calls this: experienced utility) but related to a memory based “how was it ?” (Remembered utility). The remembered utility is subject to distortion because of the life stories people construct for themselves and others. Moreover, using the remembered utility for assessing a future state of happiness (Predictive utility) is very difficult. Kahneman refers here to research in affective forecasting: how well do people predict their emotional reactions to future events. Most people imagine the transition to the condition or state, not the actual state itself. What is underestimated is the talent of human beings of adapting to new situations. Even after disease or real bad luck there is a tendency to adapt to the new situation and to report feelings of happiness.

3. Culture and Happiness

3.1. The Hofstede model of Culture

To summarize where we are:

- Some countries are markedly happier than others.
- That difference is stable over time
- Happiness is the measure of the sum of individual perceptions. All countries have happy and unhappy people

The key question then is whether there is something in the culture of the ‘happier’ countries that contributes to producing a higher proportion of happy individuals?

There is good reason to think that that country scores are not just aggregates of individual scores. Culture has a part to play as well. To understand why culture is important we need to understand the work of Geert Hofstede (see notes *2,*3), the pioneer of cross cultural analysis

In research that has been validated over more than 40 years, Hofstede identified fundamental issues every society has to cope with.

What we call cultural difference is determined by the way the dominant majority in a country addresses those issues.

The validated first 4 dimensions in Hofstede’s model (power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity and uncertainty avoidance reflect those issues.

Each country has a ‘score’ on each dimension. These scores in turn provide a ‘picture’ of a country’s culture. Hofstede’s approach is clear, simple and statistically valid.

For a short explanation of the Hofstede model (see note*3)

While each Dimension is independent of the others (each explains something distinct about a country), the most important questions are answered by analyzing how each country's scores on each dimension interact with each other.

There are over 150 countries in the world. Happily, we do not have to understand 150 distinct cultural types.

3.2. The Mental Images model of Culture

Working with complex international organizations like the IMF and the Worldbank, Wursten (Wursten, 1999; 2017, see note*4) developed a system, to combine all 4 dimensions. In doing so he was able to define 6 Culture Clusters— groups of countries with similar scores across the four dimensions.

The six Clusters thus describe 6 perceptions (what Wursten calls 'Mental Images') of what the world looks like. Japan was later added as a seventh, exceptional, single Mental Image.

These 7 mental images reflect individual, group and organizational behavior in each cluster.

As an example: The way the concept of democracy is interpreted varies according to the mental image of the Cluster being considered.

When we look at organizational behavior, those Mental Images show clear consistent differences in more than 20 different aspects of business life. Those differences range from how to sell to how to interact with one's boss.

Against this background, it is worth looking at what the Mental Images have to say about happiness.

First let us recall that in the 2018 World Happiness report showed 5 elements important for happiness: real GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption.

Second, only countries from three 3 Mental Image Clusters made it to the list of first 15 countries. It is hard to believe this is coincidence.

Indeed, it is not. Let us analyze the key components of those three clusters.

Network, Contest and Machine

First and most importantly the three clusters all have a low score on Power Distance and a high score on Individualism.

Small Power Distance means that people are assumed to be empowered to make their own decisions

In these societies, Hierarchies are not seen as an existential fact of life. Hierarchies are for convenience. Within organizations, people are less inclined to take orders without challenge. They expect to 'have their say' in decisions that affect them.

The high score on Individualism means that citizens see the individual as the main focus for the value system. People in these cultures are supposed to look after their own interests and the interest of their close family. They don't have to be concerned about loyalty to the opinions of an in-group (tribe, ethnic group, religious group), as would be the case in Collectivist cultures.

They feel protected in pursuing their individual interest by the rule of law. Whereas in Large Power Distance/Collectivist cultures the law tend to serve only those at the top and the dominant tribes/interest groups.

Very broadly therefore, people in small Power Distance, Individualistic cultures are free to make their own life choices and are protected in their individual rights by a rule of law that is explicitly focused on autonomy of the individual (Wursten, 2016).

Evidence shows that GDP per capita is in general higher in Individualistic cultures. Corruption studies also indicate that Power Distance is an important factor in predicting

corruption (after of course, poverty). Small Power Distance clusters are less corrupt – reflecting a well-known saying: “power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely”

Finally, people in Low Power Distance countries have more trust in Governmental institutions. Put simply, there is a feeling that these institutions are run by “people (more or less) like us” who can be held to account”.

Things tend to be different in hierarchical countries where people tend to mistrust the higher placed. ‘They are a different type of people, and you never know what they can do to you!’

If we look at the cultures scoring high in the ranking of happiness, they are mostly from the Network cluster (Scandinavia and the Netherlands) and the Contest cluster, the English speaking Western world))

Next to small Power Distance and High individualism, these clusters also share a lower score for Uncertainty Avoidance (the emotional need for predictability). This means that they don’t have an emotional need for strict rules. People don’t feel too restricted in making life choices.

The combination of this low Uncertainty Avoidance and the lower score for Power Distance means that the rules and boundaries that are accepted as important are *internalized* and lead to *restraint*. They don’t have to be heavily controlled and inspected. In other words: these cultures tend to be restraint

In hierarchical cultures that also have strong Uncertainty Avoidance (such as the “Pyramid” and the “Solar System” clusters) people have an emotionally need for clear behavioral rules and boundaries. But as a consequence of large Power Distance they also have a strong need for external control and inspection if boundaries are trespassed: “people respect what you inspect”. This external control through a hierarchy however also acts as a limit in making free life choices. If external control is not in place, than they do whatever is pleasing them at that moment.

The Contest cultures are defined by their pragmatic thinking. The emphasis is on taking action. As an example: An official policy of the British Government to influence the happiness among its citizens describes aspects of what people can *do something about*. The recommendations result in a mental wellbeing action plan of five activities a day:

Connect, keep on learning, give, be active and take notice!

The only other cluster represented in the ranking of the first 15 most happy countries is the Well-oiled Machine cluster (Austria, Germany, Hungary and the German speaking part of Switzerland) Again, they share small Power Distance (to the surprise of many) and high Individualism.

What sets them apart from the Network and Contest clusters is higher Uncertainty Avoidance – seen in the need for order, structure and clear and unambiguous planning. Compared to the two other ‘Happy’ Clusters this means that agile decision making is more difficult, especially in a rapidly changing world. We can see this in the most common political slogan in elections in Germany: “Keine experimenten!”. “No experiments”

To take two examples:

One: People from cultures like Germany and Austria consume more muscle relaxants than people in weak Uncertainty Avoidance cultures.

Two: A recent article in the Economist (Cheer Up, Deutschland, 2018) noted that the strong Uncertainty avoidance mindset: “expresses itself in **perfectionism**. Board a train with a group of Germans and one will soon start grumbling about some minutia. The same habits undergird Germany’s industrial success. Its factories are staffed by conscientious workers who treat each blemish as an abomination, honing and re-honing production processes until everything is in Ordnung (order). ‘

A famous song by Schubert “Der Wanderer” is expressing the nostalgic dilemma of this mental image: “Dort, wo du nicht bist, dort ist das Glueck”. In English: “There where you are not, there is happiness.”

The “Network cluster”

One culture cluster stands out: the Network system. These countries are all part of the 10 most happy in the rankings. They differ with Contest countries only in one of Hofstede’s key value dimensions: they are feminine (consensus orientation, focus on quality of life. Sympathy for the underdog). By contrast, Contest countries are all Masculine: (competitive, success orientation, admiration for ‘winners’)

Some users of the “mental Image” system think that, as this “Masculinity” is the only real difference between the network and Contest countries, both clusters must be quite similar in practice.

However the reality is rather different. Femininity and masculinity affect how the other three dimensions manifest themselves.

The feminine score of the Scandinavians and the Dutch lead to a strong emphasis on equality, solidarity with the underdog and fairness. Because of this, it is seen as important that everybody can participate in decision making and that final decisions also take explicit account of minorities.

Autonomy (driven by a ‘feminine’ manifestation of small Power Distance and High individualism) is probably the secret of the Network Countries above average happiness.

A systematic analysis of (work) motivation over a period of about twenty years showed that “autonomy” for a majority of people from the Network countries autonomy is by far the strongest motivator (Wursten, 2013). More than pay.

“Owning” your own work content is the secret of understanding Network ‘Happiness’. Everyone has his or her say. Everyone is as free as possible to do his or her job to meet the agreed upon company goals.

The Masculine score for the Contest cultures lead to more of an emphasis on equality of opportunity (as opposed to an equality of outcome) a “level playing field” and ‘Fair play’ It is accepted that there will be winners and losers. Wealthy and successful people – who have succeeded fairly (Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Elon Musk etc.) are admired. As a result of the solidarity with the underdog inequality is at a low level in the Network countries. This has some interesting consequences for the “happiness” factor.

In 2013 Thomas Piketty, (Piketty, 2014), put the issue of inequality again on the political agenda by his book “Capital in the Twenty –First Century”. His theme is the consequences of wealth concentration and wealth distribution. He found looking back 250 years that the rate of capital return in developed countries is greater than the rate of economic growth.

Jonathan Rauch (Rauch, 2018), summarized his research findings about the consequences for happiness in the telling heading: “Why prosperity has increased but happiness has not”.

He explains: “Our well-being is local and relative — if you live in a struggling area and your status is slipping, even if you are relatively comfortable, you are probably at least a bit miserable” Happiness is relative he continues, because we human beings are “constantly judging our worth and social standing by comparing ourselves with others today and with our own prior selves.” Even when people profit from economic growth it might increase their unhappiness because “people tend to compare upward when gauging status, they perceive themselves to be losing ground.”

Summary of conclusions and some thoughts about the four more hierarchical Clusters

Looking at the more egalitarian clusters, Network, Contest and Machine, three cultural elements seem to contribute at their position on the happiness rankings:

-Autonomy. The result of scoring low on the Power Distance Index

-Constraint. The internalization of the need for self-control. The combination of a weak Uncertainty Avoidance and a small Power Distance.

-A rule of law system that is protecting the rights of individual citizens and minority groups.

This “narrow” type of law is the reflection of high Individualism (See Wursten, (2016)) This rule of law works also out as a protection against corruption by powerholders.

Going to the other end of the scale, it is in line with the conclusions above that the more hierarchical countries: the Pyramid cluster, Solar System, Family and Japan all score lower on happiness.

Of course, we are not talking about forces of nature. Things can be done for the compensation of the cultural restrictions. Two elements are clearly important:

1. The culture of these countries is in essence hierarchical. The definition is emphasizing that it is about the acceptance of hierarchy by the people not in power. Change to compensate for reasons for unhappiness must start and be enforced top down. The politicians should show that they are serious in maintaining the elaborated rule of law. Protecting the rights of individual people and fighting corruption. Singapore is an example of a Government clearly seeing that it is a well understood self-interest in being non-corrupt.
2. Independent institutions should be highly visible in enforcing the rule of law. The saying in large power distance countries is: people only respect what you inspect. Enforcing should be clearly seen by the general public, and the politicians should in the open support these institutions.

A clear example are the Pyramid countries from Eastern and Middle Europe.

Reports show that there is a general feeling of lack of control over their own lives.

Citizens of these countries complain that after the fall of the dominating Soviet empire they expected to be more free. What happened instead is that, in their perception:

-the ideology changed, but many of the people in power during Communism are still in positions of power nowadays.

-they were freed from the coercion by the Soviet Union and voluntarily joined the European Union. Now they discover that the rules of the EU are strongly limiting their freedom of decision making.

Again: a perceived feeling of lack of control over their own lives.

In a recent interview psychiatrist Frank Koerselman confirmed, (Verbraak, 2016), that autonomy (as the freedom to make your own decisions and to determine your own future) is one of the basic needs of adult human beings.

But.....!

A totally different ranking is produced by the Happy planet index. This index tells us how well nations are doing at achieving long, happy, **sustainable** lives.

This ranking includes among other elements the ecological footprint of a nation. Here “Western” countries are not at all ranking at the top.

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) *sustainable* wellbeing for all.

1. Costa Rica
2. Mexico
3. Colombia
4. Vanuatu
5. Vietnam

6. Panama
7. Nicaragua
8. Bangladesh
9. Thailand
10. Ecuador
11. Jamaica
12. Norway
13. Albania
14. Uruguay
15. Spain

This is a completely different one compared to the WEF and the OESO ranking.

Here the Hierarchical cultures are leading. The ranking is actually not measuring individual happiness. It is in fact a measure of the ecological efficiency of supporting well-being.

Final remarks on “Happiness and Constraint”.

This article started with the idea that constraint was related to happiness. Remember the Delphic oracle’s advice: “Nothing in excess”.

Analysis of the big five personality traits also showed that constraint is positively correlated with happiness (see note *5).

This is however related to this other advice by the oracle of Delphi: Gnothi Seauton: “know thyself”. The need to control your own life is a powerful and essential drive. But self - knowledge is needed to know where the limits are. In this sense constraint is important for subjective happiness.

Constraint is also making the need to make social comparisons less necessary. “All you need is less” is making comparisons with the neighbors undesirable.

What the research of Kahneman makes clear is that trust in adaptation to future situations is an essential ingredient for having peace of mind. For an explanation of trust as a cultural element and the evolutionary consequences (see also Finuras, (2013)).

Notes:

(*1)The views expressed in this article are of the author and do not necessarily represent those of HofstedeInsightsGroup. Copyrights: © 2018/ Huib Wursten. Exploitation rights: HofstedeInsightsGroup. The 7 mental images are developed by Huib Wursten, based on Chapter 9 of Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov, "Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind", Third Revised Edition, McGrawHill 2010, ISBN 0-07-166418-1. ©Geert Hofstede B.V. quoted with permission.

(*2) The research of Geert Hofstede is still the point of reference in the world of evidence-based approaches in cultural comparisons. (See below)

Book	Author	Date*	Discipline	Citations
The Structure of Scientific Revolutions	Thomas Kuhn	1962	Philosophy	81,311
Diffusion of Innovations	Everett Rogers	1962	Sociology	72,780
Pedagogy of the Oppressed	Paulo Freire	1968/1970	Education	72,359
Competitive Strategy	Michael E Porter	1980	Economics	65,406
Imagined Communities	Benedict Anderson	1983	Political Science	64,167
Mind in Society	LS Vygotsky	1978	Psychology	63,809
Discipline and Punish	Michel Foucault	1976/1977	Philosophy	60,700
A Theory of Justice	John Rawls	1971	Political Science	58,594
Social Foundations of Thought and Action	Albert Bandura	1986	Psychology	55,324
The Interpretation of Cultures	Clifford Geertz	1973	Anthropology	48,984
The History of Sexuality (3 Volumes)	Michel Foucault	1978-1986	Philosophy	47,955
Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation	Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger	1991	Education	47,627
The Fifth Discipline	Peter M Senge	1992	Management	43,876
Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance	Douglass North	1990	Economics	43,411
Culture's Consequences	Geert Hofstede	1980	Management	42,144
The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life	Erving Goffman	1959	Sociology	40,573
Das Kapital	Karl Marx	1867-1894	Economics	40,237
Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste	Pierre Bourdieu	1984	Sociology	39,729
The Social Construction of Reality	Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann	1966	Sociology	38,845
Metaphors We Live By	George Lakoff and Mark Johnson	1980	Linguistics	38,723
Stress, Appraisal and Coping	Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman	1984	Psychology	38,665
Communities of Practice	Etienne Wenger	1999	Psychology	37,775
The Economic Institutions of Capitalism	Oliver Williamson	1985	Economics	37,651
Motivation and Personality	Abraham Maslow	1954	Psychology	37,614
Attachment	John Bowlby	1969	Psychology	37,318

(*3) Short description of the five “Hofstede” dimensions.

Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of a society accept that power is distributed unequally. In large power-distance cultures everybody has his/her rightful place in society, there is respect for old age, and status is important to show power. In small power-distance cultures people try to look younger and powerful people try to look less powerful.

It's the opinion of the author of this article that this dimension creates about 80 percent of the problems in international organizations that are trying to operate with multicultural teams.”

People in countries like the US, Canada and the UK score low on the power-distance index and are more likely to accept ideas like empowerment, matrix management and flat organizations. Business schools around the world tend to base their teachings on low power-distance values. Yet, most countries in the world have a high power-distance index.

In **individualistic** cultures people look after themselves and their immediate family only; in collectivist cultures people belong to in-groups who look after them in exchange for loyalty. In individualist cultures, values are in the person, in **collectivist** cultures, identity is based on the social network to which one belongs. In individualist cultures there is more explicit, verbal communication; in collectivist cultures communication is more implicit.

In **masculine cultures** the dominant values are achievement and success. The dominant values in **feminine cultures** are caring for others and quality of life. In masculine cultures performance and achievement are important. Status is important to show success. Feminine cultures have a people orientation, small is beautiful and status is not so important.

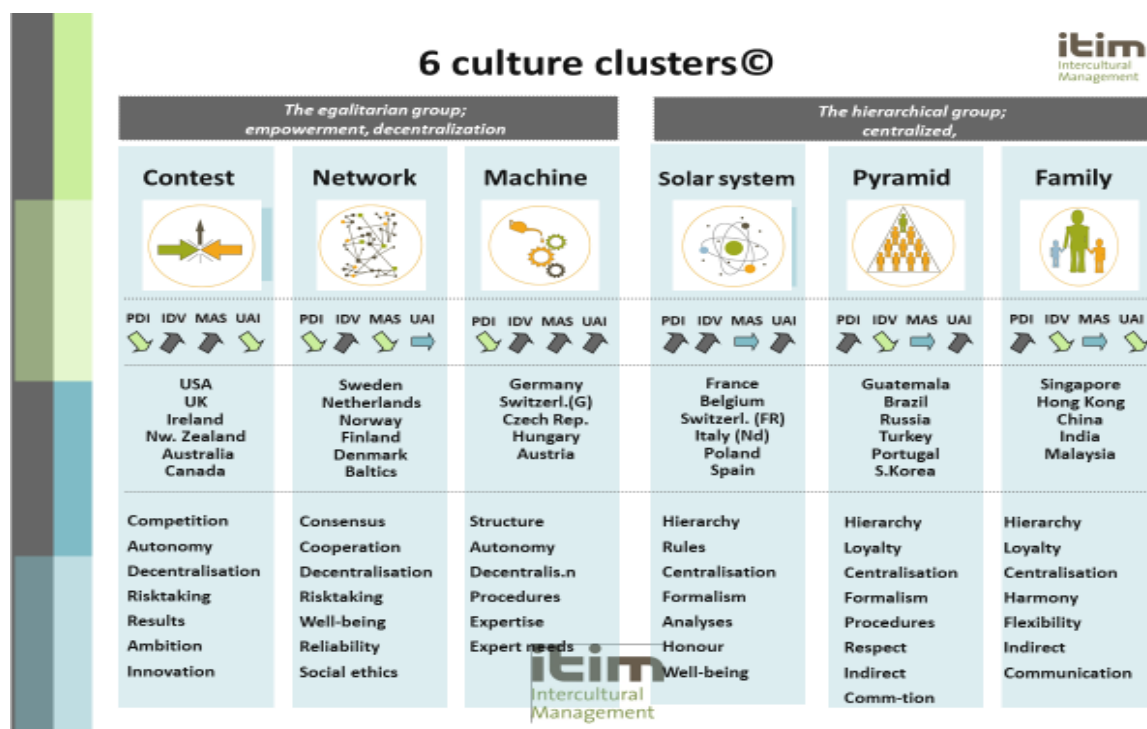
Uncertainty Avoidance is the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations. In cultures of strong uncertainty avoidance, there is a need for rules and formality to structure life. Competence is a strong value resulting in belief in experts, as opposed to weak uncertainty-avoidance cultures with belief in practitioners. In weak uncertainty-avoidance cultures people tend to be more innovative and entrepreneurial.

Two more dimensions are part of the Hofstede model. **Long Term Orientation** and **Restraint versus Indulgence**. They play a lesser role in explaining the Mental Images and more repeat research is required to give it the same empirical foundation as there is for the four other dimensions

Repeated research is showing that the scores of countries on the “Hofstede” dimensions are not, or very slowly, changing over time..

A Danish scholar, M. Søndergaard found 60 (sometimes small scale) replications of Hofstede’s research. A Meta analyses confirmed the dimensions and the scores of countries. Recent replications, showing the same result was carried out by including Hofstede’s questions in the EMS, the European Media & Marketing Survey and a replication by Beugelsdijk, S., Maseland, R. and van Hoorn, A. (2015), “Are Scores on Hofstede’s Dimensions of National Culture Stable over Time? A Cohort Analysis”. *Global Strategy Journal*, 5: 223–240. doi: 10.1002/gsj.1098

(*4) A graphic representation of the Mental Images:



(*5) The big five

The five factors are:

Openness to experience (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious). Openness reflects the degree of intellectual curiosity, creativity and a preference for novelty and variety a person has. It is also described as the extent to which a person is imaginative or independent and depicts a personal preference for a variety of activities over a strict routine.

Conscientiousness (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless). Tendency to be organized and dependable, show self –discipline, act dutifully aim for achievement, and prefer planned rather than spontaneous behavior.

Extraversion (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, assertiveness, sociability and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others, and talkativeness. Extroverted people tend to be more dominant in social settings, as opposed to introverted people who may act more shy and reserved in this setting.

Agreeableness (friendly/compassionate vs. challenging/detached). Tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others. Neuroticism (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident). Tendency to be prone to psychological stress. The tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, and vulnerability. Neuroticism also refers to the degree of emotional stability and impulse control and is sometimes referred to by its low pole, “emotional stability”. Also, individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to have worse psychological well-being.

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