National habitus: an antidote to the resilience of Hofstede's "national culture"?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to scrutinize Geert Hofstede's conceptualization of national culture and provide an alternative beyond purely constructivist conceptualizations of culture for cross-cultural management scholars and practitioners.

Design/methodology/approach – Hofstede's conceptualization of national culture is discussed and criticized. Subsequently, alternatives are being discussed. Eventually, a more feasible alternative is suggested and the ways in which it can be applied are briefly mentioned.

Findings – Several objections to Hofstede's idea and measurement of national culture are listed: it assumes people are cultural dopes, it ignores the influence of non-cultural factors, it reifies culture, it assumes internal coherence, it does not account for change, it arbitrarily uses the nation-state as the preferred locus of culture, and it has an in-built Western bias. Several authors have argued for a constructivist conceptualization of culture, which sees culture as a repertoire, from which ideas and possible actions can be selected. The downside, however, is that it has no practical value for managers. In an attempt to solve this, the paper explores the possibilities of using the concept of national habitus, which shows how dispositions are shaped on a national level and how these dispositions change under the influence of other, non-national social forces.

Practical implications – The paper briefly explores how a national habitus-centered approach can help cross-cultural managers.

Originality/value – The paper's added value lies in the use of a relatively recently extended sociological concept for cross-cultural management.

Keywords National culture, Cross-cultural management, Geert Hofstede, National habitus

Paper type Conceptual paper

One of Sławomir Magala's lasting contributions to the still developing scholarly field of cross-cultural management is his critical discussion of essentialist or reified conceptualizations of culture. In his book *Cross-Cultural Competence* (Magala, 2005), he takes to task three influential theories that use such conceptualizations: Huntington's (1996) Clash of Civilizations, Ritzer's (2011) McDonaldization thesis, and Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions. While Huntington and Ritzer have been influential in political theory and sociology, respectively, Hofstede's main influence has been on management studies. It is for that reason that this paper will primarily engage with Hofstede's work. The conceptual criticism of his work, however, also applies to other scholarly work using a similar conceptualization of culture. Nevertheless, if this critique is to be taken seriously, why do Hofstede's ideas and models continue to

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dominate the field of cross-cultural management? In this paper, I will argue for the use of national habitus as an interpretive framework, both to re-introduce the national into (or on top of) constructivist alternatives to Hofstede's work and to formulate an alternative to Hofstede which might actually be used by practitioners.

This paper is structured as follows: in the next section, Hofstede's conceptualization of culture will be discussed, followed by a section in which the main points of criticism against this conceptualization of culture will be presented. The subsequent section will discuss the predominantly offered constructivist alternative, followed by a section in which I try to find out why this constructivist alternative has hardly been used in cross-cultural management. I will then discuss yet another alternative, which shares its main assumptions with the constructivist alternative. In the final section, I will briefly explore the applicability of such a conceptualization of culture.

Hofstede's conceptualization of culture

As most management scholars are familiar with Geert Hofstede's work, a brief introduction will do.

Based on surveys of the worldwide workforce of IBM, Geert Hofstede constructed four dimensions, along which the preferences and attitudes of the employees could be plotted: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs collectivism, and masculinity vs femininity. In later editions, long-term orientation and indulgence vs restraint were added. When he split up his research population per nationality, he noted that the average scores per nationality were vastly different. He also found that these scores, were, to some extent, capable of explaining variation in other variables. This led him to the conviction that "the general factor that can account for the differences in the answers is national culture" (Hofstede, 1980b, p. 44). Culture, according to Hofstede, is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 6, original in cursive). These national cultures result in values, which he describes as "broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 9).

These national value systems, according to Hofstede, are quite enduring: "National value systems should be considered given facts, as hard as a country's geographical position or its weather" (Hofstede *et al.,* 2010, p. 20); even though changes constantly occur: "While change sweeps the surface, the deeper layers remain stable, and the [national] culture rises from its ashes like a phoenix" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 26).

Not only does "culture" pertain to deep, enduring structures of values; Hofstede also posits a direct causal link between national value systems and behavior. This claim is fed by the conviction that the dimensions can be used as valid indicators of these values, to such an extent that one can predict their influence: "[I have identified] five main dimensions along which the dominant value systems in more than 50 countries can be ordered and that [they] affect human thinking, feeling, and acting, as well as organizations and institutions, in predictable ways" (Hofstede, 2001, p. xix, in McSweeney, 2012, p. 154).

The first edition of *Culture's Consequences* (Hofstede, 1980a) made quite a splash when it was published and subsequent editions and other work by Hofstede have been hugely influential ever since, especially in the field of (cross-cultural) management. Hofstede himself has even boasted that his book has caused a paradigm shift (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 40). To his credit, before *Culture's Consequences,* culture was hardly factored into research on organizations; after, the link between culture, how people work, and management practice received wide recognition (Holden, 2002, pp. 34-36).

After the publication of *Culture's Consequences*, there have been many reiterations of his research, albeit with slight adaptations. The best-known examples are perhaps Trompenaars' *Riding the Waves of Culture* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997) and the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program, founded in 1991 by the late Robert J. House, resulting in many books, reports, and articles (see, for instance, Chhokar *et al.*, 2008). Their impact has even led McSweeney (2015) to dub them the "Trio" of cross-cultural management. The continuing influence and persistence of the conceptualization of culture as a "pregiven, determinate monolith, as the uncaused cause, as the first cause" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 162) and the general idea that "a general value system is instilled through socialization" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 143) is illustrated by McSweeney's assertion that "[t]his unvarying and transcendent idea of culture dominates (albeit does not monopolize) cultural analysis in management and organization theory" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 143).

To date, Hofstede remains one of the most cited scholars in the social sciences (*Times Higher Education*, 2009), and although, at the time of writing, he is well on into his eighties, Michael Minkov and Hofstede's son, Gert Jan, have risen up to take his mantle (cf. Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

Criticism leveled against Hofstede's view on culture

Aforementioned characterization of Hofstede's work and legacy does not give the impression of a unanimously positive reception. Indeed, right from the start, Hofstede's work has been met with a considerable amount of criticism. The criticism ranges from qualms about the epistemological assumptions of his work (Ailon, 2008) and questions about the soundness of the methodology and interpretation of the data (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; McSweeney, 2002) to unease with his conceptualization of culture and the associated value dimensions (Magala, 2005, pp. 77-83; McSweeney, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015). Staying true to the work of Sławomir Magala, this section will primarily focus on the latter issue. In the remainder of this section, I will identify seven interrelated premises in Hofstede's work that have been challenged.

First, by assuming that national cultures and their value systems influence and even predict behavior, Hofstede appears to see culture and values as "coherent, self-sustaining, [and] subjective" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 142), placed at the top of a "hierarchically superordinated control system" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 146) within which "agents are in effect relays of […] culture" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 142; see also Snel, 2003, p. 250). This denies human actors agency.

Second, even if we assume agents to be cultural dopes, we turn a blind eye to the possible influence of non-cultural factors (McSweeney, 2012, p. 164). Hofstede himself notes that only 4.2 percent of the variance in the data is explained by national culture (Hofstede, 1980a, p. 71 in Gerhart and Fang, 2005, p. 977), a figure confirmed by Gerhart and Fang's (2005) re-analysis of the data. We also have to ask ourselves whether it even makes sense to try to disentangle culture and "non-cultural" factors like the legal or economic characteristics of a nation: to do so is to assume they are distinct variables and that they hardly influence each other. As Whitley (1999, pp. 4-22), among others, argues: to a large extent, cultural conventions dictate what is deemed appropriate and "rational" behavior in the marketplace.

Third, when interpreting human or organizational actions, one must avoid the pitfall of reification (Snel, 2003, p. 250): seeing culture as a "thing" people take with them and to treat what in fact are constructs of the human mind as objective, fixed entities, exerting an influence over individuals, whereas in fact, they are constantly being

(re)produced by these very same individuals (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, pp. 106-107; Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p. 52 in Ellis and Ybema, 2010, p. 280; Serpe and Stryker, 2011, p. 228). When Snel (2003, pp. 249-251) gives examples of the reified or "essentialist" view of culture he is highly critical of, he explicitly mentions Hofstede's view of culture as "software of the mind."

Fourth, Hofstede's construction of uniform national dimensions disregards internal diversity. McSweeney (2012, p. 155) points out that after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Hofstede measured the national cultures of three of the newly formed states, all of which were completely different from the original scores for Yugoslavia. In addition, McSweeney (2012, p. 156) discusses studies finding large within-country differences in leadership styles, economic regimes, styles of planning and control, and so on. For instance, Gerhart and Fang (2005, p. 977) note that Hofstede's own data show larger within-country differences than between-country differences. And even if we, for the sake of the argument, assume that a country can be characterized by one culture, we are faced with the internal value contradictions and frictions present in many cultures (McSweeney, 2012, p. 163). For instance, Schama (1987) focusses on the uneasy relation of the merchant mindset and Calvinist values in the Dutch Republic of the Golden Age: the Dutch elite amassed a huge amount of wealth, but were reluctant to show it.

Fifth, the dimensional model used by Hofstede is static and conservative; it does not allow for the possibility of value change (Magala, 2005, p. 79; Snel, 2003, pp. 250-251), whether the processes fueling such change are internal or external. By defining culture as the "uncaused cause" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 162), and by insisting that in the event of change, every single culture is affected in a similar way (McSweeney, 2012, p. 162; see also point one on agency), Hofstede assumes that cultures endure for centuries (McSweeney, 2012, p. 152).

Sixth, Hofstede's national culture paradigm arbitrarily uses the nation-state as the preferred locus for culture (Magala, 2005, p. 83). It necessarily assumes that culture and associated behavioral patterns follow national borders. However, in a number of cases, these borders have only recently been created (see the example of Yugoslavia) or are still being contested. In fact, the Western European model of the nation-state has only been the dominant state configuration for the past one or two centuries. When we consider the recent history of Poland, for instance, we see the problems that come with the equation of a culture with a state: after more than a century of incorporation in other empires, Poland was reinstated as a state in 1919, but with different borders (McSweeney, 2012, p. 154). More recently, we see the creeping annexation by Russia of bordering parts of Georgia (Walker, 2013). Does this mean that during the nineteenth century, Polish culture temporarily ceased to exist or that territories that change hands immediately change their culture? And even if we assume that a national culture conveniently follows state borders, the question remains "whether the uniform and causal culture is that of a nation, a nation-state, or a multi-nation-state" (McSweeney, 2012, p. 155).

Finally, Hofstede's theoretical model has an in-built Western bias. The framework he uses is developed and tested in the West, on a data set of predominantly Western countries and applied by Western scholars. As a result, possibly salient dimensions non-Western researchers might be familiar with or which might have arisen if more non-Western countries would have been included in the data set from the start, have not been considered (Magala, 2005, p. 77). Looking at the most recent data shared by Hofstede on his personal website (Geerthofstede.com, 2014), this preoccupation with

Western countries still seems to apply: of the 110 entries in the database, only 99 are nation-states. The other 11 entries are supra- or sub-national categories. Of the 99 nations, only 68 have scores on all four original dimensions. Of these 68 nations, 31 are European nations, and only three nations are located on the largest continent of all, Africa: Iran, Israel, and Morocco, which, it could be argued, are Middle Eastern rather than African countries. The inclusion of supra-national categories like "West-Africa," "East-Africa," and "Arab countries" does nothing to take away the impression of a Western bias.

Constructivist conceptualizations of culture

So, if Hofstede's conceptualization of culture is both theoretically and empirically untenable, what then, would be a better way of conceptualizing culture? The authors I drew upon when I formulated my critique of Hofstede's model of national culture, largely agree on using a constructivist conceptualization of culture (Baumann, 1996; Berger and Luckmann, 1991), which deals with perceptions and constructs of participants and their performativity, which in turn accounts for change and context-sensitivity. Such a way of theorizing culture challenges "naturalistic," positivist approaches like Hofstede's, which tend to assume that there is one best way of scientifically representing the social world (Mallon, 2013). Baumann emphasizes the individual as unit of analysis and stresses human's agency in creating and invoking culture when he states that:

> […] culture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behaviour, but summarizes an abstraction from it, and is thus neither normative nor predictive. […] Culture thus exists only insofar as it is performed, and even then its ontological status is that of a pointedly analytical description (Baumann, 1996, p. 11).

As both Snel (2003, p. 249) and McSweeney (2012, p. 147) point out, this Hofstedean model of culture and similar models are increasingly seen as outdated and untenable in the broader social sciences, particularly anthropology. In recent years, a number of cross-cultural management scholars (cf. Holden, 2002, pp. 1-59; Magala, 2005, pp. 47-96) have plead for a more constructivist way of looking at culture with which we can analyze cultural exchange within and between organizations in a more nuanced and in-depth manner.

Besides using the sense-making and sense-breaking processes of the individual as a starting point, a constructivist conceptualization of culture has two other advantages. The first advantage is that it emphasizes the relational nature of culture. For instance, Holden sees culture as:

> […] being made up of relations, rather than as stable systems of form and substance […]. This implies that national cultures, corporate cultures or professional cultures, for example, are seen as symbolic practices that only come into existence in relation to, and in contrast with, other cultural communities (Holden, 2002, p. 57).

A constructivist approach thus does not see culture as an isolated phenomenon, but takes into account how constructions and manifestations of culture are linked to the social context in which they are produced.

The second advantage is closely related to the aforementioned agency of the individual, namely the understanding that culture can function as a "repertoire" from which the individual can draw in presenting himself to the outside world. Holden hints at such an understanding of culture when he comes up with a definition of culture as

"varieties of common knowledge" (Holden, 2002, p. 98). Magala (2005, p. 54) seems to agree when he approvingly talks about a "pool of potential 'building blocks' of political doctrines, social ideologies, organizational subcultures, and alternative movements." This idea of "culture-as-a-repertoire" has its origins in Swidler's (1986) seminal article, in which she is highly critical of the "culture-as-values" model advocated by, among others, Hofstede. She argues that rather than assuming there are core values steering behavior, we need to see culture "as a 'tool kit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). With regards to the causal relation between culture and behavior, she suggests we focus on "strategies of action" (Swidler, 1986, p. 273).

Illustrating: first, the relevance of taking the individual as the level of analysis; second, how people draw on a pool of different cultural repertoires; and third, how the choice from this pool is influenced by the social context, Baumann (1996, pp. 72-108) uses individual narratives to show that inhabitants of Southall, a multi-ethnic neighborhood in London, typically see themselves and other Southallians as members of one of five communities, each with its own culture: Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Afro-Caribbeans, and whites. Three of these self-defined cultures are based on religion, the other two on ethnicity.

The enduring allure of Hofstede's idea of national culture

But if the "culture wars" between essentialists and constructivists have largely been won by the latter group and this hegemony has also permeated organization studies, how come the Hofstedean notion of culture still dominates cross-cultural management research, consultancy, and training (Holden, 2002, pp. 26, 34; Magala, 2005, p. 83; McSweeney, 2012, p. 146), prompting Holden to lament the "almost slavish homage to Hofstede's work" (Holden, 2002, p. 35) which has been "intellectually numbing" (Holden, 2002, p. 34)?

The first reason for this might be the very nature of managerial work. In his classic typology of managerial activities, Mintzberg defines the manager as a "processor of information priority" (Pugh *et al.*, 1983, p. 154) and it is the access to information that gives him power (Mintzberg, 1980, pp. 4-5). Add to that the unrelenting work pace and the heavy load of work (Mintzberg, 1980, p. 5), and one can imagine why the deceptively straightforward way in which Hofstede presents culture is appreciated so much in management, both as a science and as a practice. A constructivist conceptualization, in that sense, has little to offer: because it (rightly) uses the sense-making and sense-breaking processes of the individual in a specific context as a starting point, its capacity to generalize, compare, and predict is low.

Another reason for the endurance of Hofstede's work in management research is that the field is being dominated by what Ghoshal calls "the 'scientific' approach of trying to discover patterns and laws" (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 77), which in turn could be related to the managerial preferences mentioned above. Such an approach exhibits a "firm belief in causal determinism for explaining all kinds of corporate performance" (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 77) and a view of the study of management as:

> […] a kind of physics in which even if individual managers do play a role, it can safely be taken as determined by the economic, social and psychological laws that inevitably shape peoples' actions […] that has become dominant in business schools in the United States and around the world […] (Ghoshal, 2005, p. 77).

The Hofstedean idea of culture as expressed through value dimensions, its assumption that people are in fact relays of culture and the supposition that behavior can be predicted by these values is more in line with such a "scientific" approach, allowing for comparison and computation, than the constructivist view on culture, with its reliance on context, complex negotiations, and agency – in other words, all that is difficult to express in numbers.

Furthermore, the idea that culture primarily follows national borders is reinforced through the experiences of internationally operating professionals. Cultural awareness is more likely to be invoked once geographical – and therefore: political and institutional – borders are crossed. The manager of a company from Maastricht (the Netherlands), dealing with a manager of a company from Aachen (Germany), with whom he is trading, is faced with a difference in legal systems, despite the harmonization of rules in the EU. Even more so when there is a temporary placement involved or when a subsidiary is being opened. In dealing with a representative from a company in, say, Groningen (the Netherlands), this difference in legal procedures is absent, whereas culturally, it could be argued that Aachen and Maastricht are more similar than Groningen and Maastricht and therefore that knowledge of Groningen culture might be more relevant than knowledge of German or Aachen culture, which is not to say that there are no cultural differences at all between Aachen and Maastricht. The remaining relevance of the state in an era of globalization is confirmed by Dicken (2011, pp. 172-217), who points out states can join and form trade agreements, impose internal regulations, decide to compete for capital and goods and implement a particular economic development strategy.

This remaining importance of the state not just manifests itself in legal or economic differences. In attributing the continued use of Hofstede's model to the enduring importance of the nation-state, Magala (2005, p. 2), argues that the nation-state, to a large extent, still is the level at which significant socializing processes in contemporary societies take place, particularly when it comes to education. And McSweeney, who is highly critical of Hofstede, happily concedes that there is merit in the assumption that there are differences between countries and uniformities within countries, but that this "should not blind us to diversities within countries. Nor are the uniformities evidence of the causal influence of national cultural values" (McSweeney, 2013, p. 488).

The question remains, then, how to reconcile the enduring significance of national differences, with a constructivist conceptualization of culture – and all that in such a way that it is sufficiently applicable for managers who must cross borders and bridge differences? In the following section, I will explore one possibility for such a reconciliation.

National habitus

In her article *The Rise and Decline of National Habitus: Dutch Cycling Culture and the Shaping of National Similarity*, Giselinde Kuipers (2013) makes a case for a processual approach to national comparison, invoking Norbert Elias' (1939/2000, 1989/1996) concept of "national habitus." Besides re-introducing a perhaps largely forgotten, but nevertheless existing idea in sociology, she theorizes how such a habitus has come into being, how it is affected and in some respects weakened by processes of globalization, and how it is related to other social phenomena. Arguing that the Netherlands is "one of the few countries to come anywhere near the ideal-type of the nation-state"

(Kuipers, 2013, p. 19), she uses Dutch cycling culture as a case study for the concept of "national habitus." According to Kuipers:

> "[h]abitus" – derived from "habit" – refers to learned practices and standards that have become so much part of ourselves that they feel self-evident and natural. Habitus is our culturally- and socially-shaped "second nature". What we learn as members of a society, in a specific social position, is literarily incorporated – absorbed into our bodies – and becomes our self (Kuipers, 2013, p. 20).

National habitus then means those self-evident practices and standards that have been formed on a nation-wide scale. What is important to mention here is that these practices and standards typically are neither consciously acquired nor intentionally forced upon a population (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 53); they are largely taken for granted, hence the expression "second nature."

Kuipers (2013, pp. 22-24) identifies four mechanisms behind the formation of national habitus. The first mechanism is an increasing interdependence on a national scale: partly spurred by infrastructural improvement, the social units people belong to have been growing in scale from the Middle Ages onwards. This process, together with the declining importance of smaller-scale identifications and interdependencies, has led to a growing identification with and awareness of others.

The second mechanism is the increasing density of this very same network: people began to have connections with more people, in more ways, visible in the increased importance of nation-wide institutions of taxation, education, and justice. Organizations not necessarily bound to the state – for instance companies – increasingly kept to the same geographic demarcations, which ultimately became self-evident.

The third mechanism is the vertical diffusion of standards, tastes, and practices, through trickle down processes. Prestigious, upper-class styles and behavior are being imitated, because of aspiration, status anxiety, and shame.

The fourth mechanism is the development of national "we-feelings," avenues of national identification. These processes of national identification typically coincide with increasing national integration, but have been actively promoted as well. Another important factor in fueling national sentiment is the rise of the mass media, which have the power to unite people who can never all know each other personally.

Subsequently, Kuipers (pp. 25-29) explains how national habitus has declined, by discussing the changes in each of the four mechanisms separately. First, the process of increasing interdependence has continued, although an increasing number of connections cross state borders. Because of globalization, the number of people becoming aware of non-compatriots is steadily growing, competing with and therefore weakening the relative importance of identification and habitus formation on a national scale (see also Magala, 2005, pp. 84-85). The failure of the state to remain the single most important level of organization, has also resulted in a decrease of the second mechanism, the intensification of national dependencies.

According to Kuipers, the most significant decline has been in the third mechanism, the vertical diffusion of standards and practices, which has slowed down since the 1970s. At least in the West, the notion of a hierarchy of standards and tastes has been abandoned, in favor of an egalitarian and informal ethos, where individuals are equally allowed to "be themselves," freed from the grip of previously powerful communities and institutions. This has resulted in the stagnation of cultural trickle down effects. The rise of this egalitarian ethos does not mean, however, that these societies have become more equal. On the contrary: the failure of trickle down means the collapse of

an important homogenizing force, resulting in a larger distance between higher and lower social strata. Also, status differences have not disappeared: they have merely become more subtle. As a result of growing social distance and global interconnectedness, the symbols and stories previously binding a nation become less self-evident and result in a decline of the fourth mechanism: national we-feelings.

Applicability and advantages for cross-cultural management

In summing up the reasons for developing a theory of national habitus, Kuipers briefly discusses Hofstede. She states that "while revealing and evocative, the mechanisms through which [individual 'value orientations'] are produced remain unclear. In effect this approach produces classifications rather than theories" (Kuipers, 2013, p. 21). She also agrees with the critique that such theoretical frameworks do not account for change and variation in the way national habitus is formed (Kuipers, 2013, p. 22).

In her recognition of habitus formation mechanisms, Kuipers leaves room for the shaping power of the state, whereas Hofstede primarily sees the nation-state as the aggregate expression of unchangeable values. She also identifies state-level socialization processes as being part of a range of different socialization processes, operating at different levels, and shows how these different forms of socialization interact. Such an approach chimes with Swidler's notion of culture as a repertoire: a range of images and behaviors from which one can choose (national and supra- or sub-national) rather than a set of irrevocable value orientations leading to specific behavior. More importantly, in showing how social forces, most notably globalization, and significant historical events have influenced the scope and effectiveness of the formation of national habitus, her theory is sensitive to change and more up-to-date with the current state of affairs in the world than Hofstede's inherently static cultural explanation of behavior.

Apart from the moral objections one can have against the possible implications of using broad-stroke generalizations like Hofstede's, there is a business case to be made for the use of national habitus in cross-cultural management as well. Holden (2002) and Holden and Glisby (2010) describe a number of cases in which too one-dimensional and static perceptions of culture have led to the overemphasis on cultural differences in transnational mergers and acquisitions and collaborations, leading to the loss of precious resources. For instance, despite studying previous mergers extensively, the Daimler management failed to anticipate the scale of the tensions that arose when their company and Chrysler merged, precisely because the company policy regarding the merger started from the premises that there were big cultural differences to begin with (Holden, 2002, pp. 6-7).

However, it remains to be seen how the concept of national habitus can be incorporated into cross-cultural management research and education. My suggestion for managers and teachers is to focus on the four mechanisms and, by reading up on a country's history, assess to what extent these four mechanisms have had the chance to shape a cultural repertoire, while at the same time avoiding a too deterministic view of the link between values and behavior. This enables one to map the values and possible actions these mechanisms have added to the national repertoire or habitus. This is not an easy task, because historical accounts are by no means definite or absolute: they are contested or rejected on the basis of new insights (Ricœur, 2000/2004). But then again, when a certain version of a national history dominates, this dominance also says something about the prevailing sentiments and ideologies in a country.

At the very least, it seems like cross-cultural management has some catching up to do: when Hofstede introduced his ideas, his view on culture was already outdated and challenged by the likes of Swidler. When Holden, Magala, and McSweeney referred to constructivist theory in an attempt to counter the hegemony of the Hofstedean model, constructivism had been around for at least thirty years. It is my hope that this time around, cross-cultural management will be a little bit quicker to learn its lessons from developments in sociology.

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