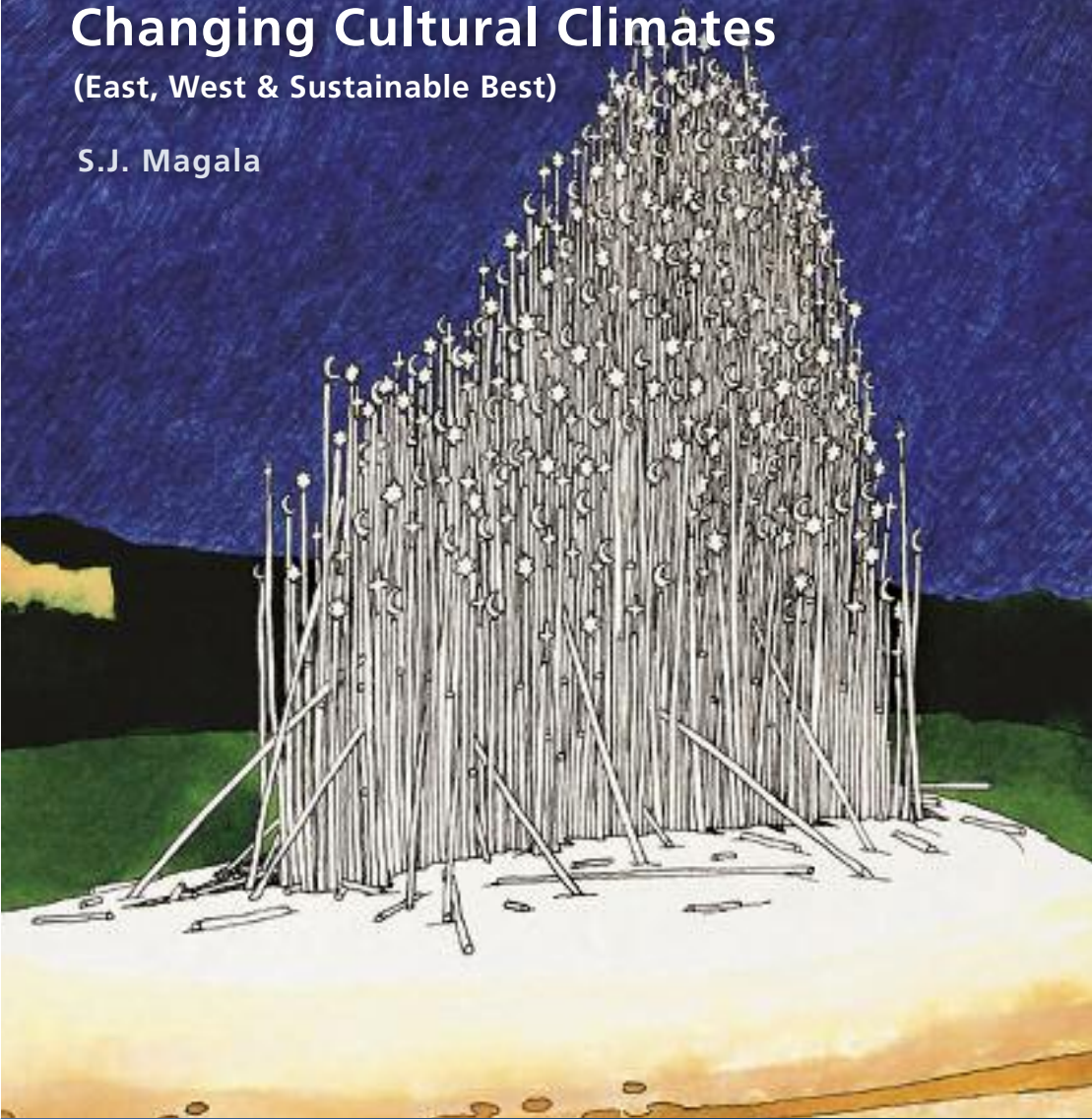


Changing Cultural Climates

(East, West & Sustainable Best)

S.J. Magala



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Changing Cultural Climates

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Changing Cultural Climates

(East, West & Sustainable Best)

Address delivered at the occasion of Valedictory Lecture
on Friday, December 11, 2015
in the Aula of the Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Samenvatting

Waarschuwing: onze planeet warmt op! Dat weet iedereen. Maar wie merkt dat ons culturele klimaat elke week het kookpunt bereikt? Passies komen massaal tot uitbarsting na elk beeld van een dode prinses of een dood vluchtelingenkind. Begrijpen we dat the reddening van onze zielen of het bouwen van een klasseloze samenleving is vervangen door de nieuwe moeder van alle waarden – duurzame groei? Alles wordt eenvoudiger, sneller en meer egalitair: vrijheid, gelijkheid en broederschap zijn gefuseerd in een universele menselijke waardigheid en geven richting aan de Verenigde Naties met drie waarden voor de prijs van één. De sociale en management-wetenschappen zijn academische bananenrepublieken geworden die ruwe empirische casus exporteren naar de koninkrijken van de natuurwetenschappen, de kwantum-mechanica en genetica. Oneerlijke handel dwingt ons dure theoretische abstracties te importeren uit de psychologie, sociologie en economie. Geen wonder dat onze koloniale opstanden, bijvoorbeeld Commandant Hofstede's culturele dimensies en de consequenties van cultuur, verslagen werden door de verenigde kleuren van oudere academische continenten. Cross-culturele competenties gingen ondergronds, losten zichzelf op als suiker in de thee, en maakten organisatiewetenschappen zoeter, maar lieten de massa achter, hunkerend naar onderwijs en Apple bites. We kunnen op onze campus onderdak bieden aan honderden vluchtelingen, maar kan onze 'Solidariteit' hun kinderen hier ook een plek bieden als student?

Abstract

Warning: our planet becomes warmer. But who notices that our cultural climate reaches the boiling point every week? Mass passions explode after every image of a dead princess or a dead refugee child. Do we understand that saving our souls or building a classless society gave way to the new mother of all values – a sustainable growth? Everything becomes simpler, quicker and more egalitarian: liberty, equality and fraternity merged into a universal human dignity and guide the United Nations with three values for the price of one. Social and managerial sciences are the academic banana republics exporting raw empirical cases to the kingdoms of natural sciences, of quantum mechanics and genetic engineering. Unfair trade forces us to import expensive theoretical abstractions from psychology, sociology and economics. No wonder that our colonial rebellions, for instance Commandante Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and culture’s consequences, were defeated by the united colors of older academic continents. Cross-cultural competence went underground, dissolved itself as sugar in tea, making organizational sciences sweeter, but leaving the masses hungry for education and Apple bites. We can shelter hundreds of refugees on our campus, but can our “Solidarity” shelter their children as our students as well?????

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1. Introduction: Cultural temperatures and sustainable values

*Dear Rector Magnificus,
Dear Distinguished Guests,
Dear colleagues, Family & Friends*

Global physical environment is warming up. Temperatures are rising, the sea level might follow – we should brace ourselves for the worse. We are all being warned and told to be prepared. Dikes must be higher, carbon dioxide emissions lower, or else. But nobody has warned us against a major change in the cultural climate. Meteorologists have always cooperated globally, but humanists were limited to native linguistic communities. They are not. Not anymore. “Le Monde” is published in French and NRC Handelsblad in Dutch. But online their editors click English. So do their Arab or Chinese counterparts. Simplified English, vivid icons. Like, hate, or delete. The emotional temperature of public discussions is going up. Extended empathy undermines our institutions. How do we control border passes if we want to shelter all Syrians, those with genuine, fake, or no passports alike? Emotions travel through mass communications as a tsunami. They leave no time to sort things out. Are we prepared to face this cultural climate change? Are we ready to admit that our species are still evolving, as are our cultures? Our global culture evolves towards emoticons and sentimental mobilization! Are we aware that our values mutate? Are we aware that culturally manipulated sentiments also evolve? **Material environment changes fairly rapidly, but so does the immaterial, cultural, spiritual, and virtual environment of meaningful communications.**

Communications are accelerating. An e-mail is too long, so a tweet will do, but a tweet requires words, so an emoticon will do. Cultural species also evolve, in schools and in the media, social or not, in shopping malls and in companies, in churches and in public institutions, in football stadiums and in chat rooms. Our interactions are wrapped up in an increasingly dense fog of wireless nets, virtual messages, digital links, and satellite-connected bonds. The name is bond, a satellite bond (of worldwide webs). Let us look at this huge process of evolution from the vantage point of a very small sample of academic pursuits.

The emergence of cross-cultural studies as a research domain – marginalized by the established neopositivist, neobehaviorist, and quantitative dictatorships in academic kingdoms of social and managerial sciences – cannot be denied. It did happen. We shall never know if it was bound to happen by virtue of some

historical necessity or that it just happened because a Dutch engineer defended a PhD thesis on negotiating a budget in an organization. But it happened, signaling that cultural climate change does not allow inaction even in ivory towers of academic institutions. Changing values have been accounted for, at least we tried. Even economists have to admit that **human dignity, bourgeois virtues, and democratic equality matter. If values break down, if they disappear from the cultural air we breathe, meaningful growth, desirable development, and expected progress may become unsustainable.** These warnings can sound like Doomsday prophecies – masses will overrun elites, elites will become watchful Big Brothers, and machines of loving grace will conquer humans.

Let's try not to panic. Let us try to gauge these changes in cultural climates, measure their extent, and predict their impact. This is what cross-cultural researchers have been doing for the past quarter of a century, and this is what I hope will be continued long after we disappear from the university payrolls.

2. A sweeping question

Do we know which elements of our cultural environment are alive and kicking and which are dead or dying? Distant stars die, but we can still see their lights above us, not knowing that they are dead. Don't our institutions, which tell us how to behave, don't our values, which tell us why to behave, also continue to shine in our hearts and minds? Do they still shine even if they are already dead in cultural skies and even if they have already been replaced by new institutions or values, new ideals and movements, or new cultural currencies? Which cultural bitcoins are gaining popularity? **Do institutions of representative democracy and values of liberal education still shine in the skies of our academic communities, institutionalized as universities and parliaments and idealized as the pursuit of truth?** Do we, in our daily contributions to the stocks of human knowledge, acknowledge the wisdom of the "east", of the "west", and do we figure out a possible "best"? Are we relevant and helpful in negotiating truly sustainable democratic futures? Are we, as academic researchers of cross-cultural issues, relevant for possible futures? Are we relevant in explaining how values change and how the ranking of some values, say, equality, suffers when the value of another value, say, liberty, goes up on cultural stock exchanges, or vice versa? **What happens when cultural mergers and acquisitions merge liberty, equality, and fraternity into human dignity and sell it to us as three values for the price of one?**

A modest analogy and some empirical data

What happens when the last human individual refusing to acknowledge the global warming breaks down and admits she was wrong? What happens when the last citizen / consumer buys a Tesla, votes Greenpeace, or becomes vegetarian? Perhaps the global climate may change a bit. But in order to change more than a bit, to become sustainable and to preserve the hospitality of our planet for our species, it has to be influenced by coordinated human efforts based on actionable knowledge. What could really help us be more rational and democratic on that ecological D-day? Well, first of all, we should recognize that changes are going on. We communicate with more emoticons and with more concrete, raw data on the pain and suffering of other people. Becoming aware of this, we can hope to notice more changes more quickly, and perhaps we can exercise even a modest degree of control of a **cultural climate**. Perhaps a reduction of emotional charges after a football game or an invasion of refugees? Fine-tuning of emoticons? It is not easy to control a climate change. It is much more difficult to control a cultural change. A cultural climate provides an artificial environment

we all live in, but rarely notice, because culture, to evoke a banal but adequate cliché, is like water for a fish.

Let us try to notice what has already started to change. What is changing in our cultures? Our? Who is the “we” behind this “our”? Well, two thirds of mankind with some access to the internet. Our routines of thinking and patterns of communicating make it difficult to notice these changes at once, but we do sense them, we become aware of them. We warm up our cultural climate every second, firing tweets and SMSes, burning the internet oil 24/7, communicating via Facebook, LinkedIn or WhatsApp non-stop in an interconnected environment. We warm it up when we track celebrities instead of issues, when we mistake shared bias for wisdom, and when we mistake a persistent collective prejudice for tested and reliable knowledge. We warm up our cultural climate every day when we refuse to face inequalities, and allow resentments to build up. The European Union protects its agriculture and mismanages development aid, so African farmers do not have a chance to compete fairly if they stay home. Resentment against life at the bottom of the global wealth pyramid is prompting millions to storm the Italian islands, the Hungarian borders, and German social assistance offices, or to sneak into the Channel Tunnel. We sense the change, we realize there is more to come, but we are not asking the right questions. Are we ready to shoot other human beings to defend our commons, our property rights, our welfare checks, our trade privileges, and our mental balances? The Berlin Wall fell. Can the US / Mexico wall, or the Hungarian one last forever? Apparently, this is what 65 countries, which have recently built walls around their borders, think.

This is not all. Our new mobile freedom to communicate may undermine our social interactions. Couples sit at the dinner table, but both are busy with their own mobile messaging instead of a face-to-face conversation. Their tweeting partners get likes, their physically present spouses get blank stares. More of what we do is immediately visible to our credit card issuers, our secret services, our PR wizards, and our neuromarketing gurus. But they are not the only beneficiaries. Any citizen of Somalia or Burkina Faso can click her mobile phone and track the European or American way of life without leaving home. Why should these citizens stay at home if they can try to build up a better future up global north? Our peasant great-grandparents moved from Europe to the USA where they could earn two or three times more than by staying home. Today, the proportions are more dramatic and the differences more staggering. Moreover, emoticons and emotions can be mobilized much more quickly than ever before. We slowly realize that our new emotional engagement undermines our emotional

routines. Not only love emerges at first sight, so does brand loyalty (assisted by neuromarketing). Not only are social protest and human solidarity easier to mobilize in Gdansk shipyards or at Tahrir Square, so is political cynicism (assisted by an internalization of needs dictated by managers). We slowly realize that the new mobility of human beings on the move (once called the wretched of the earth, currently cloaked in the label of global refugees or immigrants) is testing our political institutions. Should national parliaments decide about the exact numbers of refugees who will be accepted and supported? Should the decision be made above them, for instance, by the European Commission? Or below them, by local committees of concerned citizens? This is not a purely technical question. Do we actually know what we want as citizens of contemporary nation-states? Do we see the erosion of our values in our treatment of these refugees? Not immediately, not in the media competing for the soft sentimental education of our senses at the expense of hard truths. But we realize that our values may be washing away. Authority ain't what it used to be, but are values? Probably not. Why? Because values are harder to legitimize, justify, and uphold than comforting emotional appeals.

3. Values – a matter of ideas that matter

The salvation of our souls in order to ascend to heaven does not seem so urgent anymore. Neither does the extermination of all capitalists to make place for a classless paradise on earth. Sustainable balanced growth trumps them all.

Values supposedly act like oxygen in our cultural waters, in which we swim so naturally. We don't even notice that we have to breathe. But if oxygen of values has to be there, then what can we do if we notice that we are artificial by nature? What happens when we realize that we are free enough to negotiate which values are indispensable for breathing? If we replace oxygen with hydrogen in the air that we breathe, breathing may become difficult. But if we replace equality, liberty, and fraternity with dignity – what then? Yes, it looks artificial, this negotiation of values. We have to erect a new artifice, we have to sign a new agreement with ourselves, and we have to make sense of our lives. We have to accommodate much more than genetically manipulated food, euthanasia, gay marriage, or Wikileaks. Artificially, we have to renegotiate borders and walls, we have to make choices. For instance, **we must either invent reasons to stop migrations and maintain global inequalities, or to welcome immigrants and help them become “us”**. Artificially, we have to justify rules and regulations, which either favor fewer numerous “us” at the expense of more numerous “them”, or open our societies with more stranger-friendly laws and soften our hearts with solidarity, and not just for 72 hours per institution.

This is the larger picture. Our professional point of view cuts a narrower, a more academic, professionally slanted image of reality. Our professional point of view may be narrower, but it is our own point of view and we should make sure that it reflects our values. **Does the appearance of cross-cultural studies signal our growing awareness that values matter and can guide collective action?** Can we accommodate more openness and more solidarity with the underdogs than the expert factories of the best and the brightest knowledge producers once did? In my first public lecture as professor of cross-cultural management in 2000, I spoke of east, west, and best. In 2015, I feel compelled to add “sustainable” to “the best” in the title. Between 2000 and 2015, east and west have mingled, mixed, and intertwined. Partly it was business as usual. Partly not. The Cold War ended, but then restarted and is continuing, still relatively lukewarm, but cold nonetheless. If we are to believe statistics, differences in material well-being decreased among societies world-wide, mainly due to the dynamic growth of China and India, but also Brazil and Nigeria. However, while differences *between* nation-states world-wide decreased, differences in wealth among citizens increased

within nation-states. A Chinese from Shanghai came closer to a Norwegian from Oslo, but a Dutch passport carrier from Rotterdam South has drifted away from a Dutch passport carrier from Wassenaar (even though the Netherlands proudly remains one of the most egalitarian countries in income distribution). Is this the best possible outcome of global developments? Should we want to become more egalitarian at all? Perhaps inequality and fair competition for higher positions are the best incentives for growth and development of human societies? We do not know what the migrating masses think, but the quest for a better life for oneself, and one's children continues. So far a general direction of global migrations clearly indicates that even if "the West" is not "the Best", it is still better, more desirable, than "the rest", at least in the eyes of the migrating masses. Muslims may prefer mosques to churches, but they do not prefer Yemen to the United Kingdom as a preferred destination of their travels (even if wealth is less equally distributed in the UK).

Responses to those preferences and these choices differ. What is our professional response to the new mix of cultures, to the new cultural climate? Are we satisfied with providing "neutral" expertise either for politicians who want to limit global migrations or for politicians who encourage it? What are our professional responsibilities if we know that our voice matters more than ever before (science is the world's favorite supplier of actionable knowledge), although our status has never before been more hotly contested (our authority is subject to continuous negotiations and re-negotiations, but not because it is our, academic, scholarly, and scientific authority, but because it is authority *tour court*, and all authorities are permanently questioned, period). **In a sense, rapid growth of scientific knowledge brings similar results as a rapid growth of material welfare. There is less inequality between various disciplines of scientific inquiry. We acknowledge the equality of biology and history (which tell us how to deal with time, change, and evolution) to physics and biochemistry, which are most advanced in formalizing their theories with mathematical abstractions. But there is more inequality within scientific disciplines. For instance, the more sociobiology grows, the less status and fewer grants that are available for sociologists working with the humanist coefficient and asking, as Gary Becker did – "What about Mozart? What about murder?"**

4. In praise of academic folly

From the university's point of view, what changes most quickly and irreversibly are our academic patterns of creating, negotiating, communicating, and employing knowledge. Truth matters, but mind the networks, and distrust both the instruments and their users. Small decisions at the beginning may mean large differences in the end. Galileo learned how to mount lenses and turned the telescope outwards, towards the skies. Leeuwenhoek learned to polish lenses but turned them into microscopes, towards the bacteria. Had they switched roles, we would have been quicker in fighting devastating epidemics, but slower in landing on the moon. Or to use another example: if we look at the global migrations from the macroscopic point of view, through a telescope, we see the series of huge migrations, we see the European peasant workforce in Chicago's steel mills or slaughterhouses or African-born cotton-pickers in the southern states of the USA. If we look through a microscope at the local changes caused by the influx of strangers, we see a Syrian US American – Steve Jobs in a garage with the Polish US American – Steve Wozniak. They are about to bite an Apple. What would have happened if they had been stopped by impenetrable walls? What gives us a better view of the real effects of large migrations? Which truth should we have followed first? The macro-truth of Pakistani quarters of London as seen by statistics, or the micro-truth of immigrant's humanity as seen through Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Namesake"? The truth of the universe above us and way beyond us, or the truth of the bacteria and values below and inside us? True, both the far away gigantic galaxies and the tiniest deadly viruses, and even values people are ready to die for – truly exist. But to make a true knowledge actionable, we have to reset and renegotiate it, and then try it out. Truth is the matter of networked negotiations, choices, decisions, roads taken or not taken. **The last member of the holy trinity of truth claims – definition, interpretation, negotiation, namely *negotiation*, gains the upper hand.** Why? Because scientific communications have become more transparent and all attempts to replace working definitions and different opinions with a dictatorship of authority fail.

Negotiation is the most obvious winner among procedures tried on our way to produce actionable knowledge. This is what I learned as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Organizational Change Management. We define, but definitions have an expiration date. We interpret, but interpretations are contestable. We turn to negotiations, and we renegotiate again and again. **Negotiation is more democratic than tribal mythology, than divine revelation, than expert dictatorship.** Negotiation has much more in common with parliament and the court of law than with the church or the throne. Negotiating we turn universities into

parliaments of science and scholarship, debating societies for knowledge and expertise, start-up incubators for know-how and – to a certain extent – stages for theoretical fashion shows. Negotiations are better for negotiators' dignity than pre-paid submission and imposed obedience.

But in our democratic dreams, which prompt us to re-negotiate our deals, begin our political responsibilities. Parliaments can be frozen by the strongest parties and manipulated by consumer branding. Courts can be biased by judges' prejudices and legalized quasi-apartheids, based on gender, age, religious faith, or ethnic origin. As academic professionals, we negotiate knowledge, but we are not impartial. We are not above the whims of intellectual fashion and sponsor ranking, not to mention personal ambitions and cross-cultural rivalries. Examples abound. Behavioral finance is in, which means that econometrics must be pushed out. Servant leadership is in and so political class struggle must go out. Power remains a taboo. More so, as a matter of fact, than sex. Neuro-marketing is in, hidden persuaders have to return to their closet. Diversity tolerance is in, so studying ideological hegemony of repressive tolerance must be pushed out. We buy and sell knowledge. Corporations and governments pay more than the protest movements of 99% of citizens or participants in "Occupy Wall Street". Should we supply the high and mighty and forget the low and the poor? But knowledge repackaged as bought and sold misses different drummers sustaining democracy! We know this. **We renegotiate both the knowledge we inherit and the knowledge we earn, learn, and teach. But we are not too keen on disclosing the details of our negotiations to a broader public for fear of undermining our disappearing authority. We preach peaceful institutional evolution, while violent cultural revolutions come and go.**

Let us note that the structure of scientific revolutions makes them less bloody than political ones. No Jacobins with guillotine who followed Newton's victories, no Bolsheviks organizing genocide who used Einstein as an alibi. Changes were felt, churches of established science feared the emergent heresies of new paradigms, but Galileo, though reprimanded, could still work and study and die in his own bed. Even Sacharov did not perish in the Gulag, but under house arrest. When the idea of Popper's evolutionary knowledge lost to Kuhn's idea about the structure of scientific revolutions, no blood was spilled. Are more bloodless scientific revolutions expected in the nearest future? Does cultural climate change signal more methodological hurricanes? What new paradigmatic changes can we expect in the nearest future? What will the response of our own academic establishment be?

Some voices can already be heard, though they are still very compartmentalized, very professional, very soft, very limited, whispering rather than speaking up:

“Education and knowledge are fundamental, not only in terms of democratic socialization, or productivity, employment, and equality, but also in choosing the kind of life a person wants to live. Hence education (...) and development are closely related, especially in a context of rapid global changes and the increasing preponderance of the information society.” (Calderon, 2014, 251)

5. A modest proposal

Nowhere is this forthcoming change felt more clearly, loudly, and convincingly than in the developing scientific and scholarly country of managerial sciences, which does not have the clout of the old members of the privileged academic clubs – those clubs, which admit mathematicians, physicists, chemists, or biologists, or their mixes – biochemists, say, or mathematical physicists, or paleontological philosophers – as their members. We, the representatives of the sciences of management, still inhabit a third world academic country with a colonial past, a looming foreign debt (for instance, to history, biology, physics, philosophy, even sociology, ethnography, and psychology). As an academic family of disciplines, we are still highly dependent on high volumes of imported ideas and methodologies, and we are still burdened with low exports of finished theoretical products with the highest abstract knowledge content (so we are in fact “the Saudi Arabia or Venezuela of academe”). We export raw materials – business cases, for instance, and we import theories from economics, sociology, or psychology. We know our place in pecking orders and status rankings. But our position is changing, our minds are beginning to matter. Is this due to “culture’s consequences” as the most famous Dutch inventor of methodological lenses for studying culture would say? I mean a twentieth century version of a Leeuwenhoek, who appeared in social sciences and turned his telescope towards cross-national differences in “cultural software of our brains” – namely Geert Hofstede. **What would Hofstede say, if his granddaughter’s peers turned his inter-national telescope into an inter-personal microscope?**

Let me try to explain what has been happening in a small province of our academic country, namely in the cross-cultural regions of managerial knowledge. A province is small, and instead of a merchant, namely Leeuwenhoek, we have an engineer, namely Hofstede (well, he did write a PhD in social psychology, but Leeuwenhoek, after all, was also elected a full member of the Royal Society, so analogy holds). Our history is part of a broader, larger picture, and can thus serve as a useful illustration of the latest developments in social sciences. Our history, the history of the cross-cultural niche in managerial sciences, is also a tale of victory and an ironic twist of fate, which made us, academics producing research into cross-cultural or inter-cultural issues, very famous, salient, relevant and practical - and at the same time, very old-fashioned, outdated, and superfluous. Our historical luck started to turn in the early 1980s, with the publication of a study by a Dutch engineer, who became a social psychologist and whose odyssey led him to the Ithaca of “Culture’s Consequences”, arguably one of the most significant organizational research studies of cultural values and collective

action in professional bureaucracies after WWII. But when we turn to him and to his contribution towards an explanation of changes in our cultural climate, we are forced to pay some attention to the historical design of the social stage on which a drama of Hofstedian paradigm was played.

Let us try to understand why our research in cross-cultural changes in cultural software and institutional hardware has evolved into a less socialized and more psychologized body of knowledge for negotiating cross-cultural compromises and for honing our cross-cultural competence rather than for understanding all nations by placing them in a universal “grid”. Why did our distinct competence, the cross-cultural one, lose specificity and become an ingredient of other competences, not necessarily distinct cross-cultural ones? Why did, to put it in a nutshell, a cross-cultural competence dissolve itself in organizational sciences as sugar in tea, making the sciences of management sweeter and easier to swallow, but losing a battle for a separate, sovereign, autonomous academic kingdom? Why did it share the fate of cross-cultural capital and cross-cultural intelligence, which also dissolved in social sciences?

Does the evolution and gradual dissolution of cross-cultural competence in all domains of managerial competence teach us any either evolutionary or revolutionary lessons in fads and foibles of manmade cultural evolution?

6. A recent, but already historical background

Historically speaking, social sciences made an extremely costly mistake in measuring and evaluating cultural climates around 1968 and again around 2000. In and around 1968, they thought that the growth of material welfare in western societies would disarm the mobilizing potential of radical alternative movements, and that the capitalist and socialist societies would eventually converge and become more alike. Walt Rostow wrote influential “Stages of Growth”, suggesting long before Fukuyama that all societies have to discover the capitalist market / democracy mix in order to end up with a one big happy middle class family. Suburbs grew, the middle class stabilized the political scene, ideals were nice to cherish, but not necessarily practical and actionable. A British prime minister told his electorate: “you never had it so good.” Mancur Olson also said so in his influential study of “The Logic of Collective Action”. Well, before anybody could buy his book in Cody’s bookshop on Berkeley university campus, People’s Park student protests sparked a nationwide anti-Vietnam war movement practically next door. The protest movement, linked to the flower power and the hippie countercultural movements changed societies, but not in the ways student protesters imagined on world campuses around 1968. Changes emerged through and thanks to cultural climate changes, values, knowledge, and a slice of managerial luck. The movements did not end the Cold War at once and the world has not changed at once. The countercultural hippies did not defeat the military-industrial complex, which is alive and kicking. They did not introduce a more egalitarian, democratic mix of markets and democracies into the mainstream of global developments. **But social movements, trumpeted around in our global village by increasingly omnipresent media, worked as time bombs, which went off in different places and at different times.**

One of these time bombs went off in August 1980 in the Polish shipyards of Gdansk. It was called “Solidarnosc” – solidarity. The Polish student protests of 1968 were suppressed, but some of the protesters founded Committees for the Defense of Workers in 1976, and these helped engineer a cultural climate change, which in turn facilitated the emergence of a powerful social movement disguised as a trade union. Non-violent resistance to undemocratic government became possible on a scale nobody had dared to imagine. It is even harder to imagine today, when we realize that this was before mobile phones, iPads, and the World Wide Web. Once, ten million adult citizens of a communist-ruled nation-state, ten million Polish employees of state-owned enterprises peacefully and successfully challenged the monopoly of the communist power. The unsuccessful attempts to reform the Soviet Union (Gorbachev) and the successful attempts

to break down the Berlin Wall (November 1989) followed. None of these developments had been predicted by social and political scientists. None of them had noticed that the Polish shipyard workers were explicitly evoking a single value - human dignity - in order to mobilize against the communist power elites.

But while everybody was looking at the TV News and the newspaper headlines, where the explosion of the Polish popular protest against the communist rule happened in 1980, another parallel, less visible, but equally real and consequential cultural climate change was going on in California, especially in the last part of the twentieth century. Former hippies and countercultural flower-power people were not only following psychedelic concerts of Jerry Garcia and “The Grateful Dead”, but were also settling down, trying to find jobs, and surfing the beaches. Jobs could be found at research universities and institutes mainly founded by the military-industrial complex and venture capital, perhaps even with a Las Vegas flavor. The clash turned out to be fertile for our online future of mobile communications. When relaxed LSD-experimenting researchers overlap with ICT lab teams, creative rewriting of history accelerates. They imagined a better, more humane society in which people could move and communicate more freely. This was not what the Pentagon had asked for. They wanted a robust communication network, which could work even if the network’s head, the military headquarters, had been chopped off by nuclear strikes. This was what ARPANET, which became World Wide Web (nicknamed “the Internet”) was all about. But designers had some creative fun on the side. Mind you, they did it when computing was a serious government and corporate business with heavy and expensive hardware, cloaked in secrecy and shrouded in hierarchic access. Information and communication was run by professional bureaucracies and everybody expected it would be the same in the future. Well, these aging hippies and grown-up flower power protesters managed to pass some educational institutions and blow this heavy mainframe ideal up – paving the way for our world of mobile, individualized communications. Incidentally, also paving the way for Wikileaks.

In contemporary media folklore, one is often tempted with visions of a simple garage in California, a garage, in which two Steves, Jobs and Wozniak, are happily indulging in a do-it-yourself experiment with some new evolutionary species of information-processing and communicating devices. The real story is a bit too complex to be considered in detail. **But here is the second time bomb of the failed hippie revolution of the 1960s: the explosive growth of information and communication technologies started by exiles from the flower-powered,**

anti-Vietnam war protesters' utopia, leading to global access to online data bases and communications, to a truly "global village" once envisioned by Marshall McLuhan (who noticed that the mass media were both the message spelled as the message, and, well, a medium, while television was quickly becoming the world's cheapest baby-sitter). I think we can only compare this explosion to the explosive results of inventing a telescope and a microscope. Let us notice that our approach to what is very small and what is very large, and our dealing with knowledge about gigantic galaxies or miniature genes can also result in explosive growth of awareness – of black holes and hadrons, of cabbages and kings. The time bomb of globally connected individually mobile communications has put knowledge at our fingertips. **The tip of my finger has become the tip of my tongue, allowing me to speak to distant audiences** in real time. Are we actually aware of what this means in all walks and talks of life?

Well, I claim that both powerful political movements, which changed the history of our societies ending the Cold War (the Polish "Solidarity") and the revolution in the Information and Communication Technology (which changed the way in which we can saturate actions with much more accessible knowledge and negotiation than ever before in the history of mankind) are both the results of a cultural climate change in the 1960s and the causes of the accelerated cultural climate change between 1980 and 2000. Neither the authority of a communist dictatorship nor the authority of the military-industrial complex could survive this change. Their dikes were too low and collapsed. The next logical question is – are our studies, cross-cultural, intercultural, international business, management, and globalization studies, successful in tracing, tracking, and explaining these cultural climate changes? Will corporate sponsors be interested in paying for such studies? Do we understand cultural climate changes and are we following them closely, studying them, domesticating them through actionable knowledge, and predicting some possible futures?

The answer is a reluctant – who wants to admit failure – no, not quite. But not an unqualified "no". A qualified one. Let us qualify it further.

7. Reluctant and qualified admission of failure

The first of the cultural climate changes is global warming – large-scale changes resulting in long-term rising air and water temperatures. These changes are not the results of any single factor. They emerge as a dynamic outcome of unpredictable constellations of forces and interactions – very much like pollution does not result from a single chimney neatly enclosed in nation-state borders, and ocean currents do not warm up because of a single glacier breaking down. The attempts to impose a grid of universal dimensions allowing us to understand, explain, and neatly describe all cultures at all times do not hold water. These grids are not respected by emotionally more emphatic researchers who warm up to groups, not grids (as Mary Douglas would have put it), and who are beginning to acknowledge:

“the neo-Copernican claim that other people’s worlds do not revolve around ours.” (Sahlins, 2013, xiii)

But secondly, more is at stake than avoiding a single-malt (single factor) theory and going for blended factors, contexts, and situated events. Causes are made and remade of complex composites, observers are not neutral, they don’t stand alone, and they (we) move around as well, keeping strange companies. For instance, do we as researchers have to accept the verdict of the holy Harvard Business Review as if it were our secular Papacy (“*Harvard locuta, causa finita*”) in all matters scholarly and scientific? Not really. Researchers increasingly do not respect the international pecking order of sciences of management and organization, which places the authority in an exclusive elite club of richer nations with supposedly “better” cultures and full of endowed universities attracting more corporate funding than their poorer cousins. Cultural commons and protests against copyrights and copywrongs can already be heard, not only in the corporate headquarters of Elsevier. Our colleagues do not think that the best and the brightest academics should decide what theoretical grids and dimensions are legitimate and which can be imposed on data found in all cultures and subcultures. Academy of Management may still be dominated by US academic communities, but there is life outside of US academic hierarchies, as sociologists are quick and psychologists slow to notice. The latest call for papers for a special issue of the “*Cross-Cultural Management: an International Journal*” (soon to be retitled “*Cross-Cultural and Strategic Management*” in order to dissolve cross-cultural competence in general strategic know-how) is entitled: *The Upside of Cultural Differences: Toward a More Balanced Treatment of Culture in Cross-Cultural Management Research*. In this call for papers, the guest editors begin by

contrasting Hofstede's warning that "cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster" to a more serene and positive observation by Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of Renault and Nissan that "cultural differences can be "viewed as either a handicap or a powerful seed for something new" (both quotes from Stahl et al., 2015).

These cross-cultural researchers go on to state:

"While there are suggestions in the literature that cultural diversity can offer meaningful positive opportunities, the problem-focused view of cultural diversity is by far predominant in research on culture in international business. As such, we know much less about the positive dynamics and outcomes associated with cultural differences than we know about the problems, obstacles and conflicts caused by them. In light of the increased international business activities and transactions across nations, the growing mobility of the workforce across national boundaries, and the emerging intra-national heterogeneity in many countries, the time is ripe to consider the positive aspects associated with cross-cultural contact and the factors that could enhance the likelihood of their occurrence... (...) "as an opportunity for arbitrage, complementarity or creative diversity" (Zaheer et al., 2012, p.26)." (Stahl, 2015).

In other words, first, the grid is out, the group is in, the etic approach (one theoretical size fits all empirical cases) is out, the emic approach (or "going native") is in. Do not impose, always negotiate. Thou shalt not understand immigrants and refugees by looking at age, gender, and passport statistics. Second, the international pecking order based on an institutional and financial hierarchy of knowledge producers is out, arbitrage, complementarity, and creative diversity are in. Do not assume that the richest and most powerful are the best and the brightest. This leads me to the third consequence of the revolutionary changes in cultural climate symbolized by the emergence of "Solidarity" and the invention of Apples (minicomputers, portable phones and satellite-links, all in one) for the sciences of management, namely to the emergent "concrete" turn in social and organizational sciences. If covering laws do not work, because one size of a theory does not fit all empirical cases, and if institutional hierarchy of knowledge producers cannot be maintained forever (because academics from France or South Africa, China or Brazil refuse to be the third-rate suppliers of raw data for the theory mills of the best – Anglo-American West), then we shall have to negotiate concrete turns, not dictate new world orders. We have to decide what are facts, what are relevant clusters of forces, what events and processes should be acknowledged first, etc. In order to be able

to do so, we will have to see our organizations as fluid, flowing complex streams of organizing. The gerund “organizing” is better than the noun “organization”, because it signals that our organizing interactions and communications have not yet turned into a stone of dead institution, reproducing itself, repeating itself, and routinely avoiding imaginative and responsible change. “Organizing” signals that our realities, our organizing realities are still more like smoldering lava of contested, negotiated actions, reactions, and interactions. Can we see this “concrete” and “actionable” turn in our academic institutions, say, at Rotterdam School of Management of the Erasmus University, and say in cross-cultural studies? “The Social Psychology of Organizing” was written by Karl Weick in 1979. In 2009, I closed my book on the management of meaning in organizations, based on a quarter of a century of participating observation of my multinational peers and my multicultural self with the remark that:

“In communications, especially in hyperlinked societies, meanings can be imported and smuggled and thus the unfinished project of democracy can be retrieved, reinvented, rejuvenated and retried. Meaning, as language, should be regarded as a mode of action, not just a frozen trace of a thought with value in the background.” (Magala, 2009, p.220)

8. A glimpse of hope

Both the revolution in modes of collective organizing by individuals fighting for their dignity invented by the Polish ‘Solidarity’ in 1980 against the communist dictatorship and the revolution in modes of collective communicating by mobile individuals escaping the dictatorship of mass media with Apple devices in their pockets at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries, changed our data processing into speed dating and made us aware that when we code our data, when we manage our concrete, raw materials (Biernacki, 2012), we are actually imagining, designing, and creating our futures. This awareness has been changing the cultural climate of our times ever since. **I wish my younger colleagues good luck in rejuvenating and democratizing universities, reinventing and democratizing business corporations, and in remembering that we cannot know what we mean until we really mean what we say.** Our patron saint, Erasmus of Rotterdam was not amused when it turned out that the Protestants liked his praise of folly. Darwin was not amused when an atheist wanted to dedicate his book, ‘Das Kapital’ to him. Yet both of them would have appreciated the contribution made by the critical Protestants and Marxists to our understanding of the democracy of knowledge (which grows when shared, and when supported by crowdfunding). Democracy of knowledge, symbolized by an explosive growth of university-level education and the ICT revolution, is already changing our cultural climate. Perhaps even universities and business corporations will, someday, adapt to this climate for good?

They should and perhaps they will. If there is a common theme in the greatest climate changes symbolized by the Polish Solidarity and the Californian Apple, then it is the overall egalitarian effect of the cultural climate change (but frequently compensated by a rise in inequality as well). Political authority is forced to renegotiate, actionable knowledge arises from an ongoing negotiation, sustainable dignity moves masses to action, and, last but not least, no mummified pharaoh in Cairo or Moscow can claim eternal authority immune to a hot breath of negotiating billions. When bread becomes scarce, masses do not eat cakes, but exchange bites.

9. Word of thanks

I have spoken. Before stepping down, my word of thanks. I would like to express my gratitude to those among us, without whom thirty years at the Erasmus University would be harder, if possible at all.

First of all, to Joanna, who kindly agreed to marry me forty-one years ago and luckily did not retire me yet. I would like to thank you for not asking me to write my marital valedictory, and for making me feel that life can be an exciting adventure, well worth waking up to every morning. We share not only ourselves, but also our children, our son Jacek and our daughter Magdalena, whom I would also like to thank for putting up with an absent-minded and mindfully absent father. We do not only share ourselves and our children but also our three grandchildren, Max, Steijn, and Kiki who unfortunately could not correct the proofs of my valedictory lecture, but will certainly correct some speeches sometime later, since this morning they tweeted, in Dutch, English, and Polish – “grandpa, do not forget that we are simply indispensable for the future.”

I would also like to thank all my RSM colleagues and friends – but primarily Marja Flory and Frits Engeldorp-Gastelaars, as well as the late Willem de Laat. Among my peers and colleagues *inter pares*, I would like to thank specifically Arjo Klamer, Han van Dissel, Lucas Meijs, and Cees van Riel, to mention but a few of the many supportive and generous fellow-professionals, and among my master and PhD students – Edwin Meulensteen, Casper Hoedemaekers, Betina Szkudlarek, Colin Lee and Giorgio Touburg.

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Slawomir Jan Magala, (b.1950) educated as a philologist, sociologist and a philosopher, joined the Rotterdam School of Management in 1985, teaching, researching and consulting about cross-cultural competence and organizational change and networking in Poland, the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom and the United States, but also in Egypt, Kazakhstan, India, China, Namibia, Singapore, Mexico, Japan and Brazil. His books include "Class Struggle in Classless Poland" (1982), "Between Stock Exchange and Garbage Can" (1999), "Cross Cultural Competence" (2005) and "The Management of Meaning in Organizations" (2009). He is the editor-in-chief of "Journal of Organizational Change Management" (founded by David Boje), founding member of the editorial board of "The Qualitative Sociology Review", of the International Association of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management (IACCM, Vienna) and of the International Network of Business and Management journals (INBAM, Valencia). Married to Joanna Ramlau since 1974, son Jacek and daughter Magdalena.

In his valedictory lecture, "Changing Cultural Climates. East, West and Sustainable Best", Slawek looks at the strange asymmetry. On the one hand we all hear about global warming up of the air we breathe, on the other hand nobody notices that temperature of our communications through mass social media sends our emotions boiling over. Having spent a professional life-time in the academic third world of social sciences, which exports raw empirical data to the industrialized republics of natural sciences and imports theories from the kingdoms of sociology, psychology and economics, he asks about the future of our guiding values – human dignity and cross-cultural solidarity. Can we welcome refugees not only in temporary shelters, where they are protected from cold air and rain, but also in our hospitable societies? Can we extend our fairness and our solidarity to their children, making sure that they can join our students in order to have the fair chance for jobs in knowledge-intensive societies of the future? A new immigrant Bible might begin with the tale of two Steves, one of a Syrian, another of a Polish origin, who take a bite of an Apple in a garage of Californian Eden...

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