

# *Intercultural Competences*

## *For A*

# *Productive Social Dialogue*

HIVA-EZA Seminar EWC's

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## *Introduction: A burning question*

- 1. Understanding interculturalism*
- 2. A new paradigm for development cooperation*
- 3. Theory into practice*
- 4. So what does this mean to EWC's?*

## *Discussion*

A burning question:

*By what law must competitiveness come at the expenses of hope?*

Given the extremely competitive nature of the global economy, is it reasonable to simultaneously aspire to wealth creation and societal development?

(Nancy Adler, McGill)

# A Burning Question, A Strong Partnership



New actor in **international cooperation** in the age of globalization: its experts know how to act as bookkeeper, baker or entrepreneur. So why not do it together with colleagues from Botswana, Ecuador or Vietnam?

Provider of executive education that focuses on a deeper **understanding of interculturalism** at the level of individual actors and their organizations.  
(Spinoff Leuven R&D)

Turning mission:  
“wealth creation and societal development”  
Into action:  
hope made real

# 1. *Understanding interculturalism*

*Research has shown:*

**“Cultural values** affect corporate strategy and all forms of organizational behaviour, including selection and reward systems, superior/subordinate relationships, and group behaviour, communication, leadership and conflict management styles”.

(Nancy Adler, Mc Gill University)

*Business practice has shown:*

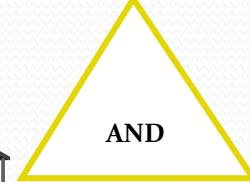
Adapting to **Western management norms** is not adopting them. In the global workplace, the enemy is called "*it is obvious*", "*it goes without saying*". Everything has to be explained, discussed, checked, understood otherwise misunderstanding will creep in and highly jeopardize or even destroy the project.

Different interpretations of contractual reliability, quality control, information sharing, feedback and responsibility, decision making ...

**In this context, the issue of *Intercultural Competence development* comes to the fore.**



deliverables



timing



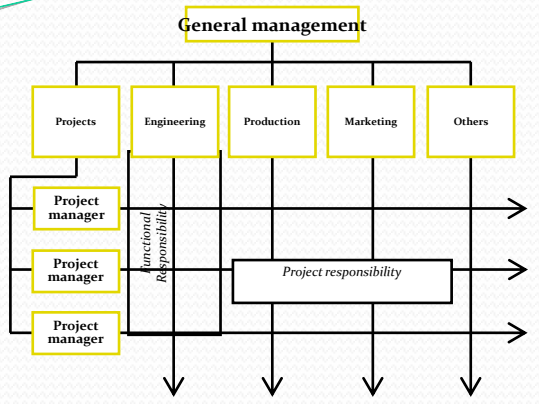
resources

1. Task is central



4. Information only exists when written down

# Key features of western management systems



2. Dual reporting lines

3. Structured systems



- Assuming similarity!
1. Task comes before relationship
  2. Hierarchy is not the ultimate decision making criterion
  3. People stick to rules and agreements
  4. All information is explicit

# *1. Task before Relationship*

Western management is born in an Individualistic Culture

- Task is central, relationships are peripheral and fluctuating
- People are motivated by their part of the task.
- People are motivated for the time they are in the project

## *2. Hierarchy not the ultimate decision criterion*

Western Management assumes a Low Power Distance culture

- International projects often assume a matrix organisation
- Most people are in 2 hierarchies at the same time:
  - Functional Manager
  - Project Manager

### *3. People stick to rules and agreements*

Western management practices advance a high  
Uncertainty Avoidance culture

- Create the illusion of “control” by structured systems
- Rules and agreements prevail even if it obstructs creative problem solving.

## *4. All information is explicit*

### Project Management is a Low Context Communication Culture

- Terms of commitment, ownership and responsibility are laid down in charters, job descriptions, social contracts.

## *2. A new paradigm for development cooperation*

“Apprenez à nous connaître à partir de  
notre continent’ (Achilles Mbembe)

In the new world, traditional views on ‘*Capacity Building*’ (practice of inclusion of foreign experts in development projects) are under pressure:

- Geopolitical assertiveness of new global champions
- Growing South-South bilateral cooperation
- Culture (historically shaped way of being and becoming) more important than humanitarian ideology

## New competences for humanitarian activists:

- Acknowledge and reorder cultural differences
- Less analytical approach or bureaucratic compliance, more improvisation and creativity
- Reframe uncertainties, tolerance for ambiguity
- Focus on business ethics and morality: success is not enough

# 3. Theory into practice

## Ex-Change vzw (B)

- Volunteers organization
- Sharing entrepreneurial expertise
- ... on demand (Africa, Latin America, ...)
- 180 projects/year



# Ex-Change vzw: ethics & interculturalism

Volunteering experts experiencing issues of:

- Violence: weapons & drugs, child labour,...
- Gender (in)equality
- Stress on bio-diversity, sustainability,...

Influence on experts:

- “Culture shock” – reinvent yourself!
  - Decision making process
  - B2B (Back to Basics)
  - Agree on new competencies (slide 16)



# Rethinking Decent work

- Health
- Safety
- ILO conventions



# Rethinking Social Dialogue

- Employee involvement
- Mediation, know-how on:
  - Labour relations
  - Interculturality

From:

Development cooperation

To:

Cooperation development

# 4. So, What Does This Mean For EWC's?

## *Europeans, Fasten Your Seatbelts*

**The engine of growth in the global economy has moved from developed to emerging countries:**

- *Emerging market multinationals are not just here to stay, but likely to become global champions in many industries*
- *Increasing social inequality, in particular affecting women and migrant workers*
- *Unlimited power driven entrepreneurship versus our bureaucracy*
- *The different demands of Gen Y— and the impact on businesses worldwide*
- *Ethical expectations and obligations when doing business*
- *The collective culture shock of nations awakening in a new world order: excitement, deception, adjusting, outperforming....?*

# *Rethinking EWC's* 'Inspiring emigration from eurocentrism'

*La planète éclate dans sa diversité - en réaction contre les idées que l'Europe a cherché lui imposer depuis deux siècles. Où aboutiront ces mouvements? Nul ne sait.*

A. Peyrefitte, 1990

# Discussion

*By what law must competitiveness come at the expenses of hope?*

**Today, the role of culture is to furnish contemporary society with the intellectual and moral tools to:**

- *Envision Possibilities*
- *Sustain Widespread Prosperity*
- *Make Hope Real*

# Thank you

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