Chapter 23

Networking Through Cultures:
Communicative Strategies in Transnational Research Teams

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ABSTRACT

Transnational communication is a natural effect escorting activities of research teams throughout the world. We understand this phenomenon not as a new-born process mediated by technologies, but the process of cross-border dissemination of opinions, information, ideas, and toolkits. We also recognize that while so-called "new" information and communications technologies (ICTs) have created their own specific problems and concerns, it should be remembered that all forms of communication are capable of causing tensions and latent conflicts (Cupach, 1997; Ribeiro, 1998). The study concerns networking and ICT-mediated collaboration in transnational research teams with Russian participation affected by cultural differences. The core interest lies in investigation of communicative strategies and effects of visual and interactive techniques, including video-conferencing, participatory social media, podcasting, and others--and, to collaboratively construct, interpret, and theorize participants' accounts of cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

In the globalised world, we find at least three dimensions within which contemporary international project management exists. The first one is the theoretical collision around notion of culture. The second dimension is transculturality, which is defined as being "in-between." The final dimension linked with the previous one is ICT-mediated communication which reflexes cultural differences in the process of decision-making, technology acceptance, and more. Most people have some opinion, drawn from their own culture's folk psychology, regarding the concept

of culture. However, after close inspection of the true meaning of culture, a very complex phenomenon reveals itself. As a result, there is no consensus among researchers on a definition of culture (Smith & Bond, 1999; Triandis, 1996). At least several dimensions of culture could be found in extant literature: on culture and cultural differences in management (Adler, 1997), social psychology (Smith & Bond, 1999), and linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997).

Beginning with the fact that the word "culture" refers not only to masterpieces in literature, arts, and music, it must also be limited to something which differs one community from another. Culture emerges and is sustained by social relations within specific contexts. Although previously the objectivist view of culture has been predominant, during the past 20 years the symbolic view of culture has become commonplace. Hofstede (1997) defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." This is used as an every-day definition in project management, so we contend with preferably cultural differences, explaining management' faults in transnational project team-building. While researchers view the problem through "cultural glasses," they must consult with the people involved and to make sure that the same thing is estimated similarly across cultures in order to achieve a consensus on various questions.

However, following Kim and Markus (1999), cultures could be theorized as constantly changing, open systems of behaviors, attitudes, and norms. They also include institutions the people within a culture continuously reinforce through diverse ways of engagement and participation, including networking. Together with lifting global migrations we discover the most popular word, "transculture," emphasizing the moment of crossing barriers, imagined or real. Though transculture depends on the efforts of separate individuals to overcome their identification with separate cultures, on another level, it is a process of interaction between cultures themselves in which more and more individuals have found themselves "outside" of any particular culture, and "outside" of its national, age, political, and other limitations. It means being located beyond any particular mode of existence, or in this case, finding one's place on the border of existing cultures.

This realm *beyond* all cultures is located *inside* of transculture and belongs to this state of not-belonging (Epstein, 1995). Transculture is usually perceived as the mode of existence liberated from culture itself; however, transculture is not a rarified and isolated construct which is separated from real national cultures. Rather, it is more about the game which is essentially derivative and forbids the creation of new signs and values, so transculture aspires entirely to the sphere of creativity. The transcultural world lies not apart from, but within all existing cultures, like a multi-dimensional space, where communication exists between those of all cultures and sharing all possible experiences.

Transculturality is enforced by new information technologies. In the digital era, access to and familiarity with technology has become an important resource for successful cooperation. Media frames, feasible from Goffman's (1974) notion of schemas, define an issue through selection, exclusion, emphasis and elaboration – in other words, frames define communication. ICT studies typically consider frames at an issue-specific or generic (thematic) level, including values, human interests and motivations, communicative strategies. For further consideration of media technology usage and framing, we will exploit cultural dimensions, defined as the core dimensions by leading researchers (Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 1998, Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1997): "individualism/collectivism," "power distance," "masculinity/femininity," "uncertainty avoidance," "time perception (monochronic/polychronic)," and "high context/low context."

These dimensions are the most influential and feasible in the context of transnational project team

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