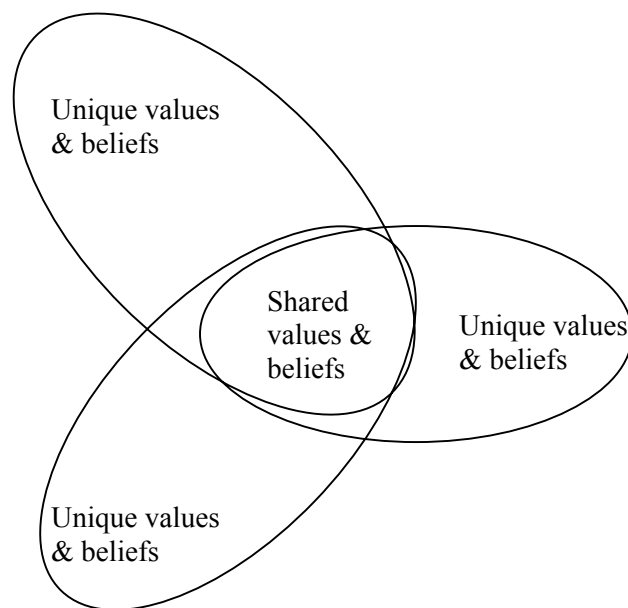




Executive MBA Program  
School of Business  
Autumn 2002

## **Leadership across the world: A global company culture as seen by its employees**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the cross-culture expert Geert Hofstede, "Managing international business means handling both national and organization culture differences at the same time. Organization cultures are somewhat manageable while national cultures are given facts for management". How well an organizational culture is communicated and acceptable by its employees is important knowledge for an organization.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how one Swedish multinational organization's definition of manager roles complies with national culture and organizational culture. For practical reasons our choice fell on Ericsson, a world-leading supplier of infrastructure for mobile telephony. With our experience and understanding of the problem we decided to look into how the organization communicated its manager definition and if the communicated definition where acceptable.

The theoretical framework chosen is based on our experience and pre-suppositions on the concept of culture. According to Hofstede, national cultures belong to anthropology and organizational cultures to sociology and we have considered this in our thesis. The empirical data is a compilation of results from questions using an Internet based survey sent to 4000 of Ericsson's 72000 employees.

It is interesting to understand that Ericsson have made their definition of a manager without describing a manager's attitude and behavior. By doing in such a way the definition of the manager does not collide with different cultures.

The result of our thesis shows that Ericsson's definition of a manager is acceptable to over 70% of the respondents except in Japan, where only 40% gave a favorable rating.



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Geert Hofstede<sup>1</sup> (2001) states "Culture is defined as the collective programming of the mind". The collective programming of people happens when people are young and are slowly changing when the society changes.

National culture sets behavioral norms for people and a subset of these norms is the behavior and attitude<sup>2</sup> of managers. Hofstede has in his own vocabulary given this phenomena the name cultural dimensions. These power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity and long term orientation.

An organization has its own set of "mental programming" regarding manager's behavior and attitude. When the organization is within one national culture there is no problem as its managers follow the national culture's attitude. However, when the organization spreads over national borders the "mental programming" starts to differ.

Hofstede indicates in his research that the behavior that is correct for managers in one country is not necessarily appropriate in another country. Managers have to adjust their leadership behavior due to cross-cultural differences. Managers from different cultures have also a communication problem when it comes to understand one another and it has a negative influence on their ability to collaborate. This requires that a manager is adaptable to cultural changes since effective organizational leadership is critical to the success of international operations.

The authors have understood that cross-cultural researchers often indicate cultural differences as differences in behavior or in differences of leadership styles or differences in leadership patterns of behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> In cross-culture studies, Hofstede is very much referenced and by some people considered as the founder of the "culture science".

<sup>2</sup> An attitude is a belief or set of beliefs that governs and controls our behavior.



Hofstede indicates that culture influences people's thought processes and thought patterns. This is difficult to measure, as thought patterns are not "things". These thought patterns might change very quickly into an opposite direction. They could change just by responding to questions asked. It is unknown if culture has a form or a structure but whatever it is, its content differs from one human being to another.

It is difficult to imagine what characteristics in a manager are highly valued by employees from different countries. Nevertheless, it is easy to realize that employees from many countries give different answers to the question: What is then a manager?

When employees think of a manager they could ask themselves the following set of questions: What is the function of a manager and why do we need them? Some employees may have the view that managers ought to be problem solvers that devote money and effort focusing on problems or purposes. Other employees may have other views of the characteristics of a manager. Whatever characteristics of a manager that the employee values high, they are used to create a culturally influenced image of a manager in the person's brain. Usually people do not even know what presuppositions they have that create this "imagined manager".

Clearly, this unique manager image is then the employee's answer to the question of what is a manager.

In our study, we looked at the Swedish company Ericsson. It has a system of beliefs, values and criteria that we may now refer to as corporate culture. A subset of this corporate culture contains a definition of a vision of how the ideal Ericsson manager should be.

This definition is composed of four identity-role models describing characteristics of the ideal manager. It is in text form so that it can be explicitly communicated worldwide.

(It is vital that you as a reader understand what we, the authors, refer to when we write identity-role models. Please see the definition in section 1.5.)



The meaning of the role models is described in detail to reduce differing interpretations. It is a vision that is spread worldwide within Ericsson:

*Every Ericsson Manager assumes four roles: Business manager, innovator, competence developer and relationship builder. These roles are equally important. They are integrated and inseparable.*

This is a separation into four roles, which are in competition and mutual dependency of each other as it is said that the roles are "integrated and inseparable".

The following figure shows the "The Ericsson Manager" concept in a single page view created by one of this paper's authors for the convenience of the reader (since a verbal description is often iconic in its larger structure and our focus of attention is on larger units).



## The Ericsson Manager

Every Ericsson Manager assumes **four roles: business manager, innovator, competence developer and relationship builder**. These roles are equally important. They are integrated and inseparable.

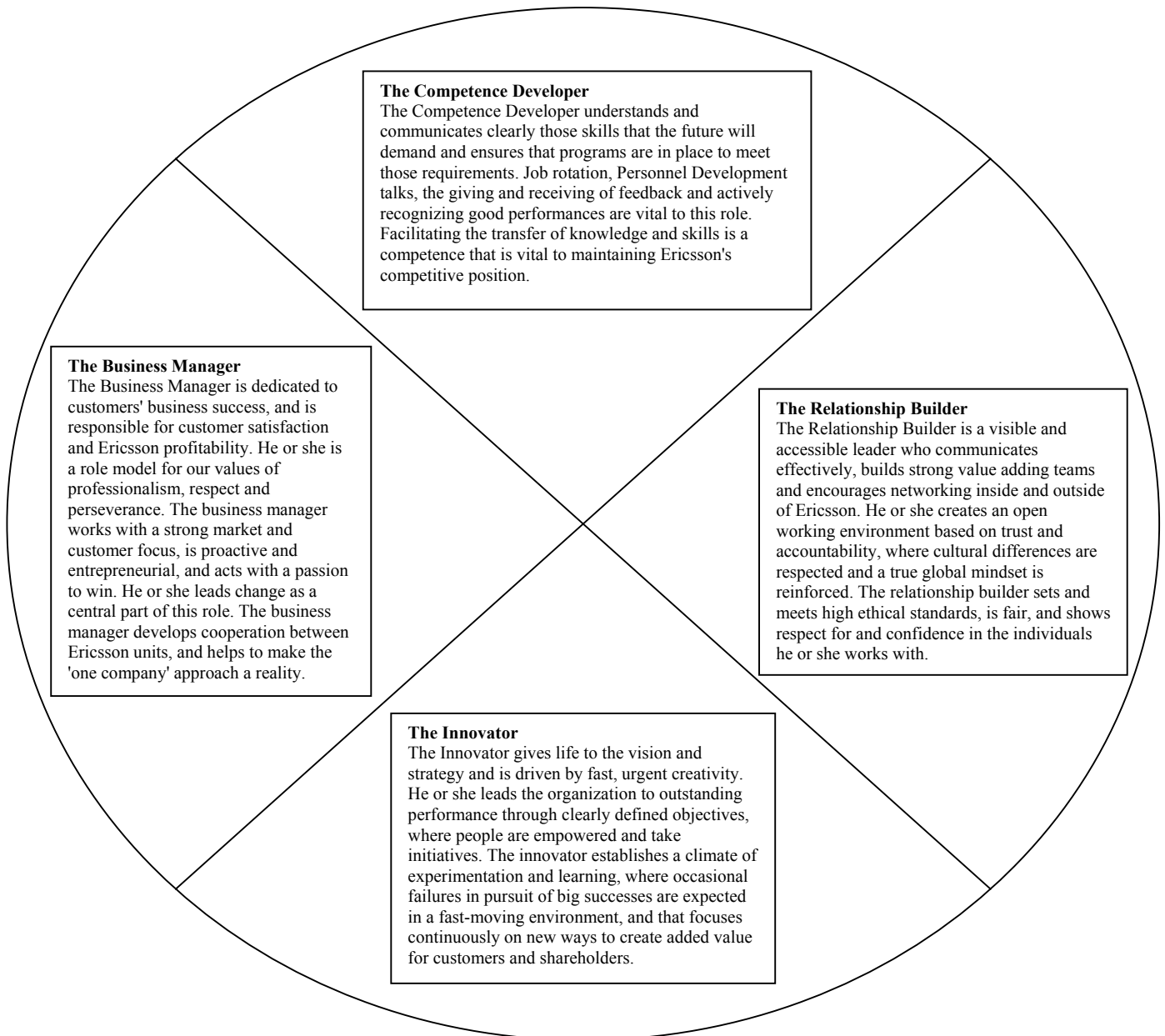


Figure 1-1





## 1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION

We have to define what we mean with global and multinational corporate culture. In a global corporate culture, all people share the same culture whereas in a company with a multinational corporate culture the employees have unique local corporate cultures. With this definition, we can deduce that Ericsson has a global corporate culture theme for their manager vision.

The benefit of a corporate culture grows if a majority of employees can identify themselves with it. Considering this, cultural differences between countries could cause problems to companies that wish their corporate culture to be truly global.

Some research (Zander, 1997) indicates "business performance has been shown to yield better results when management practices are congruent with national culture".

For Ericsson it is without doubt interesting to know how much its employees throughout the world accept the manager identity-roles. The Ericsson manager ideal is communicated in English. By just using one language, there is the problem of how the message is interpreted in different parts of the world. Zander refers to this as meaning-equivalence. Nevertheless, in this study such interpretation could be useful as leadership identity-roles can be allowed to have different meanings depending on national culture.

We know from linguistics that the meaning of a message is depending on the context (reference frame) around it. The immediate context of the message containing the *Ericsson Manager message* is the Ericsson office but outside the Ericsson office, we have another context, the geographical location in which the employee lives. The message is interpreted with the Ericsson's corporate culture modulated with the national culture.

## 1.3 PURPOSE

Our purpose is to measure the cross-cultural acceptance for the leadership identity-roles defining a manager in "The Ericsson Manager" concept.



## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

Our main research question behind our problem is:

*Is it possible to have a leadership model that can be used for a global corporate company?*

## 1.5 DEFINITIONS

### Identity roles

We will use the metaphor of "identity roles" in this thesis. With this abstraction, we mean that a person can choose an identity and take a role in a similar way as an actor in a theatre or movie. By entering this role with a specific identity, the person acts and behaves in a way that is appropriate to the role. An identity as a "teacher" sets mental limits in appropriate behavior as well as an identity as a "police-man" or "priest". The identity of the role defines the cultural behavior. A priest has a different behavior and thinking depending on if he is a catholic priest or a protestant priest or from any other religion but he is still a priest. The role itself is not connected to a behavior or thinking. The culture sets the behavior and thinking. This concept is based on the thinking of anthropologist Gregory Bateson<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Steps of an ecology of mind, Gregory Bateson



## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

#### 2.1.1 Scientific perspective

In their book about management research, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe tells that there are two dominating ways within the social science when conducting a research, i.e. positivistic or phenomenological.

Fundamental in the positivistic philosophy is that the social world exists externally and knowledge is only significant if it is based on observations of its external reality. Here the science is value-free and the researcher is independent of what is being observed, which in turn formulates the hypotheses to find out if it can be verified or falsified.

The other way is the phenomenological philosophy that is about interpreting the environment and understanding a certain phenomenon. A phenomenological researcher has the human individual in the focus of interest and the focus is on interpretation and understanding. The researcher tries to understand a person's reality by thinking in the same way the person does when he perceives his surroundings. The meaning is important for the researcher that has to understand what is happening by induction from data.

In both cases, there are two methods that can be used, the quantitative and the qualitative method. The quantitative method builds knowledge by measuring things that are easy to measure, describe or explain. Most physical "real" nouns (things) are measured this way as for example distance, velocity, mass. The quantitative method gathers statistics and numbers to analyze collected data by repeated measurements giving high reliability.



Qualitative methods are used for the understanding and awareness of things that are not easily measured as for example abstract nouns such as "power" over people or "relationships" between people. Qualitative methods are executed by interviewing people to increase the understanding of the social process. Qualitative methods are used to create an understanding of a problem by illuminating it from different angles.

### 2.1.2 Methodological perspective

We assumed a positivistic perspective by deciding already from the very beginning of this study that it would be based on a quantitatively analyzed survey questionnaire. However, in a way it is phenomenological as we tried to understand how the respondent interprets the survey in his/hers environment. This we have to do as we use words as the interface between the survey read by the person and the person's actual culturally interpreted thinking processes.

It is qualitative in the way that we are trying to understand people's expectations regarding manager roles governed by their culture.

Almost all measurements in the technical world are quantitative, as one measurement with the same in-data will give the same out-data with a high repeatability factor. In a technical world, an instrument measures with sensors or transducers. Sensors give a direct measure of the physical entity that is to be measured and transducer converts the measured physical entity into something else that can be measured. For example, a measure of temperature can be measured as an electrical voltage in a probe.

In this study, we measure people's expectations of a manager that we try to map onto a quantitative measure. This abstract thing, the manager, is defined as a noun but it has no physical entity. It cannot be measured by anything else but words and combination of words. If we look back in time to what words are, we can find a definition by Aristotle in his book "On Interpretation".



*"Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience, and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experience are the images."*

This seems very good but nowadays we know that the presupposition of "the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all" is not correct. We have more mental experiences than what we have words for, and therefore we have words that describe more than one mental experience. The meaning of a word is dependent on the context surrounding a word, as only a judge can judge.

Clearly, by using the same logic as Aristotle has taught others we have destroyed his concept of that "mental experiences"... "are the same for all". Mental experiences do not correspond in a mathematical one-to-one mapping to words that are equal to all. It might seem strange when you think about it, but words are what we communicate, and this is one of the problems with them. Still we have to use them.

What this means in reality, is that words, our transducers in this instrument, have a different meaning for each individual. This is called meaning-equivalence (and it is explained in the enclosures at the end of this thesis). The mental experiences of the person that we wish to measure in the form of corporate-cultural values can only be described to us in words and because of this, we can think of words as transducers. These given words do not give the correct answer but a value where much information has been deleted. Moreover, usually one will further reduce the information by giving the words an ordinal number, calculate a statistical value with these numbers and present this value as a fact. This means that the resulting value is qualitative.

We use words for measuring the measurement values (mental variables or mental constants). As a tool for this abstract device, we use computers for reaching people with questions and receiving answers via the same computers from them.



However, when receiving the words one must also realize that a computer is not a biofeedback machine as we humans are. We humans perform parallel processing of input from other humans by also seeing how people move, and listening to how a person articulates words, both tempo and tonality. This modulation of words contains a message of context of how specific words should be interpreted in the view of the person that talks. The modulation is a meta-message. The reference frame around the message guides us in how to interpret the message.

This meta-message is not captured in our computer device and because of this, we have made the questions with a number of, what we think corresponding alternatives. In any case, "data are always descriptions or memories of events or objects. Always there is a transformation or recoding of the raw event which intervenes between the scientist and his object".<sup>4</sup>

We have to consider how we structure the words and how we visualize the words to the reader. Even the pre-defined text-based answers that the respondent must choose are culturally dependent.

## 2.2 ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS

We made the survey with the intention to make interviews with people that did not like the vision but we got no statistically sufficient indication to pinpoint those people with the web-based survey. Our time constraints and the respondents' geographical location spread made it impossible to interview many people. The same constraint does also apply to how many questionnaires we could send out. Our statistical software was a one-month demo packet that was reasonably economical for our study.

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<sup>4</sup> Bateson, Steps of an Ecology of mind, page XXV



## 2.3 CHOSEN RESEARCH DESIGN

The research strategy depends on the research question (Yin, 1994, figure 1.1). We needed plenty of data on who, where, how many and how much employees accept the Ericsson manager ideal. Therefore, our plan was to make a survey allowing us to find relevant candidates for loosely structured interviews. At the time of our study, Ericsson had around 71700 employees worldwide<sup>5</sup> and an initial goal of 500-1000 responses seemed to be achievable with the current information technology. We developed a paperless questionnaire that would be reasonably fit for our purpose and not require any special funding.

The tool consists of a web-based questionnaire that is sent via e-mail to a number of Ericsson employees worldwide. Their response is sent via e-mail back to us and is processed to give information if the concept is acceptable or not. We have the presupposition that people may not respond to the questionnaire if there are too many questions and we have made an effort to "make it as simple as possible but not simpler"<sup>6</sup>.

The simplest would have been to ask only one single question regarding the rating of the existing ideal manager concept as a whole but this would have left us without any clues to the origins of a low rating. Therefore, we decided to ask the rating for each of the ideal manager roles together with some key characteristics of the respondent; e.g. gender and age group.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> According to <http://www.ericsson.com/about/compfacts/employees.shtml> with publishing date December 18, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> This is a quote from Albert Einstein.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 8.1 on page 48 for the complete questionnaire.



## 2.4 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

### 2.4.1 Data collection

We used the telephone list at Ericsson for picking e-mail addresses according to the last two digits in the telephone number. The link to our web based form was sent out by e-mail in three waves to 4029 employees with telephone numbers ending in:

- a) 23 (=> 741 employees)
- b) 32 (=> 686 employees)
- c) 22, 33, 55, 25, 52, 35 & 53 (The wave was sent to outside Sweden only => 2602 employees)

This we presume is a systematic sampling because we select people at a precise interval from a list. Doing sampling this way is compromise. Still we have to deal with the particularities of this survey's environment and the tools available.

To ensure that we did not get multiple answers from the same person we requested that the respondent added their e-mail address as a unique key for us. We could then check with the outgoing e-mail list and the incoming e-mail address for non-valid or bogus respondents.

We had a goal of 700 respondents and sent out more and more e-mails to fill this quota yielding in 550 respondents but roughly 50 had to be deleted because the e-mail address did not match. The number of e-mails that we sent was about 4000. Most of the respondents that answered the questionnaire did this "happily" but there were some people responding with e/mail addresses like "Donald Duck".

As we were receiving the data, we noticed that many respondents were from Sweden (around 50% of Ericsson's workforce is located there) so we tried to send out more e-mails to employees in other countries.





#### 2.4.2 The difference between the measured object and the reference object

In measurements there has to be at least two objects, one is a reference object and the other object is the object to measure. The reference object in this study is the employee's own implicit culturally created imagined manager in his mind with characteristics that the employee values high. When reading the Ericsson vision the employee creates the other object, an implicit culturally interpreted "Ericsson manager" in his mind.

The difference between the two mental objects is the cultural difference as we can only measure something relative to something else. We can only measure a difference if we have an object and a reference object. The difference between the imagined manager and the explicit Ericsson vision indicate how an employee accepts the vision.

It is very difficult to measure, as there are no "real things" to measure. Only two imagined "things" inside the brain of a person where the difference between these "things" gives a behavioral response that can be measured.



### 2.4.3 Data processing

We got the respondent's replies via e-mail and then the post processing of the answers was done with an application in JAVA. The JAVA application interpreted the text in the e-mails and converted it into a format that statistical software can read. We used "Microsoft Excel" and the evaluation version of "Statgraphics plus version 5.1" for analyzing the results and making plots. We tried to use "Statistica" but their demo version did not allow entry of other data than their own demo data.

## 2.5 CRITICAL REVIEW

According to Yin much depends on the researcher's own style when conducting an investigation. One could make a study result in a statistical analysis or use various analytic techniques such as putting information into different arrays, making matrixes of categories and tabulating the frequency of different events. These techniques are useful but the manipulations must be done carefully to avoid biasing the result. In qualitative research, it is important to organize and reduce the volume of information in a way that makes a search for patterns possible.

As for all measurements, it is important to know if a study is meaningful. The validity and reliability of the study must be high, i.e. the quality of the research must be as high as possible.

### Validity

Do we measure what we intend to measure? Is the measure relevant to an innocent bystander, or more specifically, to those we wish to measure? Can the survey predict? Does this survey give scores that agree with other things that go along with this belief and resulting attitude?



### Reliability<sup>8</sup>

If a later investigator exactly does the same study, does he find the same findings and conclusions as in the former study? This means that a survey should be dependable, stable, consistent and predictable.

### Repeatability

The ability to repeat the survey and still get the same result.

It is more difficult when doing a qualitative research to satisfy these parameters because human nature is dynamic and never static. Consequently, qualitative research could never be achieved without the influence of human behavior. We tried to minimize the influence of these parameters but it is difficult to say if we have succeeded or not. One may repeat it in one year's time to see.

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<sup>8</sup> Zander, 1997, in "The license to lead", page 98



### 3 THEORY

#### 3.1 REFERENCE FRAME FOR THIS STUDY

This study focuses on the common part of the theories related to business leadership, national culture, and corporate (organizational) culture.

##### 3.1.1 National culture

Culture is what defines the rules in different human societies. Societies have existed for thousands of years where the societies had different religion, laws and practices. Then something happened and "nations" were invented with the necessity to have a passport when crossing a border and going from one nation into another nation. However, nations do normally not contain a homogenous human society but they impose a common language and laws that makes different societies minorities in a nation. In a nation, there are strong forces that integrate the minorities into one society with national language, common mass media, educational system, army, political system, and sports.

When Hofstede describes culture, he is borrowing ideas from software science as can be seen in the following quotes.

*The collective mental programming of the people in an environment. Culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience.*

*Collective programming (software) of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category from another. (Hofstede 2001)*

Hofstede explains his ideas in the following paragraph: A working definition of culture is *The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another*. The "category of people" can be a corporation but also a nation, an ethnic group, a profession, a type of business or industry, a generation or a work group. Culture is mental software that affects the ways we think, feel, perceive the world, and behave.

Culture is according to Hofstede a mental construction and clearly, it must reside within our brain. This is the only place where it could be. Inside this mental construction there are categories of "things" that somehow relate to other categories. Some of these "things" or categories that influences our mental thought patterns are religion, language, geographical location and climate.

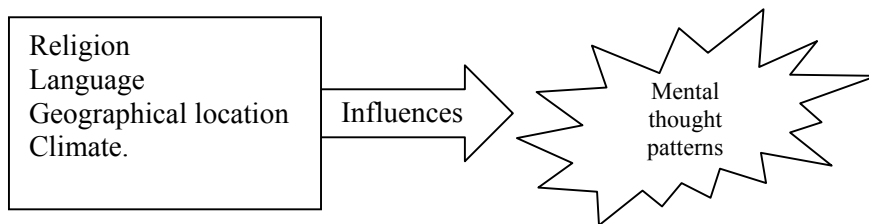


Figure 3-1

The anthropologist Bateson (2000) had a thought that *"His (commonly unconscious) beliefs about what sort of world it is will determine how he sees it and acts within it, and his ways of perceiving and acting will determine his beliefs about its nature."*

Culture affects each human being from conception or at least birth. We do not genetically inherit culture at birth. People learn it. Culture influences the way we think about stuff and perceive "things". It distorts reality as it alters the perception. You see what you want to see.

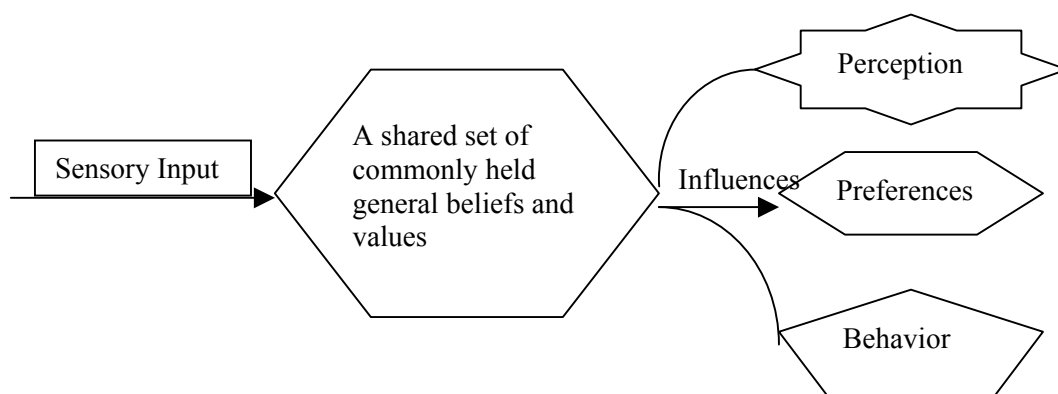


Figure 3-2



*These algorithms of the heart, or, as they say, of the unconscious, are, however, coded and organized in a manner totally different from the algorithms of language. In addition, since a great deal of conscious thought is structured in terms of the logics of language, the algorithms of the unconscious are doubly inaccessible. It is not only that the conscious mind has poor access to this material, but also the fact that when such access is achieved, e.g., in dreams, art, poetry, religion, intoxication, and the like, there is still the formidable problem of translation. (Bateson, 2000)*

Hofstede has made a model, the Hofstede Cultural Orientation Model, reported in the spring 1995 issue of the ACA Journal, which classifies cultures based on where they fall on five continuums.

#### Individual vs. Collective Orientation

The level at which behavior is appropriately regulated.

*Believe it or not, Jesus recounted a parable that we can relate to culture's influence on managerial behavior: A man said to his first son, "Go and work in the vineyard today." The son readily agreed to work there, but did not. The man gave the same directive to his second son, who said that he would not go. Soon afterward, the second son changed his mind and did the requested work. "Which son," asked Jesus, "did the will of the father?"*

*Chances are, your answer is that the second son did the will of his father because he actually carried out the work. However, a former Dutch missionary in Indonesia reports that his native parishioners favored the first son because he was more pleasing to his father. Their reasoning was that the first son did not openly contradict his father; he preserved the harmonious relationship between them. In the Indonesians' view, the son who said "no" directly to his father was more disrespectful than the one who said "yes" but failed to go to the vineyard. The Indonesian point of view signals that they are from a collectivistic culture. An answer favoring the son who actually did the work indicates that the respondent is probably from an individualist culture.*



(The missionary's story is reported by Hofstede in Cultures and Organizations, McGraw-Hill, London, 1991.)<sup>9</sup>

### Power-Distance Orientation

The extent to which less powerful parties accept the existing distribution of power and the degree to which adherence to formal channels is maintained.

### Uncertainty-Avoidance Orientation

The degree to which employees feel threatened by ambiguity, and the relative importance to employees of rules, long-term employment and steady progression through well defined career ladders.

### Dominant-Values Orientation

The nature of the dominant values - e.g. assertiveness, monetary focus, well-defined gender roles, formal structure - vs. concern for others, focus on quality of relationships and job satisfaction, and flexibility.

### Short-Term vs. Long-Term Orientation

The time focus used: short-term (involving more inclination toward consumption, saving face by keeping up) vs. long-term (involving preserving status-based relationships, thrift, deferred gratifications).

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<sup>9</sup> Interpreting Time Worldwide, August 1994 Worldwide Business Practices Report, a publication of International Cultural Enterprises, Deerfield, Illinois



*In Riding the Waves of Culture (1993), Fons Trompenaars tells the story of two telecommunications companies trying to win a major contract with the Mexican government. The Americans, whose product was technologically superior, had a presentation that was tightly organized, fast-paced, and full of high energy. Their plans included leaving Mexico City on the last flight of the evening. The French arrived two days later. Their agenda was loosely conceived, but they did have an idea of the goals they hoped to attain during their two-week visit. In their formal presentation, they emphasized the history of their company and the fact that it had done business with the Mexican government in the 1930s. The French got the business. It was the relationship, past and present, that had reality and the power to convince, not the technological quality of the product.<sup>10</sup>*

Zander (1997, p. 13) uses a definition of culture derived from anthropologists Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961): They attempted to describe culture as what it is "a shared set of commonly-held general beliefs and values" and what it influences, "people's assumptions, perceptions and behavior". "In its most general sense, culture refers to peoples way of life". (Zander, 1997, p. 181)

### 3.1.2 Corporate (organizational) culture

The authors have compiled four ideas about corporate (organizational) culture and what we have found seems contradicting. What Hofstede (1996) says contradicts Project Globe's definition of an organizational culture.

Corporate culture is according to Hofstede (1996) "an immensely popular subject about which a lot of nonsense has been written":

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<sup>10</sup> Interpreting Time Worldwide, March 1994 Worldwide Business Practices Report, a publication of International Cultural Enterprises, Deerfield, Illinois





*Contrary to national cultures, **corporate cultures are not a matter of shared values, as some authors want it.** They are rooted in the values of the founders and significant leaders, but their values have been converted into the practices, the rules of the game, for all members of the corporation. And this explains what would otherwise be a riddle; how multinationals can function productively, if the national cultures of their personnel in different countries are as different as they are. Effective multinationals have created practices that bridge the national value differences. Common practices, not common values are what solve practical problems. The differences in values should be understood, the differences in practices should be resolved.* (Hofstede, 1996)

As Hofstede indicates every organization has its unique culture even if they did not intend to create one. The culture could have been created unconsciously based on the founders or core people who built the organization. When time goes the individuals and leaders changes the culture of their organization to fit their own preferences. The style influences the management and what every one considers success.

*Corporate (organizational) culture consists of commonly used nomenclature within an organization, **shared organizational values**, and organizational history: The common agreement among members of collectives with respect to the psychological attributes specified above and common practices of entities such as families, schools, work organizations, economic and legal systems, and political institutions.* (Cultural Influences On Leadership And Organizations: Project Globe, ICC publications)

*Every organization has a culture, that is, a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual. Like human culture generally, it is passed on from one generation to the next. It changes slowly if at all.* (Wilson, 1989)

This statement captures the key points of organizational culture - a patterned way of thinking, focused on the organization's central tasks (operations) and relationships (administration), passed on by generations and slow to change.



*Any organization's patterned way of thinking reflects what is variously called its essence or the beliefs of the corps around its core. The central career professionals, those people most closely associated with the organization's core operation, define the mission and decide on the capabilities needed to carry it out. (Halperin, 1974)*

### 3.1.3 Leadership

What seems to be in the core of many leadership definitions is that leaders help others to accomplish group objectives. How the leader helps and influences the group is culture dependent. Leadership is a mental concept as persons in the group have transferred something from them to the leader and they wish to have something back. Often this is denoted with the word "power", the group has given "power" to the leader but it is not a physical entity. Maybe the meaning of "power" is social influence. The following theory definition is from the Project Globe, CCI Publications that indicates how our hidden things affect us. It is written as "implicit" which in this reference-frame really means the stuff (undefined) that we have learnt from the time we were born.

#### ***Implicit Leadership Theory***

*According to this theory individuals have implicit theories (beliefs, convictions, and assumptions) about the attributes and behaviors that distinguish leaders from others, effective leaders from ineffective ones, and moral leaders from evil ones. Implicit leadership theories influence the values that individuals place on selected leader behaviors and attributes, and their motives relevant to acceptance and enactment of leader behavior. The following propositions express the major assertions of implicit leadership theory.*

*1. Leadership qualities are attributed to individuals, and those persons are accepted as leaders, on the basis of the degree of fit, or congruence, between the leader behaviors they enact and the implicit leadership theory held by the attributers.*



*2. Implicit leadership theories constrain, moderate, and guide the exercise of leadership, the acceptance of leaders, the perception of leaders as influential, acceptable, and effective, and the degree to which leaders are granted status and privileges. There is substantial experimental evidence in support of this theory.*

#### 3.1.4 The integration of leadership and culture

One universal definition of organizational leadership is "the ability of an individual to influence and to motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members". Note that this is a definition of organizational leadership, not leadership in general. Speaking of leadership in general, defines a leader as a "group member whose influence on group attitudes, performance, or decision making greatly exceeds that of the average member of the group." (Cultural Influences On Leadership And Organizations: Project Globe, ICC publications)

The integration of leadership and national culture results in cross-cultural leadership. Specifically we mean the leadership interaction-taking place between managers and subordinates representing different cultural backgrounds. For a long time it has been recognized that beliefs concerning appropriate leader-subordinate relationships differ between countries and are an important source of differences in the leadership behavior of managers among countries. (Cultural influences on leadership and organizations: Project Globe, ICC publications)

What works in one culture does not necessarily work in another culture. There are so many different culture specific attitudes towards an Interpersonal Leadership (IPL) that it is a problem of how to implement a commonly shared IPL that replaces / complements the original set of beliefs (Zander, 1997). Some of the interpersonal leadership variables that vary across countries are empowering, coaching, supervising, reviewing, communicating in general, and personal communication (Zander, 1997). The basic premise making the cross-cultural leadership different from traditional leadership is thus the influence of cultures on expectations concerning manager-subordinate interaction.

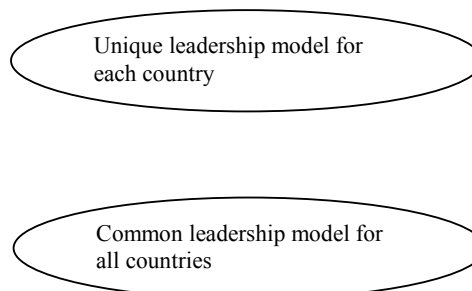
This contrasts to the leadership theory of a global corporate culture. In such a company, there is a worldwide system of shared goals, values and behaviors. Global corporate culture theory says that there could be a unique worldwide corporate culture in a global company where the corporate culture is the same and indifferent of geographical location. The corporate culture is considered to dominate an employee more than the national culture.

When summarizing we get on one hand the position that leadership is a universal phenomenon and the same leadership model can be applied worldwide. On the other hand, we have that leadership is different between countries and that a specific unique leadership behavior associated with national culture should be provided.

These two contradicting views between national-cultural leadership and global corporate-cultural leadership could both be right. It probably depends on from where the observer views the leadership model.



Figure 3-3



Now, what is extremely important to remember is that most of the studies regarding national-cultural leadership investigates the behavior / attitude of a manager / leader and **not** the manager's specific identity or role.

### 3.1.5 The Paradox

We have thus a paradox where two theories conflict regarding leadership for a manager's behavioral model. One theory says that manager's behavior must be adapted according to national cultural context and the other says that a manager's behavior should be adapted to a corporate cultural context.

In other words: When a strong corporate culture (like Ericsson with the ideal manager identity) meets various local national cultures, shall corporate culture adapt to the local or vice versa or other solutions?

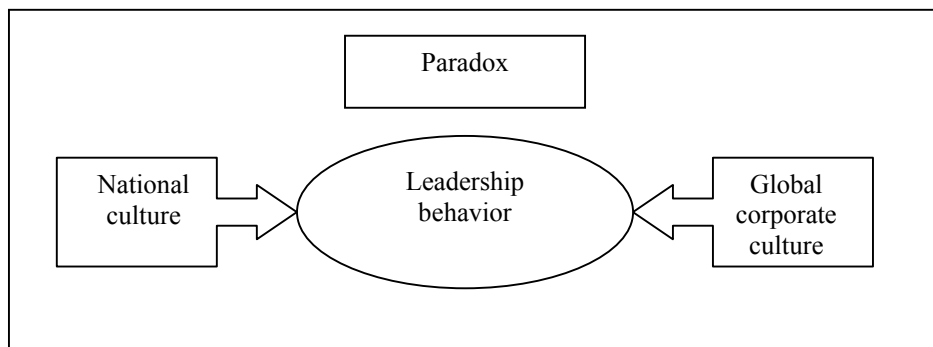


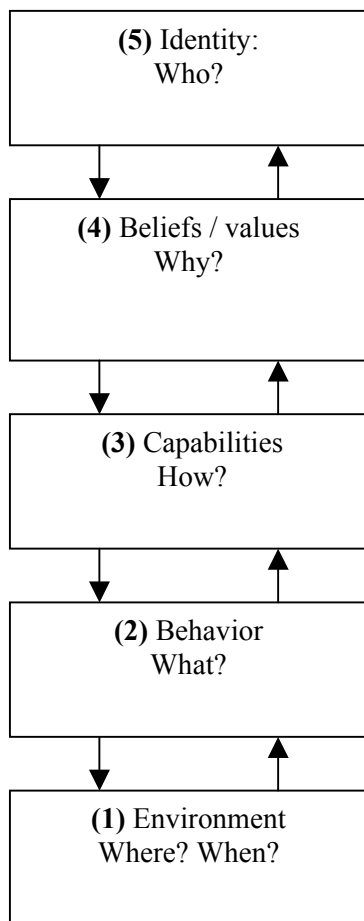
Figure 3-4

We glanced at the anthropologist Bateson's description of what culture is. Bateson has a description of a cognitive organism divided in logical levels where culture (beliefs/values) is at one level.

In his book, *Changing Belief Systems* (1990), Dilts worked with a theory from Bateson's ideas of logical levels, and by looking at the paradox from a higher logical level, we have a possibility to solve it. In this theory, identity or what a person identifies with, governs the belief system (culture is in this theory residing within the belief system). In the model (shown on the next page), the culture is at the level 4 (beliefs/values). The model determines the person's use of how he uses his capabilities, what he does, when, and where he does it.

Logical levels of the mind

"The brain, and in fact any biological or social system, is organized into levels. Your brain has different levels of processing. As a result, you can have different levels of thinking and being. When we are working to understand the brain, or to change behavior, we need to address these different levels. The same thing will be true inside a business system where there are different levels of organization.



*From the psychological point of view there seem to be five levels that you work with most often. (1) The basic level is your environment, your external constraints. (2) You operate on that environment through your behavior. (3) Your behavior is guided by your mental maps and your strategies, which define your capabilities. (4) These capabilities are organized by belief systems - and (5) beliefs are organized by identity.*

*So when a person is experiencing a difficulty, what you might want to know is whether this difficulty is coming from his external context, or is it that he doesn't have the specific sort of behavior required by that environment? Is the reason because he hasn't developed the appropriate strategy or map to generate that behavior? Is it because he lacks belief, or has a conflicting belief that interferes with his life or his outcome? Finally, is there some interference at the level of identity, of the whole system?*

"These become very important distinctions for anyone working in the areas of learning, communication or change."

Figure 3-5

This model can be compared with the "clarification of the perception of culture" by Zander (1997, page 182): "Culture in this dissertation is viewed as a core of values and beliefs surrounded in a metaphorical sense by layers of norms, attitudes, behavior, artifacts and systems".

All of our knowledge and beliefs build a system that controls our behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define this system of beliefs with its corresponding behavior with



the word attitude, "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (p.6).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) break the definition into three components: attitude is learned; it predisposes action; and such action or behavior is generally consistent. Attitude is evaluative in nature--evaluative and judging -- and such evaluations are based on beliefs. With other words: An attitude is a belief or set of beliefs that governs and controls our behavior.

According to this theory leadership identity, leadership behavior will modulate the belief system (culture). The Ericsson concept is aiming at a whole individual and the individual's being in a greater context. It might not suffice to only look at what is called culture or corporate culture in this case. The model is of how an individual relates with other things in its environment where they are living, or relate to things or relate to abstractions as for example an organization.

Therefore, a definition of different manager/leadership roles would exist at a higher logical level (in the brain) than culture, and would organize the person's belief system (including culture) accordingly.

We as human beings can learn and adapt ourselves. We can take different roles in work and outside work. We can compartmentalize our identity that organizes our belief system according to the logical levels of Bateson (2000).

A visual solution for the paradox would then be:

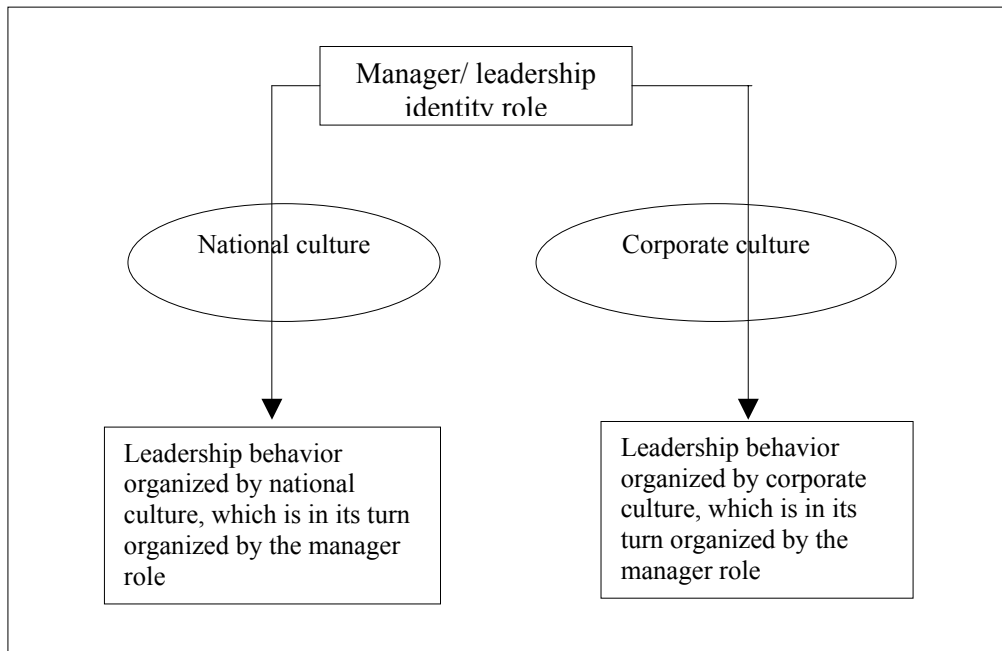


Figure 3-6

The authors' theory is as follows: If a company defines leadership identity-roles for people to step into then the company can allow it to have leadership behavior colored by a mixture of both national culture and corporate culture.

In other words, the company has not defined what a leader should do in behavioral terms. The behavior is governed by national culture. The role does not set the behavior; the national cultural interpretation of the role sets the behavior.

According to the theory in this chapter, there is a leadership clash of corporate cultures of organizations with different national cultures. When a strong corporate culture (like Ericsson with the ideal manager identity) meets various local national cultures, shall corporate culture adapt to the local or vice versa or other solutions?

### 3.1.6 A game as an analogy for culture

To increase the understanding of culture, we explored it using Hofstede's game reference frame. In this frame, culture is like the rules of a game or a play that we play. There are many rules that we have learnt but we have forgotten what they were and we are many times unable to explain them to others. However, we still intuitively know them and use them for telling us what is right or wrong.





When we interact with others, we realize that the rules differ and we can have difficulties to arrive at a shared set of rules. Sometimes we do not know who sets the rules nor on what criteria they are based.

Going back again to a leadership and organizational frame. It is very interesting to know if we are governed by the rules or do we govern the rules. This is very important to understand and it is often the debate of leadership scientists. We have read that some companies are driven by the idea that they can govern the rules and other have the idea that they cannot govern the rules. In the later case, others set the rules. In the reference frame of culture, it is shown (Hofstede) that the national culture affects people's behavior. The behavior is controlled by the person's culture but on the other hand why limit an organization to the idea that it cannot change the culture in the organization. Returning to the game reference frame: Who made the game's rules and why should we not be able to change them? The people who made the game surely did.

We will try to understand the rules in an organization and find out who sets them. There is a system of beliefs, values, criteria and rules in an organization that is the result of the leaders or the people in the company.

The system is commonly referred to as corporate culture. If we scrutinize who sets the rules we can differ between a cult and a culture. If the settings are made from the leaders it is a cult, if the people set it, it is a culture. This is a major difference.

As stated before, some organizations have the idea that they can change the rules and other that they cannot. They who think they cannot are the victims of other rule makers.

### 3.1.7 How to change the rules, or change the culture

If we think of it logically, people in organizations that think they set the rules must be located "above" culture to manage it. Organizations thinking that they cannot change the culture must be "below" it and controlled by it. Bateson showed that there are mental logical levels in our thinking.

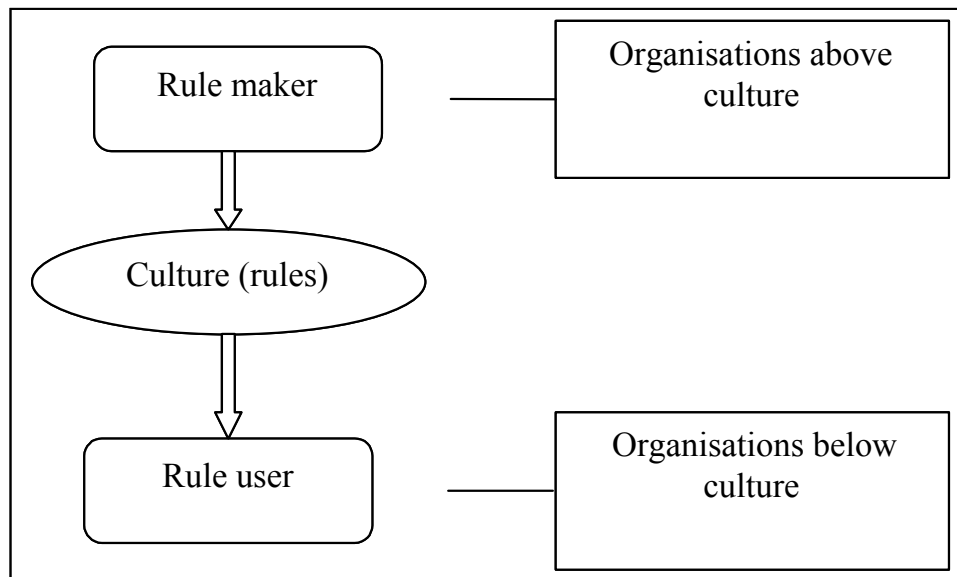


Figure 3-7

Now, as an example, a thief and an ordinary decent person have different rules controlling their respective behavior. They have both unique identities that sets and governs their rules even though they reside within the same national culture. If these two persons swapped their roles, they would also indirectly swap their set of rules (internal culture) and have very different behavior. The decent person maybe takes the role and identity of a tax evader.

Another example is if a subordinate becomes a line manager. Here is also a change in identity roles and the subordinate will change his behavior during some undefined time whilst mentally switching belief system by learning and adapting to the new role.



## 4 EMPIRICAL DATA & ANALYSIS

### 4.1 RESULTS

In our statistics, we used countries that had more than six respondents that yielded 20 countries of the initial 59 countries from which we got responses. Some views on the statistics are shown in the appendix.

Frequency Table for Country

Class	Value	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Cum. Rel. Frequency
1	ALBANIA	1	0,0018	1	0,0018
2	ARGENTINA	2	0,0037	3	0,0055
3	AUSTRALIA	26	0,0475	29	0,0530
4	AUSTRIA	1	0,0018	30	0,0548
5	BELGIUM	3	0,0055	33	0,0603
6	BRAZIL	16	0,0293	49	0,0896
7	BULGARIA	1	0,0018	50	0,0914
8	CAMBODIA	1	0,0018	51	0,0932
9	CAMEROON	1	0,0018	52	0,0951
10	CANADA	21	0,0384	73	0,1335
11	CHILE	1	0,0018	74	0,1353
12	CHINA	23	0,0420	97	0,1773
13	COLOMBIA	1	0,0018	98	0,1792
14	COSTA RICA	2	0,0037	100	0,1828
15	CROATIA (HRVATSKA)	12	0,0219	112	0,2048
16	CZECH REPUBLIC	3	0,0055	115	0,2102
17	DENMARK	12	0,0219	127	0,2322
18	ECUADOR	1	0,0018	128	0,2340
19	ESTONIA	1	0,0018	129	0,2358
20	FINLAND	13	0,0238	142	0,2596
21	FRANCE	8	0,0146	150	0,2742
22	GERMANY	17	0,0311	167	0,3053
23	GREECE	3	0,0055	170	0,3108
24	HONG KONG	1	0,0018	171	0,3126
25	HUNGARY	4	0,0073	175	0,3199
26	INDIA	9	0,0165	184	0,3364
27	INDONESIA	1	0,0018	185	0,3382
28	IRELAND	13	0,0238	198	0,3620
29	ITALY	21	0,0384	219	0,4004
30	JAPAN	6	0,0110	225	0,4113
31	LEBANON	1	0,0018	226	0,4132
32	MALAYSIA	10	0,0183	236	0,4314
33	MEXICO	18	0,0329	254	0,4644
34	NEW ZEALAND	2	0,0037	256	0,4680
35	NORWAY	10	0,0183	266	0,4863
36	PAKISTAN	2	0,0037	268	0,4899
37	PHILIPPINES	1	0,0018	269	0,4918
38	POLAND	2	0,0037	271	0,4954
39	PORTUGAL	4	0,0073	275	0,5027
40	PUERTO RICO	1	0,0018	276	0,5046
41	ROMANIA	6	0,0110	282	0,5155
42	RUSSIA	1	0,0018	283	0,5174
43	SINGAPORE	1	0,0018	284	0,5192
44	SLOVENIA	1	0,0018	285	0,5210
45	SOUTH AFRICA	4	0,0073	289	0,5283
46	SPAIN	23	0,0420	312	0,5704
47	SRI LANKA	1	0,0018	313	0,5722
48	ST. PIERRE AND MIQUE	1	0,0018	314	0,5740
49	SWEDEN	121	0,2212	435	0,7952
50	SWITZERLAND	5	0,0091	440	0,8044
51	TAIWAN	1	0,0018	441	0,8062
52	THAILAND	3	0,0055	444	0,8117
53	THE NETHERLANDS	27	0,0494	471	0,8611
54	TURKEY	1	0,0018	472	0,8629
55	UKRAINE	2	0,0037	474	0,8665
56	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1	0,0018	475	0,8684
57	UNITED KINGDOM	22	0,0402	497	0,9086
58	UNITED STATES	48	0,0878	545	0,9963
59	VENEZUELA	2	0,0037	547	1,0000

Table 4-1



4.2 RESULT CHARTS

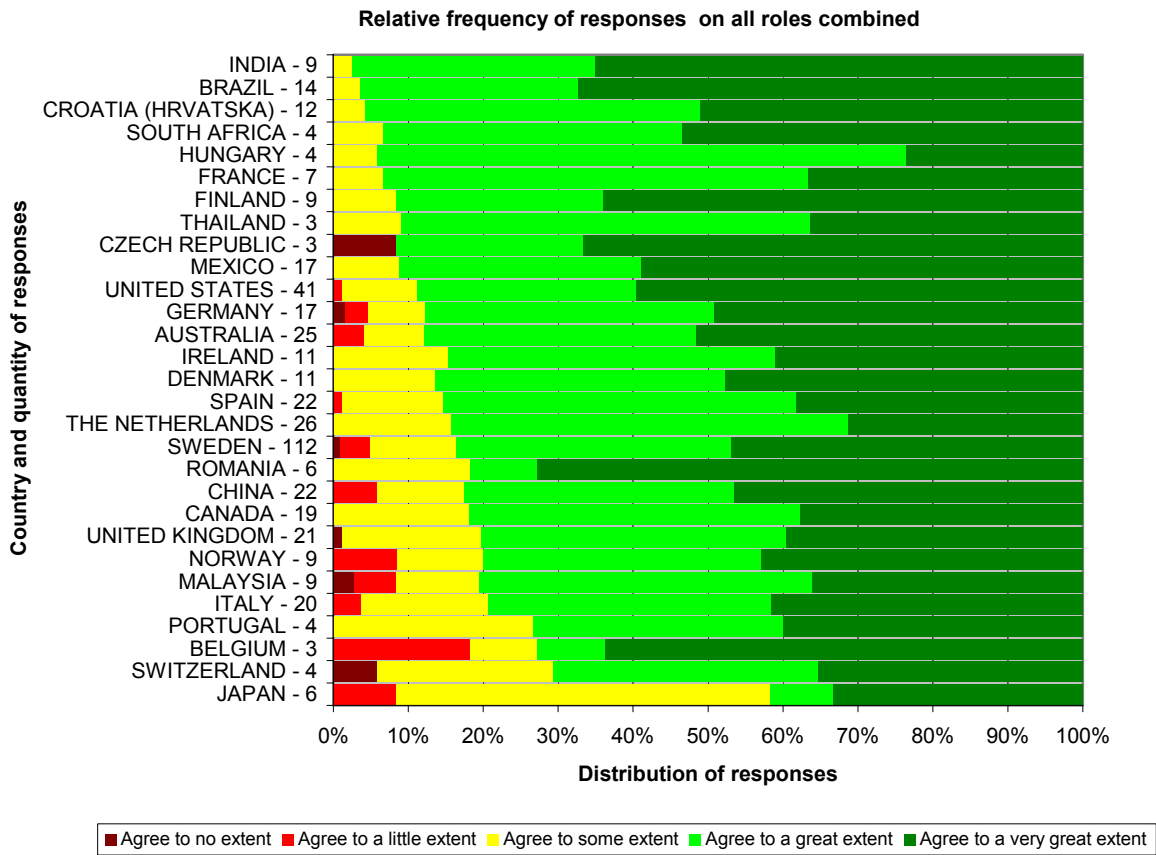


Figure 4-1

Country by AgreeOnRoleImportance

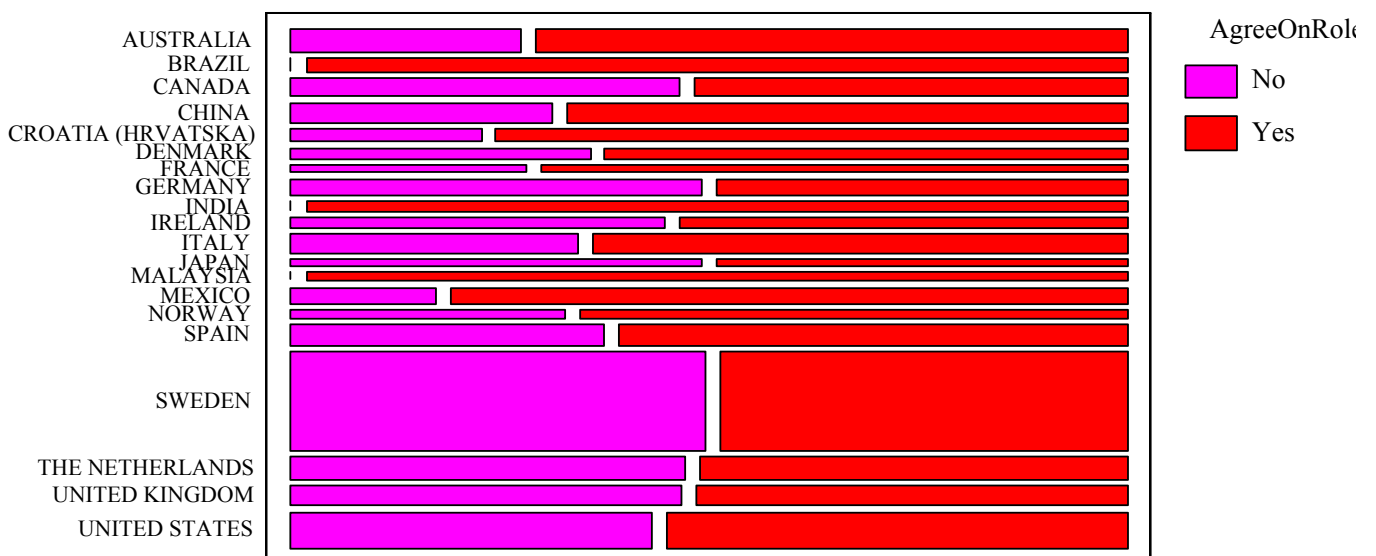


Figure 4-2



### Country by Competence

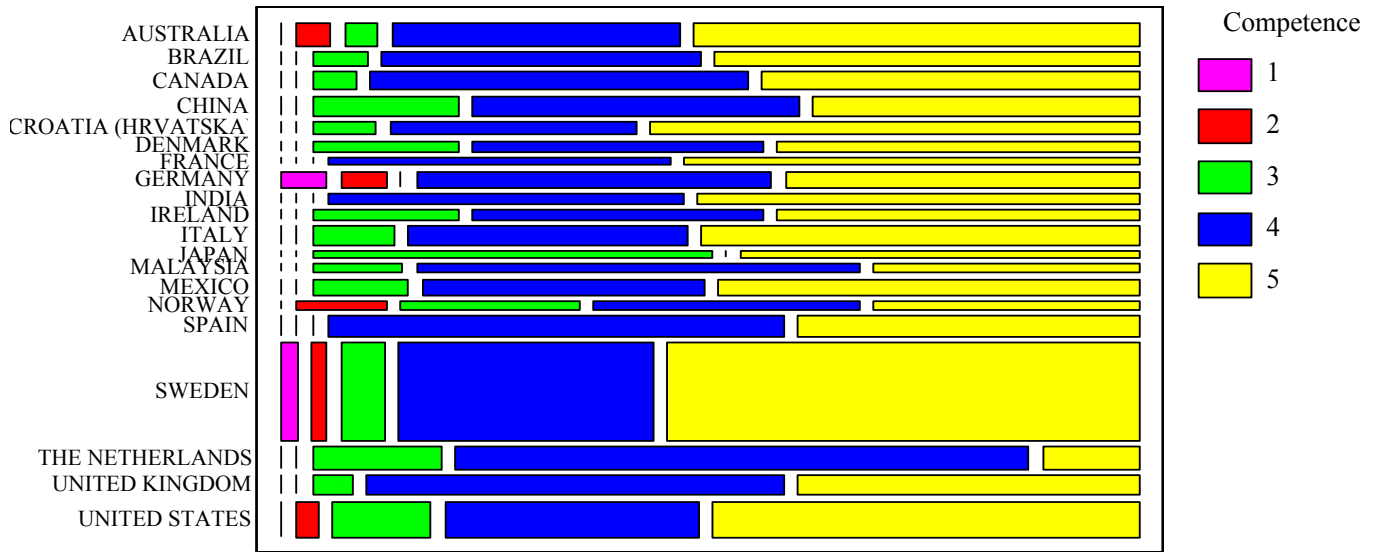


Figure 4-3

### Country by Innovator

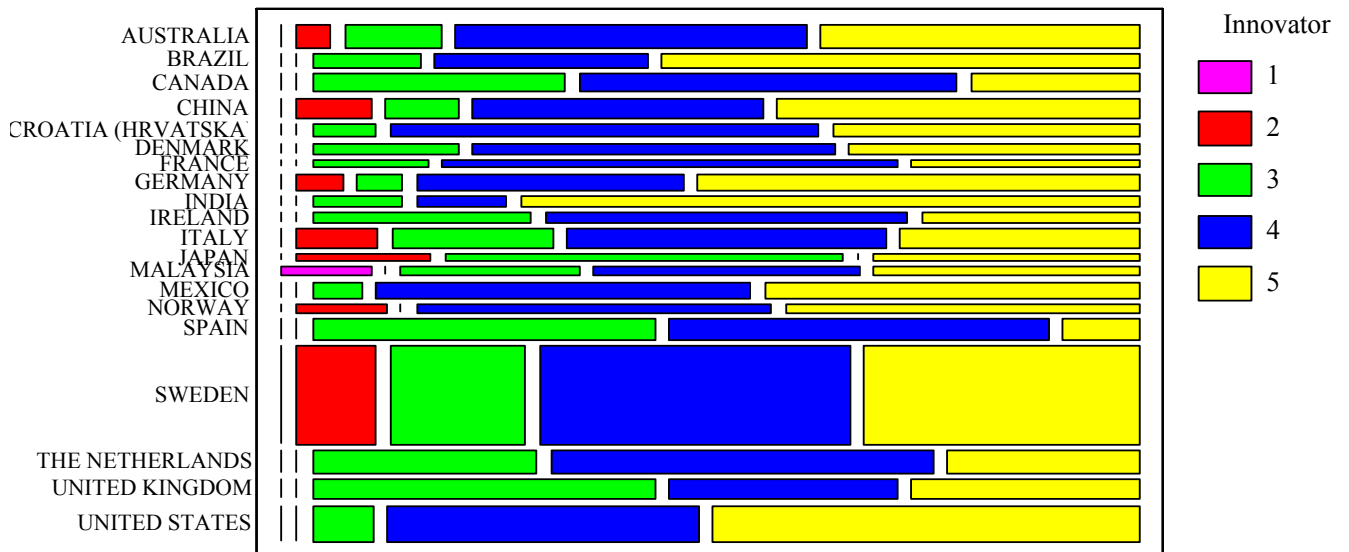


Figure 4-4

### Country by BusinessManager

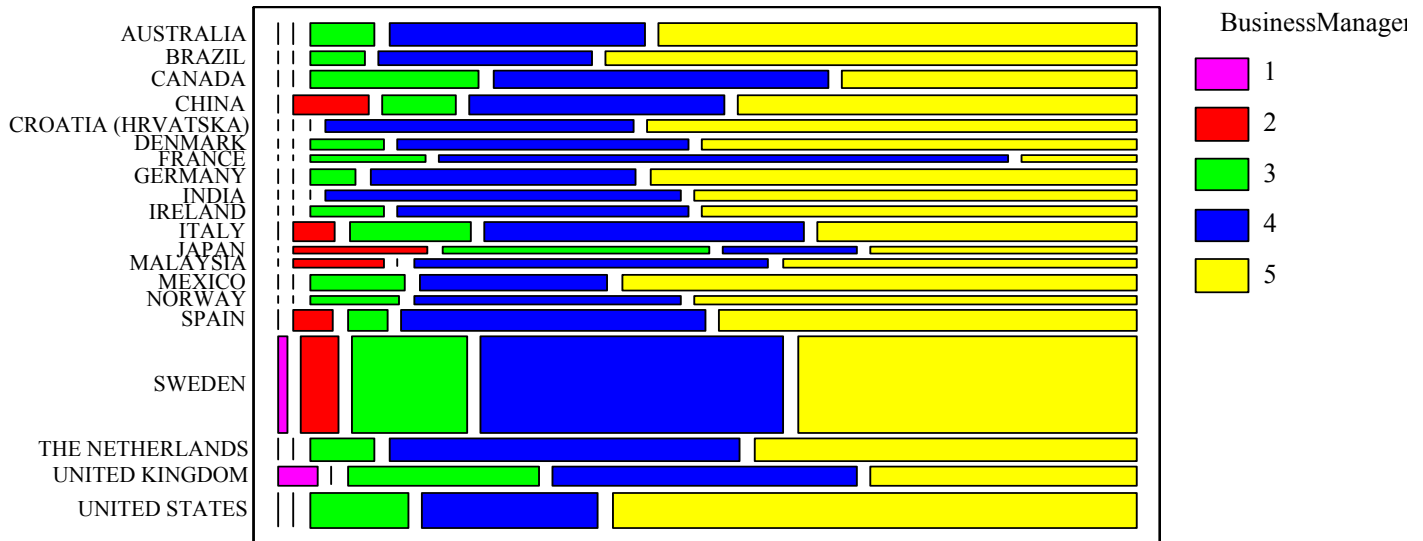


Figure 4-5

### Country by Relationship

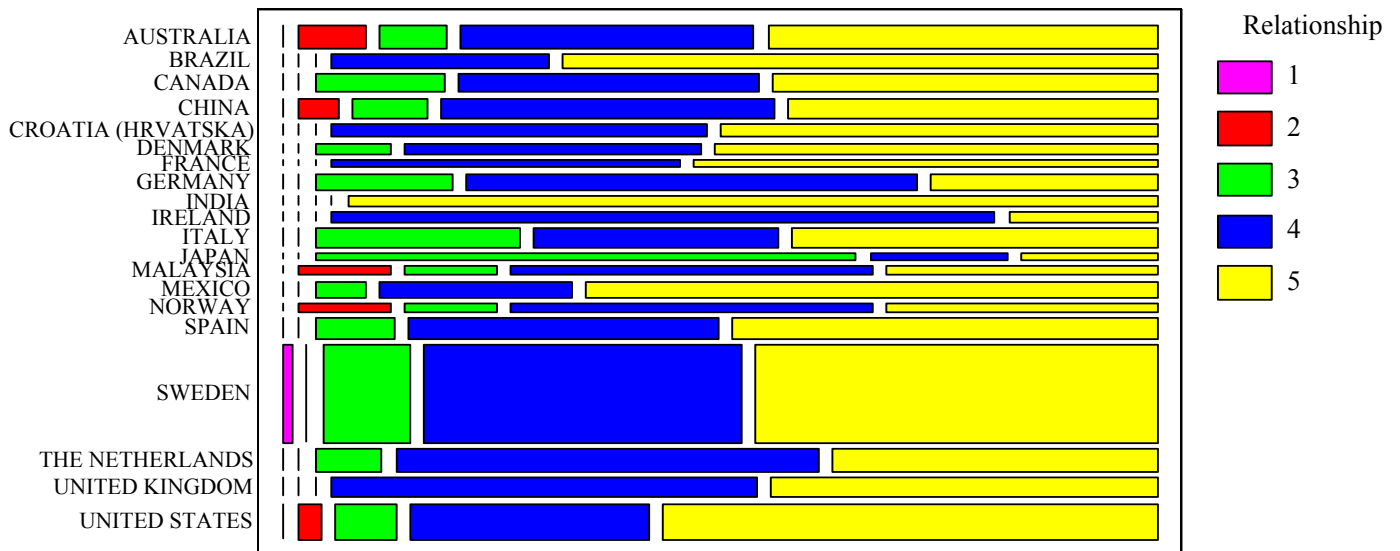


Figure 4-6

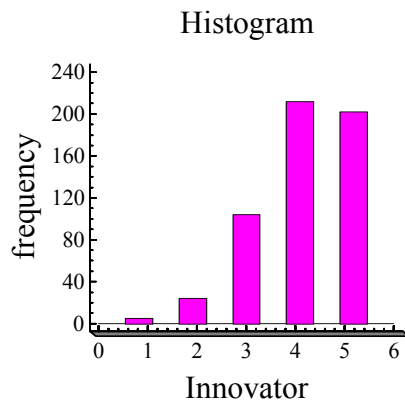


Figure 4-7

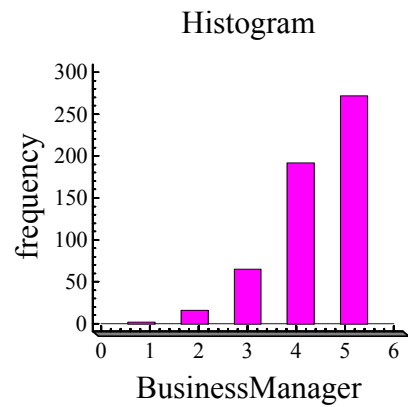


Figure 4-8

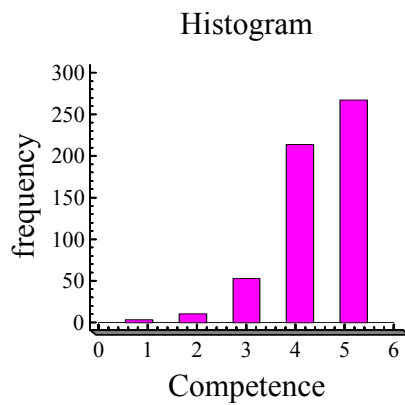


Figure 4-9

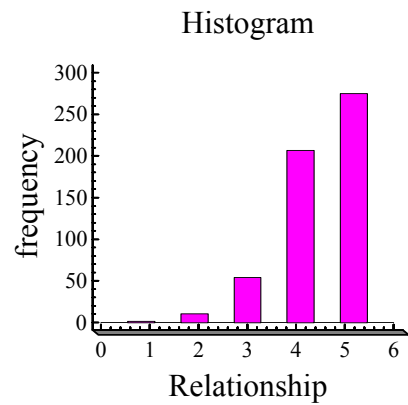


Figure 4-10

The columns numbered 1 to 5 in the above histograms correspond to the following answer choices:

1. To no extent
2. To a little extent
3. To some extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

No other choices (e.g. 0 or 6) were possible.

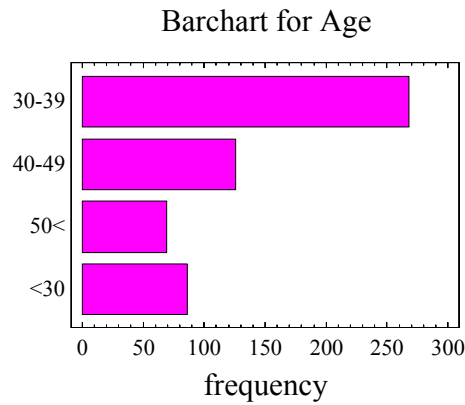


Figure 4-11

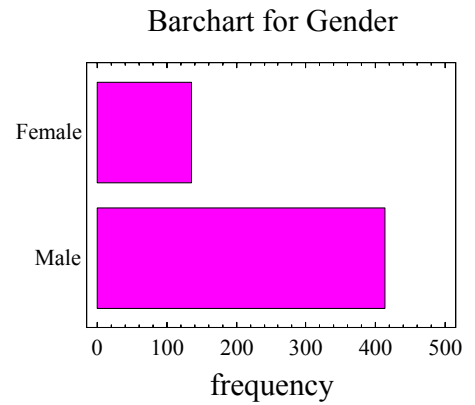


Figure 4-12

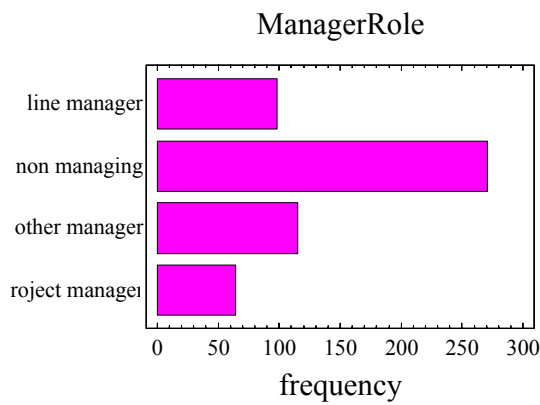


Figure 4-13

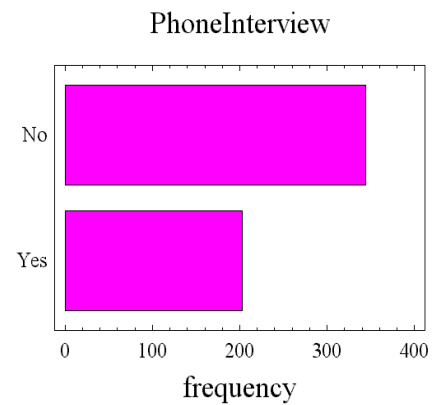


Figure 4-14

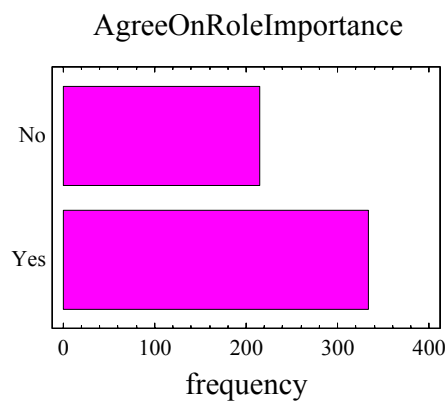


Figure 4-15





#### 4.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

By examining Figure 4-1, we can make the following observations:

The majority of Ericsson employees who answered the questionnaire of this study agreed to a great or a very great extent that a manager should be like "The Ericsson Manager".

Only less than half of the responses from employees who stated that they are from Japan indicated agreement to a great or a very great extent that a manager should be like "The Ericsson Manager".

Only less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the responses from employees who stated that they are from Switzerland, Belgium or Portugal indicated agreement to a great or a very great extent that a manager should be like "The Ericsson Manager".

More than 4000 e-mails were sent out, but since only 550 responded to them, the results are vague. We do not know why people did not respond and it is no use to ask people either, as they would not tell the true reason why they did not answer. They would only give an excuse.



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

"The Ericsson Manager" is an acceptable ideal to Ericsson employees in most countries. From inter-cultural point of view, Japan is the most notable exception.

The Innovator is the manager role that scores the lowest rates of agreement among all four roles.

It is valid for a corporate culture to have a common leadership model like "The Ericsson Manager" because it defines only globally acceptable leadership roles instead of culturally dependent leadership behavior.



## 6 FINAL DISCUSSION

The big difference between this study and other research that we have read is that we have only asked what an employee thinks about the characteristics of the manager identity role models. We have not asked about a manager's behavior or a manager's attitude. It is very important to understand this difference. Hofstede measured attitudes and behavior and this differs from what this study has investigated. Zander did also measure behavior.

*What Zander found was that: "In general, the findings refute the notion of a single best universal interpersonal leadership; they also oppose the belief that interpersonal leadership is uniquely person specific". "It shows that employees' preference for interpersonal leadership (IPL) varies across countries". The statement "oppose the belief that interpersonal leadership is uniquely person specific" means that it is possible to create role models that a person can step into and identify with.*

It is thus very important to know that the form of the roles is supportive when a person transforming into a manager steps into it. It is also very important for a company as Ericsson to know how it's people values the characteristics of the role models as the respect for a manager depends on how much an employee values the "form" of a manager. In addition, it is easier to attract managerial candidates if they know implicitly or explicitly the direction.

When we conducted this investigation, Ericsson was in great financial turmoil with frequent lay-offs and reorganizations. We think that our respondents answered sincerely in spite of the difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, 3500 employees did not respond to our questionnaire.

Many respondents took the opportunity to state their opinion in the comment field. One common view is that most managers in the company do not even remotely resemble "The Ericsson manager" ideal.



When we compare our results, we get some indications of geographical differences when we test the generic manager vision with people from different countries. However, we have not found that these differences are so great that the vision is not acceptable worldwide.

## 6.1 IMPLICATIONS

Adapting the "The Ericsson Manager" ideal to suit Japan carries the obvious risk of reducing its acceptance in other countries.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further work on "The Ericsson Manager" ideal and its application is recommended in the following areas:

### 6.2.1 The role of the Innovator

It scores considerable lower agreement among employees than the other roles. If or when Ericsson wants to improve the overall rating of "The Ericsson Manager" ideal it should focus its efforts on the Innovator role.

### 6.2.2 The application of the "The Ericsson Manager" ideal in Japan

The responses from Japan are not enough to state that there is a real problem but they are at least a hint of that there could be a problem, which also would be consistent with the rich literature in this field. Ericsson should find out with management of the local company in Japan if further activities in this area (possibly in cooperation with Sony Ericsson and/or local Universities) are worthwhile or not.

### 6.2.3 Some thoughts about the concept

One role that is lost or not explicit is "The Social builder" making it exciting & fun to go to work and how to treat people you are working with.



The Relationship Builder is said to make teams but as a consultant at Ericsson Kenneth Blake has never had any management initiated teambuilding activities for joining consultants and employees into one tight team. Rather the inverse, splitting the workforce of employees and consultants into groups A and B that will never jell together, thus never work nicely together.

### 6.3 METHODOLOGY REVIEW

The method we used worked fine without any functional problems and we did not need to change our method. We had no control of motivating people to send in the surveys and we consider 15 % as good even if we would have needed more for a better estimate. What we lacked was a good statistical application for evaluating the data better. There could still be much to find but as there were to few respondents for a valid result there is a waste of time to search for more relationships between the variables.



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## 8 ENCLOSURES

### 8.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

#### The Ericsson Manager concept

Every Ericsson Manager assumes *four* roles: **Competence developer**, **Relationship builder**, **Business manager** and **Innovator**. These roles are equally important. They are integrated and inseparable.

<p>The <b>Competence Developer</b> understands and communicates clearly those skills that the future will demand and ensures that programs are in place to meet those requirements. Job rotation, Personnel Development talks, the giving and receiving of feedback and actively recognizing good performance are vital to this role. Facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills is a competence that is vital to maintaining Ericsson's competitive position.</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that a manager should be like this?</b> <input type="text" value="--"/></p>	<p>The <b>Relationship Builder</b> is a visible and accessible leader who communicates effectively, builds strong value adding teams and encourages networking inside and outside of Ericsson. He or she creates an open working environment based on trust and accountability, where cultural differences are respected and a true global mindset is reinforced. The relationship builder sets and meets high ethical standards, is fair, and shows respect for and confidence in the individuals he or she works with.</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that a manager should be like this?</b> <input type="text" value="--"/></p>
<p>The <b>Business Manager</b> is dedicated to customers' business success, and is responsible for customer satisfaction and Ericsson profitability. He or she is a role model for our values of professionalism, respect and perseverance. The business manager works with a strong market and customer focus, is proactive and entrepreneurial, and acts with a passion to win. He or she leads change as a central part of this role. The business manager develops cooperation between Ericsson units, and helps to make the 'one company' approach a reality.</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that a manager should be like this?</b> <input type="text" value="--"/></p>	<p>The <b>Innovator</b> gives life to the vision and strategy and is driven by fast, urgent creativity. He or she leads the organization to outstanding performance through clearly defined objectives, where people are empowered and take initiatives. The innovator establishes a climate of experimentation and learning, where occasional failures in pursuit of big successes are expected in a fast-moving environment, and that focuses continuously on new ways to create added value for customers and shareholders.</p> <p><b>To what extent do you agree that a manager should be like this?</b> <input type="text" value="--"/></p>

**Do you agree that these roles are equally important?**

We also need to know a little bit about You: My age is  and I am from .  
 I am  and occupy a  role.

Please indicate here . May we contact you for a 20 minutes phone interview?

In this space you may write comments to your answers, the concept or the questionnaire.

[Click here when ready](#)

Figure 8-1







### 8.1.1 Acceptance level, Digital five (5) levels

We have restricted the possible answers for the acceptance level for the four role models {Competence developer, Relationship builder, Business Manager, The Innovator} to the following:

The inputs from the respondents are in text form. For each role model they can respond with the predefined text strings yielding an answer for us [1 · · 5].

1. To no extent
2. To a little extent
3. To some extent
4. To a great extent
5. To a very great extent

The text strings tries to answer the question "To what extent do you agree that a manager should be like this" with a value describing the continuum between implicit bipolar adjectives describing the relationship for Not Agree ---Agree.

These text formulations were found in the research methods that we were investigating before sending out the survey. What was not clear for us then, is that we cannot give the answer a specific arithmetic value and calculate a good estimate for such statistical values as mean and standard deviation. What arithmetic value should map onto each of the "text" answers. For example "To a very great extent", should this have the weight 5 or 10 or 50 compared to a value for the weight of "To no extent"? The mathematical value [1 · · 5] is only an index into the table of predefined strings and CANNOT properly be used for many statistical math operations. However, as we have read in other studies in social science, they do also use "text" for this purpose.

It would have been wiser to have a visual scale of, say, ten centimeters and use this distance metaphor where the respondents could themselves give an indication in distance (weight) of the role's appropriate "weight". However even this approach is cross-culturally dependent. How much "weight" for an "equal answer" does a man give from the Netherlands compared with a woman from India?



This matter of meaning-equivalence is not an easy feat to accomplish. In physics, the weight of an object is measured against the weight of some other object, but how does one measure an abstract object like a role model and against what should we compare it?

Users from different cultures have different associations for the same real world objects and therefore different ideas on how to interact with the objects. An object does not mean anything in itself; it only has the meaning that the user attributes to it (Trillo, 1997).<sup>11</sup>

#### 8.1.2 Equally important roles, binary answer

We also wished to investigate if the respondent considered these roles as equally important or not. We are comparing the priorities of the roles with each other and it is interesting to group the measured result of this since it is a clear bipolar (Black and White, binary) value. How can we separate an abstract thought into compartments of four without many cultural opinions? However, this could be the most significant value of the survey since it is bipolar. This makes us respond with a "Either you are with us, or you are not" answer.

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<sup>11</sup> Trillo, N. G.: 1997, Culture and Interfaces, *CMC Magazine*, <http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/jan/triint.html>



- 8.1.3 Age, categorized levels
1. Younger than 30
  2. 30 - 39
  3. 40 - 49
  4. Older than 49
- 8.1.4 Gender, Binary level
1. Male
  2. Female
- 8.1.5 Working Position, Categorized levels
1. Project manager
  2. Non managing
  3. Line manager
  4. Other manager
- 8.1.6 Additional phone Interview, Binary Level
1. Yes
  2. No

## 8.2 OUR WEB-BASED USER INTERFACE

When you think about it, all computer interfaces are metaphoric (Lovgren, J.: 1994, How to choose good metaphors, IEEE Software, 11(3), 86-88). All the features on the screen represent something else. Real things do not exist, these objects are all created by the designer to help us tap into our metaphoric memory. This way we use our knowledge of the real world to help us out in understanding the interface. A metaphor provides a method by which people can quickly learn to use a system.



Through metaphors, users map aspects of the real world source onto the software objects (Lundell, J. and Anderson, S.: 1995, Designing a "front panel" for Unix: The evolution of a metaphor, In *Proceedings of CHI'95*, ACM, Denver CO, 130-137). As such, metaphors bring knowledge of the real world to the computer. The problem in cross-cultural interface design is that the real world changes dramatically from culture to culture (Fernandes, T.: 1994, *Global Interface Design*, Academic Press, London).

On our interface, the answers to our main questions that we use reside within implicit bipolar adjectives. The possible answer resides within the limitation of the two adjectives that are not explicitly shown. The answer will be a value within the continuum between implicit bipolar adjectives describing the relationship for Not Agree --- Agree. When a person sees such a question the person will automatically balance a ratio within the adjectives.

Our presentation of the concept of the Ericsson manager differs from the textual way that Ericsson presents it. We have made it into an image where the four texts describing the role models are visually of equal size with the same layout. The visual mind can then simultaneously process the grouping and relationship of the different roles.

The questions are positioned in a symmetrical way so that one may see both the describing text and the answer for all roles simultaneously.

Symmetry is very important as almost everything in nature has a bilateral symmetry. The last part of the questionnaire is not symmetrical and when one answers some questions, many might get confused and forget about the first set of questions. Most likely, the respondent starts at the top answering the questions for the four role models that are positioned symmetrically, and then continues answering downwards. He probably loses interest in reflecting over the role model questions if they are not at the beginning. We wish to have the person's immediate answer that is subconscious and not a consciously evaluated answer. We emphasized this by writing in our e-mail requesting the survey that it should not take much time.



### 8.3 COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS: PERCEPTION, WORDS AND THEIR MEANING

The Ericsson Manager ideal is communicated in text form so it is appropriate to understand what is going on when we perceive this text message. It is an understanding that all of us have, but we often forget this. It is like driving a car, we do it automatically but it is difficult to speak to someone about how we actually do when we drive, we just do it.

So to grasp what is actually happening when we are answering the survey's questions capturing the beliefs we have to get back to the basics.

The tool that we have built is a measurement tool, an instrument, for measuring the subjective values of beliefs that are buried deep within the human brain. Our sensors or probes into the human mind will be words that are composed into questions for capturing these beliefs...

Our sensor system, in this case, is our eyes that read the words. Light variations are impinged in our eyes and converted into biochemical and electric information that is automatically processed, in real-time, somewhere in our brain. This information is immediately reduced, deleted and automatically categorized onto many representations having the formal<sup>12</sup> criteria "word". It is automatically associated with our memories giving an interpretation of what the words in the context mean.

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<sup>12</sup> Formal criteria according to posterior analytics, Aristotle, essentially relate to fundamental definitions and perceptions of something. The "formal cause" of a phenomenon is that which gives the definition of its essential character. We call a bronze statue of a four-legged animal with a mane, hooves and tail a "horse" because it displays the form or "formal" characteristics of a horse. We generalize what we perceive into patterns of familiar shapes and forms.



#### 8.4 WHY WE HAVE BELIEFS AND VALUES, SOME OF THE "ATOMS" OF CULTURE

Some of the beliefs and values change slowly and others change very quickly. A belief is a replacement in our mind for knowledge, a replacement for knowledge about reality. When we do not know something exactly the brain investigates it and gives the most probable answer back. This has to do with the brain. The brain must understand the world around it and explain what is happening around it to the conscious mind. The brain's search for meaning - making sense of our experiences - is survival-oriented and basic to the human brain. The brain needs and automatically registers what is familiar to us, and simultaneously searches for and responds to what is not.

This means that we create an understanding of something and use that understanding when we think about it. Sometimes it is a distortion of reality but still we use it. This can lead to very serious results if what we believe does not have the same belief that others have.

When we do not have knowledge we could call it superstition and what is strange is that each individual believes that he/she has the correct meaning because when a human being cannot make sense of the meaning, he will make up his own meaning as for example politics or religion or manager roles.

Not so long time ago we believed in witches: The last witch to be sentenced by that law in England was in the end of world war two, 1944. Our beliefs are strong and a certain belief is a part of a person's culture.

A way to visualize it is if we think of these sets of rules, values and beliefs as molecules or helixes one ore more for each country. The difference between molecules could then be easy to see. If we wished to have the same culture, we could break up the molecule into small parts and reorganize it in the same way for every country.

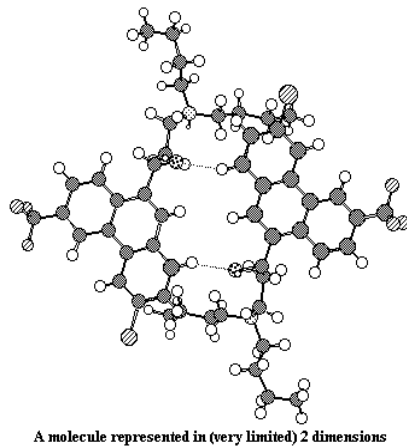


Figure 8-3

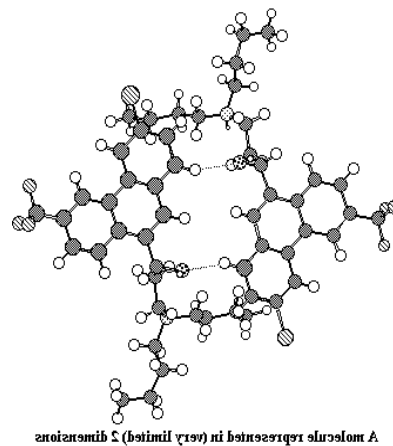


Figure 8-2

This breaking and tearing of the "molecule" is what is needed if a commonly shared culture has to be implemented and to do this breaking and tearing one must know the difference between them and how to measure this difference. If one does not know the difference, there is no way to change it. The "molecules" ("collective mental programming") are physically encoded in our brain (as there is nowhere else they can be).

This "collective mental programming" has to reside somewhere in our brain and as we are not consciously aware of the stuff it must be in the unconscious. Moreover, if it is in the unconscious we have a translation problem according to Bateson in his book, 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind'.



*"These algorithms of the heart, or, as they say, of the unconscious, are, however, coded and organized in a manner totally different from the algorithms of language. Moreover, since a great deal of conscious thought is structured in terms of the logics of language, the algorithms of the unconscious are doubly inaccessible. It is not only that the conscious mind has poor access to this material, but also the fact that when such access is achieved, e.g., in dreams, art, poetry, religion, intoxication, and the like, there is still the formidable problem of translation."<sup>13</sup>*

This does also mean that there is a physical explanation of the great communication problem between managers from different countries.

## 8.5 MEANING EQUIVALENCE

This meaning can of course have different meanings but somehow the most appropriate meaning of this is sent into our conscious mind where most of us can "hear our inner voice saying the words" or the most appropriate meaning is sent to the conscious mind as an image.

(What happens with the other many meanings that are ambiguously close to the most appropriate presented meaning is unknown but they are plenty and bountiful and sometimes this gives us a feeling of confusion when we read.)

The input into the eyes is an image that we somehow can categorize and classify into words and other images of different objects. The context surrounding the words in a sentence, in the visual image in front of us impinged in the eye, is a modulation of the words and sentence. This modulation, a *meta*-message, is a message about the (textual-) message that helps us to interpret the text-words and text-sentences. Sometimes this *meta*-message can give a very different meaning of the word itself. A "yes" can be changed to a "no" with the help of a *meta*-message.

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<sup>13</sup> Steps to an ecology of mind [reprint 2000], Gregory Bateson page 139





Therefore, you might wonder what all this neuro-science has to do with this thesis. Well, because we will knit this together to the abstract concept of culture that governs our interpretations.

The memories that our brain associates with each representation of the form "word" are unique for every human being. The association is made from those memories that we have got into our brain after we were born. These memories are made from our social contacts with other persons, books, education, TV and our own reflections of these memories. The result is the sum of experiences that we interpret with and use to make meanings of words, sentences and paragraphs and that ultimately is our culture.

This is "absolutely central to the validity of cross-cultural studies" according to Zander (1997). "One of the fundamental issues in Cross-cultural and comparative is meaning equivalence of items".

How people perceive both our web-based survey and the explicitly articulated "Ericsson Manager" is important for us to realize.

The "Ericsson manager" concept is explicitly articulated with words so it is appropriate to look at what words are and how we use them. The meaning of words are context dependent and we must then read and understand the definitions of the "Ericsson manager" in just that context. If we just look at one of the roles from the written concept, for example the business manager. We really need to investigate the words themselves, the structure of the sentence, and the structure and sequencing of the sentences in the paragraph that modulates the message contained within. The language describing the four roles describes the roles as "things", static things. Nevertheless, the roles are not things they are in fact processes of relationship. However, we will not go into such depth.



## 8.6 SMALL LINGUISTIC EXPLORATION OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER

Here we do a linguistic exploration of one of the roles that can be done for all four roles.

*The Business Manager is dedicated to customers' business success, and is responsible for customer satisfaction and Ericsson profitability. He or she is a role model for our values of professionalism, respect and perseverance. The business manager works with a strong market and customer focus, is proactive and entrepreneurial, and acts with a passion to win. He or she leads change as a central part of this role. The business manager develops cooperation between Ericsson units, and helps to make the 'one company' approach a reality.*

It all sounds very nice when we read it but do we all make the same interpretation of it? If we look at the word "is" which is a "complex equivalence". It "equates a complex generalization wherein we claim that one thing means or equates another thing" (Hall, 2001).

We will start by getting into the Business Manager's identity role:

"The Business Manager" =equals= "dedicated to customers' business success"

"The Business Manager" =equals= "responsible for customer satisfaction"

"The Business Manager" =equals= "Ericsson profitability"

"The Business Manager" = equals= "a role model for our values of professionalism"

"The Business Manager" =equals= "a role model for our values of respect"

"The Business Manager" =equals= "a role model for our values of perseverance"

So, what could give different interpretations? Let us investigate!

What is *customers' business success*? Who defines it? When is it a success?

What is *customer satisfaction*? Who defines it? What criteria tell us when satisfaction is reached?



What is "*Ericsson profitability*"? Who defines this thing? Linguistically it is described as a thing.

What are "*our values of professionalism*"? Who sets the values and why?

What are "*our values of respect*"? Who sets the values and why?

What are "*our values of perseverance*"? Who sets the values and why?

How does the Business Manager's behave? :

"The Business Manager" = "proactive"

"The Business Manager" = "entrepreneurial"

"The Business Manager" acts with a passion to win.

"The Business Manager" leads change as a central part of this role

"The Business Manager" develops cooperation between Ericsson units,

"The Business Manager" helps to make the 'one company' approach a reality.

How does a "*proactive*" act?

How does an "*entrepreneur*" act?

Passion to win, win over whom? Over the customer, the employee, the tax system? If it is the customer, one may suggest that a win-win situation is more appropriate.

Leads change, change of what and how does things change?

Why is it *one company*? Does Ericsson not consist of many companies?

There are many words describing the manager but not so many words describing *how* he should do it. Those words are deleted. The context that is needed to unambiguously interpret the meaning of the words is deleted. Some words really need a definition to grasp their meaning. Vague expressions require the reader to search through the brain for the most appropriate meaning. This imagined appropriate meaning is maybe not what the writer intended it to be.



## 8.7 SMALL SEMANTIC EXPLORATION OF THE INNOVATOR

Here we do an exploration of one of the roles that can be done for all four roles.

*The Innovator gives life to the vision and strategy and is driven by fast, urgent creativity. He or she leads the organization to outstanding performance through clearly defined objectives, where people are empowered and take initiatives. The innovator establishes a climate of experimentation and learning, where occasional failures in pursuit of big successes are expected in a fast-moving environment, and that focuses continuously on new ways to create added value for customers and shareholders.*

What does this mean? Could there be something ambiguous?

Well, there could be cultural conflicts regarding interpretation and for example:

The terrible thing about "fast, urgent creativity" is that inevitably they shorten the time span of all planning. *Emergency is present or just around the corner; and long-term wisdom must therefore be sacrificed to expediency.* (Bateson, 2000)

In most worlds, "fast, urgent creativity" is not positive; creativity takes time.



## 8.8 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kenneth Blake has a Master of Science degree in Computer Science and Engineering from Linköping Institute of Technology -1982. He has worked as an employee for ten years and after that had his own company for ten years. Some of his interests are the processes of human knowing: perception, communication, coding and translation. This came out of the quest and search for the process of creativity in combination with software development.



Martin Nebe has a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden. He has worked in many parts of the world with Ericsson since 1985.

