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TESE DE MESTRADO

Swedish and Portuguese Interacting in Swedish MNC's in Portugal:  
Cultural Issues and Perspectives

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## Abstract

- Genesis:** In 1998, Filipe Dahlin from Chalmers University of Technology - Department of Industrial Dynamics (Sweden), presented a thesis with the title 'Swedish Management in Portugal – A Cultural Perspective'. His work was about the interaction between Swedish managers in Portugal (predominantly employed in Swedish Multinational Corporations) and the Portuguese workers in the setting of Organisational life and within the context of a local cultural background. He analysed the different cultural perceptions of Swedish managers in Portugal, particularly, in reference to their Portuguese subordinates. Dahlin's problem was: how well did both cultures "fit" in order to achieve organisational objectives? What adaptations had Swedish managers to engage in order to adapt to the "locals"? How well did the "locals" accepted or engaged in Swedish management practices? However, he only presented and analysed one side of the interaction, namely, the Swedish perspective. In this present work, I took, as the main focus to analyse the Portuguese view on the issues debated by Dahlin.
- Purpose:** Thus, the main reason of this study is to make a complementary analysis to that presented by Dahlin's (1998) work. A sort of symmetrical replication of Dahlin's thesis if you will. The intention is, however, to contribute to the debate of the "Portuguese" type of work ethic, work culture in the frame of the Portuguese difficulty in soaring our productivity level, rather than contributing to some "optimal" model of interaction between Swedes and Portuguese in Swedish Multinational Corporations.
- Background:** The literature on culture and its impacts on organisational life have shown rather well the complexity of the matter. Cultural backgrounds, within which human endeavour takes place,

influence management practices and the ways things get done and corporate objectives get attained. When people from significantly different cultural backgrounds interact, the process is not one of mechanical adjustment, and some times it simply does not work. Thus, a qualitative and exploratory study of one of such interactions that has been a success for so long might help to shed some light on the richness and complexity of these processes.

**Methodology:** The methodology followed in this work is similar to that of Filipe Dahlin. A qualitative and exploratory approach sustained by a semi-structured interview process. Some 25 persons were interviewed, amounting to more than 15 hours of recorded conversations. The first step, however, was not to address the Portuguese perspective. As some years passed since Dahlin concluded his work, thus, an intermediate step was taken regarding the evaluation of the degree to which Swedish managers today would or would not agree with the perspectives of their former colleagues.

**Results:** The results and outcomes of these interviews are discussed in direct comparison to those put forward by Dahlin, and from that into a more broad discussion around cultural "fits" and to our present national debate on productivity.

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I sincerely hope that my work will contribute not only to the Swedish managers in Portugal and those potentially interested in doing business here, but also to those who want to know interactions between Latin and Nordic cultures.

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## **Introduction**

**What happens when two different cultures interact within an organisational space? What are the outcomes of such interactions in terms of organisational success? How well do the "natives" react to a foreign top management? How do managers cope with their subordinates different idiosyncrasies?**

**These are important and contemporary issues for companies that have laid their activities, in this global economic era, all around the planet. Companies set their own rules, procedures and objectives, somehow in a closed system perspective, and confront their aims, purposes, mission statements with a variety of national cultures within which they operate. The apparent shrinking of the planet to a global village, is fostered by the Information Technologies "new economic regime", however how well does it actually work this confrontation, when some general optimal procedure meets a local and contextual framework?**

**When we interact, even in our regular everyday conversations, we give much more than a simple, direct and straight answer. We tend to organise our human interactions in terms of patterns of experience (Stacey, 2001) that we use to make sense of what we are doing, of what is happening in a "taken for granted" way. When we interact with people that have developed, within their local contexts, different themes, different patterns of explanation and action, misunderstanding is often generated (Fonseca, 2001).**

**How important might this differences become, how do people overcome them in order to attain a positive work relationship, are the issues of this thesis.**

This general aim, is developed by means of replicating the work conducted by another researcher, Filipe Dahlin of Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg Sweden, who studied, in 1998, the interactions between Swedish managers and their Portuguese subordinates in Swedish companies operating in Portugal. Dahlin, however, presented his conclusions from an unilateral perspective, a Swedish lens. In the present work, the Portuguese perspective is analysed and some comparisons are made as a departure for more broad conclusions on the issues of cultural interactions in organisations. Even though, both studies, are only qualitative and exploratory they might help to develop some interesting insights on the cultural problem. Using the dimensions established in the literature, a more dynamic perspective is debated. Perhaps, one could say, that departing from a structuralist view, a more phenomenological perspective is adopted in both studies.

Dahlin argues that *“previous studies into the Portuguese culture the Swedish MNC and Swedish culture provides the background for a framework used for the construction of an empirical model of interactions between Swedish managers and their Portuguese employees. The model is based on structural dimensions of culture and enriched by the cross-fertilisation from a variety of interrelated fields of study”* (pg. vii – Executive Summary)

The model argued that Swedish and Portuguese exhibit significant disparities between them. Mutual cultural preconceptions, would lead to the "prediction" of "clash" areas, given, some, clear oppositions between these cultures as depicted on Table 1.

<b>SWEDISH TRAITS</b>	<b>PORTUGUESE TRAITS</b>
<b>More egalitarian system</b>	<b>More autocratic leadership</b>
<b>Open-minded</b>	<b>Family oriented</b>
<b>System opens no exceptions</b>	<b>Tend to find ways to apply the system according to the circumstances</b>
<b>Nonchalance when facing with predicaments</b>	<b>General aversion to unknown or unpredictable situations</b>
<b>Punctuality and long term orientation</b>	<b>Lack of punctuality and more short term orientation</b>
<b>Concerning to communication habits, tend to be more direct</b>	<b>Tend to overload the speech</b>

**Table 1 - Culture traits of both cultures**

The influence of cultural patterns underlying organisational life are recognised in a vast literature, however there are few works such as the one undertaken by Dahlin and the present study.

The thesis starts with a brief theoretical analysis, highlighting the more important perspectives on this subject, followed by a more detailed account of the problems addressed in this thesis.

Then, methodological issues are presented, namely those regarding the type of research, its limits and merits. The number of interviews, the companies from where these interviewees were selected, how and why are also detailed in this part of the thesis.

**After, the results of the interviews are analysed by groups of respondents, comparing them, against the model proposed by Dahlin and against his results.**

**Finally, a chapter on conclusions produces a more speculative and analytical perspective, followed by implications for future research.**

## Theoretical Framework

### *Background*

It is generally accepted that culture influences or constrains management activity, a survey conducted by an European consulting firm found that 35% of senior executives ranked cultural differences as the number one problem in foreign acquisitions (Schneider & Barsoux, 1997). This alone may well reflect the complexity of this issue.

The lack of understanding of such processes might be a source of disadvantage, in the same sense as Michael Porter (1994) has argued that culture can provide a source of competitive advantage.

A vast body of literature exists on culture and its impacts on the organisation and management. Most of this literature body, however, tends to reflect structural and some how universal dimensions. There are not many examples of studies addressing the actual effects and concrete results of such dimensions in terms of what happens when some broad cultural traits "meet" in everyday interactions in organisations. The 'zoom in' on relationship between these two specific parties is precisely what was carried out in Dahlin's study.

Jean-Marc Decaudin (1991 quoted in Estingoy & Cazals, 1998, p. 141) argued that to "*ignore the socio-cultural environment of target market is the base of unpardonable errors*", thus, even in if it is impossible to know in detail all the socio-cultural environment of a country one needs to understand the essential traits.

However, to answer the question what is culture, is not a simple endeavour, since there are many definitions of it as an ontological object, in the following pages, the notion of culture is debated, highlighting the major contributions for such debate. The implications of dimensions of analysis for the manager and for organisational activity are addressed, particularly, in the context of interaction between people of different cultures in organisations.

### *Culture*

Culture as a powerful guideline for social behaviour, for the acceptability of behaviours in any society context is an accepted theme of academic scrutiny. Margaret Mead (1953), a pioneer anthropologist, proposed the definition of culture as shared patterns of behaviour, while Edgar Schein (1985: p. 12) suggested that culture was better defined as “...*a set of basic assumptions – shared solutions to universal problems of external adaptation (how to survive) and internal integration (how to stay together) – which have evolved over time and are handed down from one generation to the next...*”.

As in other areas of social science, there are no clear, accepted and adopted definitions of culture (Louis, 1985), while those two previous authors emphasise the pragmatism dimension of culture as a sort of tool guiding action, Kroeber and Parsons (1958 quoted in Gomes, 1994) define culture as “...*the transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in shaping human behaviour*”, thus pointing to a more symbolic and abstract dimension of a force shaping action.

In this frame, Ortner (1984) proposed two anthropologic perspectives: symbolic and cognitive. The former turns way from the traditional analysis focused on specific behaviours (traditions, habits, costumes) emphasising the process of sharing symbols and beliefs. The later, suggests culture as a set of schemata which people use to act collectively.

**Thus, culture is referred, simultaneously, as that which is necessary to know and which is necessary to believe, inside a given community, to act in an acceptable manner.**

**We can point that culture involves:**

- **Historically derived and selected values about proper behaviour.**
- **Transmitted by example and by symbols.**
- **That constitute a coherent set of mental programmes used by a local community.**
- **These models are not always explicit and their transmission is often not formal and organised.**

#### *Culture as National Frameworks*

**Hofstede (1991) defines culture as being collective but often intangible. However, it is what distinguishes one group, organisation or nation from another. His argument, that corporate culture needs to be carefully managed, as competitive advantage, in the sense that it is what binds most multinational companies (MNC's) as a unit, is generally accepted. His studies have shown that national culture prevails over the corporate culture. Only where isolated companies monopolise a community's workforce, then a company's culture takes a superior toll. This reflects the inertia of the nation's culture in changing according to a company's vision.**

**On the other hand, according to Hofstede, values are among the first things that are programmed into children and are reinforced by local environment, at school and at work. So, in later life it is difficult to change them and this is why expatriate workers have often hard experiences when faced with another national culture.**

Management of cultural diversity is becoming a significant issue for companies of all sizes, not just MNC's.

The rise of global business, with an increasing number of joint ventures and cross-border partnerships, greater cooperation within the European Union, implies that businesses need to embrace people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. This has contributed to the need to develop a cultural sensitivity. Problems can appear in international operations because of cultural ignorance or insensitivity. Hofstede's work has provided a framework to understand cultural differences.

In this study the author skilled a simple but exhaustive approach to culture and its consequences. Based on the distributed questionnaires (called the Values Survey Module) and from the results, he drew up indices that reflect the national cultural characteristics or dimensions of a country, allowing a credible inference of the basic values of culture. The convergence of the results of the various studies with the results of the factorial analysis confirmed the validity of the inference.

For these reasons and because of its intuitive simplicity, Hofstede's dimensions are generally accepted as a scientific base and departing point for trans-cultural studies.

### *Hofstede's Dimensions*

Hofstede conducted perhaps the most comprehensive study of how values in workplace are influenced by culture. He developed a model that identifies four primary dimensions to differentiate cultures, commonly referred as "Hofstede's Dimensions". Later, it appears the fifth dimension, Long-term Orientation (The Chinese culture connection – Confucian Dynamism) which it explains the rapid economic development of many Asian countries.

The following explanations should assist the business traveller to understand the cultural differences within regions and between countries.

*Uncertainty Avoidance:* this dimension refers to how comfortable are people towards ambiguity, unknown or unpredictable situations. Cultures which ranked low (compared to other cultures) feel much more comfortable with the unknown. This is reflected in a society that more readily accepts change and takes and greater risks. In contrast, high uncertain avoidance cultures prefer formal rules, regulations, controls, and issues with career security. Any uncertainty can express itself in higher anxiety than those from low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Key words: the need of structure.

*Power Distance:* according to Hofstede & Bond (1984), power distance is defined “as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations accept that power is distributed unequally”. In other words, focuses on the degree of equality or inequality between people in the country’s society. In high power distance cultures ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within society and people are much more comfortable with a larger status and privileges (there is a feeling of dependence and the organisational structure reflects this in its hierarchy). Low power distance ranking indicates that society not emphasises the differences between citizen’s power and wealth. Key words: how society handles inequalities.

*Masculinity (vs) Femininity:* focuses on the degree that society reinforces or not, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, ambition, control, and power.

A high masculinity ranking indicates that country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominated a significant segment of the society and power structure while, females being controlled by male domination. Low masculinity ranking indicates that country has a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society and the femininity

values favour quality of life, human relationships and interdependence. **Key words:** behaviour according to gender.

*Individualism (vs.) Collectivism:* focuses on the degree that society reinforces individual or collective, achievement and interpersonal relationships.

The individualism dimension measures the population's ability to act alone instead of in cohesive groups (Hofstede, 1991). Individuals in these societies (high individualism) may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships and taking care of only their direct family. Low individualism ranking typifies societies of a more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals. People are automatically incorporated into a strong group. So, individualism is associated with self fulfilment, competitiveness and independence whereas collectivism is associated to loyalty, co-operation and interdependence. **Key words:** behaviour towards the group.

*Long Term Orientation:* this dimension refers to the selective promotion of particular set of ethics found in Confucian teachings (Confucian Dynamism: truth (vs.) virtue or short-term orientation vs. long-term orientation). Focuses on the degree that society embraces or not, long-term devotion to traditional forward thinking values.

High term-long orientation ranking indicates that country prescribes to the values of long-term commitments and respect tradition, persistence, thrift, sense of shame and order. However, business may take longer to develop in this society particularly for an "outsider". Low long-term orientation ranking indicates that country does not reinforce the concept of long-term, traditional orientation. Less important are values such as personal protection, loss of face, favours and gifts. In this culture, change can occur more rapidly as long-term traditions and commitments do not become impediments to change.

*Implications of the Model for Life Organisations*

Hofstede's model is better understood via comparative tables (Tables 2, 3, 4, 5) for each of different dimensions, connecting them with the most frequent traits of management practices, working habits and consequences.

<b>COLLECTIVISM</b>	<b>INDIVIDUALISM</b>
<b>Primary loyalty to group (nuclear family, extended family, caste, organisation)</b>	<b>People taking care of themselves, autonomous and separated from social context</b>
<b>“We” mentality</b>	<b>“I” mentality</b>
<b>Decision-making based on what is the best for the group</b>	<b>Making decisions based on individual needs</b>
<b>Relationship are more important than tasks</b>	<b>Task is more important than relationships</b>
<b>Economic development: poor</b>	<b>Economic development: wealthy</b>
<b>Climate: warm</b>	<b>Climate: cold</b>
<b>Power-distance: high</b>	<b>Power-distance: low</b>

**Table 2: Basic traits of collectivism and individualism and its implications**

*Consequences (Table 2):*

*Individualistic cultures.*

People speak out their minds, pose questions, are more confrontational and direct.

*Collectivistic cultures.*

People blend in, avoid conflict, use intermediaries.

<b>MASCULINITY</b>	<b>FEMINITY</b>
<b>Live to work</b>	<b>Work to live</b>
<b>High values of freedom/self-determination</b>	<b>Managers use intuition and try to use consensus</b>
<b>More consistent and similar behaviour towards people</b>	<b>Equality, solidarity and quality is important in work environment</b>
<b>Conflicts are solved by fighting</b>	<b>Conflicts are solved by negotiation</b>
<b>Power, affirmation and ambition. Gender roles in society are different</b>	<b>Relationships and quality of life. Exists a little difference between man/woman</b>

**Table 3: Basic traits of masculinity/femininity and its implications**

***Consequences (Table 3):***

***Masculine culture.***

**Tendency to perceive men as assertive and women as caring.**

***Feminine culture.***

**Both men/women focuses on cooperation, consciousness of those who are in need, social accommodation is important.**

<b>HIGH UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE</b>	<b>LOW UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE</b>
<b>Have more formal rules</b>	<b>Believe that less rules the better</b>
<b>Prefer details, specific plans</b>	<b>Tolerate generalisation</b>
<b>Less tolerant of unusual ideas</b>	<b>Tolerate deviance</b>
<b>Consensus seeking</b>	<b>Look for individual opinions</b>
<b>Minimise risk</b>	<b>Approve of risk taking</b>
<b>Ritualised/ceremonial</b>	<b>Avoid rite/ceremony</b>
<b>Belief in absolute truth/high know-how</b>	<b>Accept relativity of belief</b>

**Table 4: Basic traits of high/low uncertainty avoidance and its implications**

*Consequences (Table 4):*

*High anxiety avoidance.*

**Cultures are more resistant to change, often characterised by more elaborated rituals/religious practices.**

*Low anxiety avoidance.*

**Cultures tend to accept competition and conflict, tolerate disagreement and deviance.**

<b>HIGH POWER DISTANCE</b>	<b>LOW POWER DISTANCE</b>
<b>Power/authority are facts of life</b>	<b>Minimise social/class structures</b>
<b>Everyone has a specific place</b>	<b>No set hierarchy</b>
<b>Those in power emphasise position: privileges and status symbols are popular</b>	<b>Those in power minimise position: privileges and status symbols are looked down on</b>
<b>Respect for authority: subordinates expect instructions</b>	<b>Respect for individuality: subordinates expected to be consulted</b>
<b>Centralised authority</b>	<b>Decentralised authority</b>
<b>Ideal boss: benevolent autocrat/good father</b>	<b>Ideal boss: competent democrat</b>
<b>Climate: warm</b>	<b>Climate: cold</b>
<b>Population size: large</b>	<b>Population size: small</b>
<b>Wealth: unequal distribution</b>	<b>Wealth: equal distribution</b>

**Table 5: Basic traits of high/low power distance and its implications**

*Consequences (Table 5):*

*High power distance cultures.*

**Obedience to authority is expected; language filled with power or hierarchy indicators; managers tend to be autocratic while subordinates expect direct supervision, opposition is covert.**

*Low power distance cultures.*

**Emphasis is on challenging decisions, expecting autonomy and independence.**

Given such clear dichotomies, the interaction between cultures positioned in the extremes of Hofstede dimensions, such as the Swedish and the Portuguese national cultures, one should expect some severe cultural management problems.

### *Organisational Culture*

Another vast body of literature is the one concerned with the organisational unit of analysis. Unlike Hofstede's study that is oriented to what distinguishes one group, organisation or nation from another, the most relevant author in this area, Edgar Schein, is concerned with organisations and the study is focused in the formation and influence of culture as a tool for behaviour conformity, in the sense that it is a "tool" for controlling people in order to make them contribute for the success of a company. He is primarily concerned with internal consistency and external adequacy of cultural variables.

In his book, "Organizational Culture and Leadership" (1992), the main theme is linked to the complexity of deciphering, changing and adapting an organisation's culture. He argues that bringing culture to the level of an organisation, or even lower, to teams, allows us to understand how it is created, developed, changed and most notably, managed.

Schein does not assert that this is a small issue and an easy task, however he points to the leadership factor. That is, cultures, strong binding cultures, should begin with visionary leaders who impose their values and assumptions to broader groups. The leader or founder is elementary on the company culture because of their attitude towards work. Thus, corporate culture results, primarily, of leadership style, and in second order of company' history, industry, stage of development and national characteristics.

For Schein, organisational culture issues are manageable. The more crucial dimensions are internal conformity and external adaptation. External adaptation refers to the relationship with the environment and the solutions to problems of an external scene, while internal integration concerns to “human resources management” and the behaviour displayed as proper or not.

Cultures are deep based, constant and complex and, it can be extremely difficult to bring the beliefs to surface; *“Try to understand culture, give it its due, and ask yourself how well you can begin to understand the culture in which you are embedded”* (Schein, p. 2). In light of Schein's positions the type of problem faced when Swedish and Portuguese meet would, thus, become one of integration. In the Swedish companies operating in Portugal it could, thus, be expected that Portuguese workers would be submitted to cultural training. However, this would or should occur at company level, therefore one should expect some differences between each company.

#### *Trans-Cultural Interactions*

If Hofstede' positions are correct and national cultures prevail over corporate culture. If Schein' views are also correct, therefore, some sort of integration (normalisation) is required and expected in order that everyone works in the same direction and in the same spirit. Thus, given such clear oppositions between Swedish and Portuguese cultures, some adjustments would have occurred, if those companies were to succeed in the Portuguese market, as they apparently do.

Schein argues that the complexity of changing and adapting an organisational culture, would lead a company bringing a culture to a different country to need a process of “normalising” its internal integration between different people (in this case, integration between Portuguese and Swedes) and to

promote its external adaptation within a different culture (in this case, Portuguese culture).

When a culture is described often and immediately stereotypes emerge as representing that culture. Generally members of a group will tend to evaluate themselves higher than non-members. The level of ethnocentrism varies from each culture depending on the values of tolerance and harmony (vs.) cultural superiority syndrome and respect for tradition. This level consisting in propensity to favour members of the same group and rejects non-members.

In the next table, a resume of stereotypes, key-words and some authors is presented.

AUTHOR	YEAR	STEREOTYPES KEY WORDS
Giles & Ryan	1982	Define two key dimensions: the “competence” dimension (intelligence, education, success and wealth) and the “beneficence” dimension (kindness, loyalty, honesty and trustworthiness).
Fiske	1993	Define as mental notes about a group and helps to reduce uncertainty due to simplification information processing about a group.
Richard D. Lewis	1996	To provide insights on how to negotiate with several nationalities. Stereotypes are used daily for comparing reality with pre-established notions of similar experiences.
Sošková	1996	Vary in many aspects: shared by others or within a group, positive/negative, include beliefs/values, typical behaviour of a group/person.
Schneider & Barsoux	1997	Indicated that managers are ineffective in cross-cultural experiences when they either deny having stereotypes or get fixed in them.

Table 6: Resume of stereotypes key words and its authors

The stereotypes and its influence depend on the use they are given and the way they are engaged in. In fact, its best positive side is when the person is ready to unlearn his concepts and update the new information with fresh experiences. Given that stereotypes have a preponderant role to play in trans-cultural confrontation, reducing uncertainty and speeding the acculturation process a degree of this kind of behaviour should be observed and reported by those accommodating such interactions. In the intercultural training some stereotypes are used extensively because both parts are “familiar” to each other’s basic traits in cross-cultural confrontation and, simply to use this information for mutually, adjusting and adapting to each other’s view and behaviour. However, after adjustment has been achieved one should expect the stereotyping to lower its importance.

#### *Trans-Cultural Interactions the Case of Swedish/Portuguese Interactions*

Dhalin proposed in 1998 a study of different cultural perceptions of Swedish managers at Swedish MNC’s (Multinational Corporations) in Portugal. His study focus was to develop a better understanding of the interactions complexity, through previous studies to construct a model with which to confront the targeted population of managers. By confronting the model and reality, further insights arrived on the intercultural interactions.

Dahlin, in its “Theoretical Framework”, developed several issues according to culture’ complexity (stereotypes, external adaptation and internal integration, national and regional cultures, industry cultures, professional cultures and corporate cultures, etc) in order to show the amplitude of this perspective. This complexity of interactions and “forces” shaping culture and guiding peoples behaviours could shed some light in terms of how such adjustments could have been attained or managed.

The focus of his study is to understand “the interaction between Portuguese and Swedes, who work in Swedish MNC’s and have to adapt to a different country and culture”.

The next figure presents the dynamic and context of his study.

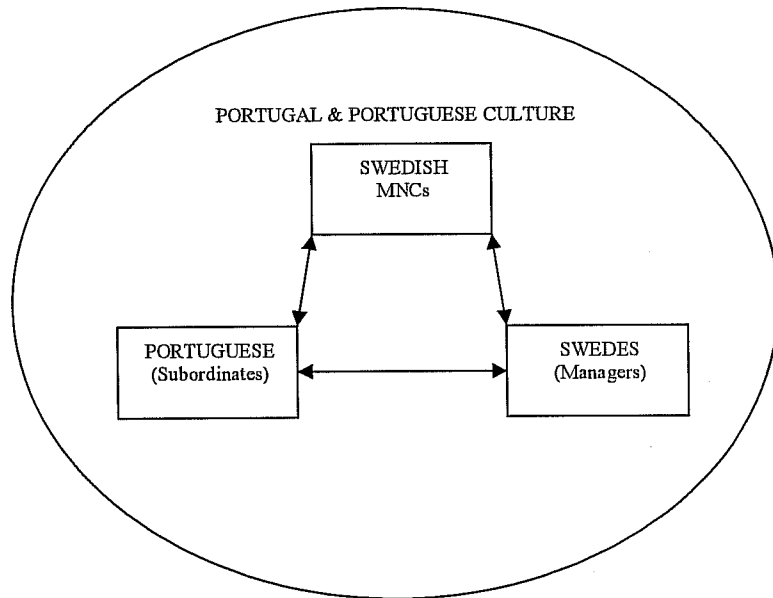


Figure 1: Dynamic and context of this study

Indeed, Dhalin’s study called attention to the contrast and values between management practices in these two countries. Whilst, Sweden is “popular” for implementing most of the new management theories; Portugal is recognised for informal and spontaneous management practices. One of the questions posed by the author was how practices move and if the mutual learning is really accepted.

His thesis aimed at providing sufficient background information and to develop some insights on the specific case of Swedish managers in Portugal. The main purpose was to analyse the different cultural perceptions of Swedish managers in Portugal concerning to their Portuguese subordinates, as a validation sample for an empirical model.

Dahlin study is based on the premise that Portuguese cultural values have remained unaltered and its significant changes occur only over very long periods of time because, culture consists in values that are fixed into society. In fact, most of the Hofstede's dimensions (1991) were confirmed by Dahlin's interview and results (1998).

Hofstede's results for Portugal were as follows: it is collectivist rather than individualistic, culture scoring high on uncertainty avoidance, high power distance and is more feminine than masculine. Apparently, Dahlin's results, even if they were not a statistically valid effort, show no evidence of a shift in such dimensions.

The implications of Dahlin's study allow the configuration of some tentative scenarios in what concerns Swedish management in Portugal. For instance, the adaptability and acceptance of Portuguese to foreigner practices would allow an easier implementation of new practices if compared to initiatives of the kind generated within the Portuguese. He hypothesised that the specific cultural traits of Swedes would positively interact with those of Portuguese, at least some of dimensions. Most Swedes did not express any serious problems concerning with negative points in the Portuguese behaviour. Finally, he concluded that due the phase of strong development and increased maturity in Portugal in 1998, provided strong reasons to substantiate a bountiful interaction between Swedish managers and their Portuguese employees.

#### *Trans-Cultural Interactions the Case of Swedish/Portuguese Interactions II*

My aim now is to make a similar work. In this study we, still, have two types of "clusters" (Swedes and Portuguese) interacting in the same geographical space, Portugal. While, Dahlin's study was focused on "Swedish MNCs" within a different country' culture (Portugal) and he analysed the different cultural perceptions of Swedish managers in Portugal, particularly,

**in reference to their Portuguese subordinates, this study takes a step further analysing the other perspective (the Portuguese) and tries to produce a synthesis of both perspectives.**

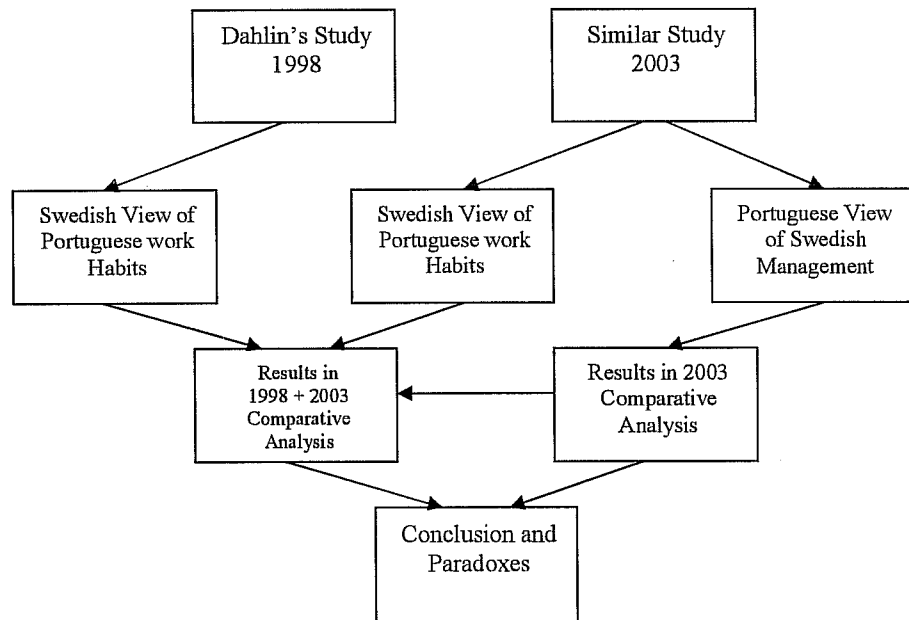
**Thus, the study focus is to develop the evolution of the interactions complexity, through previous studies and to construct a model with which is possible to confront the population of managers and subordinates in different periods of time. By confronting Dahlin's study and reality, several insights will be expected on these intercultural interactions.**

**Since Hostede (1991) and Dahlin's (1998) studies some years were passed and maybe Portugal and Sweden being more "close" to each other in management style and work habits?**

**On the other, hand Dahlin's hypothesis that cultural traits of Swedes will interact positively with those of Portuguese.**

**The next scheme (Fig: 2) explains the focus study that will be used in two distinctive forms: first, comparing my results with Dhalin's work and draw the evolution of results by a comparative analysis of different periods (1998 & 2003). Second the Portuguese perspective concerning the Swedish culture and then, to compare also with the results before mentioned (1998+2003 results).**

**Fig 2: Scheme of Study**



**Thus, the main comparative areas developed in this scheme are as follows:**

*Swedish view*

**Cultural, management and relational perspective linked with Portuguese culture, and compared with Dhalin's study.**

*Portuguese view*

**Cultural, management and relational view linked with Swedish culture, and confront with Swedish results of 1998 and 2003.**

**The main questions are: What happens when two different cultures interact within an organisational space? How they interact? Which are the main disparities, how to manage them and how to gain competitive advantage of this union?**

**Were the stereotypes devaluated afterwards? Did the Portuguese submit to the organisational culture? Are Swedish MNC's in Portugal clearly Swedish? Or was diversity preserved and stereotypes as lively as ever?**

## Methodology

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, the methodological issues are addressed. The approach taken is qualitative and exploratory, in line with the research strategy followed by Dahlin.

It started by the identification of Swedish companies operating in Portugal, particularly those that were part of Dahlin's study. Access to these companies was attempted, and in all companies, which have responded positively, the interviews were conducted. In the appendix the companies are identified and some general information about each one is supplied.

However, before addressing the main goal of this thesis, that of attaining and analysing a Portuguese perspective, Swedish managers, were also interviewed in order to confirm that they still retained the same perspectives of their former colleagues, that were interviewed by Dahlin. This step was important as some years have passed since Dahlin's study was produced; therefore, it was necessary to probe for significant shifts in the Swedish perspective. This step also turned out to be necessary for practical reasons, as it turned out, some of the companies in Dahlin's study had ceased operations in Portugal, or no longer had Swedish managers, or even Swedish workers for that matter. In fact, given these constraints, only two companies in Dahlin's sample were part of this study's sample. Thus, the qualitative data collection process was generated from Swedish Multinational Corporations with subsidiaries in Portugal and small Swedish companies with local autonomous management, regardless of the field of business.

Nevertheless, a sufficient number of interviews was made with Swedish managers and Portuguese subordinates or Portuguese in the same hierarchical line of management with direct work interaction or experience with Swedish counterparts. Since the scope of this work is dominantly exploratory regarding interactions of cultural nature in Swedish companies, but not in any particular Swedish company, the results do not compromise the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

### *The Companies*

The companies were chosen with the assistance of the Swedish Trade Council in Portugal as well as by suggestions received from some of the companies contacted in the first stages. The only criterion for choosing a company was that it should have at least one Swedish national in a managerial position possessing a significant work experience, of at least one year time, in our country. All interviews were held during January and February of 2003.

The companies were not discriminated in terms of their industry sector or size, thus their business base is ample (Table 7). A brief description of company's activities can be found in Appendix A .

<b>Field of Activity</b>	<b>Number of Companies</b>
Construction Materials	1
Industrial Equipment	1
Management Consultants	1
Real Estate Consultants	1
Security	1
Telecommunications	1
Textile Industry	1

**Table 7: Companies by field of activity**

It is important to refer that from the 12 companies contacted by Dhalin in 1998, only 2 are part of my sample.

The size and nature of the organisations that were chosen for this sample are as follows (Table 10). The only companies that are actually manufacturing in Portugal are the textile factory owned by Melka and the concrete materials production owned by Soplacas. The natures of the operations of the other are confined to services. Since 1998 the number of small and medium companies felt down (Table 8 and 9).

Number of Workers	Number of Companies
< 25	3
100 to 260	2
> 300	2

**Table 8: Number of workers in 2003**

Number of Workers	Number of Companies
< 25	6
100 – 150	4
> 300	2

**Table 9: Number of workers in 1998 in Dhalin's study**

<b>Companies</b>	<b>Nr. of Swedish</b>	<b>Nr. of Portuguese</b>
Alfa Laval	1	2
Ericsson	2	6
Melka	1	2
Mercator	1	1
Monitores Gestão	1	1
Securitas	1	2
Soplacas	1	3
Total	8	17

**Table 10: Global sample**

*Swedish Interviews*

While Dahlin made all the interviews with Swedish Managers who headed the local subsidiary of a Swedish MNC or their own companies, in a total of 12, my efforts faced a different situation. Part of the Swedish MNC's operating in Portugal no longer have a Swedish national as general manager, therefore I had to resort to interviews with managers in different managerial positions such as financial managers, internal communications and electronics engineers (Table: 11).

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Number of Swedish</b>
Managers	3
Others	3
Own Companies	2

**Table 11: Swedish sample**

All 8 interviewees were male, averaging 44 of age (Table 12 and 13) with university level education.

Age Group	Number of Swedish
32 – 39	2
40 – 49	4
> 50	2

**Table 12: Swedish age groups in 2003**

Age Group	Number of Swedish
39 – 49	5
49 – 59	5
> 60	2

**Table 13: Swedish age groups in 1998 in Dahlin's study**

Almost all of the Swedish interviewees had previous international experience in more than one country except three persons with their first expatriate assignment in Portugal. Even these had previous contacts with foreigner cultures via professional dealings or on short assignments.

The majority of Swedes interviewed have been (or were) in Portugal for a period greater than 11 years (see Table 14 and 15). In contrast, in 1998, most of Swedish interviewed by Dahlin were in Portugal over 8 years.

<b>Time in Portugal</b>	<b>Number of Swedish</b>
< 3 years	2
4 – 10 years	1
> 11 years	5

**Table 14: Managers' stay in Portugal in 2003**

<b>Time in Portugal</b>	<b>Number of Swedish</b>
< 3 years	3
4 – 10 years	8
> 11 years	1

**Table 15: Manager's stay in Portugal in 1998 in Dhalin's study**

### *Portuguese Interviews*

The majority of interviews were conducted with Portuguese subordinates and in some cases with Portuguese in the same hierarchical level as Swedes. Portuguese interviewees also held a diversity of positions and functions in the companies (Table 16). Naturally, the number of Portuguese interviewed is greater than the number of Swedes because the main goal of the study was to present and reflect on a Portuguese perspective.

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Number of Portuguese</b>
Accountancy	2
Assistant	1
Commercial	2
Customer Service	2
Financial	2
Human Resources	4
Internal Sales Assistant	1
Production	2
Technical	1

**Table 16: Portuguese sample**

**The relationship with Swedish managers is not, in all cases, one of straight manager-subordinate, as it can be depicted in the following table:**

<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Number of Portuguese</b>
Do not report to Swedish now but lived in Sweden	3
Do not report to Swedish now & never lived in Sweden but have senior position in the company	3
Report to Swedish	10
Same hierarchical level as Swedish	1

**Table 17: Portuguese exceptional cases**

**17 interviews were conducted, both male and female, individuals averaging 40 (Table 18). 7 hold a university degree or master degree, representing almost 41% of this sample.**

Age Group	Number of Portuguese
< 29	4
30 – 39	5
40 – 49	4
> 50	4

**Table 18: Portuguese age groups**

### *Interview Procedures*

The interviewing tool used for the qualitative data collection it is very similar and adapted from the one used by Dhalin. He based his tool on the structure proposed by Sošková (1996) in her analysis of MNCs from different countries with subsidiaries in Portugal. This procedure was required in order to be able to compare the results from his study and the present study.

#### *Swedish Interview*

The structure of the Swedish interview consisted of 3 distinct parts. First, it was necessary to characterise the company in Portugal (activities, history, structure, relation between head office and Portuguese subsidiary and number of workers). Secondly, it was aimed at collecting basic demographic information on the interviewee (age, experience, education, carrier in Portugal). Finally, the substance of the interview, the cultural perceptions of the Swedish concerning to the Portuguese work habits and management styles were requested (Appendix B).

The last part of the interview consisted of a set of open questions that would allow the Swedish to express his/her opinions in an open ended manner. The first half of the interview, intended to elicit a more spontaneous and open answer, probably the most saturated with cultural stereotypes (Sošková, 1996).

In the second half of the interview, a review of the dimensions that characterise the Portuguese culture was made, this time using specific guidelines for further comments.

#### *Portuguese Interview*

The structure of the Portuguese interview was similar to the Swedish interview, aimed at collecting demographic information on the Portuguese (age, education, work department, functions, previous direct experience to Swedish, international experience) as well as the cultural perspectives in a open ended and more directed manner.

However, since it became noticed that Part II, it is very similar to Part III of Swedish interview but with all questions directed to the characteristics of Swedish culture (Appendix C).

In the Sample section I referred the problems that I had in contacting Swedish companies in Portugal because the most of the Swedish General Managers went to another country. I realized this when I contacted the Swedish companies in Portugal to develop this study.

More and more, there are less Swedish General Managers in Portugal, mostly being replaced by Portuguese ones. Why this phenomenon happens?

In order to clarify this problem I asked to all persons their opinion about this.

#### *Final Notes*

I must refer that, it was not difficult to attain the co-operation of Swedish companies. Perhaps, because in my letter of introduction I mentioned that this study was complementary to Dahlin's study and that I had the support from the Swedish supervisor of Dahlin's research effort, who was vice-dean of Chalmers, an University which is mainly funded by some of the companies which I was soliciting co-operation from.

Nevertheless, there was a genuine interest in this research effort, and I assumed the compromise of giving feed-back, namely a copy of this thesis, which was clearly asked for particularly by the Swedish interviewees.

The Swedish interest in these type of research is, in it self, a sign of cultural significance.

It also should be noted, that, even with the Swedish interviewees, the conversations were in Portuguese, with only three exceptions. Another fact that should be noted is that all interviews were recorded, amounting to 15 hours of taped conversations, latter totally transcript to paper.

The interviews went developed at the company's office and almost all in a complete privacy. Generally, answers were straight and open, often highlighting other aspects of cultural or contextual information which I found useful, and people welcomed my inquiries into probing for new aspects or details.

At the end of each interview, permission to use the company and persons name was asked for, however, confidentiality was assured, since the scope of this thesis is not directed at any company in particular.

## Results

In this chapter, my aim is to compare Dhalin's results in 1998 with the results in 2003. The evolution of Swedish perceptions concerning the Portuguese working habits. The selected quotes from the Swedish interviews intend to provide auxiliary insight on the genesis of these results. The speech marks were selected according to the vehemence and contrast of the interviewee's response as well as to know what it is not part of the cultural stereotypes.

This chapter addresses the same dimensions used by Dahlin, however organised in different way:

*Cultural Aspects:* Communication and Socialisation; Accepting Foreigners; Individualism.

*Management Aspects:* Planning and Time Orientation; Decision Making; Responsibility and Delegation; Leadership and Authority; Working with Portuguese; Individualism/Collectivism.

*Relational Aspects:* Conflict Solving; International Training

This scheme will be used in two distinctive forms: first, comparing this study's results with Dhalin's results to assess the evolution of the Swedish perspective. Second, the Portuguese perspective concerning the Swedish culture, thus:

*Swedish Results:* Cultural, Management and Relational Perspective concerning their interaction with workers from a Portuguese culture, and compared to Dhalin's study.

***Portuguese Results:*** Cultural, Management and Relational aspects concerning their interaction with managers from a Swedish culture.

Naturally, these results, reflect a compression algorithm, namely and primarily, that of my own understanding. The richness of the interviews is by no means, entirely represented in these conclusions. These are the central themes that have emerged out of this research effort in my perspective.

## Swedish Perspective

### *Cultural Aspects*

In this section some of the most relevant descriptions from a Swedish perspective concerning to Portuguese cultural traits is presented:

#### *Communication and Socialisation*

One of the main traits identified by Dahlin was the sharp contrast between the informal relationships among Swedes and the formal relationships valued by the Portuguese. This was confirmed, in fact underlined by the Swedes I interviewed. They pointed their difficulties in understanding why it is necessary to treat others in a formal ways; *"Portuguese are more formal in codes of dressing and talking to each other: 'você', 'excelentíssimo', 'doutor'... I see you people talking like that even when you are just 25 years old! I don't understand that! You should be more informal and work together, you have to break this"*. Another sharp remark regarding our own codes of interaction was: *"You talk but don't communicate, you are afraid of communicating"*.

The Swedes also pointed to another trait of our communications "protocol" which is the authority tone that must be adopted. This is clearly contrary to their "consensus culture", however they shown no sign of discomfort, they simply understand it as a strategy to avoid conflicts and misunderstanding in

communications. Therefore, they will supply clear, objective, detailed order; *“Portuguese require a more obvious and direct orientation. Here the director must express precisely ‘we have to do that!’ or ‘I want this, this and this’. This is authoritative but clear.”*

As in 1998, another issue is also mentioned, this time as a positive note. It refers to our degree of socialisation at work, which the Swedes value. Our human relationship at work emulates the general climate of off work relationships; *“You have the sun and the sea, good food and wine so the life style is much more social, much more relaxed in terms of being with friends and have more fun. In Sweden we are more like everyone want to be more efficient and ‘do that, do that, do that’ and then we go home earlier. It is a big difference”*. Still, some Swedes question our work ethic as this socialising habits get in the way of productivity: *“for example you take a coffee before a meeting and you are already 20 minutes late’*.

#### *Accepting Foreigners*

Compared to Dhalin’s work in this particular case all Swedes reaffirmed a very positive answer: *“Yes, strangely well!”*; *“There is a lot of confidence believes and faith in Swedish guys and everyone tries to help them. You are very opening minded in the way of working and in social life”*. Others referred: *“Compared to Spain you are much more international, you speak better foreign languages and you are perceptive (...) in Portugal, I found people highly tolerant and genuinely interested in foreigners. You are more open and friendlier”*. However, when I asked for an explanation for this, some reveal a less positive dimension: *“I think Portuguese have a low level of self-confidence so when a foreigner arrives here, people accept automatically their ideas”*.

### *Individualism*

This dimension pertains mainly to assessments regarding teamwork. It was suggested that the Portuguese were inept team players and the information sharing was rarely facilitated. Dhalin's conclusion in 1998 was that the Swedish opinion was clearly divided between those that agreed with the model and those that slightly disagree.

This trait remained clear and is sustained by my interviewees. Out of 8 Swedes only one referred that *"people are very good working in group"*, while all others stated that *"you can work well in team but not by your own initiative...you work very well in team but if you are under control and in a trust environment"*.

Generally all opinion was Portuguese are individualistic with very weak cohesion and lack team sense. *"In Sweden we are more like everyone should be in the same level and teams work together. You are too individualistic"*; *"You are not concentrated on teamwork"*; *"Portuguese are very individualistic...maybe this is connected with the lack of responsibility"*.

### *Management Aspects*

In this section will presented some of the most relevant descriptions related from Swedish perspective concerning to Portuguese management style and its consequences in the organisation.

#### *Planning and Time Orientation*

In the interpretation of time orientation there is a big difference between Portugal and Sweden. All Swedish, think of Portuguese time orientation as short term and more flexible.

Punctuality was strongly referred by all to the time orientation. Contrasting to Dhalin's result when he said *"(...) Portuguese are seen as having improved in recent years, probably as a need to survive in a more competitive and open market"* (page 72).

Apparently, we regressed, 100% of Swedish stressed with this Portuguese weakness: lack of punctuality and relative time orientation; *“There is a big difference about the meetings. We don’t start without any small talk and we are more on time. Here many appear 15 or 20 minutes after”*; *“In Portugal the time notion is very relative because when they said ‘I’ll do it now’ it could be in a minute, an hour, next week or for the next year! The meaning of ‘now’ differs between people”*. And this serious problem on Portuguese trust view: *“This flexibility could be very good, but some times it generates serious inefficiencies and faults in the system, for example in time fees systems”*.

Only one person referred both opinions (ie.) the opposite side too *“I have seen too people on time and they respect it”*.

In what concerns planning, opinions are divided between those referred improvisation as positive *“Portuguese have a good ability of ‘desenrascar’ (improvising) and they exhibit great proud on this. Swedish can not do it and everything is planned”*, *“Expo’98 was a good example of improvisation”*. Others mentioned lack of planning as a result of improvisation: *“It would be nice to try to foresee the problems (...) to try to foresee the emergency of issues, to try to avoid the real critical issues in terms of what else can happened and try to plan a little more”*.

### *Decision Making*

It is difficult to produce a clear analysis regarding this dimension, as Dahlin made in his study, pointing to the lack of clarity of Swedish directions and the indecisiveness suggested by the Swedish Model (Hedlund and Åman, 1984) because the Swedes in my sample were not all managers. Nevertheless, some traits emerged that point to what Dahlin concluded. Portuguese seem to be are afraid of making mistakes and afraid of taking decisions. *“You are a little bit afraid of making decisions on your own; you need someone else recommending what to do”*.

### *Responsibility and Delegation*

Again there were similar results in line with Dahlin's conclusions. Portuguese are viewed as averse to accepting responsibility but good and dedicated workers. This was further elaborated in terms of: low self-confidence, low initiative, and low knowledge level, afraid of being fired, afraid of taking decisions. A possible cause for this situation was in some occasions advanced as a consequence of having being submitted to a dictatorship. *“Portuguese like to be commanded and oriented... I think it must be connected to the Portugal's History because it was only 30 years ago and these influences do not disappear easily”*; *“In Sweden we have an extremely low believe in authority as power and Portugal is in a completely opposite side. I think there is an influence of a repressive politic... a little bit of punishment and people don't go outside of their box if they don't have to”*.

This perception is amplified by a complementary relation between age and acceptance of responsibility, since many of the Swedes stated that the younger accept responsibility straightforwardly whereas older do not. *“People with 40/50 years old don't do anything without an express order...I am exaggerating of course but they normally do not express their own initiative”*.

A factor still contributing for this lack of initiative, lack of confidence and difficulty in risk taking and learning, is the attitude of some Portuguese managers. They seem to possess (or they think so) all the knowledge: *“I listen several times ‘I pay you to work not to think’. In fact, the manager is not the only who have ‘the knowledge’...the only who have the knowledge are those who make it”*. This is, in a Swedish perspective, a crucial factor preventing personal development, stopping people from finding their own solutions and to foster a learning-by-doing type of learning.

There is a significant difference between Swedish management practices and Portuguese views regarding error. For Swedes recognising mistakes is an important learning device. One can improve always. Attacking a weakness is a positive action. Whereas for Portuguese, as Swedes perceive it, a mistake is nothing but a source of embarrassment that should be avoided instead of brought to public attention as an opportunity to move ahead. The Portuguese, as managers, reveal an inability to delegate. *“Portuguese centralised more and they avoid sharing ideas or tasks. They are very defensive in this aspect”*.

#### *Leadership and Authority*

Naturally, in this dimension, it follows, that Portuguese are perceived as requiring a clear leadership. One based in great power distance and rules. *“Portugal is the most hierarchical country I had been to, perhaps together with Austria and Germany but more hierarchical than Spain and Swiss. Absolutely! It is much more than Argentina and Sweden. Sweden is probably the less hierarchical country”*.

The good thing about this is, apparently, that we do not, at least openly, refuse orders. *“Because of the formality and hierarchical system they accepted easily the superior orders and opinions and, they don’t ask why when they have orders. They don’t have own initiative to assure... the own initiative doesn’t exist, they stayed waiting”*.

However, a puzzling comment was *“You don’t follow the rules if you can by pass them; you do it even in work I suppose”*. This paradox, of demanding clear rules only to break them was illustrated by a Swede as follows: *“rules are to be broken and the traffic is an example of this”*, bending rules was however mentioned regarding ethic and legal implications as the corruption levels were portrait as *“in Portugal those who come on top of things are those who resort to “artful” schemes”*.

The Portuguese autocratic leadership was several times referred at and it was connected to status, power distance and to management problems such as the individual valorisation and an inequality system *"The Company is not seen as essence"*; *"In Portugal only the manager knows! This is connected to status and hierarchy. You must break this and create a more equal platform between manager and subordinates"*.

However an important factor mentioned by some of the interviewees as a good future perspective, which was also present in Dahlin's work was confirmed: the autocratic system, the need for superior orders and a dependence spirit being converted to the opposite with younger generations. *"In a few years it could be totally different so I think that a new generation will grow and that will change the management style. People will grow very quickly"*.

#### *Working with Portuguese*

One of the questionnaire's aims was to conclude how Swedish characterised the Portuguese work habits in general. The pictures were generally positive, despite comments in other dimensions. It is as if Swedes are comfortable working with Portuguese workers and have adapted to them since they ascribe our problems to cultural traits that take time to change and wait for a new generation to emerge. Some of the most telling remarks were as follows: *"Good workers and dedicated"*; *"kind people and very opened to other cultures"* and *"the habits in work are quite efficient"*; *"energetic people and very active in work"*; *"very social and human people"* and *"they like learning a lot"*.

One person referred the individualism as an advantage: *"Portuguese are individualistic and they don't like to work in team but sometimes this aspect has some advantages because it fosters diversity. The pluralism in Sweden disappeared a little bit. In Sweden everybody looks like 'clone'"*.

Generally it was referred as positive the influence that Swedish felt by Portuguese in social life and in work because of typical Portuguese warm social relation between people *“You show more compassion than we do, we don’t show it much but we say ‘I am sorry for you because you are crying’, we don’t cry as you do”*; *“I feel a very positive balance in working here”*.

The less positive notes regard our lack of training and education. Swedes expressed a perspective that our wages overpass our productivity. We earn more than what we produce, and this might become a real problem as Eastern Europe will be the future in terms of investment advantage for many industries. *“You still have high illiteracy. The productivity is low but salaries are almost at European level”*. Another serious problem stated was the lack of middle management level: *“You have very good top management and the opposite (illiteracy), you don’t have the middle level in the organisations and it is very difficult to find them in the market. You should give more training in this level”*.

Comparing to Dhalin’s thesis, most Swedish mentioned also bureaucracy, lack respect to the other and inefficiency as well as the lack of initiative and sense of urgency in work. *“Very optimistic with time and there is a typical thought which is ‘nothing happens till you get closer to the deadline’ and then in the last minute everybody work like crazy and say ‘we did it!’ . But the question is ‘at what cost?’, ‘how difficult it was?’ and ‘how much time people have to put in?’ ”*.

### *Relational Aspects*

In this section will presented some of the most relevant descriptions related from Swedish perspective concerning to Portuguese conflict solving and its consequences in work relations.

### *Conflict Solving*

The conclusions are almost the same to Dhalin's results. Most Swedish have the opinion that Portuguese are in contrast to Swedish who avoid conflict. There are some important aspects in Portuguese conflict solving as follows: impulsiveness, personal offence and mix between professional and personal conflict.

In fact, most of them said in the interviews that Portuguese people do not avoid conflict and underlined a typical Latin sign, the Portuguese impulsiveness. *"Explosive! More explosive than Swedish people... even in your tone of voice I note that"*.

A paradoxical remark was that we tend to have less conflict in social settings than in organisational settings. *"You are friendlier on social level (...) that is at social levels there are less outbursts than at work"*. At work everything becomes personal attack, expressed in terms of "liking" or not "liking" your colleagues as if to work with someone one needed to "like" her. The direct criticism is very complicated because it will take as a personal offence. *"They don't distinguish personal and professional conflict and beside this, when they have a personal conflict they take it into the professional life"*.

### *Intercultural Training*

Intercultural training was not valued as expected. Swedes valued language acquisition, but devaluated other issues. *"It is very important to know the language and how communicate to others in a different country... all rest will come naturally"*, this is an interesting remark as it seems that training is not a good proxy to real interaction. The real barrier, as pointed out by many, was to overcome the hurdle of language: *"It was a great shock because I have never listened Portuguese language"*.

### Evolution of Swedish Perspective

A summary of this section is organised in the following table:

MODELLED INTERACTIONS	INTERVIEW RESULTS - 1998	INTERVIEW RESULTS - 2003
Swedish managers are not sufficiently explicit; Portuguese formality (protocols, etc) requires detailed orders	Confirmed by the interviews but not perceived as a problem	Authority in communication was preferred because it is clear opposite to Swedish consensus. Formality favours individualism.
Deadlines and day-to-day management conflicts. Meetings are multi-topic and not focused to Swedish standards	Meetings, if correctly steered, do not present a serious problem	Portuguese are more flexible in way of work. Meetings if correctly guided do not present a problem
Less 'efficiency' but more dedication in the Portuguese work place?	The social work place is considered positive, but only to a controlled extent	Warm social relation between people in work. Lack of competence and knowledge level.
Organisational incompatibilities, Swedish frustration over planning and vision	Time orientations, thought different, do not clash as predicted. Punctuality is indeed improving. Planning can be a serious problem	More improvisation than planning, flexible time notion, inability for delegation, averse to responsibility and avoid sharing ideas and tasks.
Impatience on the Portuguese side, due either to unsound solutions or none at all	Decision making was perceived as slow. The model was confirmed but Swedish practices are well received	Portuguese decision making was perceived as weak: afraid of error and afraid of taking decisions
Organisational difficulties in empowering Portuguese employees; Portuguese need for supervision contrary to the Swedish autonomy	Confirmed by the interviews as one of the most critical issues in managing the Portuguese	Again confirmed by the interviews as the most critical issues in management in Portugal. Need of control, attitude of dependence

Swedish difficulty in dealing with conflicts and judging Portuguese unrealistic good intentions	This is not referred to as a problematic issue	Portuguese are in contrast to Swedish who avoid conflict. Portuguese impulsiveness.
Swedish difficulty in resolving conflicts and problems due to scarce feedback	Although feedback was perceived as very low, this did not seem to be a problem. The Portuguese attitude to constructive criticism was perceived as a definite hindrance	Direct criticism is interpreted as a personal offence. Mix between professional and personal conflict. Less conflict in social life
Organisational difficulties in defining tasks and structure	The inherent individualism of Portuguese seems to be well overcome when exposed to Swedish management	Inept team players and information rarely facilitated. Individualistic with weak cohesion team sense
Excessive bureaucracy and some corruption in Portugal as well as different posture towards leadership	Bureaucracy was considered an important problem. Difficulties in leadership were mainly restricted to the privilege system	Getting better but lots of bureaucracy, rules and high power distance. Portuguese are not coherent in rules system
Good acceptance of Swedish manager and respective ideas and practices	This part of the model was reinforced by the interviews	Again confirmed and connected to high power distance, low self-confidence and inherent Portuguese adaptability

**Table 19: The evolution of Swedish results**

### **Portuguese Perspective**

**In this section the perspective of the Portuguese interviewees is presented. Again, there is no claim that this analysis might depict the totality and exactly the views expressed. Rather it is my own understanding of some patterns that emerged of the themes debated.**

## *Cultural Aspects*

### *Communication and Socialisation*

The formality in opposite to Swedish informality was recognised. There is a clear contrast. *“They use 2<sup>nd</sup> singular form as ‘you’ whilst Portuguese use ‘you’ in 3<sup>rd</sup> singular form as ‘você’ or ‘doctor’. It does not make sense but is our system!”*. Another sentence about such contacts between the two cultures: *“The evolution of Portuguese society was marked by using ‘doctor’ always, who start to work at 10.00 am and leave at 2.00 pm! I have never seen this attitude in Swedes”*. On the other hand, younger people do not seem to be concerned with this matter although they are part of the same system.

Regarding the Swedish communication habits some contrasts are prominent. The great majority of the Portuguese expressed similar views on this matter. Pragmatism and objectivity are the main characteristics of Swedish as well as the informal communication at work. *“They talk only about essential aspects of work... they do not ‘chat’ like us... they are not very social at work”*; *“They (Swedes) are a little bit closed in there ways of talking... is like ‘the necessary to do’. The essential! A few years ago, Portuguese were more closed and today are getting better because our communication is emotional and has a direct impact in people. But Swedes have a formless kind of dialog”*. In general, meetings are well-organised. *“Communication in meetings is precise and sequential. Topics are planned carefully”*.

Some Portuguese refer human respect at work. Swedes do not use verbal offences when something is wrong. *“Swedes are direct to others but they take care in using words and attitude in order not to hurt others”*.

Another interesting conclusion is linked to communication habits between cultures. Do they really share information? There were both views. Some confirm a positive view: *“Totally open to dialog...brainstorm meetings for decision making”*. But there were some exceptions: *“They do not share all at meeting place and sometimes they talk in Swedish (...) in terms of ‘this is not to share, is part of our plans’”; “Share a lot of information, but not at all levels, of course”*.

### *Accepting Foreigners*

This dimension is very important to conclude how Portuguese accept foreigner management. Have Portuguese an open view concerning Swedish culture? What aspects do Portuguese learn from Swedes at work? Is this cultural change important?

A large number of Portuguese accept very well Swedish views in terms of management and work habits. Almost everyone confirmed a positive answer in learning linked to methods such as: planning and time, responsibility, punctuality at work, organisation, professionalism, communication and task flexibility. *“The cultural changes are very interesting always. We can learn from Swedes punctuality, organisation and informal communication”*. Other basic aspect is informality in professional relations, human respect and some family values. *“There are some observed or lived facts in our job environment which have reflexes in our private and family life”*.

Only few refer that Swedish did not influence their work habits because they were familiar with organisation and methods. However, they confirm positive cultural changes.

In conclusion, the perception of Swedish management is positive: *“Swedes are good and competent workers”*; *“They allow our professional growing”* and diverges from Portuguese system: *“We (Portuguese) are not paid to ‘think’ so we have to jump from our black box...”*

### *Individualism*

This dimension refers mainly to teamwork and seems to be connected to communication and socialisation. *“Swedes do not ‘chat’ like us... they are not very social at work”*. According to Hofstede’s study, Sweden is a basic, individualistic country and group oriented society.

In this section results a clear division from the interviews response as follows: individualism, individualism (vs.) collectivism and collectivism perspective.

A majority the interviewed (9) believe in a group oriented to teamwork and seems to be connected to management of consensus. *“They are a collective society”*; *“In geeral, decision is attained in group and is discussed till exhaustion for a common platform”*; *“Management style is management of consensus... everything is shared”*.

However, few (5) refer ambivalent Swedish attitude: one is oriented to teamwork and group view at workplace. Others are in private or social area. *“Swedes in private are closed but have teamwork abilities”*; *“They are reserved in emotions. Maybe unusual in private and cooperative in team”*; *“Swedes have feeble emotional acts... they show shy emotions”*.

Thus, comparing individualism and collectivism between both cultures:

Collectivism – Social	Collectivism – Work
Portuguese	Swedes

**Table 20: Collectivism between Swedes and Portuguese**

Individualism – Social	Individualism – Work
Swedes	Portuguese

**Table 21: Individualism between Swedes and Portuguese**

**In conclusion: Both are in opposite sides concerning individualism (vs.) collectivism and the opposite attitude at work [work: individualism (Portuguese) (vs.) collectivism (Swedes)] and social or private life [social: individualism (Swedes) (vs.) collectivism (Portuguese)].**

**Portuguese are collective in social life while Swedes are collective in professional life; Portuguese are individualist in professional life and Swedes are individualist in social life. *“Individualist in mind but at work Swedes are collective”.***

**The last group (3) view mentions individualism as main characteristic of Swedes. *“Swedish teamwork is a false concept. However, they promote several enlarged brainstorm meetings”.* In fact they emerge a kind of individual decision making and authority. *“They do not work in group by their own initiative. If necessary they work in team”.* While Portuguese have a pleasant way to live in society, Swedes live in society because they need. *“Is a cooperative society in a cold country? Perhaps! I think they do it because they have to do. Portuguese have a pleasant union in society”.***

### *Management Aspects*

**The management perspective present's most relevant views related by Portuguese according to Swedish management style and its consequences in organisation.**

#### *Planning and Time Orientation*

**In the analysis of time orientation, punctuality is referred as an important Swedish signal. All Portuguese interpret Swedish time orientation as a long term and inflexible sometimes: *“They use schedule time always and do not like our flexibility in meetings and tasks”* but recognising: *“Swedish work development is totally different of Portuguese because everything is well planned”.***

Only few connect Swedish planning to a kind of security in work results and maybe to uncertain avoidance. *“They have everything well organised till exhaustion so ‘imprecise’ do not exist. Swedish manager is organised and almost everything is perfect”*; *“Swedes are organised till DNA!”*. According to Hofstede (1991) the uncertain avoidance dimension concerns the level of discomfort felt by society’s members when faced with unknown situations. Stability and predictability are preferred to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity.

Another link is established between planning and time orientation. In fact, few mention planning obsession, lack of creativity and improvisation when a problem arrives. *“Swedish planning is obsessive but improvisation is also important in a free market!”*; *“When a project tool fail they stop working automatically! Swedes have weak improvisation ability!”*. Planning is a rigid concept and if helps work process by efficiency, also controls improvisation capacity. *“Swedes do not react to a problem like Portuguese do”*. Not many (4) refer improvisation as Swedish skill linked to time orientation.

Thus, according to Portuguese view (Table 22):

Culture	Planning Time	Profit Time	Conclusion
Japanese	90%	10%	High Planning/Low Improvisation
Swedish	60% - 70%	30% - 40%	High Planning/Low Improvisation
Portuguese	10% - 20%	80% - 90%	Low Planning/High Improvisation

Table 22: Portuguese view concerning Swedish work habits

In conclusion: concerning to planning (vs) improvisation Portugal and Sweden are in opposite scales. Swedes are direct and secure because everything is planned. They have a low believe in improvisation.

In general, 'singular mind' is consequence of compulsive planning because everything is programmed in their lives. Swedish society has high structure level. *"They have a kind of 'normative brain cloned'. Of course they have problems in society as consequence of normative knowledge"*. However, the 'normative brain' in terms of management and method is the most significant contrast. *"Some countries export products while Sweden exports 'brain' into organisations"*.

### *Decision Making*

Regarding to decision making Portuguese refer several times management of consensus as a Swedish characteristic. Only some refer timing as problem of consensual decision because is an extensive process. But people are involved in meetings which mean lack of authority. *"Decision making is shared so is difficult to emerge a consensual view... they listen people and analyse the circumstances"*; *"Brainstorm meetings are usual and Swedes do not use authority as power"* and *"No one get 'the responsibility' alone because all is discussed in group"*.

Human values are caring in decision making context. *"Ethic values are very important in decision while Portuguese get it as a 'happening'!"*.

However, Swedes are direct according to their decisions. Several times, inflexibility is referred by Portuguese. *"The main advantage is to have consistent decisions and send out to people"*; *"When decision is taken they are inflexible to changes because already decided all process till the end. If project fails so, they decided another solution"*. In fact, inflexibility is linked to attitude and seems to be connected to a normative behaviour. *"They are decided to follow the planning rules always"*; *"Swedes can not out of norms like us"*.

Another disparity appears linked to flexibility (vs.) inflexibility. Swedes have an ambivalent attitude in decision making. *"Inflexibility in decisions without an express plan but flexible in a project discussion"*.

As complementary view of decision making, authority is referred sometimes in conflict situations only. *"In a conflict situation of disagreement are autocratic sometimes but never are hostile to others"*.

To conclude, someone in the interviews said: *"They have a dogmatic decision while Portuguese have creativity at work. This mix of cultural contrasts works very well"*.

#### *Responsibility and Delegation*

According to delegation analysis, Sweden and Portugal are in opposite sides. In general, Portuguese view is positive because allows professional grow and people have an effect on decision making. However, in delegation is detected a contrast linked to an egalitarian scheme. *"Portuguese are not prepared for a 'blind' delegation of tasks. Portugal's tradition is management of dependency and autocratic"*. There is a kind of contradiction; Portuguese believe in responsibility and delegation as professional grow but not believe in their free wish to use it well.

Another important view: people feel more involved in organisation, autonomous and responsible for acts. *"Responsibility is shared by all. We have to think in solutions, not act like robots because the 'boss' said! "*

Delegation concept seems to be connected to confidence, actually Swedes hope similar attitude of responsibility from the others. *"They delegate and recognise the risk while Portuguese manager has afraid of"*. Even a few Portuguese identify an excessive level of delegation to our habits. In fact, rules are neglected. *"Sometimes Portuguese are not prepared to accept responsibility because rules are not followed"*.

Concerning to responsibility, not many refer a kind of 'dispersion' as an outcome of the consensual Swedish management. Indeed, authority is unusual, everything is discussed in group and people are involved in decisions. Everybody is responsible for the company results. Management style is diffused by all. The main problem is impartiality in tasks as well as a kind of disorder in job definitions.

Consequently, Swedish management has not the manager profile in organisations. And if emerge a positive view of power decentralisation, also brings problems to management style such as: weak control, disorder and subjectivity.

*"When project fails, nobody knows where the problem is or who is responsible for project management", "Consequence of an exhaustive process. The procedure have not the 'manager figure' so process fails! I think it happens because Swedes do not use 'information' as power skill like Portuguese do".*

In fact, only two persons refer autocratic management style in Swedish work habits. *"Delegation is a false concept in Swedish management"; "They discuss but do not accept other's ideas really".*

#### *Leadership and Authority*

In this section, the interview results confirmed the main characteristic of Swedish society: informality.

This dimension is used to define the level of acceptance of unequal power distribution in society. In fact, define the level of differentiation between manager and employees.

The majority of the interviewed (15) believe in low power distance dimension of Swedes linked to an egalitarian view of society, teamwork opportunity and low hierarchical structure in organisations. Swedish management style is not autocratic as Portuguese. Authority is not synonymous

of power in decision making, delegation or planning concepts. Authority is used in extreme cases only.

Tasks control is minimum and very subtle. Actually, only two persons mention authority connected to meetings (acceptance of other's ideas) and high hierarchical level of structure.

Feedback is common in management style but not in terms of control. *"Criticism and recognition are frequent"; "They recognise team effort easily!"*

Another important trait connected to informality is low power distance between manager and subordinate such in: communication and brainstorm meetings. *"No one is called by 'doctor' and 'you' enough! It is very simple in fact"; "Swedes have an extreme low believe in authority. Authority exists in Portugal!"*

In conflict, impetuosity in attitudes is not seen usually. Only few refer explosive attitudes in stress. *"Even with a gaffe! Swedes do not scream with people like Portuguese do"*.

#### *Working with Swedes*

One of the questionnaire's aims is to conclude how Portuguese characterise Swedish work habits.

With no doubt, the most significant disparity is linked to work and social view. In fact these areas are in opposite sides: high professionalism and low social life. *"Swedes are very efficient at work but also cold in relations"*.

In professional view, Swedes are good workers with high concept of method such as: efficiency, productivity, planning, flexibility and human respect. Actually, almost everything connected to norms area. Human respect is an exception concerning to norms and someone said: *"I do not understanding 'how a culture highly oriented to human values has weak emotions?'"*

In social view, weak relationship between people is the most frequent mark allied to Swedes. In fact, as an excessive normative life up-and-coming some signals of sadness, alcohol problems, weak emotions and some kind of internal conflict. The Swedish climate is connected to social isolation several times (ie.) environment pressure personality traits.

Almost all Portuguese accepts Swedish influence in work life but also they believe that whilst working in Portugal Swedes are much happier.

### *Relational Aspects*

The relational perspective presents the most relevant descriptions of Swedish conflict solving and the consequences in work relations.

#### *Conflict Solving*

Almost all Portuguese confirm the contrast between Portugal and Sweden in conflict solving.

In fact, Swedes avoid conflict but are also “explosive” with situations of tremendous stress.

Indeed, they are less “explosive” than Portuguese. These ones are temperamental and have impulsive acts so reacts easily to conflict (ex. Criticism).

Thus, low expression of emotions can explain high level of conflict solving, a kind of impartiality and conflict avoidance. Generally, Swedes are more subtle in conflict situations. *“Even in stress they can face the situation with a smile, softly and speaking loud”.*

However, only few Portuguese refer conflict reactions when: faced with low hierarchical levels or their wishes are contradicted. So, are exceptions of authority and high power distance? *“Disagreement is not well accepted”*; *“In fact, the level of reaction depends of person hierarchy. I mean, they react easily with low levels and try to manage conflict with high levels”*.

Have Swedes stable emotions? Have Portuguese impulsive actions? Maybe emotions can be controlled by normative behaviour. But, someone said: *“I do not believe in their absence of feelings, possibly hidden feelings! ”*. Maybe, Portuguese need to control their impulsiveness acts.

### *Intercultural Training*

The intercultural training question is to investigate its value. In Portugal, no one receive intercultural training in terms of get knowledge of Swedish Culture. Almost all disagree with the usefulness of this preparation. However, only one person refers the utility of cultural instruction because of habits gap. *“I think is important because we have special traits, mainly to Swedes. They can feel cultural chocks”*.

The reason is linked to inexistence of language obstacles because Swedes can talk our language or, dialog is established in English. Another view is connected to natural acceptance of foreigners in our culture. *“The cultural changes have a natural proceed with time and experience”*.

### Evolution of Portuguese Perspective

In the next table, the evolution of paradigms from a Portuguese perception is presented:

MODEL REVISITED PORTUGAL - 1998 <i>Dahlin</i>	MODEL REVISITED SWEDEN – 1998 Dahlin	PORTUGUESE INTERVIEW RESULTS – 2003 <i>(Concerning to Swedes)</i>
High context communication, ascription and particularism	Low context communication, achievement and universalism	Informal communication, Swedes do not use 'doctor'. Low believe in authority. Verbal offences are not used.
Polychronic time	Monochronic time	Society with high structure level. Planning is obsessive for avoid uncertainty. Meetings are well- organised, brainstorm.
Social work place	Asocial to work	Control feelings and emotions are not exposed - Neutral. Low improvisation ability. 'Normative behaviour'
Short term orientation, bad planning skills	Long term orientation, good planning skills	High level of planning. Inflexible time notion. Ability for delegation. Responsibility and company's results are shared.
Impulsive quick decisions or avoidance of decisions	Consensus, analytical and time consuming decisions	Management of consensus confirms collectivism. Inflexibility with decision without a plan - dogmatic. Flexibility linked with meetings discussion.
Lack of responsibility, pessimism and no delegation	Responsibility, realism and good delegation skills	Autonomy. Diffuse style of management. Impartiality and dispersion linked with management of consensus. Weak control.

<b>Desire to please, open and expressive conflicts</b>	<b>Avoid open conflicts</b>	<b>Can an impartial attitude explain high level in conflict solving?</b>
<b>Dislike of criticism and reluctant to provide feedback to manager</b>	<b>Need for employee, feedback, criticism is necessary to improve</b>	<b>Swedes avoid conflict but are also 'explosive' under an extreme stress. Authority is not synonymous of power.</b>
<b>Bad team workers</b>	<b>Good team workers</b>	<b>Different contrasts: group oriented; Collectivism - work vs. individualism - social life; Individualistic</b>
<b>Need of rules and strong leadership</b>	<b>Participative management and few rules</b>	<b>Low power distance and egalitarian society. Minimum control. Flat structures. Confirm its universalism.</b>
<b>Acceptance of authority and dedication/loyalty</b>	<b>Will to introduce new practices and improve process</b>	<b>Swedes are good workers and competent. Management style allows professional grow. Portuguese accepts well Swedish work habits</b>

**Table 23: Evolution of Portuguese perspective**

## Conclusions

In this section, I draw out the most significant patterns that, in my view, emerged from researching the interaction between people of such diverse cultural backgrounds as Swedish and Portuguese, in the frame of Swedish companies operating in Portugal. This reflection, is of a more analytical, exploratory and speculative nature, than the more descriptive tone adopted in the previous chapters. The intention, as it was stated before, is twofold. On the one hand, to reflect on the issue of how is it that people of radically different cultural frames can, and indeed do, attain positive results as far as their company's success is concerned. On the other hand, to contribute to a debate concerning our structurally poor productivity levels, rather than contributing, or arguing in favour of some "optimal" model of interactions between Swedes and Portuguese in Swedish Multinational Corporations.

First, I produce a more comparative analysis, reflecting on the constancy, over the years from Dahlin's study to my own, of perceptions or preconceptions on the Swedish group in Portugal. Second, and in a similar vein, the positions and experiences of the Portuguese group are analysed. Third, some dynamics are suggested to have happened in order to explain why such diverse stereotyped cultures do not clash more evidently and, in fact, allow both groups to interact in terms of proper engagement which is conducive to organisational success. Finally, some paradoxical patterns are analysed so to suggest some of the problems we, Portuguese, might be facing in terms of the difficulties we experience to raise the levels of productivity after such enormous amounts of investment made in training and technological adoptions.

### *The Constancy of Stereotypes*

The statements produced in the interviews display rather well the opposition between Sweden and Portugal in terms of culture and management styles. In fact, most of the stereotyped characteristics that have been suggested by researchers such as Hofstede are underlined by both groups.

Dahlin argued that Swedish and Portuguese exhibit significant disparities and this work has restated those significant differences. Mutual cultural preconceptions would lead people to "predict" the emergence of "clashes" areas. This issue, would raise the necessity of debating such potential clashes, or, of setting formal intercultural development programs. However, most Swedish companies do not seem to be addressing this problem with formal procedures. Apparently, despite such significant oppositions, clearly sustained by Hofstede analysis, the outcome is positive, or in any case, must be at least satisfying for the Swedish investor.

Thus, it seems that indeed, people depart from such preconceptions when they start interacting. However, when people from, such notably, different cultural backgrounds interact, the process is not just a kind of mechanic adjustment within different pieces of a whole. Nor, is there a simple or "natural" submission from one group to the other. In fact, the constancy of these stereotyped assessments shows that they do not play an important role in explaining what really happens.

There is a complex interaction that downplays the importance of such preconceptions. Thus, it would be interesting to explore some paradoxes emerging from the interaction between these cultural backgrounds.

### *Paradoxical Convergence*

Swedish companies operating in Portugal did, and do not, undergo a formal training program regarding cultural differences. It seems that Schein's dimension of internal integration and normalisation is not managed, however things work. It also seems that despite Hofstede's claims, which seem to remain indisputable, as stereotyping does not show signs of diminishing, people from both cultures do get along and work together for the benefit of company's results and objectives are achieved. In my view there are some dynamics of convergence, however they seem of a paradoxical nature.

One "mechanism" that is probably working well is that the Swede when arriving to Portugal is "seduced" by the country. The interviews confirm the positive reaction of foreigners in living here; Swedes really like to stay in Portugal because of our climate and the general warmth of social relations. This factor is indeed noted by the study; *"Whatever they think about Portuguese management, foreigners really enjoy living here"* (Cranfield University, 2000, p. 5). The issue emerges as major reason for "liking" to be here despite all other differences.

This "feeling" might be reinforced by the fact that "we" tend to accept foreigners, their habits, their culture, their way of doing things very well, provided that they act as if they were in control, as if they were in command, and if they protect our feelings of anxiety by giving clear orders while they address us in a formal way acknowledging our titles and rank.

A second paradox seems also to be "processed" very well by the Swedish part. That of simultaneously admiring and being upset by our more freely expression of emotions in the workplace. In an interesting "geographical mismatch" between Portuguese and Swedish, the accommodation process by the Swedes is indeed paradoxical. That is, Swedes tend to admire our open expression of feelings and warmth, our solidarity towards each other, except

that they are puzzled by our inability to keep those dimensions of ourselves away from work, to restrain this to our family or social lives, as this "inability" of ours to separate work from social leads us to take all criticism as personal offence. However, at the same time, they feel slightly envious, precisely because they are much more "contained" in either "geographical" arenas of their lives.

A third paradox is that of our "inability" to work in teams vis-à-vis with the Swedish consensus tradition of debating in groups. This issue derives from a notable mismatch between us. We tend to be collectively oriented in our social life and individualistic at work whereas the opposite happens regarding the Swedes. This is illustrated by our need to be addressed individually by those in senior positions, it seems that we need direct (diadic) relationships. We claim for directions even though "we" tend to reject, immediately, any attempt to organise our loose way of "doing things", such as introducing planning or setting schedules. We do not accept impersonal directions or rules, apparently, we demand and require personal connections and personal attention. Swedes seem to have understood this and work within such lines and they seem to frown away the paradox, since this behaviour is clearly opposite to their tradition.

This seems to happen because they also tend to avoid open conflict, thus they rather give up imposing a more organised procedure, impersonal rules and weak control in favour of personal supervision.

Another "mechanism" is the statement that there is "hope", as notably a great deal of Swedes refer that new generations are changing their behaviours, in a sense that some of the issues raised (the strong necessity of being addressed by title, the need for constant guidance and authoritative command) are less important for younger people in organisations, who have gained some autonomy and confidence.

This might be linked to the fact that most of the companies in Dahlin's study no longer have Swedes in "control". That is, a number of these companies have hired Portuguese managers to whom they trusted the direction of their local activities. Perhaps, this is also due to cost reductions as expatriates are expensive and revenues are shrinking in a global competitive frame, particularly in recent times. However, the former explanation was advanced as I tried to contact those companies in Dahlin's work.

### *A Context for Welcoming Foreign Investment*

In the context of a Portuguese desire to attract foreign investment, as in the present and as it has been the case over the last decades, it is important to reflect on this more "soft issues", that tend to be ignored in favour of more hard policies such as tax benefits, speedy procedural processes, funding training programs or the cost of labour.

A study developed by AD Capita International Search, Portugal and Cranfield University in "*Can Portuguese Management Compete?*" (2000) mentioned the impact of the 25<sup>th</sup> April Revolution in Portugal which ended with 50 years of dictatorship. Since 1986, Portugal is member of the European Union. In fact, all these factors have changed dramatically our evolution from a largely agrarian economy to a service industries country; "*Foreign direct investment is warmly welcomed in Portugal and continues to be an important mechanism for change and growth*". (AD Capita International Search, Portugal and Cranfield University. 2000, pag. 3)

In this frame, what can be learned from this study that could be used to enhance the impact of foreign investment in Portugal?

We came from a paternalistic society, where the "state" seems to play the objective role of a tangible protector. This is coherent with our long signed "messianic" orientation.

A number of scholars (Dias, 1986, Quadros, 1986, Real 1998) have argued that Portuguese have some traditions which set the background for our basic personality as one of dreamer with great faith in messianic and miraculous solutions, waiting for an always needed, urgent and unavoidable "regeneration". This is usually in direct opposition to a more Protestant ethic, based on individual autonomy and accountability, a drive for personal independence, leading to a risk taking attitude. Paradoxically, we tend to act individually but still foster dependency in relation to our superiors, while others, presumably more self confident, work as and in teams.

In Portugal, we tend to act within the frame of a father and son relationship. However in a paradoxical tone, that of a fatherly figure (protector) against which we are constantly rebelling in defiance of his authority. This, it seems, is a rather adolescent relationship. Perhaps due to the fact that in a sort period of time, the social, economic and political changes have been tremendous in Portugal, however, apparently, cultural changes have not been accompanying those other fast changes. In many sense we still act as if "*people are not paid to 'think' but to do!*" (2003, Swedish manager), thus reproducing the same autocratic system of the past when people had no real opportunity to take responsibility, experience and learn from their mistakes. Thus, it is no surprise if we still have a society holding to its titles of "being a doctor" rather to a more pragmatical and informal society of doing things regardless of rank and status.

One of the important suggestions Swedish made was that our education levels are still inadequate. Particularly, because there is a strong gap between those of us possessing high education levels and the great majority of the us which still exhibit very low levels of education and/or training. Most notably, this is strongly evidenced by older generations. Thus, one of our requirements seem to be connected to the education as a precondition to grow at different levels of our social interactions as well at very basic instrumental levels in organisational live.

Perhaps a better degree of education might be conducive to higher levels of self confidence. Thus, to a more autonomous and independent behaviour, therefore a lesser degree of need to depend on titles to protect our own identity, fostering our ability to work with others in groups, less dependent of a fatherly figure. At the same time we need to retain some very positive characteristics of our feminine dimension, that is our "*enormous adjustment capacity to all things (...) an attitude of tolerance. He is (...) strongly individualistic but possesses a great sense of human solidarity*" (Hofstede cit. in Dahlin, 1998, p. 29), which is linked, as most Swedes pointed out, to our extraordinary ability to improvise.

However, as Cunha et. al. (2002) have argued, we need to draw on our, apparently high ability to craft surprising solutions, in the frame of superior adaptive capabilities to respond to everyday surprises and unpredictable events, rather than using "*desenrascanço*" as a replacement or substitute for properly organised actions and politics.

Another important issue raised by the Swedes is our lack of trust in each other, which might be linked to what Fukuyama (1995) mentioned as "*familism*". In his work he mentioned an opposition between individualism (vs.) collectivism, the latter being called familism. Familism is characterised by the lack of trust between people outside the immediate family circle, or in organisational settings, outside the friendship circle. This might account also for our difficulties in team work, because it creates an obstacle to cooperation, for joint action for organisational benefit. In a study conducted by Scheinberg and MacMillan (1998) on the motivations of entrepreneurs to start a business, the need for independence in Portuguese sample was well above average, as well as our levels of inter-firm cooperation.

### *Future Research and Implications*

As often happens, as the work was being completed several new issues emerged. Notably testing some of the speculations and arguments presented above. The focus of the inquiries was perhaps to centred in the differences

between cultures rather than on probing more extensively for the dynamics of integration and how people solve some of the paradoxes. However, this resulted from the reflection on what people said responding to questions that were based on the departing point of the literature and on Dahlin's study. The literature as it was pointed out reflects a more structuralist view, drawing more on opposing and static dimensions than on how do they get overcome within the dynamics of everyday interactions (Stacey, 2001).

Thus, it is possible that the "management" of cultural diversity is less connected to the formal training based on such structures but rather left to the patterning of experience emerging out of everyday interactions (Stacey, 2001) or as Alänge and Miconnet (2001) have argued, enacted from the ongoing busy daily life of companies by those who participate in the practices rather than "reengineered" by those who observe it from the outside or decide that it should be something else.

The other implication should be that this line of inquiry could be tested within other pairs of interactions (such as German-Portuguese, French-Portuguese, American-Portuguese) to probe for different or similar differences in terms of cultural issues and of integration processes between such contrasting cultures.

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<http://www.ericsson.com>

<http://www.melka.com>

<http://www.mercator.pt>

<http://www.securitasgroup.com>

## Appendix A - Company Information

### *Alfa Laval Portugal, Lda.*

Alfa Laval is a leading global supplier of specialised products and engineered solutions. Its equipment, systems and services helps to optimise the performance of customer's process: Separation and transport such as chemicals, water, oil, pharmaceuticals, etc. Its worldwide organisation works with almost 100 countries.

In Portugal, Alfa Laval sales industrial process equipment such as: Valves and low equipment. During 30/40 years, Alfa Laval was represented by Alsopi Group but after 1985, established as own company. Alfa Laval is a small company responsible for Portuguese market but reports to Sweden. There are now 14 workers.

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Alfa Laval Portugal, Lda.

Av.<sup>a</sup> do Forte, 12

2795 – 503 Carnaxide

Portugal

Phone: +351 21 416 64 46

Web site: [www.alfalaval.com](http://www.alfalaval.com)

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*Ericsson Telecomunicações, Lda.*

Telecom operator and services providers in communication solutions such as: Mobile systems, including future 3G mobile systems, as well broadband multiservice networks and broadband access. The solutions include network infrastructure, access equipment and terminals, application enablers and global services to support business and private communications. Ericsson is presented in more than 140 countries.

Ericsson's core values: Professionalism, respect and perseverance. There are now 260 workers.

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Ericsson, Lda.  
Edifício Infante D. Henrique  
Quinta da Fonte  
2780 – 730 Paço de Arcos  
Phone: + 351 21.466 60 00  
Portugal  
Web site: [www.ericsson.com](http://www.ericsson.com)

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**Fernanda Mendes**

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**Manuel Fialho**

**Margarida Diogo**

*Melka Confeccões, Lda.*

Manufacture of ready-made clothing and exportation as well. The production is mass production.

Melka was founded in 1944 and belonged to the Mölnycke Group. In 1960, Melka Portugal was created and the development was very rapid. Already in 1964 Melka had 600 people working and then it come up to 1970 when there were approximately 1000 workers, until 1996. Then two factories were closed due to high costs. There are now 365 workers.

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Melka, Lda.

Rua Elias Garcia, 15.E

2735 – 951 Cacém

Portugal

Phone: + 352 21.914 32 00

Web site: [www.melka.com](http://www.melka.com)

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*Mercator – Sociedade de Mediação Mobiliária, Lda.*

Mercator a real estate development and management company and was subsidiary to Swedish construction company JM Byggnads och Fastighets. Mercator is autonomous company in Portugal now. There are now 12 workers.

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Mercator, Lda.  
Av.<sup>a</sup> Aida – Bloco 8 – Esc. 821  
Estoril Garden  
2765 – 187 Estoril  
Portugal  
Phone: + 351 21.465 86 50  
Web site: [www.mercator.pt](http://www.mercator.pt)

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**Maria de Lourdes Pinto**

*Monitores de Gestão, Lda*

**Monitores de Gestão is a consulting company of productivity, established in Portugal since 1995. Autonomous micro-company structure. There are now 4 workers but already had 12. This company has the same address as Mercator.**

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**Monitores de Gestão, Lda.  
Av.<sup>a</sup> Aida – Bloco 8 – Esc. 821  
Estoril Garden  
2765 – 187 Estoril  
Portugal  
Phone: + 351 21.465 86 50**

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**Mário Rolin**

*Securitas, S.A.*

**Securitas has a long tradition of protecting and respecting its basic values: Integrity, vigilance and Helpfulness. The company is established in Portugal since 1966 and in 1988 was acquire by a Swedish group. Securitas is focused strictly on security: Security services, security systems, direct, cash handling services and consulting & investigations. The special duty that Securitas has to provide security places. There are now 7 200 workers.**

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**Securitas, S.A.**

**Rua Rodrigues Lobo, 2**

**Edificio Securitas**

**2795 – 174 Linda-a-Velha**

**Portugal**

**Phone: + 351 21.415 46 00**

**Web site: [www.securitasgroup.com](http://www.securitasgroup.com)**

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**Jorge Martins**

**Odete Rosa**

*Soplacas – Sociedade de Placas de Betão, Lda.*

Soplacas makes building material in concrete and was founded in 1968. In 1989 was acquired by Scancem Group. In 2001 HeidelbergCement Group bought Scancem Group. The main activity of Soplacas is production of concrete products and systems for building, ready-mixed concrete, acontank, aggregates and contracting service, materials and services for draw construction. In Portugal, Soplacas has two industrial units: Abóboda, Cascais and Tocha, Cantanhede. There are now 164 workers.

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Soplacas, Lda.  
Estrada de Polima, 790  
Abóboda  
2785 – 543 S. Domingos de Rana  
Portugal  
Phone: + 351 21.448 17 00

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**João Romba**

**Rui Borges**

## Appendix B - Swedish Questionnaire Guide

**Introduction**

**Objectives**

**Confidentiality (Optional)**

### *Part I – Company Information (Ask by a brochure)*

- **Activities**
- **History and State of Development**
- **Swot Analysis**
- **Structure: Hierarchical, flat, line, project and matrix**
- **Relation between head office and Portuguese subsidiary: Position, authority given, quantity of expatriate manager**
- **Contacts with head office: Frequency, bureaucracy, control**
- **Number of workers**

### *Part II – The Manager (Demographic information)*

- **Nationality:**                      **Age:**                      **Education:**
- **CV with special attention to previous international experience**

- **Carrier in Portugal**
- **Special training/preparation on culture issues: Differences, national cultures, management**

*Part III – Cultural Differences (Open answer)*

- **Based on your previous experience, what are the main differences between management style and working habits in Portugal and Sweden?**
- **What would you say are the main characteristics of the Portuguese?**
- **Can you think in more differences? Like Decision Making, Typical Boss, Time Orientation and Conflict Solving?**
- **What is your present opinion on the advantages and disadvantages for the effective work and management process in Portugal?**
- **Do you want to say anything else about working as an expatriate manager in Portugal?**

*Decision Making Section*

*Defensiveness Section*

*Collectivism Section*

*Time Orientation Section*

*Planning Section*

*Acceptance of Foreigner and Their Ideas*

*Relationships Section*

*Authority Section*

- Which are the main contributions that the Swede can give to the Portuguese corporation/organisation, namely his employees and how your stay in Portugal affected your personality and your management practices?
- More and more, Portugal has less Swedish general managers working here. What is your opinion concerning this “phenomenon”?

*Conflict and management style between both cultures?*

*Economic crisis and costs effort?*

*Strategy and management style of Swedish companies?*

**Grateful for your collaboration!**

*Meaning of the Terms*

***Culture:*** The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. A group or category may be a region, nation, ethnic or religious group, industry, profession, etc.....

***Values:*** Culture has to do with values, basic and underlying assumptions of what is good or bad.

***Preferred way of working:*** Culture as part of personality, influences the patterns of thinking, feeling, acting and it also influences the preferred way of working.

***Management style:*** Manager's preferred way of working

***Effective management, work:*** Way of working that leads to the desired results quickest and with least cost (cost includes: time, stress and frustration)

## Appendix C - Portuguese Questionnaire

### Introduction

### Objectives

### Confidentiality

### *Part I – Portuguese Subordinate (Demographic information)*

- **Nationality**
  
- **Age:** < 29 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39 \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49 \_\_\_\_\_ > 50 \_\_\_\_\_
  
- **Academic Degree:** Bachelor, licentiate, master, others
  
- **Department**
  
- **Function:** Manager, commercial, others
  
- **CV description with special attention to direct experience with Swedish general manager?**
  
- **How many years you report to him/her?**
  
- **Do you have professional experience as an expatriate? Where?**
  
- **Did you have other Professional contacts with Swedes or Nordic cultures?**

- **Special training/preparation on culture issues: Differences, national cultures, management?**

*Part II – Cultural Differences (Open answer)*

- **Based in your previous experience, what are the main differences between management style and working habits in Portugal and Sweden?**
- **What would you say are the main characteristics of the Swedes?**
- **What would you say are the main characteristics of the Swedes?**
- **Can you think in more differences? Like Decision Making, Typical Boss, Time Orientation and Conflict Solving?**
- **What are your present opinion on the advantages and disadvantages for the effective work and Swedish management process?**
- **Do you want to say anything else about your work with an expatriate manager in Portugal?**

*Decision Making Section*

*Defensiveness Section*

*Collectivism Section*

*Time Orientation Section*

*Planning Section*

*Acceptance of Foreigner and Their Ideas*

*Relationships Section*

*Authority Section*

- Which are the main contributions that the Portuguese can give to the Swedish corporation/organisation, namely his employees and how your stay in Portugal affected your personality and your management practices?
- Do you feel influenced by Swedish culture at work?
- What is your opinion about learning different work habits with Swedes?
- More and more, Portugal has less Swedish general managers working here. What is your opinion concerning this 'phenomenon'?

*Conflict and management style between both cultures?*

*Economic crisis and costs effort?*

*Strategy and management style of Swedish companies?*

**Grateful for your collaboration!**

### *Meaning of the Terms*

***Culture:*** The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. A group or category may be a region, nation, ethnic or religious group, industry, profession, etc.....

***Values:*** Culture has to do with values, basic and underlying assumptions of what is good or bad.

***Preferred way of working:*** Culture as part of personality, influences the patterns of thinking, feeling, acting and it also influences the preferred way of working.

***Management style:*** Manager's preferred way of working

***Effective management, work:*** Way of working that leads to the desired results quickest and with least cost (cost includes: time, stress and frustration)