The Construction of the Modern West

and the Backward Rest

in Hofstede's Culture's Consequences

Published in the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*

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Short version of the title: **The Modern West and the Backward Rest**

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Abstract

An increasingly globalized business environment and a strongly held corporate belief that the world can be rationally managed have brought forth a growing demand for normative models dealing with cross-cultural management issues. Cross-cultural management has thus established itself as a significant research field, with much of the initial inspiration coming from Hofstede and his influential cultural model from 1980. In this article, our aim is not to merely repeat the already formulated objections to the latter model, concerning its ontology, epistemology and methodology, but rather to focus on the very words of Hofstede himself in his second edition of *Culture's Consequences* (2001). With a broadly postcolonial sensibility, drawing on authors such as Said and Escobar, we contend that Hofstede discursively constructs a world characterized by a division between a 'developed and modern' side (mostly 'Anglo-Germanic' countries) and a 'traditional and backward' side (the rest) and discuss the cultural consequences of such colonial discourse.

Introduction

During the last two decades, which have witnessed a growing internationalization and globalization of businesses, there has been an increased urge among organizations to improve their knowledge about cultural differences between nations, and thus a growing demand for normative models dealing with cross-cultural issues in business, with the underlying assumption that such models could serve as competitive devices in the conquest of the global market. Studies in this field are usually characterized by a comparative nature and a main interest in contrasts between different cultural – and usually national – contexts. Much of the initial inspiration for the setting-up of this distinctive field can be argued to have come from Hofstede's (1980) seminal study, *Culture's Consequences.* Hofstede's model is made up of four (later five) cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1980; 1991; 2001): 'Power Distance', 'Uncertainty Avoidance', 'Individualism' and 'Masculinity' (and later 'Long-Term Orientation'). These dimensions were identified by Hofstede as a result of statistical analyses of surveys involving people from 66 countries – but only one multinational company. Each of the national cultures involved was assigned a score on each of the four original dimensions: that has allowed many researchers to compare national cultures and make claims about cultural differences on the basis of such supposedly objective measures.

In this paper, our aim is not to merely repeat the already formulated criticisms concerning ontology, epistemology and methodology, but rather to focus on the very words of Hofstede himself, in his second edition of *Culture's Consequences* (2001). What is interesting is that some of Hofstede's main purposes in writing this second edition have been to address the criticisms that his work received in the previous twenty years, and to demonstrate that the results are (still) valid. It even seems, as Smith (2002) notices, that Hofstede wishes to extend the relevance of his model to wider societal and world issues – as is shown, for instance, in the new, broader title. Beyond his rigorous quantitative approach, it is the way he comments on his results that serves to legitimate this claim for extended relevance. He calls this an 'exercise in induction' (Hofstede, 2001: 97), which he claims is based on 'intuition'. Our main aim here will be to analyze the discourse that is conveyed by Hofstede's comments on his results. For this

analysis, we will find inspiration in works characterized by a broadly postcolonial sensibility, such as Said's (1995) and Escobar's (1995) – both inspired by Foucault's (1971; 1979) approach to discourse. We will analyze how the discussion of each of the five dimensions produces the 'other' national cultures discursively, from a Eurocentric – or, perhaps rather, an 'Anglo-Germanic'-centric – point of view.

After this introduction, we will present Hofstede's model, the many criticisms that have been mounted on it, and how a 'discourse analysis' approach differs from these criticisms. We will then move on to our methodology and explain how it relates to critical analysis in the postcolonial tradition – as especially laid out by Said and Escobar – and to Weber's (1978) seminal study. Our analysis will follow, with some preliminary observations and then a critical examination of how each of Hofstede's dimensions contributes to the broad discourse. Before wrapping up the paper with our conclusions, we will point out some of the implications of the discourse in terms of disciplinary power broadly speaking, and of how it might be seen as a neo-colonial discourse more specifically.

Hofstede's model

In this paper, we are focusing on Hofstede's 2001 volume *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. On the whole, this edition does not change or modify any of his basic conclusions presented in his pioneer study (Hofstede, 1980). What mainly characterizes this edition is that it comprises data from 10 of the African and Middle East countries which earlier were excluded because of instability of data, three new chapters dealing with organizational culture, intercultural encounters and the application of his dimensions, and a more thoroughly explained analysis, supported by 63 of his own publications and other scholars' replication, extension and validity tests on his cultural model. Although the contents of this edition have been extended, our interest here is mainly focused on the discursive construction of his five cultural dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity, and Long Term Orientation. The extended title in his 2001 edition along with recurrent references to his findings as 'evidence' reveals his

ambition to broaden the relevance of his model to wider societal and world issues (cf. Smith, 2002) as well as his concern for the model to maintain its validity.

Even though Hofstede's research has been considered groundbreaking in many scholarly quarters, significant criticism has been raised against his cultural model over the years. For example, his work has been criticized for being vague and contradictory and for lacking basic theory (Cray & Mallory, 1998: 57). It has also been criticized for being based on time-worn secondary data collected during 1968 and 1972 in only one multinational organization, and for including a too limited sample of mostly white marketing and sales*men* (Smith, 2002). More importantly, severe criticism has been raised towards the essentialistic conception of national culture, which instead of recognizing nations as 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) depicts them as historically determined, homogeneous and static entities (Cray & Mallory, 1998; Kwek, 2003). A criticism that is directly connected to this static conception of culture stresses the fact that Hofstede's study concerns perceptions of values and behaviour that are observed within the context of the national cultures as a basis for comparison. It has been argued that focusing directly on interactions would be more relevant (Bartholomew & Adler, 1996; Holden, 2002) because 'observations about how individuals interact with one another in their home country may not provide useful guidance for how the same people behave towards foreign visitors' (Cray & Mallory, 1998: 90), nor does it tell how they will cope abroad if they come to be expatriates. Another main shortcoming in Hofstede's framework (also connected to the essentialistic, static view) is its strongly functionalist and quantitative nature, which focuses on measuring phenomena that should not – and, to many, cannot - be narrowly seen as quantifyable. Moreover, some scholars claim that Hofstede's study does not concern culture *per se*, but instead reveals organizational members' perception of values and behaviour (e.g. Bartholomew & Adler, 1996; Roberts & Boyacigillier, 1984). Another significant objection highlighted by opponents is that the study, despite its claim to the contrary, contributes to the reproduction of ethnocentrism (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997; Kwek, 2003; McSweeney, 2002). While Hofstede, according to Kwek's (2003: 138) observation, 'questions the ethnocentric tendencies of researchers who utilize his dimensions', the very same Hofstede

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fails to question 'the ethnocentric origins of his own dimensions or methodology, [or] the implications of such tools for marginalizing other knowledges'. Kwek thus considers that Western cross-cultural management can be seen and criticized as a 'colonial discourse'.

However, despite the criticism that his model has been subjected to over the years, Hofstede has never recognized any significant errors or weaknesses in his research (McSweeney, 2002). On the contrary, many of his efforts at responding to the criticism have been aiming at showing that his 'scientific' approach, methods, and findings are sound and valid. Moreover, in his ambition to convince the reader that his cultural model and hierarchical ordering of countries is not only valid, but also will remain so for years to come. Hofstede explains that 'any kind of change would affect all countries in the same way' – leading thus to a status quo. It is, he argues, 'only if on a dimension one country leapfrogs over another that the validity of the original scores will be reduced' (Hofstede, 2001: 36). The chance for this to happen is according to his estimation fairly unlikely. Hence, rather than treating culture as changeable, the cultural model normalizes the idea of historical determinism and stability.

What seems to characterize the criticism towards Hofstede's study is that most of it is concerned with the validity of his model from a Western 'scientific' viewpoint. Considering this focus of interest, it appears that the great majority of scholars within cross-cultural management research share a concern for a scientific knowledge deeply rooted within a Western rationality. As far as we understand, the strong focus on this aspect can be explained by the fact that the claim that Hofstede's approach is solidly based on a scientifically appropriate methodology basically is what legitimates the discourse and what has allowed for its institutionalization as valid scientific knowledge. Such an institutionalization is of utmost importance and is understood as constituting the very foundation of 'disciplinary power' (Foucault, 1979). A text claiming to contain such knowledge is therefore not easily dismissed as it will be perceived as academically prestigious and treated as experts' reports (cf. Said, 1995). On the contrary, although methodological arbitrariness reduces the 'reality' it is supposed to disclose, it contributes to the production of a discourse with one accepted way of looking at the world.

Our approach differs from current critics in the sense that we are not concerned about the 'scientific' method and the validity of his model *per se.* Instead, we take an interest in his text and the discourse that has acquired power thanks to the 'textual attitude' (Said, 1995:94) that characterizes its audience. As Said explains, a textual attitude is created upon a unified belief that 'the complex world in which we live can be understood on the basis of what is described in a book'. According to Said there are two situations which favour such an attitude. One is when a human-being confronts at close range something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one can handle the situation by finding support either in previous resembling experiences or what one has read about it. A second situation favouring the textual attitude is the appearance of success. What we argue is that cross-cultural management discourse not only produces the 'contents' of national cultures, but also shapes people's subjectivities in many ways. Drawing on insights from postcolonial theory and the Foucauldian notion of power (Foucault, 1971), the purpose of our paper is to explore how Hofstede's model, through its reproduction of pre-existing ideologies originating in the Protestant ethic (see Weber, 1978) and effected in modern discourses such as that of 'development' (see Escobar, 1995), divides the world in two, with one side conceived of as 'developed and modern' and another side conceived of as 'traditional and backward'.

Theoretical influences and research method

Before proceeding with our exploring of Hofstede's cultural dimensions some words on our research method and our theoretical influences are in order. Let us start with postcolonial theory which is the major source of inspiration in our analysis of Hofstede's text. The main reasons why we are interested in postcolonial ideas are because they deal with the contemporary legacy of colonialism and its influences on the perception of culture. Colonialism was one of the most profound and significant experiences that from a European perspective shaped the Western world's perception of non-Western people (cf. Bhabha, 1994; Prasad, 2003; Said, 1995). It was Said's (1995; originally published in 1978) historical investigation of *Orientalism* that awakened many scholars' interests in studying past and present discursive encounters between the West

and its Others. After developing first within literary studies (e.g. Bhabha, 1990; Spivak, 1988), postcolonial theory began to affect other disciplines and came to deeply influence scholars from history (Chakrabarty, 2000; MacKenzie, 1995), anthropology (Appadurai, 1996; Clifford, 1988; Thomas, 1994), broader cultural studies (Gilroy, 1987), gender studies (Mills, 1992; Mohanty, 1984), human geography (Gregory, 1994; Jackson and Jacobs, 1996) and, more recently, organization and critical management studies (Cook, 2003; Mir et al., 2003; Prasad, 1997; 2003).To date a postcolonial deconstruction of Hofstede's model has been, to our knowledge, attempted only once (Kwek, 2003), but mostly focusing the critique on the reductionism, essentialism and representationalism – 'the belief that theories are attempts to accurately describe and represent reality' (Kwek, 2003: 125) – that characterize the framework, without going into the textual details of Hofstede's own comments on his results.

One of the conceptual inventions that gained immediate support in early colonialism and which is intimately linked to the hierarchical ordering of nations is the idea of 'race'. As pointed out by Ashcroft *et al.* (2002: 198-9) 'race' became an important imperialistic concept because it translated the colonial oppression into a justifying theory. European 'race' thinking initiated a hierarchy of human variations which placed the Europeans in a position superior to people within the expropriated territories. Although 'culture' and 'ethnicity' have come to replace the less euphonious concept of 'race', we argue that the legacy of colonial thinking is still discernible in the hierarchical ordering of nations and the choice of cultural attributes employed in Hofstede's description of people's values and behavioural patterns.

Another reason why we are particularly inspired by ideas from postcolonial studies is because cross-cultural management in general and Hofstede's hierarchically ordered cultural dimensions in particular are subsumed under the dominant discourses of 'modernity', 'development', and 'rational economy' which emerged – at least partly - as a result of the colonial conquests. It was, as Ashcroft *et al.* (2002) points out, when the notion of European superiority became crucial for justifying the expropriation of territories that 'modern' became synonymous with 'progress', 'development' and 'civilized behaviour', and 'rationality' and the creation of 'truth' became core features of modern thought. It was thus the Europeans' will to

dominate which encouraged them to construct the image of a traditional, static and pre-historic non-European world. To Foucault (1971), it is the shift from the 'power of rhetoric' to the 'power of truth', which he considers to have taken place in classical time, that gave rise to the 'discourse of modernity'. Similarly, the colonial discourse produced knowledge about the colonized, third, and fourth worlds constructed upon mysticism and prejudice, knowledge which was protected by the assertion of the superiority of 'scientific truth'. Influenced by Foucault's conception of discourse, Said (1995) argued that the colonizing of the Orient is best understood as a discourse by which the Occidental center was able to manage and produce the Oriental periphery. Emphasizing that all Occidental discourses about the Orient are determined by the will to dominate over Oriental territories and people, Said suggests that the representation of the 'other' is accomplished within an institutional system of scholarship. It is further pointed out by Prasad and Prasad (2002) that such a shaping of 'otherness' takes place in the discursive practice rather than on a level of individual and institutional beliefs.

The colonial discourse and its image of the world were presumably strengthened by Weber's search for the roots of 'modernity' within the protestant ethic. In effect, even though it may not have been Weber's intention, his seminal study (1978) did encourage him to argue that there was a difference between Western and non-Western economic mentalities. To Weber the industrial revolution required a disciplinary society because people did not generally change their country life for the city and a work in the factory by their own choice (Escobar, 1995). It required a convincing motive to attract people to the industries and Protestantism, and its Calvinist variant in particular, was apparently a successful tool for this mission since it directed the desire for salvation into a distinctive set of motives that encouraged rational, methodical action to master the world. The protestant ethic thereby contributed to the development of rational capitalism by encouraging accumulation of wealth as a path to salvation. It did so by restraining the enjoyment of wealth, by fostering methodical economic calculation of profit and loss, by promoting honesty and predictability in business practice, and by encouraging hard, disciplined work (Swidler, 2001: 80). As pointed out by Said (1995), Weber influenced the construction of the Orient and the view of the Oriental's economic incapability by assuming the

Orient to be a mystical, feudal and anti-rational place which lacked all those characteristics that had made European progress possible. According to scholars like Escobar (1995) and Banerjee (2003), the assumption of capitalism being the only way to think in the contemporary world is also quite clearly connected to the 'development' discourse and, for instance, its construction of the 'Third World' – a concept which was invented as a result of Truman's vision to transform all countries in the world to economically and technologically advanced societies and which almost overnight made two thirds of the world's population poor (Escobar, 1995).

The long-standing academic tradition in combination with the faith attributed to 'scientific methods' have most certainly contributed to the construction of expert opinions which have legitimized a way of thinking about 'self' and 'others' originating in Eurocentric discourses. We argue that, as a result, Hofstede's cultural dimensions are subsumed under these dominant discourses and that his argumentative construction of the five cultural dimensions - Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity, and Long Term Orientation – is inescapably linked to them. Our paper focuses on Hofstede's 2001 edition not only because this book comprises his research over the past 20 years, but more importantly because we attempt to explore how his cultural dimensions function as a model for producing and maintaining disciplinary power. We adopt Foucault's (1971) approach to discourse referring to a bounded area of social knowledge and maintain that the 'will to truth' with its linkage to power, has provided for the 'scientific' method and its encouragement of a collective understanding of culture. The Foucauldian meaning of discourse is less concerned with specific interaction but rather with how a discourse or a set of discourses comes to constitute objects and subjects (Potter, 1997). Similar to Foucault's argument that power is exercized to produce and control individual subjects through a system of knowledge and that subjectivity is produced by disciplinary discourse, it could be argued that national culture is not simply out there for everybody to learn about and adjust to, but brought into being by a prevailing discursive system.

We have chosen to focus on the three aspects of Hofstede's (2001) discussion which, in our view, show how the colonial mindset is kept alive in the worldview he offers. In our analysis, we are particularly interested in 1) his conception of culture and more specifically if he treats it as

dynamic or conceives of it as historically determined and stable, because essentializing 'the other' is one of the powerful tricks of colonial discourse; 2) the basic oppositions that he lays out between different sides regarding each dimension, because all colonial representation is based on sharp binary oppositions between the civilized / developed metropole and the territories in need of civilization / development; and 3) the rhetoric and arguments that he uses to convince the reader of the relevance and validity of his findings, because they are what makes his textual representation potentially powerful, when strengthened by a scientific legitimacy, for instance through establishing correlations. These three aspects are connected to each other in the sense that each potentially contributes to the power of the neo-colonial discourse.

Analysis[1]

As with any book, the first impression that *Culture's Consequences* gives to the reader is through its very title. It conveys the idea that situations stem from culture, i.e. that culture can be blamed for a variety of phenomena at the level of nations; for instance, underdevelopment or autocracy. Understood as 'programming of the mind' - or 'software of the mind' as the subtitle to the other famous book by Hofstede (1991) goes -, culture, rather than geography or history, is used as the universal explanation. It thus seems that Hofstede's ambition is to demonstrate that a few 'cultural dimensions' (which we rather would think of merely as symptoms of the consequences of complex historical dynamics) can be considered as universal causes for differences regarding phenomena such as 'development', 'modernity' or 'democracy'.

Indeed, for each dimension, Hofstede discusses its 'origins and implications'. He comments on these through instrumentalizing some of the correlations he finds in order to make conclusions regarding wider phenomena (such as the three listed above) – phenomena which are typically of importance to, and tend to be defined by, Western, 'developed' countries. While the dimensions may well be symptoms of certain values being expressed, it is quite clear that trying to 'explain' where they come from is quite a speculative activity – based on 'intuition' (p. 97) according to Hofstede himself. This 'exercise in induction' (ibid.) is indeed claimed by Hofstede to be reminiscent of archaeological work, in that archaeologists rely upon 'intuition'.

One could assume that Hofstede's intuition is based on some kind of preconceived view of the world that he makes use of when constructing his five cultural dimensions. In any case, why would there be 'implications' of these particular constructions? Obviously, nothing proves that 'culture' would be 'essentially' made up of these dimensions, which are arbitrary constructions applying to hypothetical 'societal norms'.

Power Distance: Being modern is being equal

The Power Distance Index (PDI) is perhaps the most significant dimension from a postcolonial viewpoint, because all the 'good cultures' seem to be on the same side. It appears that 'low PDI' is overwhelmingly presented as the desirable inclination. Hofstede's exhibit 3.10 (p. 118) clearly suggests that the 'low PDI' side is better, at least from his Western, supposedly rational and universally fair viewpoint: this side is deemed to be more technological, more legal, more modern, more urban, more educated, more literate, more wealthy, more democratic, more fair, more equal, less imperialistic (!), less centralized, more questioning of authority, characterized by more social mobility, a bigger middle class, better wealth distribution, a more representative political power, an the list could go on. This pretty much represents the idea of a 'first world' (which happens to be overwhelmingly Western, 'Anglo-Germanic', and Protestant) depicted as rather coherent despite a number of rather shocking allegations – like presenting the United States or the United Kingdom as on the 'less imperialistic' side, or as among the 'more equal' societies.

At the core of all these oppositions, there seems to be a fundamental distinction between ideas of 'modernity' and 'tradition', of 'modern' and 'traditional' man. Citing Triandis (1971: 8), Hofstede (p. 211) is trying to convince us that the division of the world in a modern and economically developed part and a traditional underdeveloped part is due to the fact that they are inhabited by 'modern' versus 'traditional' people.

> Modern man [...] is open to new experiences; relatively independent of parental authority; concerned with time, planning, willing to defer gratification; he feels that man can be the master over nature, and that he controls the reinforcements he receives from his environment; he believes in determinism and science; he has a wide, cosmopolitan perspective, he uses broad in-groups; he competes

with standards of excellence, and he is optimistic about controlling his environment. Traditional man has narrow in-groups, looks at the world with suspicion, believes that good is limited and one obtains a share of it by chance or pleasing the gods; he identifies with his parents and receives direction from them; he considers planning a waste of time, and does not defer gratification; he feels at the mercy of obscure environmental factors, and is prone to mysticism; he sees interpersonal relations as an end, rarely as means to an end; he does not believe that he can control his environment but rather sees himself under the influence of external, mystical powers.

One way that Hofstede's rhetoric proceeds is through making these generalizations where all 'low-PDI' and 'high-PDI' countries are supposed to be represented by straight oppositions, and to justify some of the assertions through comparison with some chosen suitable countries from one group or the other. An interesting example of that approach could be Hofstede's claim that equality is more a 'factual' matter in protestant countries, and more 'ideological' in catholic countries. We are encountering here one of the limits of Hofstede's approach examining only one company and values expressed by white middle aged men with similar occupations in sales and marketing: there is no reason why what may be true at the level of this company in different countries (regarding issues like 'equality' or 'democracy') should have to be true at the level of national societies. But it is part of Hofstede's discourse to present what happens in companies as also what happens in the society – or in those layers of society that he finds relevant for his agenda. Only in this way is it possible to maintain that the Western (protestant) countries are 'factually' more equal and democratic than others.

Another illustration of Hofstede's selective choice of examples can be found when he discusses 'evidence of a negative correlation of PDI with peak scientific performance' (p. 101). This 'evidence' is based on the 'Nobel index' and the example that Hofstede takes is France, which is 'only' ranked ninth. Beyond the unconvincing nature of this argument, what is most striking is that Hofstede justifies his claim that high-PDI countries are less performant scientifically by giving just one example (p.101).

When (briefly) addressing the effect that colonization may have had on colonized countries in his text, Hofstede indulges again in the 'one example to justify the whole' rhetoric: he claims (p. 120) that 'traditional precolonial relationships also contained elements of large inequality:

there is no better example than the Indian caste system', intending to demonstrate that the high PDI found in most former colonies is not due to having been colonized. Once again, one extreme example is supposed to account for all 'high-PDI former colonies'. In the end, even though he often uses only one example at a time, all the examples add up in the mind of the reader to lay out the worldview that there is one side of the world (mostly the 'protestant' countries) that is more modern and the other side that is more backward.

Uncertainty Avoidance: Being modern is being flexible

The Uncertainty Avoidance index (UAI) perhaps does not allow for such a clear opposition as PDI does. However, while the 'low-UAI' side may not be presented in such an overwhelmingly superior way as the 'low-PDI' one was, we still get the picture that it is more desirable than being 'high-UAI'. For instance, Hofstede claims that 'it seems that in higher-UAI countries innovations are more difficult to bring about' (p. 167). This claim is based on a study by Shane (1993) allegedly demonstrating that 'less uncertainty-avoiding cultures showed higher rates of innovation in terms of trademarks granted' (ibid.). One aspect that is quite reminiscent of the PDI discussion is that UAI is also characterized by a quite clear divide between protestant (low-UAI) and catholic (high-UAI) countries. A number of fairly obvious contradictions (especially with the conclusions that were drawn from high-PDI countries) seem to stem from this basic opposition. For instance, a low-UAI feature is presented as entailing much more moral tolerance than a high-UAI feature. This seems in clear contradiction with, for instance, the claim that catholic, high-PDI countries would be characterized by people taking more liberty with moral issues. Among other things, this idea of tolerance also implies that low-UAI countries are supposed to be more tolerant towards immigrants, an interesting assertion given the recent developments in Northern Europe.

These apparent contradictions in Hofstede's text on UAI can probably be explained by a simplification that seems to equate the amount of rules with how significant the rules are and how they direct human behaviour. While there may indeed be more rules, perhaps stemming from more 'demanding' religions, in so-called high-UAI societies, what Hofstede fails – or does

not want – to see is that a bigger amount of rules does not necessarily tend to make people more rule-abiding. Now, no matter whether Hofstede fails to see that or deliberately ignores it, his text conveys certain impressions as to how non-protestant, high-UAI people are supposed to be: obedient, subjected to strong rules and social control, and not very open-minded (implying that if those countries do not 'develop' or 'grow' enough it is because they are not ready or willing to change – to the Western-protestant capitalist ways - quickly enough). That the social control in Northern European countries – regarding the inflexibility around time issues or the all-knowing administration, for instance – is among the world's strongest does not matter here. What is implied is that those countries that do not share the low-UAI values like e.g. work flexibility (a great tool for US-style capitalism) are before all too conservative – otherwise they would have adjusted to the Western-protestant way, since it is so desirable.

Individualism: Being modern is being individualistic

Similar to PDI, but with an even more obvious distance between the West and the rest of the world, Individualism (IDV) is the dimension which according to Hofstede correlates the most with 'modernity'. As stated by Hofstede, IDV is among those dimensions empirically found in the IBM data (p. 211) which is most closely linked to a country's level of 'economic development'. If we are to judge from his statement that the questionnaire 'could as well be called a "modernity questionnaire"' since eleven of the thirteen questions are related to 'modernism', it appears that the concept was defined beforehand and drawn on a kind of 'intuition' based on preconceived knowledge about the effects of individualistic versus collectivistic behaviour. Similar to PDI, it is also the dimension which most significantly echoes the legacy of colonialism and its idea of a superior Western world and an inferior rest. As is evident from the exhibit 5.10 (p. 254), high IDV is associated with more economic development, more wealth, a greater social mobility and stronger development of middle class, a more modern and more urban society, a lower birth rate, a more universal education system, and an individualistic thinking. On the contrary, a collectivistic country is claimed to be characterized by less economic development, less social

mobility and a weak development of middle class, an extended or tribal family structure, more children per parent couple, a traditional education system and a collective thinking.

What is noteworthy in Hofstede's rhetoric is that while IDV is commented upon with positively loaded attributes, collectivist values are, on the contrary, discussed through rather negative associations. For example, while low-IDV countries are characterized by a rigid social and occupational class system, high-IDV countries are characterized by social and occupational mobility (p. 251). While individualist societies are supposed to represent a *modernist ethic* with an *equal law system*, collectivist societies are supposed to represent traditional *ethics* and a law system which is built on *traditions and religion*. Moreover, while within the high-IDV cultures individualism is considered *good* and science and technology treated as a *matter of fact*, low-IDV cultures are argued to treat science and technology as *magic* and to consider the placing of the individual interest before the collective good as *evil.* The use of terms which portray the 'self' as modern and progressive and the 'others' as backward clearly reverberates the legacy of a colonial thinking. This idea of inferiority and backwardness is discernible also in the way that collective value patterns in these so-called traditional societies are supposed to set a limit of the possibilities for economic development. According to Hofstede's analysis there is an 'obvious relationship between the organization's technology and the position of its members along the continuum from individualism to collectivism'. Drawing on earlier studies from Stinchcombe (1965: 145), he claims that 'technologies developed in Western individualist settings more or less presuppose an individualist mentality in entrepreneurs, managers, and workers, which is part of "modernity"' (p. 213). Introducing such technologies in more collectivist countries represents one of the main forces toward a shift of societal norms in those countries. On the other hand, the collectivist value pattern in more traditional societies sets a limit on possibilities for transferring technologies; this is one of the dilemmas of the economic development of poor countries. One solution that is suggested is the transfer of 'intermediate' or 'appropriate' technologies that are better adapted to what already exists in the traditional collectivist societies' (p. 213). As can be understood from Hofstede's discourse, a prerequisite for economic development in non-Western societies is an adjustment to the Western standards and life-style

since this apparently is the only way to gain prosperity – an argument hardly based on solid ground judging by the development of certain Asian countries.

Furthermore, individualistic countries, which not surprisingly turn out to be located in the Western world (e.g. USA, Austria, Great Britain, Canada, Netherlands) are 'modern or postmodern' societies characterized by a 'guilt culture' and people's calculative involvements. Collectivistic countries, which generally are located in 'the South' (e.g. Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, Chile and Singapore), are presented as 'traditional' societies characterized by a 'shame culture' and people's moral involvements. When interpreting the combination of a 'guilt culture' and 'calculative involvement' through the postcolonial lens it could be argued that bad conscience for eventual calculative involvements in Third World countries are justified by a notion of superiority called forth by rational Protestantism. At the same time it makes one wonder if it is not the Western world that produces or at least contributes to the production of a 'shame culture' by imposing their definition of 'modernity' and 'development' on the rest of the world, and by making people believe that there is only one way to achieve economic success, namely, by mimicing Western culture.

Masculinity: Can feminine values be modern after all?

In his construction of the Masculinity/Femininity dimension (MAS), Hofstede proceeds from the presumption that 'the duality of the sexes is a fundamental fact with which different societies cope in different ways' (p. 279). The concept refers to the dominant sex roles pattern in the vast majority of both traditional and modern societies; that of male competitiveness and assertiveness and female modesty and nurturance. While underscoring that this not necessarily means that men always behave in a more 'masculine' way than women and women in a more 'feminine' way than men, he does however point out that statistically men as a rule will be more on the 'masculine' side and women more and the' feminine' side. By this he apparently means that men generally are more achievement-oriented while women are more care-oriented. According to Hofstede a problem with this is that the dominating patterns in a society also are transmitted to other institutions. The goal of the organizations does for instance affect the

distribution of labour over the sexes. Business organizations have goals of achievement, which correspond to the alleged achieving role of the male.

Interestingly, this is the dimension where the opposition between the West (especially the Anglo-Germanic, Protestant world) and the rest of the World is the least clear. This is not only because, as Hofstede himself claims, it is the only dimension that is unrelated to national wealth, but rather because the US, the UK and Japan for once seem to be on the 'wrong' side, while the Netherlands along with the Scandinavian countries once again are depicted as 'quite nice cultures'. At least one gets the feeling that he holds feminine culture in countries like Scandinavia and the Netherlands (his native country) as a model as it is more fair, egalitarian, and, to summarize, more human.

However, MAS stands out as probably the least meaningful of all five dimensions and is also the one which has provoked most criticism over the years. Among other critiques it has been blamed for being both vague and contradictory. A common remark is that the dimension seems to include several types of 'femininities'. Some scholars even reject this cultural designation altogether claiming instead that 'quality of life' more accurately describes these kinds of differences between countries (Adler, 1997). For his defense Hofstede claims that many scholars have misinterpreted its meaning, but, nevertheless, the claim that the dimension represents 'the convergence in social gender roles' is hard to accept. Because of the lack of meaning of that dimension, it is not as convincing and thus not very significant for the 'disciplinary power' brought forward by the general Hofstede discourse. From the postcolonial viewpoint, what can be perhaps most criticized here is the very choice of metaphor in the sense that the discussion of gender, similarly to that of culture, assumes the presence of essential characteristics. While the cultural (colonial) discourse distinguishes the world in mainly two parts, the West and the non-West, the gender discourse distinguishes the feminine from the masculine. The concern with the way representation influences the constitution of subjectivities is also one of the reasons why feminism is of crucial interest in postcolonial discourse (see Mohanty, 1984; Prasad & Prasad, 2001; Spivak, 1999).

Long-Term Orientation: Accounting for unexpected success

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) is of particular interest since its elaboration was supposedly triggered by a will to be less ethnocentric – in terms of an acknowledged 'Western bias' (p. 352) - and do justice to more 'Asian' values. As Hofstede puts it, the Chinese Value Survey (CVS) that was used as a basis for this fifth dimension 'was composed from a values inventory suggested by Eastern minds, which only partly covered the themes judged important in the West' (p. 351). Although the methodology used to operationalize the dimension was directed by the same quantitativist worldview as that used for the first four, Hofstede seems to consider the setting-up of this fifth dimension as partly answering 'the need for local, culturally fitting theories of management and organization' (p. 462) in non-Western areas of the world – in this case Asia.

Hofstede claims that 'the relationship between certain Confucian values – as opposed to other equally Confucian values - and economic growth over these decades is a surprising, even sensational, finding' (pp. 367-368). Still according to Hofstede, the LTO findings are evidence supporting the statement that there is 'a relationship between Confucius's teachings and economic growth in the latter part of the 20th century', a statement which 'had been suggested before' but 'never proven' (p. 368). He contends that this 'discovery' – the 'sensational' nature of which is surely proportional to Hofstede's initial preconception of these areas of the world as too backward to experience 'development' – was made possible by the fact that the CVS is 'an East Asian instrument', which he finds 'remarkable' (ibid.). He forgets to underline that this 'instrument' was not only used according to the dominant Western-based research paradigm, but was also initially designed with that mind-frame – if anything, it suggests that these 'Eastern minds' that designed it did so not only according to 'Confucius's teachings'.

And then, there is the issue of African values, which have the honour to be addressed for slightly more than half a page in the 500+ page text. This is probably due to the assumed lack of 'modernity' of African countries – the book is supposed to 'explore the differences in thinking and social action that exist among members of more than 50 modern nations' (p. xix). No matter how short Hofstede's discussion of Africa is, it tells a great deal about the worldview he has – or wishes to convey. He starts by describing Africa as 'a development economist's headache' (p.

369), with 9 of the 10 poorest countries in the world. To Hofstede's credit, he did try to develop an additional cultural dimension grounded from specifically African values, using the same approach as with the CVS (ibid.):

> Ask Africans to develop a values questionnaire, administer this in both African and non-African countries, and see whether any new dimension emerges that might explain why Western recipes for development don't seem to work in Africa.

Alas, after developing an ecological factor analysis that produced six factors, and correlating the country scores on these factors with the four IBM dimensions, 'no serious candidate ['emerged'] for a new, African-inspired, cultural dimension' (pp. 369-370). From Hofstede's text, it does somehow feel as though Africans are 'not worth' their own dimension. Hofstede goes even further by suggesting an explanation for the underdevelopment of Africa broadly speaking, in terms of a bad combination as regards the existing dimensions. He states that African values contain some element that is 'fiercely contrary to the high-LTO mind-set' (p. 370), noticing that a certain factor 'opposed the African to the Asian countries and thus did provide a possible explanation for their differences in development rate' (ibid.). Hofstede's final verdict on Africa states that 'attributed wisdom that is not based on knowledge and education is a dubious foundation for the development of a country', a judgement of value clearly suggesting that what is wrong with Africa is the backward, unmodern cultures that characterize it. This is perhaps the clearest – and most shocking - example of his will to blame everything on culture, hence allowing for a guilt-free Western subjectivity regarding the colonial and neo-colonial facts: 'it's all in their mental programming'. Ultimately, since it seems this latest feature was shared between Africans and Westerners, Hofstede suggests that the difference may lie in the 'different associations with the word wisdom' (ibid.). Additional evidence that his conclusions are not directly drawn on his findings, but also by strong preconceptions: when the findings seem to be the same for two 'cultural groups' that should, in Hofstede's worldview, be very different, it is blamed on 'different associations' with some of the key terms used in the questionnaires.

Discussion and Conclusions

We have argued that cross-cultural management in general and Hofstede's model in particular is subsumed under the dominant discourses of 'modernity', 'development', and 'rational economy', and the purpose of our paper has been to explore Hofstede's second edition of *Culture's Consequences* (2001) and the rhetoric he uses to legitimize the validity of his cultural dimensions – Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity and Long-Term Orientation - and discuss cultural consequences of such colonial discourse. We have taken a particular interest in his treatment of culture and in his binary construction of the five dimensions. His second edition can clearly be seen as yet another contribution for the strengthening of current cross-cultural management discourse and its idea of national culture as a stable, historically determined and essentialistic phenomenon. Moreover, our analysis of the text reveals that his binary oppositions tend to construct the world as characterized by a division between a 'developed and modern' side and a 'traditional and backward' side. Our contention is that, by presenting deep cultural values as a central explanatory factor for virtually anything - for instance, 'innovation', 'intolerance', or also even 'wealth' -, Hofstede's vision of the world is one that greatly undermines the burdens of history, especially the colonial and neo-colonial facts, and thus tends to point to the idea that inequalities should be blamed on the people's 'collective programming of the mind' (Hofstede, 2001: 9) alone. By approaching culture as essentialistic he fails to recognize that the 'other is never simply given, never just found or encountered, but made' (Fabian, 1986: 208), and that the description of Western people as 'developed and modern' and non-Western people as traditional, irrational and prone to mysticism is a discursive construction based on a colonial thinking.

As cross-cultural management discourse becomes more and more institutionalized as legitimate knowledge, one can, with a Foucauldian lens, see this knowledge as contributing to producing both a guilt-free Western subjectivity and a collective cultural responsibility on the part of the people from so-called 'developing countries'. Hence, Hofstede's cultural model, with its regimes of biased stereotypes, ultimately serves the purpose of promoting the idea of the West as a world saviour by exporting its founding principles, such as democracy, economic

development, advanced technology and science. The sense of collective cultural responsibility for developmental failure that is implicitly attributed to the developing countries, on the other hand, is strengthened by the fact that many former diaspora students who have eventually become influential institutional actors in their countries of origin convey this worldview when they try to implement what they have learnt from the 'more successful cultures' in which they have received their superior education. Subjected to and disciplined by the discourse based on Western theory and method these scholars transmit their doubly legitimate knowledge (as the one of the academic élite and yet one that they, local people, have acquired) in the developing countries.

Put together, this suggests that Western companies wishing to operate in certain developing countries (e.g. in Africa) would be quite right to believe that all their managers should come from Western (preferably Anglo-Protestant) cultures, that most of the organizing (presumably for all kinds of organizations), broadly speaking, should be taken care of by Westerners or Western-educated people, along models created in the West, unless there is, as Hofstede (p. 462) puts it, an 'effort in theory-building, especially in those countries in which theories of modern man, management, organization, and society must be imported wholesale from abroad'. Another good way for the West to appropriate even more the resources of the developing countries. This may be stretching the implications of the discourse quite far, but isn't it the worldview that we precisely see, on the part of not only Western managers but also Western-educated third-world managers – and often more on the part of the latter. The local 'effort at theory-building' that Hofstede calls for (p. 462) is most likely one that should be accomplished, in his mind, by those 'local' researchers who share his worldview that one can map cultures through a few quantitative measures, like those 'Eastern minds' (p. 351) who designed the questionnaire meant to measure LTO. Hofstede's claim that theory-building is so needed locally in developing countries suggests that the existing 'local knowledge' is deemed worthless for the ultimate purpose of development as fitting the Western standards in terms of what it implies for 'modern man, management, organization, and society' (p. 462). For Hofstede, it is alright if the ways of thinking, the local 'minds', as he would put it, are used with the purpose of determining a cultural

'competitive advantage', like in the case of Asia. That is, as long as the only scholarly contribution that 'Eastern minds' are supposed to offer is nothing that might interfere with Western ontology, but merely assistance in order to formulate the questions for a questionnaire.

Many writers from the Euro-American center lean on their - and their like-minded colleagues' – belief in a 'scientific truth' and talk as if their statements can claim universal validity. The overconfidence in the quantitative methods' capacity of delineating such a scientific truth in combination with the appearance of success have favoured a textual attitude and multiple replications of the study, which have in turn reinforced the power of Hofstede's discourse. Our main contribution in this paper has been to expose how this powerful discourse constructs the world as divided between a developed and modern side and a traditional and backward side. We have thus contributed to those postcolonial studies that aim to dismantle the truth-claims of Eurocentric discourses (Spivak, 1988) and indulge in a critique of the philosophical discourse of modernity (Lazarus, 1999). By helping to disrupt 'the stereotypical discourses through which the colonial formation reproduces itself' (Smyth, 1997: 157), our analysis of Hofstede's framework has hopefully allowed for breaking the self-reinforcing circuit of knowledge production which, in our opinion, characterizes current cross-cultural management theories in general and Hofstede's model in particular, and to open up for an alternative knowledge production which includes rather than excludes and banalizes rather than exoticizes the other.

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[1] Unless stated otherwise, citations and page numbers from this section refer to Hofstede's 2001 volume.

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