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The Cultural Embeddedness of Human Resource Management: *Wolves, Foxes and Dogs*

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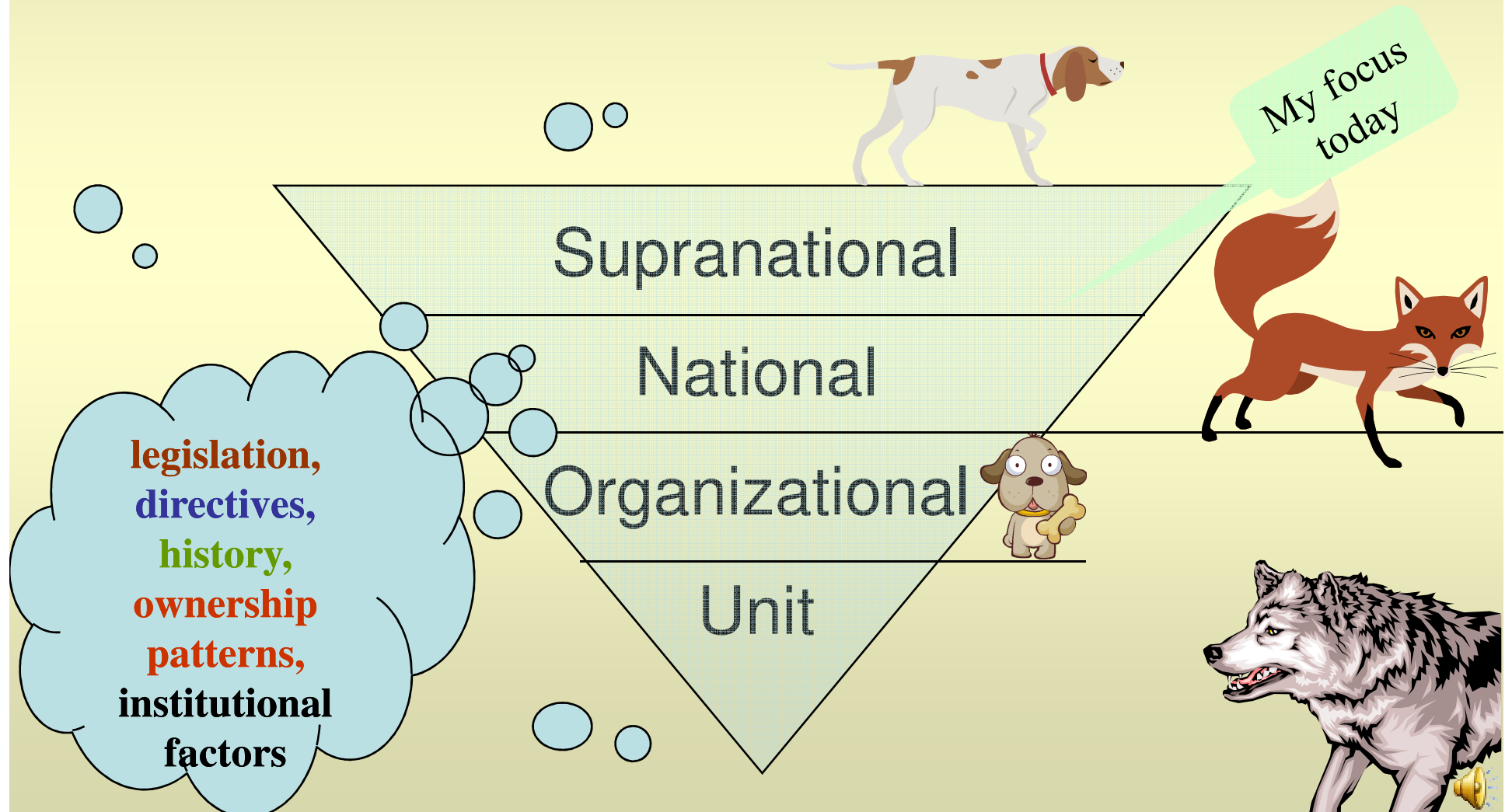
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Wolves, Foxes *or* Dogs

Cultural embeddedness at different levels: *i.e.*



Wolves, Foxes and Dogs as a Metaphor

All members of the “Canid family” are incredibly adaptable animals, and this makes them successful colonisers and cross-breeds in most areas of the world, practically in all habitats available and often in close proximity to humans.



Human resource management can adapt successfully and flourish practically in every corner of the world: its basic ingredient is humans



Canid Family

vs.

Wolves, Foxes *or* Dogs



*Common
sense?*

Global Integration:
*All organizations need
to practice HRM.*



Local Adaptation:
*How they go about
practicing HRM, is
culturally defined.*

Academic debate about
Universalistic versus
Contextual HRM

Wolves, Foxes *or* Dogs

- * The challenge for HR managers is to understand the different cultural assumptions embedded in HRM policies and evaluate their likely impact.
- * Being able to assess the cultural context is crucial in deciding which HRM policies can be globally exported and which need to be locally adapted.
- * It is a vital step in avoiding the possible alienation, low morale or ineffectiveness which comes from imposing HRM policies that are ill-suited to the local culture.



Get to now the “territory” well
before you practice HRM



Cranet

Cross-cultural, comparative HRM research network of 42 countries

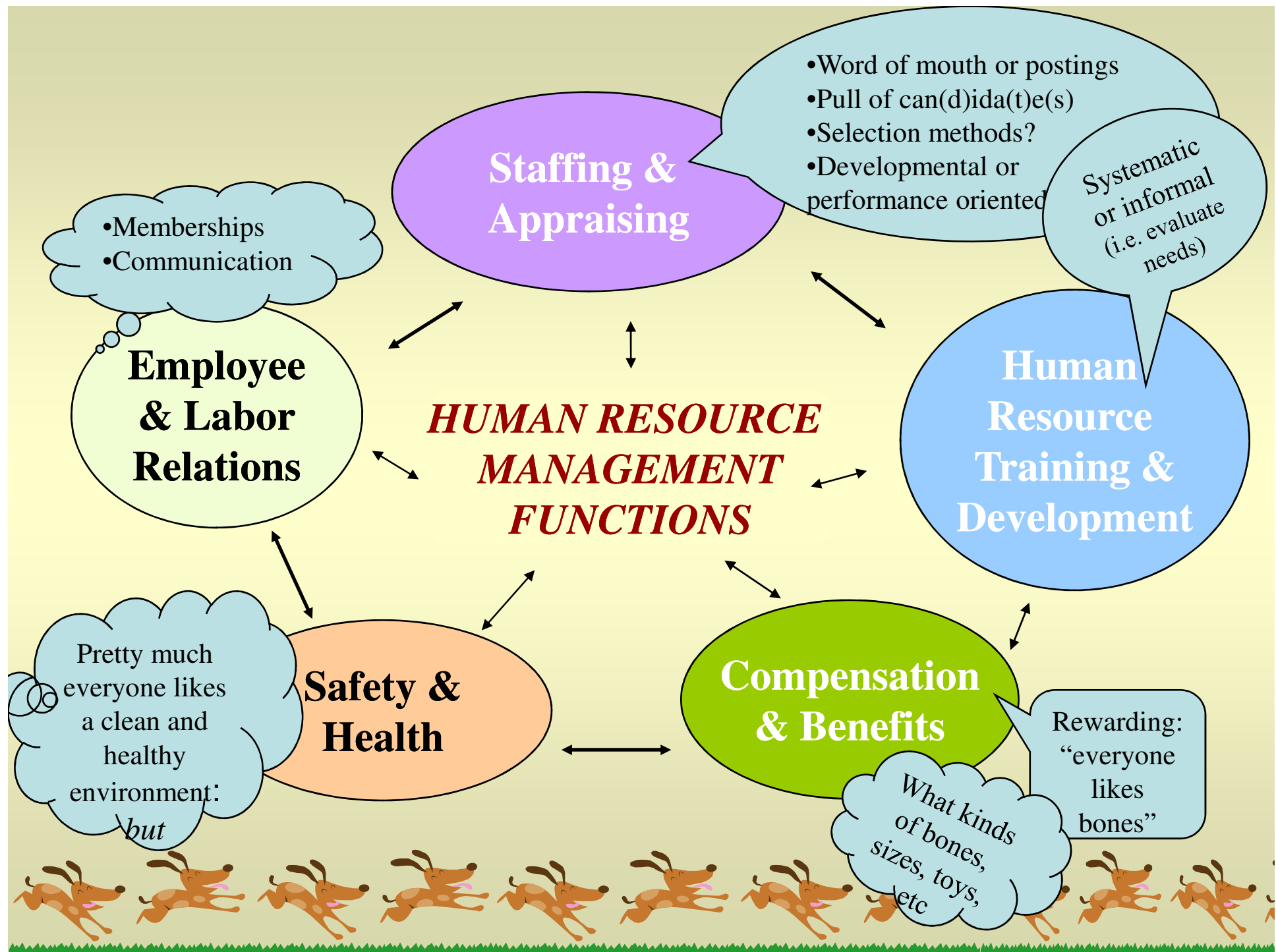
Started in 1989 at Cranfield University from Chris Brewster who recruited colleagues from four other countries

Survey with factual questions on a wide range of HRM issues, all industries and various kinds of organizations

Survey conducted every 3-4 years by a scholar locally in the local language

Made it possible to compare HRM within and among countries on the same set of issues and measured in the same ways, while preserving embeddedness (*i.e the word “line manager” was translated into totally different words in some countries to keep its meaning*).

<http://www.cranet.org/>

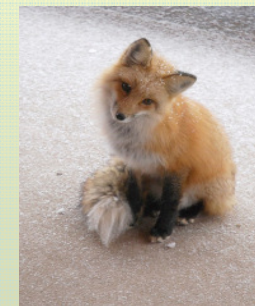


HRM through Globe's cultural clusters

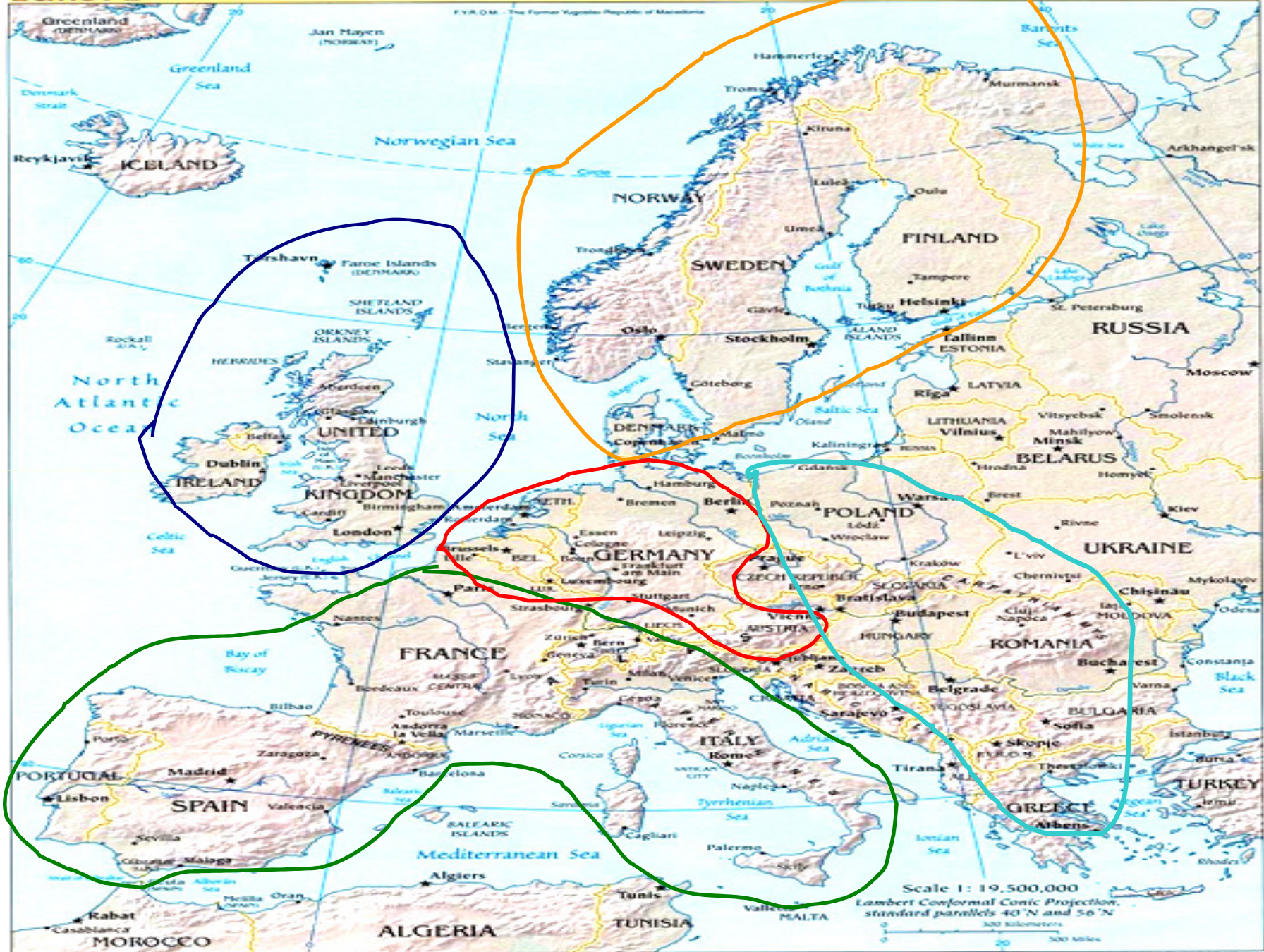
Cultural Clusters

- The Anglo
- The Latin
- The Germanic
- The Nordic
- The Eastern European

HRM



EUROPE





HRM in the Anglo World

Shareholder economies

Most aggressively practiced from all clusters: embedded in a pronounced market mentality (compartmentalised)

The focus is the organization, not the employees

Labour unions are weak, management has the upper hand

Use of mainly individualistic methods: (i)performance, (i)rewards, (i)contracts, etc

Less concerned with internal staffing or employee-friendly FWAs

Looking at the employment relationship in the short-term: downsizing is common during hard times

The focus is on “universalism” versus adaptation of HRM

Quite professionalised and formal

Emphasis is placed on competitive advantage, strategicness of HRM, and its contribution to the bottom line





HRM in the Germanic World

**Collaborative, hierarchical/formal HRM is practiced
Looking at the employment relationship as a longer-term process**

Employee voice is strong through: unions, consultative committees, works councils

Expectations for high productivity from unionised employees

Job security is important

Embedded in a less pronounced market mentality

Apprenticeship is quite common

HRM is focused on efficiency and effectiveness



HRM in the Nordic World

- **Archetype of social corporatism**
- **Participative and egalitarian HRM is practiced**
- **Looking at the employment relationship as a longer-term process**
- **Very much concerned with work-life balance**
- **Unions are strong**
- **Emphasis is on internal communication and mutual understanding at all levels**
- **Job security is important**
- **Public and private sector personnel practices are well integrated**
- **Embedded in a less pronounced market mentality**
- **Emphasis on advanced planning and high line-management involvement** ◀





HRM in the Eastern World

**Paternalistic HRM is practiced, employee participation is low
“Lag behind” their western counterparts in HRM professionalisation
and strategicness: HRM concept is rather new**

Less sophisticated approach towards training and development

Equality in rewards is the norm (rather than being performance-based)

Do not pay high emphasis on connecting HRM to observable and quantifiable performance outcomes



HRM in the Latin World



More sophisticated HRM than Eastern Europe but not as sophisticated as Anglo, Germanic or Nordic Europe

More focus on internal staffing and equality in rewards

Extensive and formal training but not much connected to performance

HRM is the weak but elegant sister in the organisational pyramid

Public sector is particularly large and institutionally separate to the private one – the focus is in public sector personnel management

Paternalistic, beaurocratic and hierarchical style of HRM ◀

Conclusions on HRM Systems in Europe

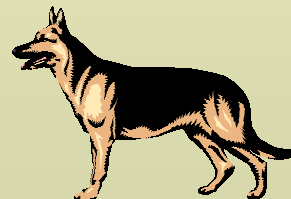
so, what does all this mean?

HRM is culturally embedded; but...

We have to ensure good practice and fairness in practicing HRM in the different contexts; thus

We should concentrate on the principles behind HRM, not the systems, processes or procedures; and

Pay attention and be flexible ◀



Thank you!

