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**Cross Cultural Research:  
A Specialized Paradigm or an Interdisciplinary Flavor?**

Motto:

“The value dimensions will no longer appear as a universal typology that captures cross-cultural differences but as a very distinct construction that reifies a scheme of global hierarchy. (...) Dramatizing tensions within the Euro-American elite, it might be said, conveniently obscures the more acute power issues at play between them and their (common) others.” (Galit Ailon, 2008, 887,892)

“On the crest of their second revolution, the managers banished the pursuit of routine and invited the forces of spontaneity to occupy the now vacant room. They refused to manage: instead, they now demand that the residents, on the threat of eviction, *self-manage*.” (Bauman, 2011, 167-8)

Abstract:

What do we study, when we study cultures and base our conceptual framework on reconstructed and assumed core values, ignoring power struggles (which shuffle core values as poker cards) and downplaying socializing and economic inequalities (which reshuffle them again as in a card game of bridge with trump color changing all the time)? First, we study the social construction of *unequal realities* and *real inequalities*, for instance *the long shadow of Cold War and the postcolonial hidden injuries of subalterns and their masters*. (cf. Zander & Romani, 2004, Fang, 2005-6, 2011, Barinaga, 2010) Second, we trace the *structuring of personalities, and the shaping of organizations (which means negotiating actionable knowledge)*. We design toolkits for managers, coaches and “Siren Servers”<sup>1</sup> to exercise a degree of control about the outcomes of global flows of interactions, patterned cooperation, conflicts and communications. (cf. Brannen & Salk, 2000) We – the academics; researching and teaching and generally speaking knowledge brokering communities of practice. Are the academic communities (trustees of socially legitimate truths) and their broader constituencies (citizens, elites, aggregate agencies, social movements, activists) well served by a relatively new specialist domain of research and competence – namely cross-cultural studies as an autonomous domain pioneered and legitimized by Geert Hofstede? His academic contribution became very popular among researchers, consultants and trainers/coaches in the 1980ies and 1990ies. But his research and consulting institute went bankrupt, and his academic legacy is modest, even in the Netherlands. Are academic communities, perhaps, better off with a cross-cultural and globally

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<sup>1</sup> The term “siren servers” has been introduced by Jaron Lanier, to warn us, internet surfers, against the siren songs of seduction by the owners and managers of giant data-bases and server corporations, as googles or facebooks, cf. Lanier, 2013

comparative *flavor* (smelling more of diversity than value dimensions) added to all sorts of organizational and managerial research by sociologists, political scientists, economists, social psychologists, cultural anthropologists and other research denominations, but moderately so, with no pretense to dominate the taste of newly produced knowledge and competence?(cf. Whitley, Glaser, Engwall, 2010) Perhaps it is time to offer our mobile and flexible, analytical and diagnostic, interpretative and prognostic services to our comrades in academic arms within an interdisciplinary solidarity of professional knowledge producers and disseminators, the craftsmen of actionable thought?

Keywords: manageable inequalities, cross-cultural competence, intercultural communication, comparative flavor

Reflection on our identities, professional, institutional, personal – is never neutral. This holds true for the evolving academic specializations as much as for the citizenship debates between refugees, minorities and not always silent majorities. Let us ask ourselves what are we doing, when we claim to pursue cross-cultural studies? Are we studying cultures in a comparative perspective because we are continuing an autonomous academic project of cross-cultural or intercultural research in business management? Are we muddling through in fresh tracks of Hofstede, the GLOBE teams and their popular disseminators? If so, research communities investigating human resources and organizational change are in charge and we are developing a new sub-discipline of social, managerial, organizational studies. Our creative roots are in a dissatisfaction of a small, but growing research community, which slowly articulated its distinctiveness, which, in turn, had emerged as a sub-community of academic research (SCOS, IACCM) and practice (SIETAR)<sup>2</sup>. This is a legitimate mechanism of an academic development and change. For instance, Critical Management Studies grew out of dissatisfaction with the mainstream academic research in management, when Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott wrote a paper on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School at an international congress celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

Their innovative proposal to start critical management studies took root. They are still going strong. This year the EUR celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and I can imagine that the recent proposals by Alvesson and Spicer about “stupidity-based” theory of organization would be hard to match as far as a diversity promoting methodological policy for an academic research community is concerned. Who can resist the following definition of functional stupidity, even if it comes from a hard core of the rich, dominant, northwestern European countries (Sweden, in case of Alvesson and the UK in case of Spicer)? Here is the sample of their definitions in the best subcultural critical tradition:

“Functional stupidity is organizationally supported lack of reflexivity, substantive reasoning and justification. It entails a refusal to use intellectual resources outside a narrow and ‘safe’ terrain. It can provide a sense of certainty that allows organization to function smoothly. This can save the organization and its members from the friction provoked by doubt and reflection. Functional stupidity contributes to maintaining and strengthening organizational order. It can also help motivate

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<sup>2</sup> SCOS = Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, IACCM – International Association for Cross Cultural Management, SIETAR – Society for International Education, Training and Research

people, help them to cultivate their careers, and subordinate them to socially acceptable forms of management and leadership. Such positive outcomes can further reinforce functional stupidity. However, functional stupidity can also have negative consequences such as trapping individuals and organizations into problematic patterns of thinking, which engender the conditions for individual and organizational dissonance. These negative outcomes may prompt individual and collective reflexivity in a way that can undermine functional stupidity.”(Alvesson, Spicer, 2012, 1196)

Cross-cultural studies – by analogy with the critical management studies - grew out of a dissatisfaction with the dominance of a US-centered approach to business research; Hofstede points to the inspiration with the ideas expressed by Philippe d'Iribarne (with his contrasting of the logic of honor as typical for the French managerial class, and the logic of contract, pursued by the US American managerial elite). Both d'Iribarne (who went on to praise the diversity of the cultural worlds) and Hofstede (who went on to manage his legacy in the public domain very much transformed by the emergence of the Internet and social media) were writing and communicating against the background of educational reforms after a global student rebellion of 1968 (though none of them referred to this experience of a generational rebellion in his theoretical research). Growing academic profession (and let us note that it grew among others due to the successful rebellion of students against feudal inequalities in universities' social systems) easily accommodated them and their critics. But can we still claim that Hofstede is managing his legacy and taking care of the academic or public orthodoxy as the ultimate authority on what dimensions of culture are and what they are not? Why had his verdict on predictions of culturally motivated and constrained behavior been surprisingly successful compared to the other authors?

Well, his approach was to a large extent compatible with tacit expectations shaped by the Cold War and the anti-communist propaganda. Hence an easy geopolitical guilt by association. Large power distance – communist party dictatorship, small power distance – liberal and benign political superstructure of a free market, high individualism – free men and women, high collectivism – enslaved and disenfranchised masses of the slaves of their communist masters, feminine national cultures – communities west of Elbe, Protestant, masculine national cultures – aggregates east of Elbe, Catholic. With the conservative response to the 1968 student rebellion (reaffirming the crucial role of a nuclear family, state regulated school and full-time job in formatting a cultural software of national or organizational cultures), cross-cultural studies were – or at least it seemed so – ready to be ideological avant-garde of the globalizing multinational corporations. Genius of Hofstede allowed him to tap this domain of studies and his writing talent facilitated a very convincing synthesis, which promised to get behind the façade of cultural stereotyping. But Cold War and 1968 are external factors from the point of academic communities. What about the academic reception and fertility of Hofstedian research program? Is academic respect for Hofstedian dimensions and their significance in explaining cultural softwares of national communities administered by contemporary nation-states, is this respect actually growing? We certainly cannot say, paraphrasing the papal infallibility principle (by the way, abandoned by John Paul II) that *Hofstede locuta, causa finita*. Hofstede's influence as the dominant and fertile research paradigm does not appear to be growing, Michael Minkov's significant contribution notwithstanding. (cf. Minkov, 2011) Hofstede, who prefaced Minkov's book, praises him (and his own son, Jan Geert Hofstede) for significant “contributions to the expansion of the Hofstede doctrine”. He goes on to say that Minkov's book:

“represents a substantial contribution to the existing body of knowledge on cultural differences. Misho tackles a number of important global issues in a new way. He discusses societal differences in speed of economic growth, thrift, and saving, attitudes toward work, leisure, freedom of speech and deviation from norms, happiness, educational achievement, religiousness and national pride, suicide rates, lethal violence, HIV and adolescent fertility, corruption, road death tolls, and various aspects of the rule of law (to name only a few important indicators analyzed in his book) and finds that they form convincing cultural structures that shed light on the national cultures of all major regions of the world and help us understand their peculiarities.” (Hofstede, in: Minkov, 2011, xii)

But Minkov refrains from summing up his creative use of the World Values Survey as an expansion of the Hofstedian doctrine and ends his book on a more cautious note:

“It is true that there is no such thing as a good or bad culture in a general sense, just as time is a meaningless concept in the absence of moving or changing objects whose positions or transformations can be used to measure it. But once some criterion and a historical period are chosen as a coordinate system, it is possible to evaluate the desirability of specific cultural features. Some are currently better than others in terms of fostering economic growth. But they are worse in a different coordinate system; the carriers of those cultures are less happy and less satisfied with their lives. If educational achievement is taken as a criterion, some cultures are more likely nowadays to promote success in modern education than others. But the same cultures have higher suicide rates. *Ultimately, how good or bad a particular culture is is a matter of individual perception and judgment.*” (Minkov, 2011, 239, italics mine – S.M.)

Minkov’s study is certainly interesting, and it will certainly play a role in future cross-cultural debates (along with the books by Emmanuel Todd). But it does not seem to be reclaiming the dominant position for the Hofstedian doctrine. In fact, it does not claim a place for any dominant theoretical doctrine at all. Informed individual perception and judgment can be trained and coached, but not necessarily indoctrinated (learning by indoctrination is not granted a privileged position if individual perception and judgment are the ultimate decision-makers). Most of the differences between, say, a suicide rate between Hungary and Switzerland, or educational achievement between Finland and Italy can be explained without undue reliance on national cultures placed along the dimensional continua and playing the role of a matrix generating relatively predictable and homogeneous individual or collective actions. Right now, it seems to me, we are not continuing the demarcation of the borders of a new academic discipline. Cross-cultural studies are definitely in, but the term “diversity” appears much more frequently than ever before. I do not know if the shift is ideological – if the term “diversity” serves better the ideological purpose of making striking inequalities more acceptable than country score on a power distance or individualism dimension. Perhaps what we are actually studying are various aspects of managing and organizing processes in systematic interactions and communications, which bring together individuals and groups in unpredictable and novel, untried, contexts. Studying how the involved parties cope with these emergent challenges we assist and aid other researchers and stakeholders, but not by selling a unique research product (core values and beliefs laid bare and explained as the causal triggers of actions and communications). All we do is perform an auxiliary function, preferably in an interdisciplinary context of joint research projects – trying to help individuals, who reflect and evaluate, to paraphrase Minkov’s last words. We participate in the great quest for knowledge – but not necessarily as a separate team. Even those, who observe approvingly the popularity of Hofstede or Trompenaars among the interculturalists they

had surveyed (89 out of 170 asked did mention them as a source of theoretical inspiration), note critically that:

“Despite of (or perhaps precisely because of) the widespread influence of Hofstede and Trompenaars, developers and participants increasingly criticize the usefulness and quality of the knowledge they offer. What may be regarded as monolithic concepts of culture as something related chiefly to national or ethnic group membership does not chime with professionals’ increasing experience of a professional environment in constant flux and with their confrontation with other salient bearers of culture, such as gender, age, religion and not least the organization.” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, 211)<sup>3</sup>

My personal impression is that Minkov’s sensitive and humanist approach to the problem of values (even as standardized as in the Inglehart & Welzel cultural map of the world) is mostly due to his humanist, literary and linguist training in academic disciplines, which he had studied before turning his attention to the values and cultures and their consequences. From this point of view he would have to be located closer to Anna Wierzbicka (semantic studies of the meanings attached in different languages to certain relations and their emotional significance to communicating individuals) rather than to, say Marieke de Mooij, one of the most classical followers of Hofstede, who had simply applied his model of cultural dimensions to the analysis of problems in marketing and advertising. Thus humanist background of Minkov as opposed to the engineer’s training, which was the first academic education received by the young Geert Hofstede, puts him closer to Wierzbicka (a linguist, a philosopher of language and a semantician) and de Swaan (the author of a study on disappearing languages entitled *Words of the World*, a sociologist and a humanist) than to his academic master.

If we do not offer a brand with theoretical paradigm and acknowledged domain, then we are sub-providers. We, cross-cultural researchers, provide a flavor, which is indispensable for our professional comrades in academic arms, for researchers focusing on human resources – but also on strategic management, on organizational change, on global accounting practices and on stitching logistical supply networks together – not to mention business ethics, gender politics, ecological balance and sustainability politics. It looks thus as if instead of being an avant-garde of the developing academic project we have finally realized that our place is among the auxiliary facilitators of a professional analysis, or haven’t we yet? In a recent ongoing joint online book on state of the art management project undertaken by a number of academics from all over the world, the cross-cultural section appears under the label of diversity management (the overall initiator of the project is Charles Wankel, but a team evolves, including, as senior editors, for instance, Stella Nkomo and the undersigned). We develop and produce new knowledge, but testing consequences of different cultural socializations and linking them to manifestations in views or activities, we remain paradigmatically modest and reserved. More often than not we are sub-suppliers of overall explanatory theories. Some part of this reserve can be attributed to a general reluctance to offer covering models, general theories, “covering” explanations a la Darwin, Marx or Freud. Some can be

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<sup>3</sup> One of the quoted authors, Peter Franklin, goes as far as to suggest that Hofstede and Trompenaars are: “relatively far removed from the daily communication situations and interactions of (international) cooperation and thus offer little help to international managers in the area of communication itself – in assisting managers actually to interact across cultures. Hofstede devotes only just over one page of 466 to the principles of intercultural communication and cooperation (...) and less than a page to language and discourse (in second edition of *Culture’s Consequences* – S. M.)”(Franklin, 2007, 264-5)

attributed to the increased transparency of academic research, whose legitimacy depends on being transparent. But this does not explain our reluctance to stand more firmly for our own theoretical domain, our own province in the federation of scientific research domains. Nor are we without successful cases of a fairly general theoretical explanation. Philippe d'Iribarne is a case in point, and so is, for instance, Emmanuel Todd. D'Iribarne inspired Hofstede, who did not limit himself to the typology (the logic of honor, contract and negotiation in – respectively - French, US American and Dutch companies), but went on to propose a theory of culture's consequences on a much broader scale and on a higher level of abstraction and generalizability. Todd went further than d'Iribarne, but also started with a typology, namely the one of family types.

Todd is French but his academic career is linked both to the French and British universities, and as opposed to d'Iribarne, he had been publishing in English early on in his career. Nevertheless, he did not acquire Hofstedian *guru* status and remains known to the academic (and French social – he is the grandson of Paul Nizan) elites. Todd, who is a historian, demographer, sociologist, political scientist and cultural anthropologist, had made three theoretical contributions to our understanding of a link between culture and action. First, he offered a theoretical prediction based on his academic research. In 1976 he had published "The Final Fall: an Essay on the Decomposition of the Soviet Sphere", in which he had predicted the breakdown of Soviet Union on the basis of an analysis of demographic data (such as infant mortality rate, average life length, etc.). This prediction has turned out to be correct, but as a political scientist Todd might have based his prognoses on more tacit assumptions than he had listed in his study (he must have known, for instance, that in 1976 the Polish government had to cancel food price hikes after a very decisive street protest of Radom workers – which paved the way for the 1980 independent "Solidarity" trade union). Second, he had concluded a comparative historical, sociological and demographic study (The Explanation of Ideology: Family Structures and Social Systems, 1985) with a theory on a link between an early family upbringing and political preferences demonstrated in voting patterns. Some of the ideas have been in the theoretical air: Piaget and Kohlberg had tried to distinguish the stages of cognitive, moral and interpersonal growth, and anti-authoritarian protests of 1968 were aimed at all socializing agencies, including the family. Nevertheless, Todd dared to propose a falsifiable theory and to offer it to the academic community. Todd had tried to analyze to link between voting preferences in certain regions of the world and the degree of authoritarianism in family socialization (primarily parental or paternal power exercised over children, resulting in a dominant family type). This produced – sometimes – a very fresh insight into, for instance, voting behavior of some segments of the French rural population or into the ferocity of blood-letting which accompanied the Indonesian anti-communist military coup, but did not result in a very convincing theory about the influence of early authoritarian socialization and a preference for the left or right political parties.

Third contribution of Emmanuel Todd to the development of comparative, cross-cultural studies, was aimed at the falsification of the Huntington thesis. As opposed to Huntington, who claimed that the emergence of religious political ideologies will inevitably result in a clash of civilizations, namely of the Muslim and Christian ones, which will gradually grow into totally different, hostile and irreconcilable military blocks and ultimately are bound to clash in an armed conflict, Todd concluded that all contemporary societies, especially Islamic and Christian ones, converge as far as values and life-styles go. They become more alike, not less so. Together with a fellow demographer, Youssef Courbage, Todd published "A Convergence of Civilizations: the Transformation of Muslim Societies Around the World" (2007), but Huntington still remains a tacit, quasi-religious dogma for the media

newsmakers all over the world, with the notable exception of Al Jazeera. I mention Todd, because he comes closest to Hofstede in a theoretical ambition to link values and actionable knowledge, culture and behavior, and to do so on a population level. Apart from these and comparable rare examples of a bold theoretical attempt, most of our professional colleagues focus, deliver, facilitate, help, and contribute to the analyses of our colleagues in Strategic or Human Resource Management, in marketing and organization theory, in business ethics and organizational theory, behavior, development and change. Do we have to basically step aside when independent academic disciplines are called and wait until they divide us between them?

The question is looming large in 2013, although it has been very clearly articulated as early as 2007, when the IACCM conference – devoted to “Cross-cultural Life of Social Values” had been hosted by the Rotterdam School of Management (and the undersigned), and when Terence Jackson, Brendan McSweeney, Peter Dorfman, Mats Alvesson, Hugh Willmott and Louk de la Rive Box voiced their critique of Hofstede’s fundamental doctrine of nationally tinted cultural software as an explaining factor (in the presence, nota bene, of Hofstede himself). AoM’s special topic issue of the “Review” devoted to the forum on international management (and subtitled “critique and new directions”) has been only one year away as far as editing by Gavin Jack, Marta Calas, Stella Nkomo and Tuomo Peltonen went. When the special topic forum (STF) on international management appeared in October 2008, it did include very critical voices and the editors clearly stated that they were searching for non-mainstream, non-neopositivist and quantitative theoretical representations in order to generate alternative conceptualizations of the research domain “international management”. They explicitly wanted to account for:

“Unavoidable power relations that sustain the material realities of international management... In this way, the STF sets out to offer a critical and multidisciplinary conceptual foundation for future analysis and empirical research. We aim to articulate explicit concerns with issues of power and ideology in the academic theorization of international management and organization (...) the voiced/unvoiced circumstances that appear in these theoretical representations and the possible implications for the uses and abuses of the knowledge thus constituted.”(Jack et al., 2008, 872)

In 2008, they already sensed that inequalities are too large and too damaging to be ignored, but their polite, academic tone was somewhat overshadowed by the world-wide financial collapse resulting from the financial speculations of large US banking corporations. Today, after five years of trying to emerge from the financial crisis, we can already conclude that the inequalities in question were not addressed, but are, nevertheless, changing both values and behaviors<sup>4</sup>. To put it in a nutshell: after the collapse of a building, which had been housing five sweatshop-like textile factories in Dhaka, Bangladesh, we are no longer allowed to hide behind the façade of cross-cultural differences of, say, power distance or ambiguity tolerance, in order to close our eyes to the killing inequalities. The collapse in Dhaka in 2013 killed 1,129 predominantly female employees (making clothes for – among others British *Primark* and Spanish *Mango*). We can hardly afford to limit ourselves to a tactful and discreet mentioning of Spivak and Bhabha and the subaltern concept in postcolonial theory (Michael Frenkel did mention them in the abovementioned issue of AoM). Shouldn’t we be more firm in demanding “meaning-laden representations of the world” researched among “the weak Others” rather than expats and higher managers available online for surveys? The question of Banu

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<sup>4</sup> Some exceptions notwithstanding (cf. Barinaga, 2010, Rajan, 2010, Galbraith, 2012, Stieglitz, 2012)

Ozkazanc-Pan from the same STF issue of AoM acquired new urgency after the protests at the Taksim Square have entered their third week and hundreds of thousands of Turks have been involved. She tries to design a research program, which could take the “West” out of the golden cage of a self-proclaimed and self-maintained privileged position of the producer of managerial knowledge and disseminator of managerial expertise (“disrupt the hegemony of the Western epistemology in IM research” as she puts it). Banu Ozkazanc-Pan works at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and she is acutely aware of the fact that while her sensitivities are from the periphery of world capitalist system, namely Turkey, her current research position in the academic pecking order moves her up towards the core (after all, Harvard, one of the brightest stars in the academic galaxy, is also located in Massachusetts). She pleads for the management researchers in the “West” coproducing managerial knowledge and expertise *with* rather than *about* the “Rest”(of the world):

“How might recognizing third world women as knowledgeable about international businesses reconfigure IM theory and research?” (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2008, 970)

Let me rephrase her question and fit it into our context. Can we answer the question about our own status in the academic community of researchers in business schools much more clearly and convincingly now, in 2013, re-visiting Rotterdam after 6 years?

When “Culture’s Consequences” had first appeared in print (1980, with a more complete re-edition of the first version in 1984, and the publication of the second, much enlarged and comment-rich version in 2001), the world of social communications had still been reading about the passing of the Gutenberg galaxy with disbelief. Publishers were not yet lamenting dramatic drops in printed book sales, and Disney corporation paid US politicians to gradually extend copyrights for Mickey Mouse until the day of the Last Judgment. Radio and television were described as the most modern tam-tams of the global village by Marshall McLuhan and neither Google, nor Facebook, nor Amazon.com were available to every owner of a smart phone, iPad or laptop (not to mention the absence of mobile computing, GSM-networked telecommunications, infrastructure of databases and servers plus individualized ICT access devices). The academic communities were still relatively neatly divided into disciplines, schools and traditions and they had been policed by the post-Popperian and post-Kuhnian, but mostly neo-positivist methodological gate-keepers and philosophers of science. The military, the corporate and the political sponsors talked to the best and the brightest at the universities, in research labs and in diverse think tanks, but ARPAD had not just yet produced the Internet. Wikipedia, not to mention Wikileaks, and online dating were yet to come. PRISM was ahead, and so was it’s unmasking. There was, briefly speaking, no one, who could twist a new interpretation of the phrase “the medium is the message” into the mold of a decentralized crowdsourcing. There was nobody, who could have noticed that culture is not a black box of software injected into individual minds by parents, teachers and managers, but a negotiable re-mix of contextualized and re-legitimized cloud. There was no one who could have predicted the political consequences of crowd-sourced inventing of a newly imagined and designed trade union (the Polish “Solidarity” of 1980) or of the participatory budgeting which would bootstrap democracy (Brazil around 2000), or the micro-credits and the like.

The situation, one is tempted almost to say “the spiritual context of the times” (die geistige Situation der Zeit – as a more philosophical and old-fashioned diagnostic label might look like only 50-60 years ago) has certainly changed. Serious studies of the global contexts in which culturally articulated



differences are played out begin to be entitled “Seeing culture everywhere” (cf. Breidenbach, Nyiri, 2009), “Global assemblages” ( Ong, Collier, 2005), or “Internationalizing cultural studies” (Abbas, Nguyet Erni, 2005), not to mention the growing literature on the influence of global flows (for instance migrations, cf. Isanski, Luczys, 2011, Castells, 2012, Bauman, 2011, Faist, Fauser, Reisenauer, 2013) upon societies and cultures or interactions and communications (cf. Mylonas, 2012, ). As far as I can see, the theoretical development of our domain of knowledge does not follow the Hofstedian tracks. Theoretically speaking, its abstract generalizations go towards evolutionary/temporal approach (information space of Boisot, 1995, Boisot et al., 2011, and the theory of sociocultural selection, Richerson & Boyd, 2005, and Runciman, 2009), and pragmatically speaking, we seem to be going towards the empirical and pragmatic approaches, attempting at the most a grounded theory approach or abandoning a major theoretical generalization altogether (remember last words of Michael Minkov quoted above, compare also Burawoy at al., 2000, or Goldfarb, 2012).

Can we, as a subcommunity of a broader academic community of management and organization researchers and teachers, which in turn is a subcommunity of a broader academic community of social sciences and the humanities (Camic, Gross, Lamont, 2011, Escobar, 2008, Alvesson, 2013), which, in turn, is a subcommunity of a broader community of knowledge producers, who, in turn, merge with the broadest population; humanity at large, networked, clouded, interconnected, can we, as members of this subcommunity, live with the awareness that we are just sub-providers, and not proud representatives of a sovereign republic of learning, who have the right to march under their own flags at the annual conferences, and take part in prize competitions? Is our research domain – humble, modest, limited – sustainable in the longer run?

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