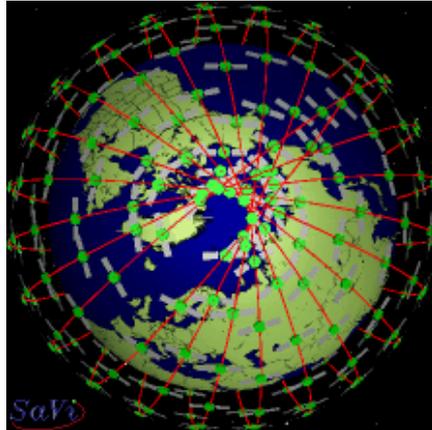


# Distance learning across cultures

Gert Jan Hofstede, [www.informatics.wur.nl](http://www.informatics.wur.nl)

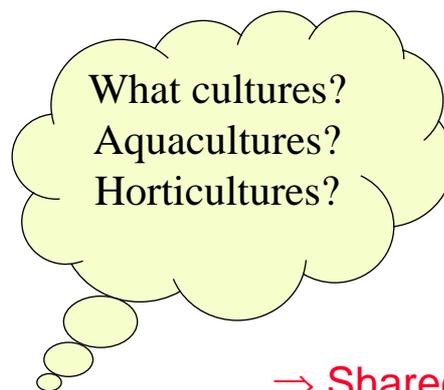


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...across cultures...



⇒ Shared language!

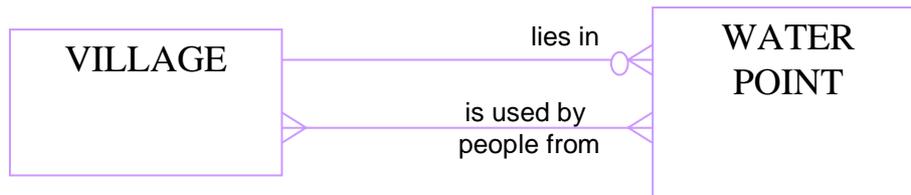


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## Learning context: theory



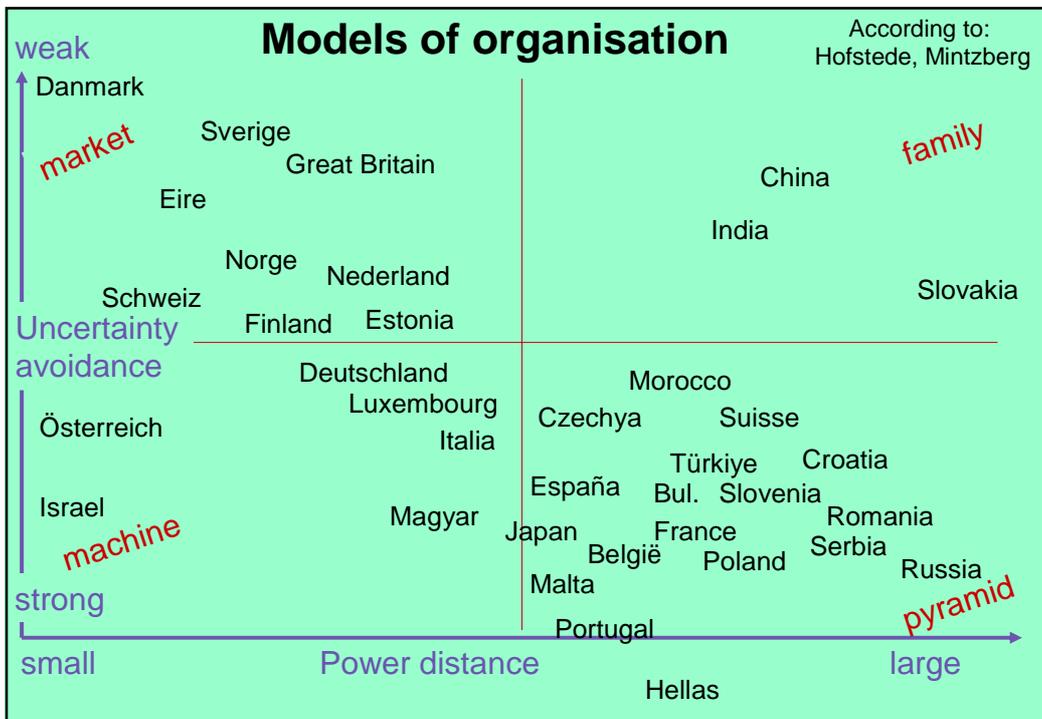
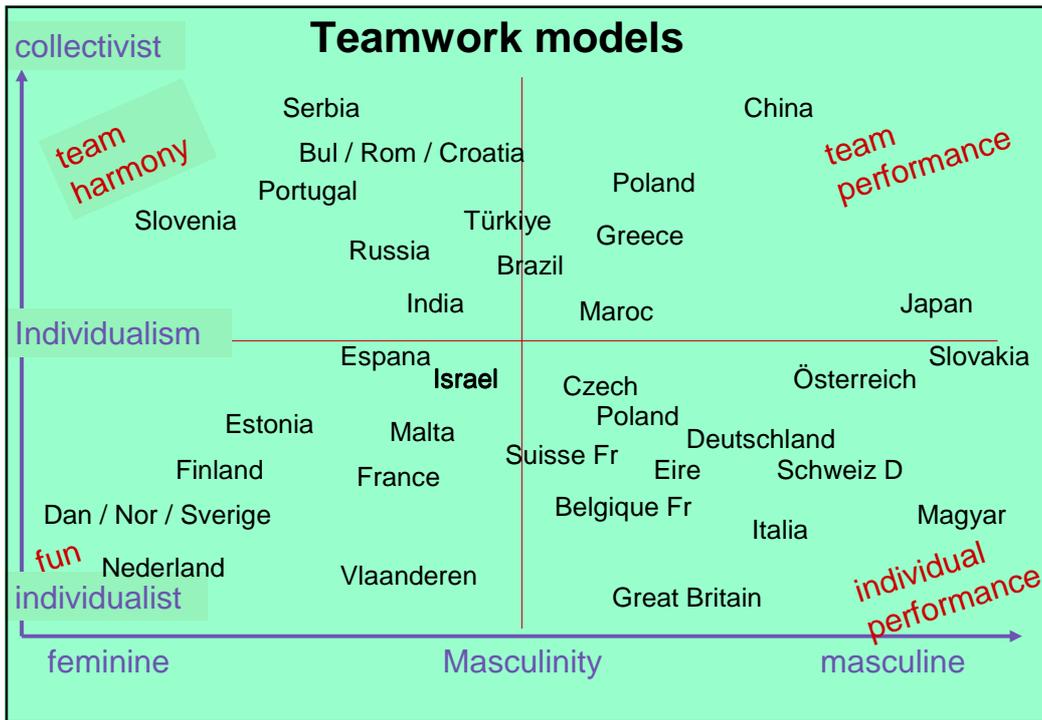
⇒ Shared worldview!



## Learning context: group work

- Here, the unwritten rules of the social game are very important!
  - Nordic countries are similar (and NI)
  - ...but not quite...
  - Latvia and Lithuania I don't know...
- Misunderstandings:
  - E.g. nice time or high mark?
  - E.g. small print or big picture?
  - E.g. who's boss?





## Culture clash in e-learning?



- HKNet team evaluations:
  - “We did not notice any culture differences”
  - “It was quite difficult to work together because we had different culture and backgrounds”
- What to believe?
  - Are there no culture differences on the Internet?
  - Is culture irrelevant to E-learning?

## HKNet project (1998 -)



- NL about HK:
  - “They won’t do anything if they are not told what to do”
  - “They feel very responsible about their tasks”
  - “You can count on them to do their job”
- HK about NL:
  - “They are open-minded and outspoken”
  - “They stick to their own interest”
  - “They did not follow the rules of the game”
  - “They are rude and impolite”
  - “They speak English but not necessarily know what the others mean”

## HKNet 2001 Virtual classroom



<http://blackboard.cityu.edu.hk/>

- Roles team 1:
  - communication moderator (Bonfrère NL)
  - procedural leader (Chu HK, Losapio Fr)
  - listener, responder (Lesavre Fr, Hilary HK)
  - socializer (Rik NL, Sander NL)
- The Dutch tend to switch roles.
- 3 NL, 2 HK, 2 FR



## First week: Choosing a topic



- Losapio > Is there anybody?
- Losapio > Hello!!!
- ...
- Bonfrere > "I would like to propose something for better communication. (...) use more words to make clear what we mean in stead of lesser words"
- ...
- Bonfrere > \*reading the research topics\*
- ...
- Hilary > hm...
- ...
- Chu > ALL. That means we are agreed on three sub-topics (...). Agreed?
- ...
- Bonfrere > bye
- Hilary > :0



## Next week (1): Teacher, Topic again



- ...
- Sander > one moment please, the teacher is talking very much today
- Hilary > too bad
- Losapio > Our teacher is on holidays!!!!
- Rik > Our teacher likes to explain stuff
- Hilary > any good stuff from your teacher, rik?
- Rik > Always...
- ...
- Losapio > I have detail the topic presentation: coding characters, color, contrast, page height, page weight. All the characteristics of a web site.
- Sander > I think you submitted some good points, but I think we should not make the subject too complex, we should have a clear researchsubject
- Chu > ALL: Last week, both HK and France had agreed on topics: (...)



## Next week (2): Word or Web?



- ...
- Chu > Everybody, why you all discuss working out a web site. What we should do is to produce a report in WORD.
- Sander > CHU: the end project should be submitted as a website
- Chu > Sander, no. The final deliverable is a WORD document that is submit to Blackboard. This was already mentioned in the project guide.
- Sander > CHU: No way, check the announcements
- Bonfrere > Chu: the announcement from today says that there should be a e-report, Word is of second consequence. It is less important.
- ...
- Bonfrere > Chu: I will check with my professor right now.
- Hilary > Sander: We have read the announcement.
- Chu > Sorry. I just learn it from the announcement.
- ...



## So what?

1. What matters:
  - culture, technology, student's personal circumstances, language problems, ...?
2. Added value of E-learning?
  - cheap and fast if it works
3. Do's and don'ts?
  - make sure communication channel is clear
  - take on manageable chunks
  - start f2f to build relationship



*“It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities”*

Albus Dumbledore

