

Cross-Cultural Management Research Contributions from Various Paradigms

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Cross-cultural management research has developed under the influence of distinct paradigms and foci (see e.g., Redding, 1994; Sackmann and Phillips, 2004) and can be organized in diverse streams with their own assumptions, definitions and sometimes methodologies. We use the term *cross-cultural management* for the compilation of research and practice of cross-national comparisons, intercultural interaction and multiple culture studies, including research that focuses on culture at the national, organisational, and sub-organisational levels.

Cross-cultural management research has been criticized as being at an 'early stage of paradigmatic maturity' (Lowe et al., 2007) or at least as being dominated by one paradigm,

namely the positivist one (Jackson and Aycan, 2006; Jack et al., 2008). Criticism on paradigmatic closure and quest for new or different paradigms were already present in the field from the early 1990s (Boyacigiller and Adler, 1991) and these voices have become stronger in recent years. In this special issue we have included papers from different paradigms, arguing that all have valuable and different insights for academics and practitioners of cross-cultural management.

Hence, we pursue two goals with this special issue on 'Contributions from various paradigms'. First, with our editorial introduction, we want to highlight the paradigmatic state of cross-cultural management and stress its imbalance among paradigms as well

as its inherent multi-paradigmatic nature, which has not received much attention up to now. In our view, cross-cultural management seems to mirror the situation in which the field of organization studies was two or even three decades ago when competing paradigms existed (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Gioia and Pitre, 1990) and paradigms were even seen 'at war' (Jackson and Carter, 1993). Consequently, our second goal is to show that the same paradigms exist in cross-cultural management research as in organizational studies, although some of them and the respective research are less represented in academic publications, education, and practice. This is why we intend to give voice to research conducted from different paradigms applying less well known research approaches and methodologies to cross-cultural management. More specifically, the included studies are grounded in four different paradigms and provide illustration of less travelled research paths.

Organization Studies and Multiple Paradigms

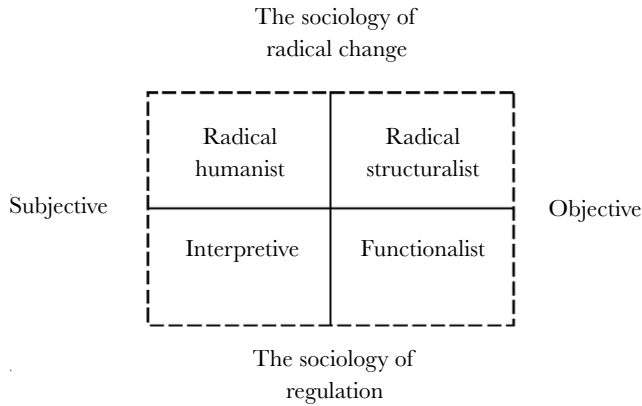
In organisation studies, debates and controversies over philosophical grounds, theoretical cores and methodological practices (Burrell et al., 1994) started at the late 1970s, and continued to its plateau in the 1990s (Clegg et al., 1996) when the major argument was about accepting an alternative epistemology, ontology, methodology, and assumption about human nature and about the very nature of society. Burrell and Morgan (1979) introduced two dimensions dealing with (1) assumptions about the nature of social sciences and (2) assumptions about the nature of society.

The first dimension, *objectiviste subjectiviste*, covers the debate regarding the philosophy and theory of sciences (ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology) which dates back to ancient Greek philosophy. Objectivist researchers believe that the social world is objectively given and independ-

ently exists 'out there' (ontology). Hence it is possible to investigate its structures and regularities by scientific research and seek for causal relationships (epistemology). Human beings are seen to be determined by the situation and environment (human nature). Researchers emphasise predefined scientific protocol, follow the natural sciences as role models, prefer hypotheses testing, large-scale quantitative methods or even controlled experiments (methodology). In contrast, subjectivist researchers consider society socially constructed (ontology). Hence researchers cannot be independent of the subject of inquiry (epistemology) and so members of a society actively participate in creating and recreating the social world. They are basically autonomous and have a free will (human nature). Scholars prefer research processes that directly involve them in the situation of inquiry making participant observation, detailed analysis of deep-interviews or diaries, personal documents (methodology) their methodologies of choice.

The other dimension asks whether we believe that our present society (capitalist, consumption, Western society) is the only possible one or if there can and should be a better society. Social scientists close to the sociology of regulation of Burrell and Morgan's model believe that no better society exists than our present Western capitalist ones, and societal problems are to be solved within the framework of capitalism. Researchers at the radical change end struggle for fundamentally better societies, and try to uncover societal tensions, oppressions, inequalities, and unfair distribution of wealth and power. These researchers aim to show hidden (unspoken) power structures, inequalities, and unfair chances. The two dimensions, subjective-objective and sociology of radical change-sociology of regulation, define a grid classifying four paradigms in the field of organization studies, as reproduced in Figure 1.

Burrell and Morgan's (1979) matrix served as an emancipator to non-mainstream



From Burrell and Morgan (1979:22)

Figure 1 Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms

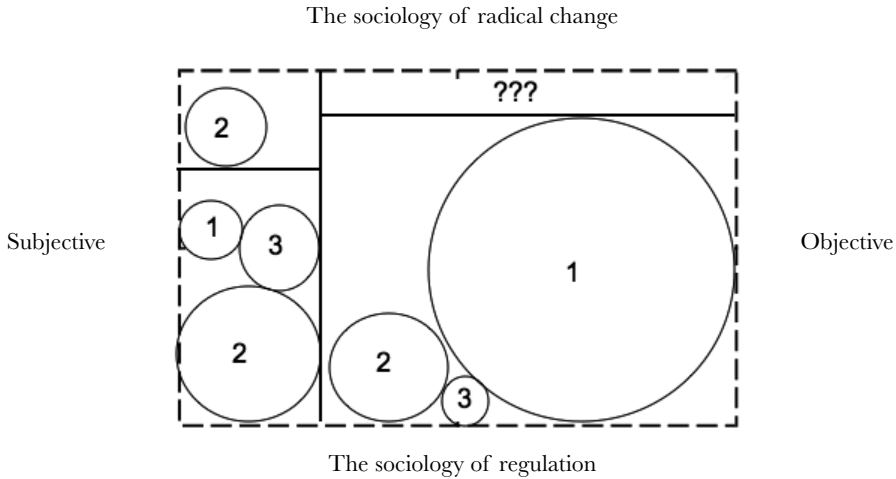
paradigms such as the interpretive and radical paradigms and vivid debates on paradigms started. While this debate had several outcomes (Primecz, 2008), the interpretive and the radical paradigms have a more or less well established position in the field today even though the functionalist paradigm is still overrepresented in research, education, and management practice. This paradigmatic debate does not seem to exist in cross-cultural management research.

Research and Paradigms in Cross-Cultural Management Research

Following Sackmann and Phillips (2004), three streams of research can be identified in cross-cultural management. Studies adopting a *cross-national comparison perspective* investigate the variation of values across nations, with Hofstede (1980) being a seminal work. This stream of research is generally grounded in the positivist paradigm (or in Burrell and Morgan's term 'functionalist' paradigm) and is associated with well-known researchers such as Hofstede (1980; 2001), Schwartz (1994) and House et al., (2004). Comparative

studies have, however, also been conducted from an interpretive paradigm exploring different national management models (e.g., d'Iribarne, 1997; Redding, 2005). Today, the cross-national comparison perspective and the positivist paradigm are dominant in scholarly research and publications of cross-cultural management as well as teaching materials.

A second stream of research focuses on *intercultural interactions*, often in a binational setting, and investigates processes and practices linked to culture – predominantly at the national level – within an organizational setting. In this stream of research, culture is frequently taken for granted, sometimes viewed as a dynamic and creative process, or considered a social construction (e.g., Brannen and Salk, 2000; Kleinberg, 1994). Research in this stream has been inspired by anthropologists such as Geertz (1973) or Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). While we acknowledge that research in anthropology can be both interpretive and positivist, this discipline gave methodological exemplars for studying culture within organizational settings in an interpretive way. We can find examples for intercultural interactions both



1: Cross-national comparisons; 2: Intercultural interactions; 3: Multiple cultures

Figure 2 Cross-cultural management streams using Burrell and Morgan (1979) paradigm grid

in the interpretive paradigm (Chevrier, 2003) and in the positivist paradigm (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). We see interpretive research in cross-cultural management as more accepted than in organization studies – thanks to its anthropological roots – but still in a minor position compared to research in the positivist paradigm.

The third stream of research refers to the *multiple culture perspective* trying to shed light on the various cultural influences that exist simultaneously at different levels of analysis such as nation, industry, and organization as well as cross-cutting groups such as ethnicity, profession, et cetera, including interactions between these levels and cross-cutting groups that may influence individuals' identity and, hence, their behaviour. Research within this stream has also been conducted on the basis of the interpretive as well as the positivist paradigms (see, for example, the different contributions in Sackmann, 1997; Fischer et al., 2005).

When we compare research conducted in the different paradigms, we notice that the imbalance observed by Redding (1994) and

Boyacigiller et al. (2004) still exists. Inspired by Gioia and Pitre (1990), we propose in Figure 2 an intuitive graphic representation of cross-cultural management research using the four paradigms proposed by Burrell and Morgan (1979). While these authors developed a two-by-two matrix with four quadrants of equal size, we suggest that the positivist paradigm occupies a dominant position in cross-cultural management.

The dominance of the cross-national comparison stream that is mostly represented by positivist studies often leads those reviewing cross-cultural management research to overlook the diversity of existing approaches. The inspiration of many researchers by anthropology, both cognitive and critical anthropology, is rarely acknowledged (Bjerregaard et al., 2009). Although there is a constant quest for more critical research in cross-cultural management (Jack et al., 2008; Jackson and Aycan, 2006; Westwood and Jack, 2007) only a few studies exist that explicitly deal with power inequalities in cross-cultural settings or covers (post-) colonial inquiry (e.g. Cooke, 2003; Prasad, 2003; Westwood, 2004; 2006).

In sum, the paradigmatic richness of cross-cultural management is often overlooked. This is why this special issue seeks to contribute to a broader paradigm acknowledgement and to show that some research questions should also be investigated using radical paradigms. The articles included in this issue provide illustration of the existing diversity.

Contributions to This Special Issue

Our idea for this special issue was born during the discussions of our EGOS sub-theme on the same topic in Vienna, 2007. We decided on a special call for papers and received 32 submissions, sending more than a third out for review. Several rounds of reviews and the authors' dedication to respond to comments contributed to months of stimulating exchanges. We are grateful to, and thank the 14 reviewers for the insightful and inspiring dialogue with the authors that led to the final selection of these six papers.

The first contribution in this special issue is a methodological paper by Martin Gannon on the development of cultural metaphors. This is a unique methodology because it refers to cross-national comparisons – mainly in the positivist paradigm – and, at the same time, steps further away from cross-national comparisons by developing an in-depth cultural metaphor for a single country. The cultural metaphor sketches a more detailed portrait of a country profile than, for instance, cultural dimensions, and also allows for the making of cross-country comparisons (see Gannon, 2004; Gannon and Pillai, 2010 forthcoming).

The second paper by Christine Sarah Nielsen, Ana Maria Soares and Carlos Páscoa Machado provides an illustration of the cultural metaphor methodology addressing Portugal and the folk music form of the Fado. The authors develop a new cultural metaphor for Portugal in contrast to the existing one of the bullfight (Gannon, 2004). They also adopt a slight methodological

change from the methodology presented in the first article thereby contributing to enrich the methodological discussion. The cultural metaphor of the fado incorporates cultural characteristics that help us make sense of both Portugal's scores on cultural dimensions and intra-cultural variations in attitudes, behaviour, and values.

Philippe d'Iribarne's contribution is also linked to the cross-national comparison stream but rooted in an interpretive approach. Phillippe d'Iribarne presents a conceptualisation of culture at the national level. The article pinpoints the challenges of conceptualising national culture in an interpretive way allowing for continuity and change. Following an abductive process of theory development, the author proposes to conceptualise national cultures as articulated around a core concern that is at the heart of social existence, and the social forms used to address this concern. He illustrates this conceptualisation by comparing social concerns in France and in the USA as expressed, among others, in work interactions.

In line with d'Iribarne, André Ofenhejm Mascarenhas and Flávio Carvalho de Vasconcelos take also an interpretive perspective in the study of culture, and a focus on culture as a place of continuity and change. The authors adopt two interlinked concepts inspired by the work of anthropologist Sahlins: structures of conjuncture and functional revaluations. Structures of conjecture reveal that actors react to an event using available (cultural) structures of meanings, while reinterpreting them simultaneously in terms of the situation (functional revaluation). They illustrate the two concepts with rich cases and discuss detail implications of their approach for studying organisational culture.

The other two articles represent the radical paradigms (now often referred as the critical paradigm: Willmott, 2003 or Critical Management Studies: Adler, 2002) and investigate power dynamics in intercultural interactions. Sierk Ybema and Hyunghae Byun

suggest that cultural identity does not carry a pre-given meaning, but is rather creatively constructed in order to defend or oppose established practices of power relations. With an empirical investigation of self-reported cultural differences between Dutch and Japanese employees working in interaction, they show how employees refer to cultural differences among them to discursively legitimate, or oppose, power asymmetry in hierarchies. In particular, the authors highlight the relevance of taking power asymmetries into consideration in the construction of discourses on cultural differences.

This special issue concludes with Ajnesh Prasad who represents a post-colonial approach. He highlights and questions the Westocentric assumption of universality and argues for giving voice to systematically and historically oppressed people for gaining novel insights of organizational life across cultures. While the object of investigation represents critical issues, above all, the author applies Foucault's genealogy method to reveal these inequalities. The novelty in this paper is not only the presentation of Foucault's genealogical method in cross-cultural management, but also the fact that for this structural analysis (postcolonial research) the author chooses a poststructuralist method (Foucault's genealogy).

Cross-Cultural Management and Multiple Paradigms

With this editorial introduction, we wanted to highlight the multi-paradigmatic state of and research approaches found in cross-cultural management, and point out its imbalance. We hope to contribute toward reaching a state in which different paradigms (in Burrell and Morgan's sense, as alternative to Earley, 2006) are not only recognized in the field, but also appreciated on equal grounds for their respective contribution in gaining knowledge from different perspectives. With this special issue, we provide illustrations of research

constructed on the basis of four main paradigms that are, at the same time, examples of less travelled research paths within each paradigm. We hope to further encourage different voices to speak up (especially critical and indigenous ones), and engage in joint discussions and constructive dialogue. We also hope that researchers in the field of cross-cultural management will understand and learn different paradigmatic 'languages' so that they can gain novel insights from different research perspectives and start conducting paradigm interplay applying different paradigms within the same study (e.g., Harris, 2000; Romani, 2008; Schultz and Hatch, 1996). We strongly believe that this will further enrich cross-cultural management research and contribute to an improved understanding of important issues.

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