

Hofstede in Luxembourg

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to find out where Luxembourg fits in on Hofstede's cultural dimensions — Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence, and Monumentalism — in comparison with France and Germany. The design of the research is the replication of Hofstede's study by using Hofstede's methods: participant observation, interviews and original questionnaire, the values survey module VSM 2008 (Hofstede, 2008). Three hypotheses are offered. This is the first time Hofstede's studies are replicated entirely in Luxembourg, providing 134 filled-in questionnaires and a full set of results for Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The originality of this research lies in the separation into Lux.Nat. (Luxembourg with Luxembourgish nationality) and Luxembourg (including the foreigners), and the data found for Monumentalism. Implications of culture on practices, discussion and implications, future research and references follow.

Key words: international management; Hofstede; cultural dimensions; intercultural comparison; language as identifier; Luxembourg

JEL code: F

1. Introduction

This research investigates Hofstede's seven cultural dimensions Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence, and Monumentalism of Luxembourg in comparison with France, Germany, Europe and the world. The purpose is to find out where Luxembourg fits in on Hofstede's cultural dimensions today, with the aim to explain to managers, expatriates, as well as their spouses and family, coming for work to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, trying to cope with the cultural and linguistic specificities, especially in the HR domain the impact of these cultural dimensions on (HR) practices in Luxembourg. The design of the research is: (1) literature review on dimensions of culture, (2) Luxembourg, trilingualism and Luxembourgish, (3) replication of Hofstede's study. Hofstede's methods were used: participant observation, interviews and original questionnaire, the values survey module VSM 2008 (Hofstede, 2008), by administering it to employees in one company in Luxembourg, France, Germany, providing 134 filled-in questionnaires to measure the cultural dimensions today and comparing them to Hofstede's data for Luxembourg, France, and Germany. It is important to note that Hofstede only holds estimates for Luxembourg and no data for Monumentalism. Three hypotheses are discussed. The originality of this research lies first in the separation into Lux.Nat. (Luxembourg with Luxembourgish nationality) and Luxembourg (including the foreigners) that replies

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to Hofstede's critique, nations are not the best units for studying cultures; and second in the fact that this is the first time Hofstede's studies are replicated entirely in Luxembourg, providing a full set of results for Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as Hofstede bases his research on Luxembourg on estimates. Third, Hofstede holds no data for the cultural dimension Monumentalism in Luxembourg.

2. Literature Review on Dimensions of Culture

Since the late 1960s more intercultural research has been published than ever before. This trend was initiated by Geert Hofstede (1980, 2001) with his meticulous research on culture at IBM worldwide and continued by thousands of replicants. Culture is found to have dimensions, the question is not if, but how many. Hofstede initially came up with four dimensions (Individualism versus Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Masculinity versus Femininity), added a fifth later (Long-term versus Short-term Orientation) and a sixth (Indulgence versus Restraint) and a seventh (Monumentalism). Hofstede brought an end to the era of well-known researchers and their theories. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another". After Hofstede many intercultural studies were started in North-America, the GLOBE by House et al. (2004), Mintzberg (1993), Schwartz (1990), Smith (2002, 2006), Triandis (1995), Schein (2009), just like before Hofstede, but others started in Europe (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), and in Asia (Bond et al., 2004).

The most famous replications are the Chinese Value Survey by Bond et al. (2004), the European Value Survey and the World Value Survey by Inglehart et al. (2008) and Inglehart (2011), and the GLOBE by House et al. (2004). Peter Smith's 2006 article "When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled: the GLOBE and Hofstede projects" is a summary of the exchange of opinions between the GLOBE and Hofstede. Triandis (1995) concentrated his research on the Individualism dimension. Kirkman et al. (2006), Minkov (2011, 2013) and Schinzel (2013) summarize the most important replications.

Geert Hofstede's research has not only been subject to enthusiasm (Triandis, 1982), or to reviews (Smith, 2002) but also to criticism, contestation and controversy (McSweeney, 2002; Søndergaard, 1994).

Hofstede states: "I made a paradigm shift in cross-cultural studies, and as Kuhn (1970) has shown, paradigm shifts in any science meet with strong initial resistance" (Hofstede et al., 2002). The five main criticisms of Hofstede's approach have been enumerated by Hofstede et al. (2002) himself:

"(1) Surveys are not a suitable way of measuring cultural differences; (2) Nations are not the best units for studying cultures; (3) A study of the subsidiaries of one company cannot provide information about entire national cultures; (4) The IBM data are old and therefore obsolete; and (5) Four or five dimensions are not enough."

This study takes on the second challenge of Hofstede's criticism, namely, that national boundaries are not the best unit of analysis of studying culture, and uses the example of Luxembourg to demonstrate that language — Lux.Nat. — is a better identifier of culture rather than geographical boundaries of nations. It compares data collected in three subsidiaries of one company in Germany, France and Luxembourg, to demonstrate that Luxembourg's dimensions of culture are not proxies for the average values found by Hofstede in France and Germany, but rather are unique and a result of Luxembourgish, which, along with French and German, is one of the official languages of the Grand Duchy.

Hence, the next section delineates background information about Luxembourg, such as geographical, economic, historical, and social, as well as some reflections on the linguistic peculiarities of Luxembourgish and

trilingualism, followed by a set of hypotheses.

2.1 Luxembourg, Luxembourgish and Trilingualism

The official designation is Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (Statec, 2013), the only remaining Grand Duchy in the world. The form of government is a representative democracy in the form of a constitutional monarchy, the Chief of State is H.R.H. Grand Duke Henri and the Prime Minister is Xavier Bettel (formerly Jean-Claude Juncker). The territory is 2,586 km² with 549,680 inhabitants on 1st January 2014 (see <http://statec.lu>). On 1st of January 2014, the Luxembourgish population was composed of 300,766 (= 54.7%) Luxembourgers and 248,914 (= 45.3%) foreigners: 90,764 (= 16.5%) are Portuguese, 37,158 (= 6.8%) French, 18,773 (= 3.42%) Italians, 18,159 (= 3.3%) Belgians and 12,659 (= 2.3%) Germans. Domestic employment (379,000) is characterized by a high percentage of cross-border workers (156,900 = 41.4%), coming for work during the day from France (20.55%), from Belgium (10.42%), and from Germany (10.43%) (Statec, 2013). Luxembourgers are in good shape and feel healthy. Luxembourg was one of the founding members of the CECA, the Treaty of Rome, EEC, EURATOM and the EU. Schengen, the “Europe without borders”, is a small village in Luxembourg’s Mosel valley. The European Investment Bank, European Union Publications Office, Eurostat, European Investment Fund, Parliament (secretary), Court of Justice, Council (2nd), and Court of Auditors are among the European Institutions in Luxembourg. IPSE (2010) criticizes money laundering, bank secrecy, fiscal criminality and high level of civil servants. The national language is Lëtzebuergesch, administrative languages are French, German and Luxembourgish (Statec, 2013). This tri-lingual situation is founded in the history of Luxembourg’s language(s). Luxembourgers find their identity in both, in their Luxembourgish language and their trilingualism (Fehlen, 2013; Information Press and Service of the Luxembourg Government, 2004, 2008a, 2008b), distinguishing the “in-group” from the “out-group” (Briley et al., 2005; Minkov, 2013; Spizzo, 1995).

2.2 Hypotheses

Following the description of Luxembourg and its culture, it is argued that Luxembourg’s dimensions of culture are not proxies for the average values found by Hofstede in France and Germany, but rather are unique and a result of Luxembourg’s language. The following three hypotheses are offered:

Hypothesis 1: Native Luxembourgers scores on the PDI, UAI, IDV, MAS, LTO, IVR, MON cultural dimensions are significantly different from the scores of non-Luxembourgers in Luxembourg.

If hypothesis 1 is corroborated then the scores on Hofstede’s dimension should reflect a tendency of Luxembourgish native language speakers to score differently than the scores of French, German and foreigners in Luxembourg. The following hypothesis is offered:

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences between Hofstede et al.’s (2010) PDI, UAI, IDV, MAS, LTO, IVR, MON cultural dimensions estimates for Luxembourg and the empirical values found in this study for Luxembourgers with Luxembourgish Nationality.

Hypothesis 3: Luxembourgers are happy because they use their language(s) as identifier.

3. Methods

Participant Observation. The author participated in many seminars, meetings, fairs as covered participant, taking notes and pictures.

Interviews. The author replicated Hofstede’s original interview with HR managers.

Questionnaires. Hofstede’s (2008) original questionnaire, the values survey module VSM 2008, has been

used to measure his cultural dimensions in Luxembourg, France, and Germany and his original calculation formulas to calculate the means per question.

4. Results

Results from the Participant Observation are: Luxembourg prefers private meetings, in person, has a vivid culture of meetings, conferences, events, and fairs.

Results from the Interviews are: Symbols are: excellence, and ethical behavior. Values are: responsibility, trust, team work, tolerance, respect, quality, and punctuality. Heroes are: the directors and the Grand Ducal family. Rituals are: diverse sport and other events, Christmas party, and get-together events.

Results from the Questionnaires are: Using Hofstede's calculation formulas from the original VSM 2008 questionnaire, the results are shown, — the means — found by the author in Luxembourg, Lux.Nat., France, and Germany by simply adding up all questionnaires' responses and dividing by the number of respondents, to get the mean for all 4 nationalities shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 Comparison Luxembourg–Lux.Nat.–France–Germany

	Luxembourg	Lux.Nat.	Hofstede's estimates on Luxembourg	France	Hofstede's France	Germany	Hofstede's Germany
PDI	36	29	40	32.5	68	37	35
UAI	97	95	70	28.8	86	67.5	65
IDV	51.5	34	60	41	71	65.5	67
MAS	47	54	50	43.5	43	64.5	66
LTO	69	65	64	37	63	84.5	83
IVR	53.5	55	56	80	48	46	40
MON	10	24	-	31	16.5	6.5	9.9

The results show the differences from Hofstede's estimates. The Lux.Nat. indices diverge from the Luxembourg indices, confirming the difference in culture in PDI, UAI, IDV, MON. Compared to Hofstede's estimates on Luxembourg, the indices are especially different for Uncertainty Avoidance and Individualism-Collectivism. For France, the divergence in data is even more striking, showing a low PDI, alongside with low UAI, low IDV, and low LTO. Germany's data are identical, except for Monumentalism.

Table 2 Lux.Nat. in Comparison

	Lux.Nat.	France	Germany	UK	Belgium FR	Belgium NL	Italy	NL	China	USA	Japan
PDI	29	68	35	35	68	61	50	38	80	40	54
UAI	95	86	65	35	93	97	75	53	30	46	92
IDV	34	71	67	89	71	78	76	80	20	91	46
MAS	54	43	66	66	60	43	70	14	66	62	95
LTO	65	63	83	51	82	82	61	67	87	26	88
IVR	55	48	40	69	57	57	30	68	24	68	42
MON	24	16.5	9.9	35.4	-	-	35.2	11.9	0	57.2	4.0

The results in Table 2 show the cultural difference between Hofstede's estimates and Lux.Nat., Luxembourg (with the foreigners) and France, Germany, UK, Belgium FR, Belgium NL, Italy, the Netherlands, China, USA, and Japan.

The previous two tables show the place that Lux.Nat., Luxembourg, France and Germany hold. Lux.Nat.

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score low on PDI (29), low on IDV (34), and high on UAI (95), contrary to Hofstede (40, 60, and 70). France scores low on PDI (32.5), IDV (41), and UAI (28.8), contrary to Hofstede (68, 71, and 86). Germany scores low on PDI (37), high on IDV (65.5) and high on UAI (67.5), unchanged to Hofstede (35, 67 and 67).

The below correlation matrix shows that Luxembourgers are characterized for being long term oriented, they indulge in life, they are uncertainty avoidant, and they are happy.

Table 3 Correlations among All Variables (N = 134)

	PDI	UAI	IDV	MAS	LTO	IVR	MON	HAPPY	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION
PDI	-										
UAI	-0.021	-									
IDV	0.135	-0.011	-								
MAS	0.206*	-0.060	0.517**	-							
LTO	0.138	0.059	0.030	0.000							
IVR	0.031	0.043	0.318**	0.272**	0.042	-					
MON	0.068	0.023	0.245**	0.129	-0.089	0.244**	-				
HAPPY	0.038	0.160	0.045	0.014	0.268**	0.293**	0.001	-			
GENDER	-0.030	0.073	-0.041	-0.012	0.004	-0.029	-0.105	0.029	-		
AGE	-0.117	0.031	-0.059	0.022	-0.076	0.108	-0.312**	0.040	-0.128	-	
EDUCATION	0.037	-0.155	0.106	0.094	0.119	0.112	0.060	0.082	0.120	-0.025	-
RANK	0.230**	0.210*	-0.001	0.016	0.080	-0.043	0.090	0.006	0.162	-0.490**	-0.084

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .001

5. Implications of Culture on Practices

Lux.Nat. hold a unique position on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. There is no other country in the world like Lux.Nat. with high Collectivism (66) (weak Individualism (34)), low Power Distance (29) and strong Uncertainty Avoidance (95). Contrary to the belief that Luxembourg is culturally close to France and linguistically to Germany, Hofstede's cultural dimensions show the limitations of this.

Power Distance is found low for Lux.Nat. (29), similar to UK (35) and USA (40), different from France (68) and China (80). Luxembourg being small, hierarchy is not felt that much, boss and employees meet in the same sport clubs, supermarkets, bars, and events.

Uncertainty Avoidance is high (95), compared to China (30), UK (35), and USA (46), similar to Japan (92). Lux.Nat. avoid uncertain and unknown situations, a secure, regulated, clear life without surprises is preferred. Lux. Nat. is afraid of any uncertainty. For Lux. Nat. everything must be planned, organized, regulated, restricted and foreseen. Nothing has been left to surprise. They prefer that every day is the same and every year brings the same events with always the same people at the same place and the same procedure. They distinguish themselves from their mighty neighbors Germany, France, Belgium, and they created their own language (Briley et al., 2005; Hong et al., 2000), habits (Spizzo, 1995), and peculiarities (IPSE, 2010; Haag, 2011), that they hold to strongly as if they were their identity savers or their rescue plan (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

Individualism is low (34), means Collectivism is high (66), compared to USA (91), UK (89). Lux.Nat. are highly collective people preferring the well-being of the group and country to the individual pleasure.

Masculinity is medium (54), compared to UK (66), USA (62), Japan (95), Italy (70). The characteristics of a masculine dominant country (competition and success) and those of a feminine dominant country (caring for others, quality of life) are equally distributed.

Long-Term Orientation is high (65), compared to USA (26), UK (51), but not as high as in Germany (83), and is characterized for foreseen, and planned events and by perseverance and thrift.

Indulgence versus Restraint is medium (55/100), compared to UK (69), USA (68), Italy (30), China (24), Lux.Nat. in general indulge in life, love profiting from the benefits of life, and enjoy life. Concerning the cultural dimensions Indulgence versus Long-Term Orientation, Luxembourg is culturally close to France.

Monumentalism for Lux.Nat. is low (24/100), compared to USA (54.2), UK (35.4), Italy (35.2), but high compared to Germany (9.9), France (16.5) or Japan (4). Lux.Nat. love their national traditions and nationality, the Grand Ducal family, National Day, National Hymn and are living their national identity.

One must genuinely accept and understand the meaning of “Mir wëllebleiwewatmirsinn” (“We want to remain what we are”). If one does not make an effort to integrate into Luxembourg’s specific business culture, success in Luxembourg may never be possible.

The Grand Duchy’s political, social and economic stability allows people to plan for the long term, thereby providing support for people’s need for security and life predictability. It is possible that this is the key for the high scores on Long Term Orientation and Happiness in Luxembourg found in this study. To validate this argument it is worth citing Hofstede himself: “At 70 Luxembourg has a high score on uncertainty avoidance which means that as a nation they are quite reluctant to test unknown territories. Security is a key word in Luxembourg: there is not one activity which is not depending on some sort of security control from authorities; from banker’s money to safety exits in a restaurant. It makes life in Luxembourg very safe, but some would argue a bit boring. New ideas, new methods, new management techniques must first be proven to work in other countries in order to be accepted in Luxembourg. Historically more “farmers” than “traders” the inhabitants kept that good old “common sense” made of cautiousness which has proven to be profitable for a country that managed not to be at war since Napoleonic times! (<http://geert-hofstede.com/luxemburg.html>).

France scores low on Power Distance (PDI = 32.5), low on Individualism (IDV = 41), and low on Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI = 28.8). France’s divergence from Hofstede’s France is due to the migration background.

Germany is a country whose inhabitants feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity, they try to avoid these situations. It has a flat hierarchy and individualistic people who accept that power is distributed unequally.

6. Discussion, Implications and Future Research

This research investigated Hofstede’s dimensions Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence Versus Restraint, and Monumentalism of Luxembourg in comparison with France, Germany, Europe and the world. Hofstede’s original research was replicated successfully in Luxembourg, France and Germany.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 were confirmed because Luxembourgish nationals score high on “Uncertainty-Avoidance”, Collectivism, “Long-Term-Orientation” and “Happiness”, they score low on Power Distance, low on IDV (high on COL), medium on MAS (medium on FEM), high on LTO, high on IVR, high on MON and use their language(s) as identifier. Luxembourg is a multinational, multicultural, multilingual environment; has a vivid culture of meetings, events, fairs, outings, parties, breakfasts, and presentations, all in person; prefers private contacts; traditional HR practices remain mainly unchanged: advertisement, CV screening, contact candidate, interview — after the recruiting: discussion in person, annual performance evaluation, training; HR managers are

happy with the current situation, which explains the rejection of change. Luxembourg is a small country, where the whole world lives and works. It is reluctant to accept any change, historically explained by the aim of defense of their own identity. It has developed its own specific language and culture with the aim to distinguish itself from its neighboring countries.

France scores low on Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism and Long-Term Orientation, and high on Indulgence and Monumentalism. Germany scores high on Uncertainty, high on Individualism, and low on Power Distance.

In this world, where millions of people communicate via social networking technologies, Facebook, email, mobile phones, the ability to maintain a culture of non-digital social networking is a challenge, but thus far successfully defended in Luxembourg.

Future studies could link cross-cultural research with new media, new technologies, strategies and challenges of global human resource management, communication and with other subjects such as marketing (De Mooij, 2011), with psychology (Leung et al., 2011), and with language research (Lewis, 2006). Future studies could focus on the replication of Hofstede's research, investigating his cultural dimensions PDI, UAI, IDV, MAS, LTO, IVR, MON in more companies in Luxembourg, France, Germany and other European countries — to validate the cultural shift that has happened since Hofstede's initial research in the 1960s (see DeLorenzo et al., 2009) who confirmed the cultural shift of the Slovak Republic. Culture is moving and mixing (Hermans & Kempen, 1998), culture changes over time, and is not fixed and nations are not the best units for studying cultures.

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