



# *Emulsifying Cultures*

**A Study of the Cross-Cultural Cooperation at the Global R&D Centres of  
AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim**

## **MASTER THESIS**

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# Preface

This report is submitted in fulfilment of the Master thesis for the Master Humanistics in *Critical Organization and Intervention studies* (KOIS). Through this research I got to know a whole different world: the world of BU R&D Car Refinishes. The experience as an intern, researcher and student in this commercial environment has taught me so much. I learned about commercial businesses, how to work on a large project, how to approach people with a different professional or cultural background, and of course, I learned how to make car paint. When I started this research in November 2008, I couldn't imagine this would have such a great impact on my life. Also, travelling to the three R&D locations in Troy Michigan (United States), Bangalore (India) and Sassenheim (The Netherlands) and meeting so many people over the world, has been quite the experience.

First of all I would like to thank BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof. He made this research possible and gave me the opportunity to complete my Masters with such a great project. He was also my supervisor at AkzoNobel and helped me, from beginning to end, with the research. He kept me focused and gave me feedback on the progress of the research and my personal experiences in the R&D organization. I am most grateful to him for putting so much time into this project and making this a learning experience for me.

Secondly, special thanks go to my tutor at the university, prof. Dr. Alexander Maas. He guided me through the process of becoming a 'naturalistic' researcher: someone who goes into the field of study as an equal participant instead of a distant observer. I also want to thank Dr. Caroline Suransky (co-reader), for bringing me in contact with AkzoNobel, and for helping me in connecting this research to (the international focus of) Humanistics.

Other people of AkzoNobel whom I want to thank, especially for their help in organizing and planning the research at the three R&D locations are: Monique de Graaf, Wendy Combee, Birgit Hennephof, Pieter Peters, Luc Turkenburg, Sudha Dantiki, Latha Sharath, Sheeja Abraham, Mike Shesterkin, Paul Oleszkowicz, and many others.

I also want to thank Olaf van Duin, Jurjen van Pelt, Kriti Toshniwal and Dagmar Storm for their support and critical remarks during the research period and writing process of this thesis.

Some people might ask why this research was not executed by an anthropologist or change-management consultant. Humanistics uses different fields of study to look at the human being as a whole. People are not just their culture, their profession or their social position. People define who they are by giving meaning to the world and their experiences. This is what Humanistics tries to grasp by asking people about their world-view and how they give meaning to their lives. The study in Humanistics taught me to look for the full picture of a person and organization. This focus makes Humanistics a good starting point for the study of culture and cooperation in a highly complex and dynamic environment as BUR&D Car Refinishes.<sup>1</sup>

The title '*Emulsifying Cultures*' was chosen to connect the core business of R&D Car Refinishes (car paint) to the study of cross-cultural cooperation. In R&D Car Refinishes chemical processes are used to develop car paint. In chemistry, an emulsion is a mixture of two unblendable liquids. To blend the liquids constant stirring is needed. Another option is to add a surfactant to break the surface tension between the two liquids, to keep them in a mixed state. The subject of this research can be seen as an emulsion: The cultures of the three R&D locations are the (seemingly) unblendable liquids which are mixed during their cooperation. This research examines this mixture of cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations, Part II Humanistics.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce the subject and structure of this thesis: the assignment at *AkzoNobel Business Unit Research & Development Car Refinishes* (BU R&D Car Refinishes), the position of this research in Humanistics, the research approach, the research question, the theoretical and practical relevance, and how the thesis is organized.



## 1.1 The Objective: Research Assignment at AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes

This thesis covers the research project at *AkzoNobel BU Car Refinishes* in the global R&D<sup>2</sup> department (also called R&D Car Refinishes). BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof asked me to research the cross-cultural cooperation between three global research centres of BU R&D Car Refinishes. Cross-cultural cooperation is the cooperation between people with different (national) cultures (French 2007). These can be national cultures, but also organizational cultures, departmental cultures, etc.

These three global research centres are situated in Troy, Michigan (United States), Bangalore (India) and Sassenheim (The Netherlands).<sup>3</sup> The assignment was to research the cultural differences between the three global R&D sites and the influence of these differences on the cooperation in general and the efficiency in specific.

In the global research centres, employees have complained about the difficulty of working together with colleagues of other R&D sites with a different cultural background. Some employees and managers feel that the problems in the cooperation such as miscommunication, not meeting the expectations and project delays, are caused by cultural differences. Cultural differences are perceived to negatively influence the efficiency of their cooperation.

In this research I investigate if this is indeed the case and what can be done to improve the cooperation between the three R&D sites.<sup>4</sup>

BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof wants the three laboratories to work as optimally as possible, ultimately as one global lab. The goal of this research is to give recommendations on how to optimize the cooperation and how to make sure that cultural differences do not negatively influence the cooperation or can even have a positive effect on the cooperation and/or create a competitive advantage.

The research question that will be answered in this thesis is:

*What are the main coping strategies of R&D employees and team dynamics in terms of handling cultural differences and how does this influence processes of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*

In the following paragraphs I will argue why Humanistics can contribute to this field of study.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> R&D stands for Research & Development.

<sup>3</sup> A worldmap with the R&D locations can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> See the Internship Report in the Appendix.

## 1.2 Research Programme of Humanistics

The themes of the research programme of Humanistics which this research relates to are *Humanization, integrity and sustainability in organizations* and *Moral education and democratic citizenship*. This research relates to the first theme in that it focuses on the improvement of the organization of R&D Car Refinishes by looking at culture and cooperation. In Humanistics, cultural diversity is considered an important value. Different cultures have an equal right to exist and should be respected. By looking at the cooperation between R&D sites, which are situated in different countries and cultures, the dynamics between them will become visible. This insight can indicate the current relation between the sites and help improve the equality between the sites. The value of cultural diversity and the improvement of the cooperation can be seen as an activity to stimulate humanization in the R&D organization. Humanization is the aim of creating a more humane and just society in general, and in organizations in specific.

This research relates to the second theme of *Moral education and democratic citizenship* in its focus, looking at North-South relations and economic and cultural globalization processes. This appears in the context of the organization: a multinational in a globalising world and the (post-colonial) relation between Western countries (such as Netherlands and United States of America) and Asian countries (like India). This theme touches the (sometimes) sensitive relations and dynamics between different Western and non-Western countries in general. In this research, these global processes are part of the context of the R&D organization.

As we know in The Netherlands, cultural differences are sometimes difficult to understand and to cope with. In this research acceptance of cultural differences and stimulating humanization is directly linked to practise. Therefore, it creates an opportunity for Humanistics to apply its humane focus and help an organization create meaningful cooperation between different cultures in a commercial setting.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.3 Personal Motivation

This thesis constitutes the final assessment for my studies in the Master of Humanistics in *Critical Organization and Intervention Studies* (KOIS). The Master KOIS tries to combine insights from organization theory, consultancy, change management, cultural change in organizations and the process of globalization. Within these subjects, my interest developed around how people work together, collaborate and cooperate, and what the chances and challenges are for people working in teams. Apart from the focus on cooperation in organizations, I have a special interest in the cooperation processes in an international setting. I believe my personal background has led me to possess an interest in cross-cultural cooperation. I was born in South-Korea and grew up in several foreign countries (South-Korea, Bangladesh, Mozambique) before moving to The Netherlands. During my childhood, I came into contact with people from many different cultures, not only through native people from the country I was living in, but also through the expat communities. I have always wondered how it could be so easy to make friends in a different country (because everybody

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<sup>5</sup> The research has taken place after an internship spread over a period of 7,5 months. The purpose of this internship was to get to know the R&D organization, learn about the processes and structure of this multinational organization specifically BU R&D Car Refinishes, and to gather information on the sites as part of this research: departments and employees in BU R&D Car Refinishes in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim. The internship has given a strong basis of knowledge of the organization for the research on cross-cultural cooperation. After the internship, the research question has been slightly altered; I will discuss these changes in the following paragraphs. For further information see the Internship Report in the Appendix.

<sup>6</sup> Onderzoeksprogramma 2005-2010 Humanistiek (16 mei 2007). Onderwijsgids 2009-2010, p. 10-15 (juni 2009).

accepts the fact that you are different) and still have such difficulty understanding each other which leads to frustrations or even conflicts.

I believe that with a better understanding of one's own culture and the culture of others, people can work with each other more easily and have less misunderstandings and conflicts. In an organizational context, this will not only be beneficial for employees working with different cultures, but also for the organization in terms of the efficiency in working towards the targets.

I think Humanistics as a multidisciplinary science can offer AkzoNobel new perspectives on cross-cultural cooperation. Humanistics uses qualitative research to uncover the experience and meaning-making processes of people. In this way, there is a lot of attention given to what people in the organization find important. Humanistics tries to be all-inclusive, not only focusing on management practices, but including all layers of an organization and its employees within its focus. The purpose is to show the different perspectives and realities of people in the organization, and how they negotiate these cultural differences and diverse experiences and opinions.

In the following paragraphs I will argue how the research has been designed: an introduction on the study of culture, the choice for qualitative research and the practical and theoretical relevance.

## **1.4 Culture**

A definition of culture which I used as background information, to have some notion of the cultural themes that could be mentioned by respondents, comes from Gelfand et al. (2007). Their definition is very wide, so we have a wide scope for the research. According to Gelfand et al. (2007), culture can be described as, "*the total of behaviour, rituals, habits, beliefs, ideas, values, roles, motives, attitudes and ideas about the social and physical world*" (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496. Jacob 2005, p. 525).

To find out how cultural differences influence the cooperation in BU R&D, I will argue in Chapter 3 – based on a study of literature on culture in organizations, as well as my research and internship at the three R&D sites – that we have to look at the interface of cultures. An interface is the point of contact between two or more different cultures (van Dongen 1997, p. 69-73, 85, 93, 105-107, Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 11-13).<sup>7</sup>

## **1.5 Qualitative Research**

I have stated that the study of culture is difficult because culture is heterogeneous (not a static entity), and consists of different levels. Because the study of culture is complex, I choose to do a qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is characterised by an open and flexible way of information gathering with the purpose of coming as close as possible to the social and personal reality of those investigated. This type of inquiry is often used to study complex practices or situations with the objective of improving them (Maso & Smaling 1998, p. 9-10). Qualitative research uses interviewing and observing as tools to collect data from the researched practice. Interviews and participative observations were held in all three R&D locations. This has provided the research with data for the analysis of the cross-cultural cooperation in R&D.<sup>8</sup>

## **1.6 Practical and Theoretical Relevance**

The research assignment of this thesis has its roots in practice and therefore a strong practical relevance. By researching the daily practice of R&D employees at the three sites in Troy,

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3: *The Cross-Cultural Interface: a Methodological Shift*.

<sup>8</sup> I will elaborate more on this method in Chapter 2. The presentation of the data can be found in Chapter 4.



Bangalore and Sassenheim, I believe the problems in the cross-cultural cooperation can be indicated, and recommendations can be made to create a better understanding of the cultural differences and to improve the cooperation.

The theoretical relevance lies in the study of the interface and the Humanistic approach of this research. The study of the interface is a relatively new field of study within cultural studies. The focus has been changed from defining cultures to studying the dynamics of cultures: the interface. Cultural differences in themselves are not important. It is more interesting to find out what effect these differences have on people and how they deal with these unusual factors in their lives, or as in this research, in their global cooperation.

Humanistics has a strong base in the study of human meaning-making processes and interaction. The multidisciplinary character of Humanistics makes it possible to study these dynamics from different perspectives by using different theories. Cross-cultural cooperation is studied from different angles, which creates new insights on this topic by letting different theoretical disciplines pollinate each other.

The study of the interface of cultures combined with the multidisciplinary perspective of Humanistics can create new insights for the study of culture and the organization of R&D Car Refinishes.

## **1.7 Multidisciplinary Approach**

In this thesis, three disciplines have been used to study the influence of cultural differences on the cross-cultural cooperation at BU R&D Car Refinishes. These disciplines are Organization Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Management Theory and Humanistic Theory. Organization Anthropology mainly focuses on the cultural aspect of this research. Cross-Cultural Management Theory focuses on the team cooperation and management aspects of this research. Finally, Humanistic Theory provides a more philosophical and reflective perspective in this research, used for recommendations.

In this research, interviews and observations have been conducted at the three R&D sites in Troy Michigan (United States), Bangalore (India) and Sassenheim (The Netherlands). The data from these interviews and observations are analysed using the theory of Organization Anthropology based on coping strategies. Theory on team dynamics of Cross-Cultural Management Theory is used to analyse the transnational teams in R&D. This leads to the research question “*What are the main coping strategies of R&D employees and team dynamics in terms of handling cultural differences and how does this influence processes of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*”.

The following sub-questions were made to give a clear distinction between the different aspects researched, which will result in recommendations for the AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes Management Team and staff:

- a. How do the employees of the R&D sites of Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim perceive cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural issues at work?*
- b. How does this influence the efficiency of the international cooperation between the three R&D sites?*
- c. How can the quality in general and the efficiency in particular, of cross-cultural cooperation, be improved by the R&D Management Team and staff?*

Each sub-question is considered as a step in the research, gradually building towards the answer of the research question.

In the last paragraphs of this chapter, I will discuss the organization and structure of the thesis. As the structure is quite complex, figure 1.1 will show how the thesis is built up.

## **1.8 The Organization of the Thesis**

This report starts with a discussion of the methodology and working method in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I will describe the characteristics of qualitative inquiry, and the chosen method and how this was practised during the research at the three R&D locations in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim.

In Chapter 3 I will give an overview of theories related to the study of culture. Part I of this chapter will start with a discussion of the methodological shift in the study of culture. Part II of this chapter will discuss the theme ‘cross-cultural cooperation’ and describe theories from Organization Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Management Theory. These theories will later be used in the analysis of the data from the interviews and observations.

In Chapter 4 this data is presented in two parts: The first part contains a summary of the data from the interviews at each specific location, starting with Troy, than Bangalore and finally Sassenheim. This is the data collected on the context level.<sup>9</sup> The second part of this chapter consists of three case studies. Two case studies of the interface Sassenheim-Bangalore, and one case study of the interface Troy-Sassenheim. This part is focused on the team level.<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 5 contains the analysis of the research. The data from the interviews and observations presented in Chapter 4 will be analysed using the theories from Chapter 3. This chapter analysis the data on the two cultural levels: first the context level, then the team level. In the analysis of the context level, the theory on coping strategies from Organization Anthropology is used. In the analysis of the team level (case studies) the theory on transnational teams from Cross-Cultural Management Studies is used.

Chapter 6 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the thesis. Because this thesis is also part of an assignment for the AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes, this chapter has been divided into two parts. These can be read separately. Part I summarizes the conclusions relevant for AkzoNobel and will give recommendation for the improvement of the cross-cultural cooperation. Part II will summarize the conclusions relevant for the study of Humanistics and the scientific field of Cross-Cultural Studies.

## **1.9 The Structure of the Thesis**

While reading this report, some things have to be kept in mind about its structure. The subject of this thesis is the cross-cultural cooperation between the three global R&D sites of AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes. As mentioned before, this research has taken place on two cultural levels of the R&D organization: the context level and the team level. The context level of the R&D culture shows how the three R&D sites are embedded in a national culture and how they interact with one another. The team level of the R&D culture shows how the teams with members in two or more sites deal with their cultural differences at work.

This distinction between context level and team level is used in the structure of Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Each of these chapters will discuss these levels separately starting with the context level and then the team level. Figure 1.1 on the next page shows the structure of the thesis. This figure gives further clarification on the structure: which parts of each chapter are focused on the context level and which parts are focused on the team level.

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<sup>9</sup> The context level and the team level are distinguished by Gelfand et al. (2007). An explanation of these level scan be found in Chapter 3, Part II Cross-Cultural Cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> A study of Bangalore and Troy was left out, because the interviews didn’t provide enough data for a case study.

	<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Chapter 3</b>
	Introduction	Methodology	Theoretical Frame
<b>General Discussion</b>	1.1 The Objective 1.2 Research Programme of Humanistics 1.3 Personal Motivation 1.4 Culture 1.5 Qualitative Research 1.6 Practical and Theoretical Relevance 1.7 Multidisciplinary Approach 1.8 The Organization of the Thesis 1.9 The Structure of the Thesis	2.1 The Study of Culture 2.2 Methodology 2.3 Working Method 2.4 The Analysis 2.5 Development of the Research... 2.6 Trustworthiness 2.7 Confidentiality 2.8 Research Tools 2.9 Research Plan	<b>Part I. How Should We Study Culture?</b> 3.1 The Definition of Culture 3.2 National Cultures and Organizational... 3.3 The Cross-Cultural Interface...
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	Data Presentation	Analysis	Conclusion & Recommendations
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Figure 1.1 Structure of the thesis per chapter.

## Chapter 2 Methodology, Methods and Research Plan



In this chapter I will discuss the methodology of this research. This contains the principles of qualitative research, the working method and research plan. But I will start with some preliminary remarks on the study of culture.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1 The Study of Culture

The study of culture is complex. First of all because cultures are heterogeneous. In societies and in organizations, different cultural levels influence one another. In organizations for instance, an organizational culture in itself consists of divisional cultures, departmental cultures, team cultures, etc. The heterogeneous character makes it difficult for researchers to distinguish different cultures, to draw a hard line between them (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497, Ashkanasy et al. 2000, p. 385-394, van Marrewijk & Veenswijk 2008, p. 2-9).

Secondly, the study of culture is complex because cultures change over time due to a changing environment (external factors) and encounters with other cultures. In the encounters between cultures, the cultural differences are negotiated and in result can be transformed or even integrated. In cultural studies, such an encounter is called an interface. An interface is created when different cultures encounter each other, which automatically leads to a (significant or insignificant) change of the cultures due to the reaction to each other: The encounter at the interface leads to people adapting to others and different situations, or holding on to their customs, beliefs and other cultural aspects (van Dongen 1997, p. 69-73).

In this study of cultural differences at the three sites of R&D Car Refinishes, the aim is to find out what cultural differences are present and relevant for employees in their cross-cultural cooperation and how these influence the cross-cultural cooperation. We are going to try and define the three different cultures at the locations, or the national cultures of the three countries. We will do this by looking for the perception of differences between the three cultures. With this information, we can now look at the question of what methodology would suit this research objective.

### 2.2 Methodology

We need a methodology which grasps the complex nature of culture and focuses on the diversity of perceptions. To reflect the complexity of the research field, qualitative inquiry was chosen as a suitable methodology. Qualitative inquiry does not work with predetermined question lists or with statistics and graphics, which reduces stories to numbers. In qualitative inquiry tools such as interviewing and observations are used to gather rich descriptions of how people see themselves, others and their world. Qualitative inquiry has many forms and methods. This research combines two methods: naturalistic inquiry and responsive methodology (Guba & Lincoln 1985, Erlandson et al. 1993, Abma & Widdershoven 2006). I will discuss the principles of these methods in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>11</sup> The Research Plan (Dutch) written previous to this research and can be found in the Appendix.

Naturalistic inquiry is based on the assumption that meaning is determined by context and that multiple realities exist next to each other. It has its roots in social constructivist theory, the main principle of which is that people construe meaning during interaction with others and the world. It looks at the diversity of meanings and how these different perspectives interact with each other. This brings us to the statement that reality is complex. Because of the many different perspectives, it cannot be reduced to single statements or be generalised.

Because the research is focused on the construction of meaning and knowledge, it has to be open and flexible. Guba & Lincoln (1985) speak of an emergent design, which means there are no fixed definitions or hypotheses at the start of the research. This method has to be open for the different meanings and interpretations, which cannot be known or predicted beforehand. In an emergent design, the research shapes itself around to the meanings and perspectives which evolve during the research process. Through the interaction between researcher and the researched, the different meanings and perspectives will surface. The research is developed in a dialogue with stakeholders<sup>12</sup> (Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 35-37, Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 37-43, 208-211).

This automatically leads to a new role for researchers. In contrast to behaviouristic science, in which the researcher is the 'objective observer' who draws objective conclusions, the researcher in naturalistic inquiry is involved in the research as a subject. The researcher is not someone who 'knows things' or puts himself in a higher position than his respondents. In responsive methodology, it is explicitly described that the researcher should be open and respectful. The interaction between stakeholders should be open, respectful, aiming at inclusion and involvement of everyone. The researcher has to stimulate interaction and seek meanings or constructions of people which are different from each other.

In responsive methodology, the researcher is part of this process, not only facilitating dialogue but also participating by asking questions to respondents and asking for feedback from respondents on collected data and preliminary findings. This is a two-way process (Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 35-37, 46).<sup>13</sup>

Responsive methodology goes one step further than naturalistic inquiry. It aims at creating a dialogue within the researched group leading to consensus or new insights (depending on the aim of the research). Its purpose is to not only research a specific situation or group of people, but also to facilitate change. (Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 92-93).

In conclusion, in a naturalistic inquiry the research will not lead to objective 'scientific' conclusions or truths. The subjective process, in which both researcher and the researched participate, creates meaningful conclusions and knowledge for the people in the researched practice (Maas 2009, p. 33).

In summary, the principles of naturalistic inquiry and responsive methodology are:

1. People are active in giving meaning to their experiences.
2. Multiple realities can exist next to each other.
3. Reality is complex.
4. Reality can't be reduced to simple cause-effect statements.
5. Research cannot be objective; knowledge is created between object and subject.
6. The researcher plays an active role in the interpretation process of the research. (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 35-43, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 11-19. Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 33-37, 91-93).

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<sup>12</sup> Stakeholders in responsive methodology are people who are, in one way or the other, involved in the research: they have a significant role in the research or a special purpose for the research outcomes.

<sup>13</sup> Because this research has an emergent design, this report contains descriptions of the process and development of the research.

## 2.3 Working Method

In this research on cross-cultural cooperation, the methods of naturalistic inquiry and responsive methodology are combined. In specific, naturalistic inquiry was used to ask respondents about their experiences and opinions on cross-cultural cooperation. This means looking for multiple meanings and perspectives on the subject. The purpose of this method is to let the research field speak and give insight about possible answers to the research questions.

For Humanistics, naturalistic inquiry is a suitable method. First of all because the social constructionist assumptions, such as the existence of multiple realities and the aim to let (all) these multiple realities have a voice, is in line with Humanistic methods for research. And secondly, because Humanistics aims at doing more empirical research.

The responsive method was used in the selection of the respondents. The aim of responsive methodology is to create a democratic dialogue. This was not the aim of this research. In this research, the aim is not to facilitate a dialogue, only to ask for feedback on the collected data. The responsive method was used to select respondents for the interviews. This is called a force-field analysis (*krachtenveldanalyse*): The selection takes place by looking at which people play a central role in the organization. It works like a network in which one respondent gives several new names of people in the organization. This way we can see how employees in their working network are related to each other, and who the key figures are (Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 29-48, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 83).

Evaluation moments in the research have been used to check preliminary findings. These preliminary findings were discussed with employees who were asked how they felt about the findings: Did they agree with the findings? Was there any information missing? Could the findings be deepened? Could other examples be added to confirm or invalidate them?

The conversations were held during the research period at every location. Some respondents gave so much information that they were asked for an extra interview to talk about the preliminary findings as well. At the end of the research period at each location, a final presentation was given for local management. Here preliminary findings regarding the locations were discussed with employees. The presentation was given with the aim of instigating a fruitful discussion between employees, and between employees and the researcher.

Apart from interviewing, other research tools were used in this research as well: participative observation, document study, keeping a field journal consisting of a log of day-to-day activities and personal research diary, and the study of literature, all were used to gather data and file the research process (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 268-281).

A lot of cultural studies have been done in the past. It is important to have some frame of knowledge on cross-cultural cooperation. Therefore, literature was used as background information and analysis material. The theory is seen as an open theoretical frame with unambiguous concepts. These concepts do not contain 'the truth' of what we can know about cross-cultural cooperation, but are part of the different perspectives and meanings which are collected through the research. Just as a respondent can have a certain perspective on cross-cultural cooperation, so does the literature. This way, theoretical study and interactive research are merged to form a fruitful combination with the possibility of creating new, appealing insights.

## 2.4 The Analysis

The research data and study of literature provide two sources of knowledge which will be used for analysis. The data gives insight into the perspectives of employees on cross-cultural cooperation. The data is focused on 1. The locations (which covers the context level of the R&D culture) and 2. The teams (which covers the team level of the R&D culture). In the literature, three fields of study were used: Organization Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Management Theory and Humanistic Theory.

Organization Anthropology is used to analyse the data of the location on the context level. This is done by analyzing the coping strategies used at each individual location. In this part the outcomes of the interviews of each location is used.

Cross-Cultural Management Theory is used to analyse the case studies containing the data on teams on the team level. This is done by analysing the interface between each of the locations on the dynamics of transnational teams.

Humanistic Theory is used for recommendations.

The goal of this method is to combine practice and theory to get a fruitful interaction between the two. In some research, the focus lies on the literature (theory) which places the collected data in a pre-set frame. The risk of this type of research is the loss of important field knowledge, which in itself can be an important source for understanding the field and creating (new) knowledge of the field processes. In a naturalistic inquiry, the field is brought forward and given a voice. Naturalistic inquiry assumes that there are multiple realities. This is why data collecting tools such as interviewing and participatory observation have been used. These tools help the researcher to get close to and step into the field of research. This way the researcher can collect the different experiences and knowledge (different meanings and realities) in the field and give them an equal position as theory (Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 14-18, 80-110, Rubin & Rubin 1995, p. 20-23, 38-41, 122-136).

In the following paragraphs, more specific aspects of the research will be discussed. This contains a discussion of the development of the research question, how trustworthiness of the research was established, how confidentiality was established, and a more detailed description of how the different research tools were used for collecting data. For readers who are not interested in this part, I would advice skipping this bit and proceed directly to Chapter 3.

## 2.5 Development of the Research Question

At the start of this research I formulated a problem definition which indicated/described the direction and aim of the research. I started with the following research questions:

1. *What are the cultural differences within and between the three locations of BU R&D Car Refinishes (at the three locations Sassenheim, Bangalore and Troy, Michigan)?*
2. *What is the influence of these cultural differences on the cooperation between these locations?*
3. *What is the influence of these cultural differences and the handling of cultural differences on the efficiency (and effectiveness) of the three workplaces?*
4. *How can R&D Car Refinishes optimize their processes and efficiency? (advice)*

Apart from these four main questions, I had a list with another 17 sub-questions. I later realised there were too many questions to answer in my analysis, and that I needed more focus. During my research, I also studied the literature on cross-cultural cooperation more in depth. This gave me the insight that it is not the cultural differences which I needed to study, but the interface of cultures and how people in this interface react to one another. This changed the original research question, because it was not the cultural differences which influence the



cooperation, but the way people handle or cope with these differences. Also, the research is not aimed at any fixed definition of the three cultures (of the United States, India and The Netherlands), but how people perceive culture and how they give meaning to the interactions with people from other cultures. This made me change the research question to:

*What are the main coping strategies of employees and team dynamics in R&D in terms of handling cultural differences and how does this influence processes of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*

Sub-questions:

1. *What do R&D employees think of their own culture, that of others and of the cooperation?*
2. *How does this influence the cooperation and the efficiency of the cooperation?*
3. *What can be done by the R&D Management Team and R&D employees to improve (the efficiency of) the cooperation?*

The change of the research question also had an effect on the use of definitions of culture and a semi-fixed research design. After reading Van Dongen (1997), I realised that my first aim, which was to define several cultures, was not possible due to the heterogeneous and interchangeable character of culture. To research the perception of different cultures, I had to ask the respondents/those investigated what culture is to them and how it comes about in the cooperation. I came to the conclusion that a definition of culture can be used as a first indication of what can come from the respondents, but what will be mentioned and what not, is eventually up to respondents and their context. This is why in the adjusted research plan, the definition of culture moved to the background of the research.

## **2.6 Trustworthiness**

In doing scientific research, the researcher has to argue that the choice of method, the execution of the research, the analysis and the drawn conclusions are trustworthy. Trustworthiness is measured on four points: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 289-294, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 66-79).<sup>14</sup>

*Internal validity* (credibility) concerns the soundness of the collected data and arguments which lead to the conclusions of the research (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 290-291, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 29-30, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 71-73).

In this research, internal validity was established by using tools and organizing several activities: I started the research with a research design and research plan. I read a certain amount of literature on culture as background information. Several introductory conversations with employees of AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes and discussion with professors of the University for Humanistics helped me in developing the problem definition.

The research plan was approved by my tutor, co-reader and thesis coordinator at the university. My supervisor at AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes, BU Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof, evaluated the formulation of the assignment and problem definition. In this way, the scientific and practical aspects of the research plan were inspected.<sup>15</sup>

I followed this research plan during the research at the three R&D locations. I also kept a field journal which consists of a day-to-day activity log and a personal dairy. I separated personal notes and experiences from the description of daily activities. The journal helped me in

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<sup>14</sup> Other terms have been used to describe the four categories of trustworthiness. In the next paragraph I have added these terms to the descriptions of the four categories.

<sup>15</sup> See the Research Plan in the Appendix.

keeping objective and subjective information apart. I also used the journal to keep track of my activities and being able to look back if I needed a reference. The steps in my thinking process, coming to preliminary findings and conclusions, can be found in the personal diary. I kept different types of notes: methodological, theoretical, personal and random. The methodological notes contain questions and reflections on how the research was going and if I needed to make adjustments. The theoretical notes contain new ideas on theories and possible connections between theories. The personal notes were used to write down personal experiences. The random notes contain thoughts which were on my mind during the research period and didn't look relevant at the time but could be of use later. The notes kept me in a reflective mode and worked as a memory of what I later wanted to discuss with my tutor or other people helping me during the research. The journal and notes in total have made it possible to trace my research activities back in time.

A long and intensive period of participative observation has helped me to get a feel for the organization, the work and working life of employees in different departments. The internship period previous to the research period helped me to get to know the R&D organization and its members. The informal and formal conversations, lab internships (in which I learned about making car paint), joining meetings and visiting every department for at least a day has given me a panoramic view of R&D. During my research period, this continued in my daily activities. I planned my interviews with different respondents for the day, but also arranged to have lunch with people from different departments and teams. This way my whole day was an activity of participative observation. Except for the moments I worked behind my desk to write on my field journal, transcribe interviews and write out observations.

One of the risks with this type of prolonged engagement (which in totality, including the internship, came up to 7,5 months) is over-rapport or over-identification. In one case in Sassenheim, over-identification in one department was becoming a risk. In this department they have many problems with the cooperation with Bangalore. To find out more about the problems and possible causes, I accepted an invitation to change my workplace to another office in their department. I got to sit in an office with one of their employees, which resulted in many day-to-day conversations and observations with members of the department. But this also resulted in getting more acquainted with these people, more than others in the R&D organization. I observed in my notes and during my daily activities that it affected my objective judgement. It seemed as if I got integrated into their department, becoming one of them. Because I was warned by my supervisor and therefore had calculated this risk, I had arranged this workplace for only a limited time, which made it possible for me to leave the workplace after a short time. I was offered to be able to stay longer, but after talking to the manager I changed my workplace back to my old desk (which was an office with four empty working places which I was the only one using).

Other activities I used to reduce unsystematic findings were to have regular meetings with my tutor at the university, prof. Dr. Alexander Maas. I also met several colleague students, friends (with different professions and cultural backgrounds) and family for methodological and theoretical feedback and discussions. And I presented my preliminary findings gradually to different people in and outside the R&D organization in AkzoNobel, to test these findings and deepen or specify the data and conclusions.

*External validity* (transferability) is the ability to sufficiently generalize conclusions of the research to other situations, persons, phenomena, etc. (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 291-292, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 31-33, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 73-74).

The aim of this research stays within the context of AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes. This means that the findings arrived at here are not meant to be generalized to other situations or phenomena. Only for the evaluation of literature on transnational teams (cross-cultural

management theory), it is important to see the conclusions in this research, not as definite additions to the existing theory, but indications of possible new knowledge on transnational teams. This is not a sound generalization of findings, but a recommendation for further study of the sort in other organizations.

*Reliability* (dependability) means there should be a consistency in the drawn conclusions within the research, and this assumes that each repetition of the same research will give the same results. The findings must be consistent in this way (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 292, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 33-34, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 70-71).

Smaling & Maso (1998) say that a real repetition of a research is not possible due to the changes of time and people. The setting of a research will never be exactly the same. This is why it is important to keep track of research activities, and the sequence and development of arguments, findings and conclusions. We can evaluate the reliability by inspecting the audit trail, tracking the systematic reference of the research process. Smaling & Maso also call it a virtual repetition of the research (Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 70-73).

As I have described in the paragraph on internal validity, I kept a field journal with a log of my activities. These can be traced from the start of the internship period to the end of the research period. I also used the program Atlas-ti which helps to analyse field notes and data from interviews and observations. In this program you can find the analysis of the interviews which resulted in the presentation of the data in Chapter 4 (Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 34, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 70-73).

*Objectivity* (confirmability) means that actions have to be taken to avoid subjective interpretations of the data, so that the interpretation of data is not biased by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 292-294, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 34-35, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 69-70).

The field journal made it possible to keep track of my ideas and experiences on which I could immediately or later reflect. This reflection I sometimes discussed with my tutor<sup>16</sup> and supervisor<sup>17</sup> when this was necessary for the quality and continuation of the research. As I have mentioned before, I kept observations and interpretations and thoughts apart, to prevent biases from appearing in the data.

During the research I had regular moments of reflection in which I evaluated my activities. For instance, I kept a log of the interviews. Because the research has an emergent design and a networking way of selecting respondents, it was during the research that I decided whom to interview. Because I kept the interview log, I could see if my emerging selection of respondents resulted in interviewing people from different departments and hierarchical levels. I did this on a regular basis, also with the intention to test if I kept to my research design.

Reflection on the method and theory of the research, I did together with colleague students and friends. These reflections I evaluated together with my tutor. Also, if I had any doubts about my progress or decisions, particularly when I was abroad, I emailed my tutor or supervisor for help.

Most important were the presentations of preliminary findings to employees and the local management teams during and after each research period at the three R&D locations. This made the chance of biases smaller because the findings would be evaluated by the stakeholders of this research. Of course, not all employees were asked to do so. This would take too much time and effort to process this extra data. As in the approach of the responsive method, I choose to ask key figures (with a central position and open to reflection) for

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<sup>16</sup> Prof. Dr. Alexander Maas, University for Humanistics.

<sup>17</sup> BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof, AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes.

feedback on the findings. I believe this has been sufficient enough to fill most gaps in the data and biases.

## 2.7 Confidentiality

From the start of this research, I have been aware of several confidentiality issues. First of all, to get representable data, I needed respondents to feel free to say what they wanted to say without them (being concerned about) being harmed. In my conversations with BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof we agreed that I would keep all the interviews and observations anonymous. No one in the company would or will have access to the data. Also, the interviews and observations have been presented anonymously and cannot be related to any person or any department in the R&D organization.

Although it is unlikely, the data collected here could be used for small scientific research. Therefore the data will be saved for a period of 5 years. This is the normal period for saving data according to scientific standards.

At the beginning of my internship and research I have signed a Confidentiality Agreement with AkzoNobel. This agreement has to be respected throughout this period of 5 years. This means that, also in consideration with the privacy of respondents, the data will not be available to any person in AkzoNobel or any third party. If there is an appeal on the data collected in the internship and/or research, I will contact AkzoNobel and ask BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof if the data can be used anonymously. After the period of 5 years, the data will be destroyed (Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 155-159).

## 2.8 Research Tools

*Interviewing:* What I had to keep in mind during this selection process of respondents, was to make sure people from different departments, functions and hierarchal levels were going to be interviewed for the data to be able to represent the whole R&D department. Due to the limited size and time of the research, not all employees could be interviewed. That is why, to get representable data, I had to interview at least one member of every department (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 268-273, Erlandson et al 1993, p. 83, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 50-52).

In the table below you can see the number of weeks I had for the research at every R&D location and the number of employees present. To get representable data, my tutor advised me to do at least ten to fifteen interviews in Sassenheim and Bangalore and five to ten interviews in Troy. Because this was the first time I was doing a research like this and because some interviews or appointments could turn out to go wrong, I aimed at doing 5 interviews more than needed as a buffer.

Table 2.1 Interviews

Location	Time (weeks)	Employees	Intv. min.	Aim	Result
Sassenheim	3	180	10-15	20	21
Bangalore	5	150	10-15	20	22
Troy	5	100	5-10	15	19

As shown in Table 2.1, more interviews were conducted than necessary. I decided to do so during the research because some interviews were not very fruitful, and others gave so much information that I wanted to interview them again and ask those respondents to react to some preliminary findings as well. The number of interviews is not representative of the entire number of R&D employees that I have met and spoken with during my research however. During my stay at the locations I had a lot of conversations with other employees as well. These interactions have been part of my field journal and some of the observations.

Finally, to address the content of the interviews: I have a short topic list with themes I asked the respondents about. These themes are related to their own culture, the culture of the other sites, examples of cross-cultural cooperation, (the influence of) cultural differences in this cooperation and ideas for improvements. This was all focused on the perception and experience of the respondents.

One of the things I had to adjust during my research was the way I asked questions to the respondents. During the research in Troy (United States), I started doing interviews and asking respondents what problems they had in the cooperation with other R&D sites. I never got an answer to that question. Respondents kept telling me there were no problems. At first I couldn't understand this because on the other hand they were also saying there were issues in the cooperation. Then in one interview, a respondent said there were "no problems, only challenges". I wondered if my choice of words influenced the answers I got, so I decided to change the word 'problem' to 'challenges'. By asking what challenges there were in the cooperation, I got the information needed.

*Participative observation:* During my stay at the three locations I was constantly observing activities of R&D employees which had to do with the cooperation with other R&D sites. In my field journal I used thick descriptions to write down my observations. I also kept a log of the observations.

The observations were used in the three case studies of specific transnational teams. These observations give extra information on group dynamics and relation between the sites and team members (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 273-276).

*Document study:* I had already finished a large document study during my internship, which provided me with enough background information of the organization to know where I could find the right people and other necessary information.

The documents I studied were mostly minutes of meetings, lab notes and other reports of departments, R&D information and employee information on CarNet (R&D intranet). The organization charts on CarNet helped me especially, to find employees in different departments and to know who works where. Most of the documents functioned as support for the execution of the research (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 276-281).

*Field journal:* As I have described in the paragraph on trustworthiness, the field journal helped me keep track of my activities and write down important experiences and observations. In this way I kept reflecting on my research. Important topics or topics that kept repeating, I discussed with my tutor and supervisor. This has supported the quality and focus of the research. Self-documentation was part of the field journal.

*Literature and theory:* As I have mentioned before, I used literature on cross-cultural cooperation as a theoretical frame which can be seen as a perspective on this subject next to the perspectives coming from the interviews. As I have explained in Chapter 1, the objective of this research is to find out how cultural differences influence the cross-cultural cooperation in R&D Car Refinishes.

The literature looks at three aspects of cultural differences and cooperation. First, at coping strategies in organization anthropology, secondly, at team dynamics in cross-cultural management theory, and finally at bridging activities in humanistic theory. The first two theoretical fields are used to analyse two cultural levels: the context level and the team level (Gelfand et al. 2007). Humanistic theory is used on both levels, giving more of a philosophical and reflective perspective on the research (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497, Smaling & Maso 1998, p. 18-27).

## 2.9 Research Plan

Within this section I briefly want to address the planning of the research. I had a total of 7,5 months to do an internship and the research at R&D Car Refinishes at the three locations in Sassenheim (The Netherlands), Bangalore (India) and Troy, Michigan (United States). The schedule presented in Table 2.2 below contains my planning on visits and deliverables:

Table 2.2 Research schedule

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Phase/Deliverable</b>
February 2008	November 16, 2008	Preparations	Research design
November 17, 2008	January 9, 2009	Internship SAS	Exploration
January 10, 2009	January 23, 2009	Report on SAS	Analysis SAS
January 24, 2009	March 2, 2009	Research in the TRY	Inquiry
March 3, 2009	March 19, 2009	Report on TRY	Analysis TRY
March 20, 2009	April 27, 2009	Research in BAN	Inquiry
April 28, 2009	May 17, 2009	Report on BAN	Analysis BAN
May 18, 2009	June 14, 2009	Research in SAS	Inquiry + internship report
June 15, 2009	February, 2010	Writing the thesis	Analysis SAS + Thesis report

The internship report was finished in July 2009. After the writing of the internship report, I started analysing the data of the three R&D sites and began to write the thesis. In August 2009 I gave a presentation for the R&D Management Team in Sassenheim on preliminary findings. This helped me to sharpen the focus of the thesis and the possible recommendations. The writing phase has been extended from the final date in July 2009 to February 2010. Moving the date of delivery of the thesis to February 2010 was discussed with BU R&D Manager Dr. Klaas Kruithof.<sup>18</sup>

In this chapter, an overview was given of the methodology and methods used in the research. The next chapter contains the study and discussion of theory on culture and cross-cultural cooperation in organizations.

<sup>18</sup> See the Research Plan in the Appendix.

## Chapter 3      Theoretical Frame

This Chapter is focused on the second and third sub-questions of this research: *How does this (perception of cultural differences) influence the efficiency of the international cooperation between the three R&D sites? And: How can the quality in general and the efficiency in particular, of cross-cultural cooperation, be improved by the R&D Management Team and staff?*

These questions will be answered from the literature by starting with a discussion on the study of culture. A few definitions of culture and the issues this raises for cultural research will be discussed. After handling the issue of the concept of culture (Part I *How Should We Study Culture*). A new approach to cultural research, using the theory of Van Dongen (1997) will be discussed. Cross-cultural cooperation in organizations will be discussed in the second part of this chapter (Part II *Theories on Cross-Cultural Cooperation*). In this part theories of Organization Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Management Theory and Humanistic Theory will be described and later used for analysis and recommendations.



### Part I      How Should We Study Culture?

#### 3.1      The Definition of Culture

To give an idea of the different definitions of the concept of culture, I will outline three different definitions of three different researchers: Hofstede, Sinha and Gelfand et al. These definitions were chosen to give examples of the old ways of studying culture (Hofstede), the new ways of studying culture (Gelfand et al.) and an approach which combines the two (Sinha).<sup>19</sup>

Hofstede defines culture as *‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’* (French 2007, p. 16). In this view collective programming takes place through socialisation in which the older generation transmits values to the next generation. In his research, he used four dimensions of values on which cultures can vary: *individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity* (Jacob 2005, p. 514-521, Sinha 2004, p. 71, 75-76). As can be observed, this definition focuses on the similar patterns in the minds of a group of people, and how these patterns determine their (mutual) actions.

Sinha (2004) acknowledged the fact that there are many different definitions of culture. But instead of discussing the differences, he comes to a list of *“common features that constitute the essential parts of culture.”* (Sinha 2004, p. 71). In summary, he sees culture as the totality

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<sup>19</sup> I chose these researchers because Hofstede is famous for his research on national cultures and often used in organizations, as in AkzoNobel R&D, to define a culture and understand cultural differences. Sinha was also chosen for his research on multinationals in India which is relevant for this thesis as AkzoNobel has a lab in India. Finally, Gelfand e.o. was chosen because these scholars support new ways of studying culture and specialise in cross-cultural organizational behavior.

of “*assumptions, beliefs, values and norms that enables people to maintain continuity across generations and yet adapt to changing internal and external demands.*” (Sinha 2004, p. 71). According to Sinha, the four entities mentioned above are interrelated and influence human behaviour. (Sinha 2004, p. 71-71). This definition of culture highlights the static and changeable aspects of culture.

Gelfand et al. (2007) give a highly detailed version of a definition of culture. According to Gelfand et al., culture can be described as the total of “*behaviour, rituals, habits, beliefs, ideas, values, norms, roles, motives, attitudes and ideas about the social and physical world*” (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496). We could see this as an extended version of Sinha’s definition of culture.

The different definitions show that there is no consensus on how to define culture and what cultural elements should be part of that definition. Apart from the lack of consensus, there are two problems when we try to define culture:

When we look at Hofstede’s definition of culture, he assumes that the aspects of culture are universal and applicable to all cultures. By using these dimensions, he presumes there is a meta-culture from which we can create a context for measurements with universal validity. In this case, culture is an entity with clearly defined properties. A researcher also belongs to a culture, which makes the research and research approach one that is culturally rooted as well. How we approach the subject and what we find important is the consequence of belonging to a culture (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. xiii).

The risk is that Western standards are used to define and evaluate other cultures. This could lead to social stratification through which cultures are evaluated and placed in order, ranked from high to low. This would imply that some cultures are better than others. According to Jacob (2005) and Van Dongen (1997), there is no such thing as a meta-culture which is scientifically neutral and can be used to define other cultures. This is something we should avoid, but it does leave us with the question of how to research culture when we can’t define it. The first problem this creates for researchers is that a definition of culture is not sufficient to do cultural research (Jacob 2005, p. 515, 519-521, 525, van Dongen 1997, p. 85, 93, Francesco and Gold 2005). This problem will later be further discussed. The next paragraph will first elaborate on the second problem of a definition of culture.

The second problem is that in these definitions of the concept of culture, culture is seen as a homogeneous entity. To Hofstede, his cultural dimensions give a static frame in which we can place a culture and compare it to others, assuming that when we define a culture it stays the same and all the people belonging to it will act alike. But as Van Dongen (1997) and Jacob (2005) state, culture is not a static entity. Actually, culture is not an entity at all. Jacob states: ‘*...cultural boundaries need to be construed as permeable, rather than as walls which differentiate and segregate.*’ (Jacob 2005, p. 515). Cultural purity does not exist: people belong to different cultural groups; people tend to be hybrids, a mix of different cultures.

In conclusion: 1. Cultures change over time and 2. People belong to a mix of cultures and are heterogeneous. This makes it impossible to define culture.

### **3.2 National Cultures and Organizational Cultures**

The concept of culture is not limited to national culture; as argued above, people belong to multiple cultures. There are different cultures within a country, but also within an organization. According to Sinha (2004) “*the organizational culture is a subset of societal culture. However, the organizational culture is not wholly determined by the surrounding societal culture.*” (Sinha 2004, p. 77). (Sinha 2004, p. 77-79, French 2007, p. 18-20).



Gelfand et al. (2007) distinguished different levels in a culture:

1. The cultural or context level<sup>20</sup>: the national background, culture and context.
2. The organizational level: characteristics of the organization and its context.
3. The team level: characteristics and context of the team.
4. The individual level: personal characteristics and context.
5. The global context: how the different levels influence each other and can be seen in a global context. (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497).

Although societal culture is included in the way people in organizations form their culture, the context level (1.) is still limited to national level. This means subcultures within a nation are not being taken into account while studying an organizational culture.

Gelfand et al. (2007) distinguish different cultural levels, which lead to having a multi-level perspective: this shows how the different levels interact with each other and how this forms the culture of a specific group. This makes the research of culture more complex but provides a broadened scope.

### **3.3 The Cross-Cultural Interface: a Methodological Shift**

The change of scope from researching culture as a homogeneous entity to a multilevel perspective, implicates a change in focus from comparing cultures and cultural values to studying the interface of cultures. An interface is a point of contact between two or more cultures. In the interface, cultural differences become visible and are negotiated. People become aware of commonalities and differences. The negotiation refers to discussing how to work with each other while dealing with these cultural differences (van Dongen 1997, p. 69-73). By studying the interface of cultures, we can focus on how, for instance, values of a national culture interact with values of an organizational culture, and which context factors play a part in negotiating the differences between those values (Ashkanasy et al. 2000, p. 395-396, Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 497, Jacob 2005, p. 514-526).

Van Dongen adds that we should use terms such as homogenizing and heterogenizing to help understand cultural confrontation and seek ways of managing diversity. These concepts can help us understand the ability and activities of a culture to absorb or reject different cultural elements in a cultural encounter (Jacob 2005, p. 515-521, van Dongen 1997, p. 69-73, 105-107, Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 497).

#### *Integrating definitions of culture in the study of the interface*

As we have seen in the discussion on the concept of culture, there is no meta-culture which we can use to define cultures. And culture is heterogeneous because people incorporate a mix of cultures, and cultures change over time. Does this mean we have to reject all definitions of culture and cultural comparative studies? No, there are certain things in these studies we can use in our study of the interface of cultures.

First of all, the different descriptions of the elements of culture help to give an idea of what cultures consist of and what to look at in cultural research. For instance, the elements described by Gelfand et al. (2007)<sup>21</sup> give us a frame to describe an organizational culture.

Secondly, a description and indexation of different national cultures gives an idea of the features of these cultures. Although not sufficient, and seen from a Western point of view, it

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<sup>20</sup> Gelfand et al. (2007) calls this level the cultural level. In the present research, this has been changed to 'the context level', because it is not a national culture that has been researched, but the context of the R&D locations in a national culture.

<sup>21</sup> Culture is the total of behavior, rituals, habits, beliefs, ideas, values, norms, roles, motives, attitudes and ideas about the social and physical world. (Gelfand et al. 2007: 496).

gives some indication of what a culture is like. These descriptions are more like a first sketch of a culture, instead of the full picture. When these descriptions are used, the validity of the statements in these descriptions should be tested and verified, for instance, by asking people who belong to that specific culture if they agree with these statements or not. This way, the risk of using false descriptions and stereotyping can be minimized.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, these descriptions and comparisons have been used in the past. Theories with typifications of cultures, like the ones from Hofstede, have been spread over the world and are still being used by people in organizations. In some cases, the typifications of Hofstede have been incorporated in the culture of a specific group. The typifications have become part of their assumptions, beliefs and ideas, causing biases and stereotypes. Researchers should use these definitions as material containing information of the possible biases of a group, and to be aware of personal stereotypes and biases (French 2007, p. 27-28, 39-40, van Marrewijk 2008, p. 3-4, van Marrewijk 2009, p. 23).

To summarize, the discussions of definitions of culture has resulted in the statement that the interface of cultures should be studied. Definitions can be used in these studies if they are used to become aware of biases of the researched and researcher.

The next part of this chapter, Part II *Theories on Cross-Cultural Cooperation*, will go into the specific field of cross-cultural research in organizations. Here the theories of Organization Anthropology, Cross-Cultural Management Theory and Humanistic Theory will be discussed. Organization Anthropology, with its theory on Coping Strategies, will focus on the context level. Cross-Cultural Management Theory, with its focus on Transnational Teams, will focus on the team level of the cross-cultural cooperation.

## Part II Theories on Cross-Cultural Cooperation

### 3.4 Coping Strategies – the Context Level

To answer the question of how people cope with cultural differences in cross-cultural cooperation, the field of organization anthropology researched the management of diversity in alliances. Cross-cultural cooperation takes place in a context in which power and politics are part of the process. Studies of the cooperation between groups with a different culture have resulted in the formulation of coping strategies. The strategies show how power and commitment in groups (consisting of different cultures) is established. For good cooperation, a balance of power between the different cultural groups is needed (van Marrewijk 2008, p. 5, van Marrewijk 2004, p. 10, van Marrewijk 1999, p. 339, Bate 2002). Based on their research Child & Faulkner (1998) describe four coping strategies:

#### 1. Domination

In the domination strategy, one of the present cultures in the alliance or cooperation becomes dominant, and cultural integration means adjusting to that culture.

#### 2. Segregation

The segregation strategy consists of a balance between the different cultural groups. There is no dominant culture; all cultures have the same influence in the cooperation or alliance. Cultures are not mixed and therefore stay the same as they were before the cooperation.

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<sup>22</sup> Stereotyping and ethnization will be described in the next part of this chapter (Part II *Theories on Cross-Cultural Cooperation*).

### 3. Synergy

The synergy strategy is a strategy in which different cultures merge. This means (some) elements of the different cultures are used to create a new culture which is implemented in all the groups. This results in all the groups having the same culture.

### 4. Break-down

The break-down strategy is not a separate strategy, but a negative result of unbalance between groups. This strategy is a result of bad cooperation during a domination or segregation strategy. When a domination strategy is practised against the will of one of the cultural groups, it creates resistance which eventually leads to a break-down of the cooperation. When a segregation strategy is practised, but the balance in power and/or commitment is affected, for instance by having different loyalties, it can result in a break-down of the cooperation as well (van Marrewijk 2004, p. 10-11, Child & Faulkner 1998, p. 245-250).

These strategies are similar to the scale of Van Dongen (1997) mentioned earlier: homogenizing versus heterogenizing. According to Van Dongen, cultures can be confronted with the question: To what extent can they accept and stimulate (cultural) variation? She asks: “*Does a culture homogenize or heterogenize?*” (van Dongen 1997, p. 107). Is there a tendency towards cultural fixation or is a culture open to new perspectives and input? The scale of Van Dongen applies to domination and segregation strategies. Domination is similar to homogenizing activities, and segregation similar to heterogenizing activities. Synergy would be a combination of the two.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Cultural resistance: Ethnization and stereotypes*

As Van Marrewijk (2004) points out, different groups in an alliance or cooperation can have good intentions, but if they are not able to cope with diverse management styles and cultures, it can result in the slow down of decision-making processes, frustrations and eventually conflicts or even a break-down of the cooperation. (van Marrewijk 2004, p. 10)

As can be observed from the coping strategies, cross-cultural cooperation takes place in a context in which power is an important aspect. In a break-down strategy, forms of resistance can be found. One of these forms is called *ethnization*. Ethnization means purposefully enlarging cultural differences and strategically using ethnicity to gain power or sabotage the cooperation (van Marrewijk 1999, p. 277-280, 339, van Marrewijk 2004, p. 13-14).

Enlarging cultural differences is also seen in stereotyping. Schneider & Barsoux (2003) define stereotypes as ‘*mental files that are used to help process new information by comparing it with past experience and knowledge.*’ (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 13). The problem with stereotyping is not so much the existence of stereotypes, but the way they are used. Stereotypes are (often) insufficient and incomplete images of a certain group of people. Because the descriptions are not sufficient, the first problem is that we cannot predict nor explain the behaviour of an individual of that group with 100% accuracy. Another problem is that people tend to fix their mental files trying to put new information into old files instead of changing their files. People also forget that individual behaviour can be different from the stereotypical behaviour of the cultural group the individual belongs to.

Because stereotypes are used as fixed files containing truths about other people’s cultures, people are not able to change their cultural images. This lack of awareness can be an obstacle in cultural encounters. Research on cross-cultural management shows that managers who are aware of their own stereotypes and are open to modify them, are more successful and effective in business than managers who deny having stereotypes or use them as fixed truths.

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<sup>23</sup> In the Appendix, another scale related to the coping strategies can be found.

Stereotypes can contain valuable information, but according to Schneider & Barsoux it is important to be open and able to check and recheck those mental files during and after new cultural encounters. This way the mental files get continuously updated and there is room for cultural diversity (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 13-15, French 2007, p. 87, 88).

To get back to forms of resistance, stereotypes could purposefully not be updated or revised because they are used as a form of resistance to sabotage cooperation.

### 3.5 Transnational Teams – the Team Level

This section will discuss Cross-Cultural Management Theory. To find out how, at the team level, the team dynamics influence processes of cross-cultural cooperation, the problems and stimulating elements of transnational teams will be presented.

If well managed and organized, transnational teams can be used as a ‘glue technology’: “*encouraging cohesiveness among otherwise independent, autonomous national subsidiaries and other business and functional units.*” (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 217). Employees will not only strengthen their networks throughout the company, but also learn to function within different cultures. This will support organizational integration and organizational learning. (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 216-217, Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491-492). But what are the conditions for creating a successful transnational team? According to Cross-cultural Management Theory, the following elements are needed:

1. Creating a common purpose (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
2. Setting specific performance goals (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
3. Having the right mix of skills (technical, problem-solving and interpersonal) (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
4. Having the necessary external support and resources (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
5. Establishing task and process strategies (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
6. Evaluating and providing feedback on team performance (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
7. Stimulating discussion to come to a shared strategy (goal, task and process) of how the team members will work together (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
8. Leaders should prevent communication breakdowns and surface hidden knowledge (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
9. Developing norms of meaningful participation (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
10. Developing a strong team identity (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
11. Creating mutual trust, commitment and cultural sensitivity (French 2007)

There are also difficulties in the cooperation of transnational teams. Usually organizations are sceptical about teams which consist of members from multiple cultures, and when they tend to live in different countries, it is felt that the challenge to make a team successful is even bigger.

The problems which can arise in transnational teams are:

1. Effort-withholding behaviours (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)
2. High levels of ethnocentrism (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)
3. In-group biases (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)
4. High levels of task and/or emotional conflicts (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)
5. Interpersonal conflict (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)
6. Communication problems (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)
7. Potential frustration and dissatisfaction (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)

Transnational teams do face an extra challenge compared to mono cultural national teams. Most of the time team members do not work at the same location. They use a lot of electronic communication tools for meetings and other team activities and information exchange (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491). Teams that work from different/dispersed locations and time zones are also called 'virtual teams'. A virtual team is "a group of people who interact through independent tasks guided by common purpose and work across space, time and organizational boundaries with links strengthened by webs of communication technologies." (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244)

Most people assume that face-to-face meetings are necessary for creating social relations which people need to be able to work together. But research indicates that teams which only use technology to communicate can be just as effective. It appears that the effectiveness depends on the match between the use of a communication technology and the type of activity in the task. It comes down to choosing the right media for each message. Research indicates also that face-to-face meetings are needed in complex situations such as first meetings in which the team needs to clarify purpose, procedures, roles, and work on teambuilding to establish team identity and commitment. Computer-mediated meetings are useful for routine-type activities, like routine tasks, fact-finding, informing people, and working efficiently despite differences in time zones. The latter also saves costs due to less travel expenses (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244-248).

To summarize, transnational teams can be as effective as heterogeneous national teams. But to function properly and deal with the extra challenges of cultural differences and the physical dispersion, teams and their leaders should think about the conditions they need, to make their communication and cooperation successful. This goes from discussing underlying assumptions to more practical considerations for communicating, like considering different time zones and the use of different types of media (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244-248, Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491-492).

### **3.6 Humanistic Theory: Bonding, Bridging and Boundary-Spanners**

The third and final field of study which will be discussed is Humanistic Theory. This discussion will focus on the third sub-question: *How can the quality in general and the efficiency in particular, of cross-cultural cooperation, be improved by the R&D Management Team and staff?* The humanist theories presented here will be used as material for recommendations in the final chapter of this thesis. This will provide the thesis with a more philosophical and reflective perspective on the conclusions of the research.

Maas (2009 a) tells us more about the need for a strong and safe social base to be able to deal with different people and cultures outside of one's own group. In order to *bridge* cultural differences, people need to *bond* first. *Bonding* is focused on internal contact within a homogeneous group which strengthens the own (social) identity. *Bridging* on the other hand, is the expansion of ones network or contacts with people from other (different) groups. This leads to a heterogeneous network of contacts.

We do have to be careful that the bonding process is not of an exclusive nature or restricted by internal focus alone. There has to be the willingness to step out of one's own cultural group and approach and connect with others. Bonding is a condition for bridging cultural differences (Maas 2009 a, p. 27-28).

We have to realize that not all people are able to step out of their own world and approach 'strangers' and try and build a relationship with them. Many philosophers, like Jaques Derrida and Charles Taylor, have studied and discussed the issues multiculturalism raises, more

specifically the fear of ‘strangers’ and clashes between cultures.<sup>24</sup> Although this is an important aspect of the philosophical study of culture and cultural differences, it is not possible to elaborate on this subject in this thesis due to the time limit and primary focus on the practice of R&D Car Refinishes. I will nevertheless, recommend this subject for further studies. What can be kept in mind while proceeding further though, is that approaching ‘strangers’ and dealing with cultural differences can be difficult for people.

Getting back to the question of how to improve the cooperation between the three labs, we will look at what makes a cross-cultural cooperation successful. Newman (1992) has studied what tools we can use for success in cross-cultural cooperation. In his studies, he discovered the role of boundary-spanners. Boundary-spanners are people who are able to build a bridge between two different organizations, or two or more groups with different cultures. A boundary-spanner is a person who performs the bridging activity between the different groups. The competencies of a boundary-spanner are:

1. An empathetic understanding of the customs, values, beliefs, resources and commitments (culture and context) of the people and organization on each side of the boundary.
2. A good understanding of the technical issues involved in the relationship.
3. The ability to explain and interpret both 1. and 2. to people on both sides of the boundary.

According to Newman (1992), in a cultural setting this usually means that the boundary-spanner has to be a (native) speaker of both the local languages to fully understand and explain the cultural meanings of and to both parties.

It is hard to find people with all these qualities. Another option according to Newman is to make a team of two persons of which one person can account for the cultural competency (1.) and the other for the technical competency (2.). This way the bridge can be built as well.

Considering the theory of Maas (2009 a) of bonding and bridging, it is necessary that a boundary-spanner is accepted by both groups. If one of the groups reject the boundary-spanner, it is not possible to build the bridge between the two. You need a point on both sides to stretch a line.

Apart from the boundary-spanner, for stimulating good communication, we need to look at the role of other group members. What should they do to create a successful cross-cultural cooperation? According to Maas (2009 b), we should look at how the separate groups prepare themselves for an encounter (this could be a meeting, email or conference call).

In an interface of different cultures, we have to consider the fact that the groups have different ideas about communicating and social conditions in cooperation. In most cases, group members are aware of the fact that these differences are there, but don’t know how to deal with them. For instance, a group from India could be focused on the relation and environment in communicating with others, while a group from The Netherlands could be focused on the content and process of the communication. These are two different approaches in cooperation. Maas (2009 b) says group members should be aware of the process in the interface and make conscious decisions on how to prepare for such an encounter and what needs to be done during the encounter to stimulate good information exchange or discussion. This means, apart from the normal preparations for meetings etc. (in which the focus lies on the content you’re discussing), the focus now should also lie on the way in which that content can be communicated, taking into account what different social conditions need to be considered.

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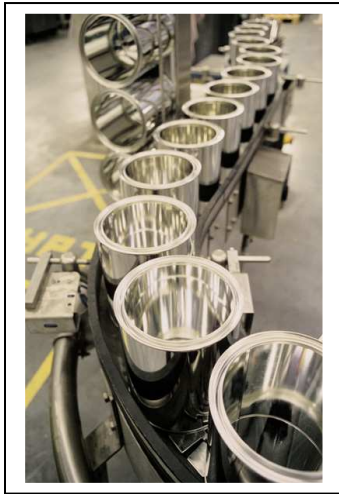
<sup>24</sup> For further readings on this topic see: Borradori, G. (2003). *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: The University of Chicago. And Taylor, C. (1994). *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The social conditions are like gateways to the other culture and to one's own. As a result, this might mean that meetings should be prepared in special preparation meetings. This way, every group creates an extra layer between the content preparation and the actual encounter with the other group (Maas 2009 b).

In this chapter, the theories of Organization Anthropology on Coping Strategies, Cross-Cultural Management Theory on Transnational Teams and Humanistic Theory on bridging cultural differences, were discussed.

In the following chapter, Chapter 4, the data from the interviews and observations will be presented. The first part (Part I *Perspectives on Culture and Cooperation – the Context Level*) of this chapter summarizes the data on the context level (for every individual location). The second part (Part II *Case Studies of R&D Project Teams – the Team Level*) summarizes the data on the team level, presented in three case studies (between the locations). In Chapter 5 the theory from Chapter 3 will be used to analyse data from Chapter 4 at these two levels.

## Chapter 4 Data Presentation



In this chapter the first and second sub-question of the research will be answered: *How do the employees of the R&D sites of Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim perceive cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural issues at work? And How does this perception of cultural differences influences the cooperation in general and the efficiency in particular?*

In the research the interviews and observations have provided a huge amount of data regarding the perspectives of R&D employees on their cross-cultural cooperation. The data collected at the three R&D sites in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim will be presented here.

This chapter is divided into two parts:

Part I *Perspectives on Culture and Cooperation – the Context Level* contains the data from the interviews per location which are related to the context level. The data from each location will be discussed separately: First Troy, than Bangalore and finally Sassenheim. The summary of the interviews from each location will give a perspective on how employees of that particular location see the culture of and cooperation with the other two locations. Therefore the data are organized by topics: culture, cooperation and other aspects. Also a short summary is given on how these employees view their own culture. The headers indicate from which location the data is coming (for instance “Troy:”) and what the topic of the data is (for instance “The culture of Bangalore”).<sup>25</sup>

Part II *Case Studies of R&D Project Teams – the Team Level* contains the data from the case studies. Three case studies will be described. These descriptions are organized according to two perspectives: First the perspective on the cooperation of project members from one location, than the perspective of project members from the other location. Finally, a comparison of the two perspectives is given.

Please note that the footnotes contain valuable information on the codes and references that are being used in the presentation of the data.

### Part I Perspectives on Culture and Cooperation – the Context Level<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.1 Data from Troy

There is not a lot of cooperation between Troy and Bangalore. There is one global project in which Troy and Bangalore work together. Apart from this project, they sometimes share information and help each other in the IPD department. Because of the low intensity of the interaction between these two locations, not all respondents could say something about the culture of, or cooperation with people in Bangalore. Only a few quotes from the interviews

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<sup>25</sup> In this chapter the boxes next to the text contain anonymous quotations of respondents. The quotes have been presented in the original language. Translations of the Dutch quotes can be found in the Appendix.



give insight into the way people in Troy perceive the culture of Bangalore. These have been summarized under *Troy: The culture of Bangalore* and *Troy: The cooperation with Bangalore*.<sup>27</sup>

Troy and Sassenheim have a lot of interaction with each other and cooperate in several projects. Some departments only speak with people in Sassenheim once in a while, while others interact daily, like the IPD department. This cooperation happens at all the (hierarchical) levels of the organization. A lot of data has been drawn from the interviews, which contains information on how people in Troy perceive the culture of Sassenheim and how they feel about this close cooperation. This has been summarized under *Troy: The culture of Sassenheim* and *Troy: The cooperation with Sassenheim*.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Troy: The culture of Bangalore*

- People in Bangalore are very dedicated to their work.

Compared to people in Troy, one respondent feels that people in Bangalore are more dedicated to their work than people in Troy.<sup>29</sup>

*“In Bangalore they are very dedicated to their work. A lot of people are here, but generically in our society it is not so much anymore. It is give and take.”*  
[T7:15]

- Bangalore lab is a more rigid and formal organization.

One respondent said that he feels that Bangalore has a more hierarchical organization with more formal processes compared to Troy.<sup>30</sup>

- People in Bangalore don't challenge others a lot.

One respondent said that Americans and Indians are the same when it comes to challenging what people say, and asking questions. Troy and Bangalore act alike when you compare them to the Dutch. People in Bangalore and in Troy don't challenge their bosses or supervisors. According to another respondent, this can be explained by the fact that people in Troy who are higher in the organization's hierarchy don't want to be challenged, and you can get fired if you would. They don't know why it is the same in Bangalore, but they feel the same cultural distance to Sassenheim on this topic.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Troy: The cooperation with Bangalore*

The three respondents who made statements on this topic were very positive about the cooperation, but also mentioned some issues due to miscommunication. I will describe the statements according to theme.

*“The cooperation goes very well, everybody helps out great and the communications goes well too.”* [T3:1]

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<sup>26</sup> The data has been organized with the scientific software programme Atlas-ti. The data will be presented as a summary of what respondents have mentioned on certain topics. In the footnotes, information on how many respondents have mentioned the topic can be found. The codes are used to refer to the respondent and the quotation number in the Atlas-ti programme. The abbreviations 'T', 'B' and 'S' stand for the three R&D locations Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim. An example: T14:5 = respondent from Troy (T), respondent no. 14, quote no. 5.

Because this is a qualitative research, no quantifying statements can be made about the topics and interviews. However, the codes in the footnotes do give some information on the relevance and value of the topics, in terms of the number of respondents that have mentioned it.

<sup>27</sup> T14:5.

<sup>28</sup> T14:5.

<sup>29</sup> T4:10.

<sup>30</sup> T10:3.

<sup>31</sup> T7:4.

- Dependencies

People in Troy feel they get the support they need from Bangalore. Respondents also mention the effect of how well they can reach people in Bangalore. For instance, what people in Troy find convenient in the cooperation between Troy and Bangalore is that in Bangalore people don't take long holidays or leaves during the summer like the people in Sassenheim. Because of this, they can work at their normal pace and still cooperate during the summer. This has a positive effect on the cooperation according to Troy.<sup>32</sup>

- Improvements

Several respondents find the people in Bangalore very flexible in how they work, and are positive about their knowledge of the American market and its different climate conditions. On the other hand, people in Troy would like Bangalore to have more knowledge of the customers of Troy and this is what Bangalore could improve. In their opinion the cooperation is a learning experience for both the labs.

Another point they feel can be improved, is the clarity of the feedback people in Troy get from people in Bangalore. In some cases they would like more (background) information or explanations for specific questions on product wishes.

*“Bangalore is not as clear, but we do get feedback from them. For instance in Bangalore they say they need a lower viscosity. But then to us it is not clear why they need that and how much. We do not get a lot of information on the ‘why’ and therefore we sometimes make solutions which they didn’t want. Or something could have been solved in a different way. But we didn’t know. When you explore different options and have an open exchange you do better.” [T14:2]*

In this case for example, Troy would like more background information with the request for adjusting a paint formula, to get a better and faster fit between the problem and the solution.<sup>33</sup>

*Troy: The culture of Sassenheim*

- Dutch people challenge you and check your statements.

First of all, people in Troy say that Dutch people challenge others a lot. They also want to know the ideas and assumptions behind statements. To some people in Troy this was first experienced as an attack. But after working with people in Sassenheim more often, they came to understand that this is not an attack, it is their way of discussing a subject.<sup>34</sup>

*“The Dutch always challenge you. You can’t just say something. They will check if you are right. (..) The Dutch will even challenge the CEO’s. The rest was like ‘Yes, sir’. When you understand how they talk, the nature and character, then you understand that they are not attacking you.” [T4:7, T4:8]*

- People in Sassenheim can talk a subject to death or over think an idea.

Related to the previous statement, people in Sassenheim want a lot of information and are very argumentative. The opinion

*“They want to know theory behind everything. But the American way is more like hurry up and jump into it. Sometimes (person SAS) and (person SAS) talk the subject to death. We’re just like: Let’s just try it. So yeah I definitely see that as a difference between Europe and here.” [T12:4]*

<sup>32</sup> T2:6, T3:1, T4:2.

<sup>33</sup> T1:12, T1:19, T3:6, T4:2, T4:3, T4:6, T7:2, T7:3, T7:4, T7:10, T7:15, T9:16, T10:3, T10:10, T12:1, T14:2.

<sup>34</sup> T4:7, T4:8, T4:9, T7:4, T12:4, T12:5, T14:12.

of the people in Troy is that this sometimes leads to too much talking about a subject, which is not necessary and quite the opposite of the way people in Troy go about their discussions and make decisions for testing.<sup>35</sup>

*Troy: The cooperation with Sassenheim*

- Open communication

In general people in Troy are positive about the cooperation with Sassenheim. One of the respondents feels there is an open communication between the team members of the two sites.

*“We are pretty open. The communication, I think, is pretty good. We’ll tell each other what our results are. We are not really afraid to get bad results or good results. So I think that helps, because the group is pretty open.(..)” [T12:9]*

In this example the open communication stimulates the cooperation between the two sites.<sup>36</sup>

- Holidays

An obstacle in the cooperation is the way in which people in Sassenheim go on vacation. During the summer people in Sassenheim go on vacation for weeks in a row. For people in Troy it is very inconvenient to have to work with Sassenheim when so many people there are not present.

*“(..) in the summer Europe shuts down, people go on holiday. In America they still work. So you cannot get in touch with people in Europe in the summer. [T7:4]*

*“(..) They give different perspectives on the project and what should be the next step. It is not really clear who eventually decides what will happen. Sometimes it is very complicated to understand what the the people in SAS want.” [T12:2]*

- Decision making

Respondents from Troy get confused when it comes to understanding people in Sassenheim: When they have discussions with each other, it is unclear what the result and final decision of that discussion is, nor is it clear who makes that final decision.<sup>37</sup>

- Improvements

Finally, related to a specific case in which people in Troy find it complicated to cooperate with Sassenheim, they formulated some advice on how to improve the cooperation. This group consists of members from Troy and Sassenheim. In the cooperation they use a lot of emails to communicate ideas and decisions, especially from Sassenheim to Troy. This respondent explains that the difficulty is in the different ways in which Sassenheim and Troy use email to communicate. This emerges from the following quotes.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> T4:7, T4:8, T12:4, T12:13.

<sup>36</sup> T12:9.

<sup>37</sup> T7:4, T7:15.

<sup>38</sup> T12:14, T12:15, T12:16.

*“The way we communicate with (the manager) is we’ll kind of go through (the manager). (The manager) wants to make sure that what we are sending, he agrees with. Like when it comes to data. So he wants to review emails and that before they are sent out. So we basically do it that way. For send a message to (the manager) and (group leader) will forward it (to Sassenheim). (..) “The reason why it works then is that it gets us all talking and makes sure that we all agree with the results and then we can send them on. So we can make one clear consistent message versus five different ideas.” [T12:14, T12:15]*

According to members in this group, Sassenheim works in a different way. They don’t discuss things within the group before sending it out.

*“(..)To me it seems like those guys, if any one of them comes up with an idea, then they will just quickly fire it off. And it doesn’t seem like it is bundled through anybody. It is like they are more independent, if that would be the right way to say it. They’re more independent on when they communicate. Which it does lead to some confusion because one person will (..) tell us to do something. And then (another person) will come up and say like maybe the exact opposite. And then we are like: Well, what do we do? (..) So that’s where it can get confusing. We’re not being able to following information through one particular person. (..) And we are kind of like: Well, maybe if you guys slow down on email for a second and make a decision together and then send us just a couple (of emails). Send us the conclusion and then an email with explanation.” [T12:16]*

In this group, the people in Troy are organized and communicate through one spokesperson or manager, while people in Sassenheim communicate individually. This is confusing to the group members in Troy, because they don’t get a clear idea of what the group members in Sassenheim want them to do. The group members in Troy think it would help if the group members in Sassenheim would meet and have discussions with one another and only send the conclusions of their meeting to Troy and give them a clear assignment.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Troy: Other aspects of the cooperation with Bangalore and Sassenheim*

- Time difference

One of the things R&D employees mentioned in Troy was the time difference between the R&D sites. The time difference with Sassenheim is six hours and with Bangalore eleven and half hours. When employees in Troy want to call someone in Sassenheim, they have to do this in the morning to be able to reach someone within office hours. For calls to Bangalore, they are usually not able to do this without making an appointment for the call, because office hours do not overlap. They deal with this by coming in for work early and call Bangalore when they are at the end of their day.

*“I had conference call about a group of colors. I called with Bangalore and Mexico. It is difficult to call them because 6.00 am here is still late for Bangalore. Time difference is the biggest hurdle.” [T4:4]*

<sup>39</sup> T1:12, T4:4, T4:6, T4:9, T7:1, T7:12, T8:4, T12:9, T12:13, T12:14, T12:15, T12:16, T12:17, T13:3.

*“We schedule calls, that helps. Questions we send by email back and forth. Then we decide to call. In conference calls people will give a report and tell their issues and say if they need support or help.”*

[T4:6]

In some cases the sites depend upon each other for information or other support. If Troy can't go on working without the help or assistance of Bangalore, then this project or activity has to be put on hold until the next day.<sup>40</sup>

All groups email each other a lot. According to employees in Troy, this helps in the communication to bridge over the time difference and to get answers quickly the next day. The email stays in someone's inbox till he comes to work. When someone from Troy comes in the next day, Sassenheim and Bangalore have been able to answer the emails already so you can start your project again.<sup>41</sup>

- Language & accent

For R&D employees in Troy it is sometimes difficult to understand what people in Bangalore are saying due to their different accent while speaking English. Sassenheim is easier to understand, their English is ok.

*“Sometimes it's also difficult to understand what they are saying. For instance their word order. First they will say 'add reducer'. Later they will say 'don't add'. Later it will be 'after addition'. (Understanding) Bangalore, Mexico and Jakarta is hard, Sassenheim is ok. The global language of Akzo is English.”* [T4:4]

Sometimes there is miscommunication when the use or meaning of specific words is different. In these cases they usually found out after a while that the words were used differently.

The language used within AkzoNobel between people from different parts of the world is English. This means that only the Americans in Troy can speak in their native language. For people in Sassenheim and Bangalore, this is not the case.<sup>42</sup>

- Use of media

The global R&D labs make use of different kinds of media: email, telephone, MSN Messenger, conference calls, and video conferencing. They also have a shared working place and intranet (CarNet) to place and retrieve documents. They use the different kinds of media to share information and report on the project status and procedures. In meetings through a conference call they present PowerPoint presentations to each other by using a shared internet space. The goal of the meetings is to share information, update each other on the progress with the projects and discuss (new) ideas. This happens in the cooperation with Sassenheim as well as with Bangalore. Apart from email and telephone, FedEx is often used to send samples of paint or sprayed panels for testing at the other sites.<sup>43</sup>

*“In conference calls people will give a report and tell their issues and say if they need support or help.”* [T4:6]

Meetings are mostly held through conference calls. From the perspective of the people in Troy the meetings are ok, but there are some issues with the medium they use. This has to do with the technology. Due to a bad connection there are silences during the meeting and

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<sup>40</sup> T1:10.

<sup>41</sup> T3:8, T4:4, T4:6, T10:6, T14:4.

<sup>42</sup> T4:4, T8:7.

<sup>43</sup> T1:10, T3:4, T4:4, T4:6, T8:4, T12:2, T17:2.

people don't know if the others are still on the line or got disconnected. Another problem is the use or position of the microphone. When at one location people are not close enough to the microphone, the other locations on the other side of the line cannot hear them well or sometimes not at all. This causes frustration and delays in the information sharing process.<sup>44</sup>

*"(..) Typical because for Sassenheim to other places they have a big room where the table is as long as the room. If you have one microphone, then you cannot hear the people on the other side of the table. In Bangalore it is (groupleader) and (chemist). The others are close to the microphone. Other people mention it that we can't hear that (what Sassenheim says). And we were probably like that as well in the beginning a couple of years ago, but the people in the room (in Sassenheim) don't realize it." [T7:1]*

The problem here is that because of the bad usage of microphones or the bad quality of the sound, it is hard to communicate.

- Market difference

One of the things a couple of respondents and a group of managers mentioned is that there is a difference between the departments within R&D, not specified to a location, if you look at the markets they serve and the workload and pass this brings as characteristics to their work.

Another point regarding markets in different locations is the differences between the regional markets and the knowledge about those markets. Two respondents from the same team mention that their counterparts in Bangalore do not know a lot about the American market. This is a difficulty while making a global project, because they do not see what demands they need to fulfil. Apart from this, it is an issue that the R&D sites have to deal with the customers of their own region although the product was made by a different site. What works for the market in Asia does not necessarily work for the market in America. The respondents in Troy find this difficult.

An example of the market in America being different from the market in Europe is the colour palette. European cars have more conservative colours, less special effect colours. But this is also because the climate is different and asks for different types of paint, or paint with different characteristics.<sup>45</sup>

- Meetings

Meetings between the R&D locations are usually held through a conference call. Two or three locations call each other at the same time to have a meeting. One of the problems indicated with respect to these meetings is that some conversations or discussions are very local. For instance, when people in Sassenheim talk about a subject which is not relevant for people in Troy and/or Bangalore. In this case those locations have to wait till Sassenheim is done. Sometimes the quality

*"Some conversations are very local and few people will get involved. (person from Bangalore) is the formula owner so he is involved in everything...he is the formula owner for CBP so he needs to know everything that is going on. (..) If the formula owner is not there (on vacation or else) then they have to wait to address the issue till he comes back. In the last CBP meeting (person from Bangalore) was on vacation." [T7:2]*

<sup>44</sup> T12:2, T1:10, T17:2, T3:4, T4:4, T8:4, T10:8.

<sup>45</sup> T6:8, T8:8, T10:14, T14:7.

of the sound also proves an obstacle to joining in with the local conversations (see media usage).

Troy is positive about the way the global meetings are structured in a project team by one of their members. In this case the agenda will be sent

*“Where in some cases we almost talk too much (laugh). Cause sometimes we spend too much time in meetings and not enough time in getting stuff done.” [T3:11]*

before the meeting and minutes will be sent after the meeting. This gives a good overview of the information. One of the things which some respondents complain about is the length of the meetings, or the balance between meetings and actual ‘work-time’. One respondent mentioned that he feels he had to address old subjects over and over again when certain people were not present at previous meetings. He feels that those subjects have been discussed and should be done with. If someone wasn’t there, they shouldn’t have to repeat everything or do the meeting for the second time. He feels that this practice is not efficient.<sup>46</sup>

- Decisions

One of the structures within R&D is that the formula owner is the globally responsible person for a specific paint formula assigned to him. Everybody, worldwide, who wants to make a change in, or adjustment to the formula, needs to ask permission from the formula owner.

The only things mentioned on this subject is that there sometimes is a delay in the decision-making process when the formula owner is not present, for instance if he/she is on vacation. The project team has to wait till the formula owner is back, to ask permission for the adjustments. This costs some time. But it is not indicated as a huge obstacle in their working process.

R&D employees make recommendations to management, which decides which projects will run and where they will be placed (at which location). In the interviews, an example came up about a new innovative project which NBT had finished and needs to be transferred to IPD for development. Now it is not clear what will happen with it. The project has been put on the shelf without any communication about this (why and till when this will be the case). The respondent was disappointed because he worked on the project and now doesn’t know what will happen. The R&D Management Team needs to make a decision, he thinks. He now waits and hopes it will be decided.<sup>47</sup>

- The matrix organization

In Troy, a couple of respondents have mentioned their viewpoint on the matrix structure of the organization. One conclusion we can draw from these interviews is that the hierarchal structure in America is usually different. But because AkzoNobel is originally a Dutch company, the structure is in a Dutch style as well. The matrix structure means that people report to multiple bosses, at a hierarchal level and the task/project level. Americans are not used to working in an environment where employees report to two or more bosses, and in their view splitting their loyalties. They believe in a more militaristic management style. See the following quote.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> T3:11, T7:1, T7:2, T10:6, T10:8.

<sup>47</sup> T7:3.

<sup>48</sup> T5:5, T5:7, T11:12.

*“We have a hierarchal view of management, more a militaristic style: Line up under the general, go out and concur. (..) I don’t think Dutch culture is like that. AkzoNobel is a Dutch company and isn’t run that way. (..) If you ask a Dutch to look up a word, then he would say ‘Well why should I do that?’ or ‘Shall I look up three other words too?’ An American guy says: ‘Yes, sir.’ and gives the report. Dutch is more matrix. American hierarchal.” [T5:5]*

- Corporate values

Another subject mentioned by respondents in Troy is the fact that the corporate values<sup>49</sup> have been formulated in Europe and sent to all the other AkzoNobel locations. As described in the previous paragraph, ‘*People in Troy find hierarchy important when it comes to discussions and asking questions*’ clearly describes how people in Troy don’t find it comfortable to challenge people. In American culture this is not something you do normally, especially not with your boss. One of the corporate values asks for such sort of questioning in the company.<sup>50</sup> Respondents have said they find this difficult to do:<sup>51</sup>

*“You know those new objectives that came through for the communication: We want you to be an entrepreneur, we want you to challenge...No! You cannot challenge! That is ridiculous, because you need your job. You’re not going to challenge your boss. No! You’re not going to do that! So that’s one of the funny things. And it is funny, ironic I suppose. That Europe is sending, that might work in Europe, that doesn’t work here....Here is what Europe is sending: We want you to challenge your supervisor. We want you to do this and this is an objective. That might work great in Europe, but that’s going to get you to unemployment here in Detroit. (laughs). (..) because we don’t challenge here. (..) That’s a perfect example of what they say in Europe and what happens here. (..)” [T11:12]*

### *Troy: The culture of Troy*

Respondents in Troy have named several characteristics of their own culture. These characteristics are mentioned while comparing their culture with those of Bangalore and Sassenheim, and therefore this section may in parts be a repetition of points mentioned in the previous sections. In the quotations you can find exemplar viewpoints of people in Troy.

- People in Troy find hierarchy important when it comes to discussions and asking questions.

The first thing which a lot of respondents in Troy mentioned about their own culture is that people in Troy, or the US in general, are not used to challenging others, particularly when compared to people in Europe. See the following quote:<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See the Internship Report in the Appendix.

<sup>50</sup> Corporate values are related to the corporate culture. In the study of cultural differences questions can be raised about the extent to which the formal corporate culture and its corporate values suit or connect with the local cultures of the AkzoNobel locations in different countries world-wide. In this example of Troy we can see that the corporate values formulated in The Netherlands do not match the local culture in Troy (America). To get a deeper insight into these processes and effects of corporate values on local organizational cultures, could be a subject for further study. This would be interesting for the field of Cross-Cultural Studies as well as AkzoNobel Corporate.

<sup>51</sup> T4:9, T5:5, T7:16, T7:17, T11:12.

<sup>52</sup> T5:5, T5:6, T7:16, T11:12.



*“It is culturally understood... that as a group we were not asking. So when we got back and got some feedback ‘yeah you guys were not asking enough questions’...The questions, ‘cause to us the question is a challenge like you’re challenging someone’s integrity and it is very personal like you’re going at them. Versus in Europe in particular it is understood that you’re allowed to challenge and that.. even here you can’t do it, you have to be very careful that it sounds constructively and you got to be so politically correct. Unfortunately in certain cases people always take it as a personal attack, so you can’t do much about that. But again, culturally it is set up more to challenge in Europe, especially in Netherlands.(..)” [T7:16]*

- People in Troy are timid and afraid to make mistakes.  
People in Troy are afraid to make mistakes and are therefore a bit timid. They don’t speak their mind. Compared to Europe, where everybody speaks their mind, this is quite different. One respondent mentions this could be due to a fear of getting fired. But he didn’t have that kind of an experience in the company and finds the timidity strange.<sup>53</sup>
- Politics in Troy.  
One local cultural aspect is ‘*the good old boys club*’. Some people in Troy have mentioned that salary raises are not based on performance but on how much your boss likes you. Another aspect of the culture is that people won’t give each other all the information (in a project for instance) because they are afraid people will use this information against you, to attack you.<sup>54</sup>

## 4.2 Data from Bangalore

In the interviews in Bangalore, a lot has been said about the culture of the people working at the R&D site in Sassenheim. From the data, the following perceptions about their culture could be drawn:

### *Bangalore: The culture of Sassenheim*

- Dutch people discuss the remarks of their boss  
In Bangalore, when (upper) management would make a remark about a project, people would directly adjust the project using that remark. One respondent gave an example in which a BAN-SAS team got a remark from upper management. The group in Bangalore immediately wanted to adjust the project set up. But the project leader in Sassenheim stopped this and told the group in Bangalore they should first discuss the idea in a project meeting.

*“If I say ‘what can I do?’, he (Dutch manager) would say ‘What do you think?’. He would provoke a person to think and come out with an idea. And he says ‘If you like it, go and do it.’(..) A person doesn’t feel like ‘I should always do what my boss says.’” [B9:2]*

Another respondent gives an example which describes the difference between his Dutch manager and his usual reaction to Indian bosses (see the quote on the right).

This shows a difference in the meaning and position they give their bosses. In Sassenheim they do not necessarily follow what the boss said.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> T11:12, T12:5.

<sup>54</sup> T4:9, T7:16, T7:17, T11:7, T11:12, T12:5.

<sup>55</sup> B1:2, B2:9, B3:4, B9:2, B9:3.

- Dutch people challenge you and want to discuss things<sup>56</sup>

In several interviews the respondents mentioned that people in Sassenheim, stated as the Dutch (in general), will challenge you. This is not something people in Bangalore are used to. One respondent said her colleague in Sassenheim wants an explanation for everything. Other respondents feel that in Sassenheim they are more used to sharing ideas and asking questions about statements. They want to know your arguments. Sometimes this leads to extended discussions. In Sassenheim they are developing ideas, not getting it right the first time. On the one hand, people in Bangalore stand positive to the well thought of opinions and discussions. But some also feel that discussions go on for too long, not always sticking to the subject. One respondent also mentions that people in Sassenheim are verbally very strong. She feels this is because they were educated that way. So to them, not only is asking a lot of questions normal, but so is being argumentative themselves.

*“In Sassenheim they first want to see the surface and than get deeper into it. But we would like to address the topic and solve it and then go to the other.” [B6:7]*

- People in Sassenheim are open<sup>57</sup>

In Bangalore several respondents mentioned that they feel that people in Sassenheim are very open and want to share information and their knowledge. Compared to the working situation in Bangalore, where some people feel they don't get to know everything about the projects they are working on, the opinion goes that in Sassenheim they will tell you whatever you want to know about a project.

*“(..)But I find they (Sassenheim) they tell you everything. I felt that way, they tell you each and everything whether it is...that sort of seniority we don't see. Seniority in the sense that they think 'I am senior, I have to just tell only so much to her.', like that..(..)” [B8:3]*

### *Bangalore: The cooperation with Sassenheim*

People in Bangalore are fairly positive about the cooperation with Sassenheim. Although they feel that face-to-face contact would make it easier to communicate, they feel that the cooperation over email and phone works fine. One respondent compared working in CR R&D with her former job and was happy about the emphasis on teamwork. Some people in Bangalore even feel they can learn from people in Sassenheim, for instance with regard to time consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

Next to the general positive feeling about the cooperation, there were some problems indicated in the interviews. There is some criticism on certain aspects of the cooperation with Sassenheim. I will discuss a few themes coming from the interviews.<sup>59</sup>

- Missing explanations in the cooperation

In two interviews it was indicated that decisions were made by people in Sassenheim, of which people in Bangalore could not understand why these decisions or requests were made. These were two totally different cases. In these cases people in Bangalore had to ask repeatedly for access to a system or specific paint data.

*“Certain things when we suggest on something, yeah definitely the reply comes like 'It is not that, it is not necessary to do like that'..(..) We think 'what is the harm in trying it out?'. ” [B15:4]*

<sup>56</sup> B3:7, B6:7, B10:2, B18:1, B18:7, B20:6.

<sup>57</sup> B8:2, B8:3, B8:4, B21:1.

<sup>58</sup> B6:2, B9:3, B20:1.

<sup>59</sup> B2:1, B2:2, B2:4, B2:5, B2:6, B2:7, B2:8, B2:9, B2:10, B3:6, B7:4, B8:1, B8:2, B8:3, B8:4, B8:5, B10:1, B10:7, B10:8, B14:2, B14:3, B14:4, B14:5, B14:6, B14:7, B14:8, B15:2, B17:3, B17:4, B17:10, B18:1, B21:2.

There was no explanation for the denial. Eventually the access was given, but according to Bangalore, it delayed the process of solving problems and performing tasks.

Another problem related to this was a case in which a spray-out was done in Bangalore, but according to people in Sassenheim, not done properly. A person in Sassenheim threatened that the test had to be repeated because the panels were not neat enough, which would be a lot of work (approximately 6 to 7 weeks). However, he said it was ok for the time being, but the next spray-out should meet certain standards. These standards were new to Bangalore, but were accepted by the group in Bangalore. Later on though, the person in Sassenheim told Bangalore he had trouble conducting measurements on the same spray-outs, and requested Bangalore to repeat the whole series. The group in Bangalore felt the measurements could be made with these panels and didn't understand what was wrong. Now, the person in Bangalore felt as if she had to repeat them because of the neatness of the panel.<sup>60</sup>

*"We wonder how they psychologically feel to train us but losing their jobs themselves. They were experts, but they told us we were not doing it right. It was their job and they still feel as if it is their job but it is taken away from them. ... You (in Sassenheim) may not like it when a person is coming from India to be trained."* [B10:2]

- Job transfers

Something people from several groups in Bangalore wonder is how the people in Sassenheim feel about people in Bangalore, especially when Bangalore is taking over tasks or jobs which were previously done by people in Sassenheim. Some people in Bangalore feel as if people in Sassenheim do not support them in developing their knowledge, because they are afraid they will take over more work and they could lose their jobs themselves.

Others might still be angry at Bangalore for taking over jobs in the past. These are ideas which people in Bangalore have when the cooperation with Sassenheim is sometimes not going well.<sup>61</sup>

- Priority and recognition

During the cooperation on a specific global project, the deadline was postponed even though Bangalore was working for the deadline at all costs. One respondent said he feels there is a difference in the priority of holidays between Bangalore and Sassenheim. This also relates to the feeling of not getting enough recognition for the effort put in their work and the sacrifices they made. The following quote exemplifies this:

*"And we worked day and night, and we worked late, we even worked on weekend on Saturday and Sunday to maintain the date. Because we were told that [upper management] has given the task at (deadline) under what ever, what ever may come.(..) And finally when a certain support required from the Sassenheim team and some people from there, (deadline) the release did not happen and even 2 days later nobody from Sassenheim would able to stay back because the holidays have started. (..) And so, what always surprises me is that: Why is it that we Indians have to for holidays and things like that and work? And we work late. Whereas people in Sassenheim, when it comes to holidays, they give it the highest priority come what release dates that have been promised. Why is it not a priority then?"* [B9:4]

<sup>60</sup> B15:2, B15:3, B15:4, B15:9, B17:5.

<sup>61</sup> B10:2, B13:2, B13:3, B15:6, B22:1, B22:2.

- Criticism

Related to the cultural statement that Dutch people tend to challenge you and are verbally strong, respondents say that in dealing with experts it feels like you are being criticized and not doing your job properly.

*“They were experts but they told us we were not doing it right.(..) Conversation came up that they had a different approach. ‘This is the way I do it.’ We spoke to our manager about it. He said this is psychology: Take the advice and say ‘I’ll see, I’ll work on it.’. You are now the owner of the application. Take their remark not as criticism but if it’s good, ok and if not no need to implement it.” [B10:2]*

A lot of the work is initiated by Sassenheim. Bangalore depends on what comes from Sassenheim. Nowadays, the control has slightly shifted to Bangalore, for instance, more work has been transferred to Bangalore. But people in Bangalore would like to do still more and contribute more input to the projects. They want to be stimulated in their initiatives, but they are not because they feel Sassenheim is scared to lose more work.<sup>62</sup>

- Improvements

To the question what could be improved in the cooperation with Sassenheim, respondents had different ideas. In the previous paragraph I described how, while working towards a deadline, the date got postponed because of holidays in Sassenheim. This respondent said that it is not so much the delay that is a problem, but the communication about the seriousness of the deadline and the recognition of their work effort.

*“The commitment should be equal from both sides. If there is a delay, tell us in advance, we understand. (..) a little appreciation makes a lot of difference.” [B9:5]*

Another suggestion is to check if the message has come through in the right way between Sassenheim and Bangalore. Several people mentioned there are regular misunderstandings in the communication between the two sites. One respondent said his counterpart in Sassenheim was shocked to see that he had interpreted her assignment in the wrong way and did the wrong tests. If this could be checked beforehand, mistakes can be prevented.

The last suggestion for improvements is that people in Bangalore would like to know what people in Sassenheim are working on. Most of the time only group leaders know what people in department are working on, but the team members don’t. Some respondents say they would be interested in knowing.<sup>63</sup>

### *Bangalore: The culture of Troy*

In general there has not been a lot said about the cooperation between Bangalore and Troy. Probably because there is not much cooperation and there are not a lot of joint projects. In only two interviews the cooperation with Troy came up.<sup>64</sup>

*“We got very good support from marketing and maintenance and production from Troy and Sassenheim. Troy gave us very good support. Based on our inputs they would go back and work on those inputs and solve the problems in North-America.” [B14:5]*

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<sup>62</sup> B15:5, B15:6.

<sup>63</sup> B9:5, B9:6, B9:8, B14:1, B14:2, B18:3, B18:8, B21:7, B21:8.

<sup>64</sup> B14:5.

No statements were made by respondents about the culture of employees in Troy.

*Bangalore: The cooperation with Troy*

Two respondents have mentioned the cooperation with Troy. These respondents work on the same global project. They were both very positive about the cooperation and feel that they get good support from Troy (see the quote on the right).

- Improvements

One of the things that could be improved according to one respondent is the knowledge about the market and customer requirements of the other market areas in AMEA and NA. He said they have already learned a lot from this project, but when they get more information beforehand, they can better adjust the new product to all the requirements.<sup>65</sup>

*Bangalore: Other aspects of the cooperation with Sassenheim and Troy*

- Time difference

Several respondents said that they have to consider the time difference when they want to call or email Sassenheim. To get in touch with them, they have to contact them in the afternoon. This is not a huge problem, but holidays at other locations are. See the quote below.<sup>66</sup>

*“On holidays sometimes it happens they are on vacation in SAS. It is not clear...maybe there will be a delay carrying out those actions. (..) a back-up is not there to answer your questions. You have to wait till the person comes back. Then you cannot proceed with your project. And usually in Sassenheim they take holiday for weeks together. In India that is not the case they just take it for a day or two.” [B7:3]*

- Language & accent

Many respondents said that they were aware of the fact that they have a different accent while speaking English compared to the people in Sassenheim. This has been an issue in the communication, but is going much better after having more experience in communication and training.

Although the situation has improved in their opinion, one respondent still felt that because of the accent, people in Sassenheim face a barrier speaking over the phone. They don't want it. People in Bangalore try and speak clearly and find it important that others understand them.

*“In India we will speak fast. Some users are really good and know our accent very well. People who contact me often know my accent very well. With others I have to cut my words and slow, slow, slow slow. Some would say ‘stop’. Sometimes I am not able to understand them. Dutch have a different accent.” [B11:3]*

Another thing this respondent mentions is a misunderstanding due to different expressions used in both countries. He tells, for instance, how he would conclude emails with the sentence “Please do the needful”. Apparently people in Sassenheim receiving this message did not understand this sentence and got upset with it or laughed about it. The respondent tells that his boss even got complaints from Sassenheim because he had used this sentence. He was very surprised about this because he had no bad intentions using this expression and didn't know it would make people in Sassenheim feel insulted or

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<sup>65</sup> B14:1, B14:2, B14:5, B14:9.

<sup>66</sup> B7:3.

disrespected. After the remarks he stopped using it. But he is still puzzled with the way people in Sassenheim reacted to it.

Such misunderstandings are sometimes present in the communication and can lead to irritation or lack of understanding on both sides.

- Use of media

The media used for communicating with Sassenheim and Troy are email, phone and msn. They also use teleconferences in which they can have meetings with a group of people in different locations. A lot of respondents feel that travelling to other locations would help in the communication. Most people prefer face-to-face contact, but feel that with the existing media the communication is ok. Many respondents do feel that more travelling or exchange of personnel would help the cooperation, because you would know who to go to and how to approach that person. People also find it important that others know their abilities and activities.<sup>67</sup>

*“(.) Manager will explain it so they (team members) will understand. In the presentation the team gives a presentation (for upper management) and (group leader) will answer the questions (of upper management) because as a team you feel that the accent (we can’t understand), (group leader) can explain it to us and in the group meeting we will discuss ourselves. (Group leader) will present it to them (upper management) after (the group meeting).” [B13:4]*

People are more positive about calling compared to the use of emails for instance. Several respondents indicate that through the phone you can build a personal rapport. Other benefits of phone calls are the immediate response you get. You can understand each other better, and this way you can solve problems easier.

Only in one case a respondent said he would like to call his colleague in Sassenheim, but his colleague refuses to speak over the phone. The respondent thinks people in Sassenheim are hesitant to call, maybe because of the Indian accent they have to encounter. Although he sometimes cannot understand the Dutch accent, he prefers calling, but accepts working over email because the person in Sassenheim wants this.<sup>68</sup>

*“In Sassenheim the people will, have a barrier, to not speak through phone. If I call they will speak. But they will not call me but send me though mails. (.) Direct contact we would understand better. Now we just send mails, but mails on and on. But if we talk we can solve the issues very fast. That is my way of working. I will just take the phone and talk.” [B11:4]*

- Market difference

Only one respondent mentioned that, particularly related to his project, the markets in EMEA, North-America and Asia are different. This is not so much a problem if he and his other group members are well informed about the demands and requirements of that market.

- Meetings

The meetings are structured by an agenda, and after the meeting the minutes are made by one person on the team and distributed over the group for the next meeting. In some

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<sup>67</sup> B2:4, B2:11, B3:1, B3:2, B6:2, B6:9, B9:8, B9:10, B11:3, B11:4, B11:6, B14:7.

<sup>68</sup> B2:11, B11:3, B11:4, B11:6, B11:7, B13:4, B21:4, B21:5, B21:9.

meetings team members give PowerPoint presentations to the group. This is the way they employ to give an update on a specific project task or status.

In meetings with Sassenheim, decisions are made by the whole project team. They usually start with a discussion. One respondent said that the more people in the meeting, the more it needs to be structured. At the end of a meeting action points are made, so it is clear what needs to be done for the next meeting and the coming time period. Two respondents from one department feel that the action points are too much. Even the normal things belonging to a task are spelled out as action points. They feel this is too much and not useful. Two other respondents said that most meetings with Sassenheim cost too much time because discussions go on for too long or start moving away from the topic.

*“Dragging, dragging, dragging with this discussion on in meetings, to long discussions. We didn’t like to go to meetings. Some meetings are like that. This is in terms of project meetings(..).” [B7:8]*

Sometimes people don’t understand each other in meetings. A couple of respondents indicate that they will get an extra person to attend the meeting to try and explain it in a different way, kind of functioning like a mediator.<sup>69</sup>

- The matrix structure

The matrix structure of the organization was encountered by respondents when they explained to whom they report. In this case they report to different people: They report directly to their manager and have a bilateral exchange with them. On the other hand, they report to project leaders at a task level.

Respondents didn’t make specific positive or negative remarks about the matrix structure in R&D.<sup>70</sup>

- Decisions

Decisions are usually made based on consensus and what is mostly agreeable for business. A proposal is made and given to the next level of management. There is not much interaction across the globe. Opportunities to experiment are good. Respondents felt there is openness and there are challenges to grow in the organization. There is transparency and you get an explanation. There are possibilities for growth right up to the managing level and you can get exposure to management.<sup>71</sup>

### *Bangalore: The culture of Bangalore*

- Group leaders

Some aspects of the working environment in Bangalore are for instance that group leaders are usually also the contact persons for a project. So the interaction between Bangalore and Sassenheim is channelled through the group leaders, not so much the group members themselves (there are exceptions).

- Distance between bosses and employees

People in Bangalore also feel that in most departments in Bangalore, there is a certain distance between bosses and other employees. Some respondents mentioned that compared to this generally existing distance, some bosses come closer to their group by

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<sup>69</sup> B3:2, B3:3, B3:4, B3:6, B6:1, B6:8, B7:8, B13:2, B13:3, B14:7, B14:8, B21:3.

<sup>70</sup> B3:4, B6:8, B9:1.

<sup>71</sup> B1:2, B3:4, B6:3.

stimulating ideas, and giving feedback and helping them. In these few cases respondents were very positive about their bosses and felt they are lucky.<sup>72</sup>

*“Others they have a boss-thing. In our team that’s not there. Boss-thing is to maintain some distance and you can’t discuss anything with your boss. He (my boss) gives you a chance to speak your mind and gives you feedback and to think about it.” [B6:5]*

- People in Bangalore are flexible in their work  
People in Bangalore have mentioned different aspects of their own culture. One of the things they are proud of is their flexibility. They can fit into any type of job or adjust their skills.
- People in Bangalore want to do things right the first time  
They also feel as if they have to know and do things right the first time, while in their eyes Europeans feel more comfortable in taking time to develop ideas.  
One respondent mentioned that in his family there is also a distance between ‘the elder’ and younger people. The younger one has to respect the elders. In this context he said:

*“Indians usually don’t like open suggestions. With my relatives I cannot say my open suggestion or comments to them.” [B21:9]*

### 4.3 Data from Sassenheim<sup>73</sup>

*Sassenheim: The culture of Bangalore*

- The people in Bangalore work hard and are friendly and grateful  
Several respondents feel that people in Bangalore work hard, and are grateful when they work on a project with or when they get help from people in Sassenheim. Most of the respondents said that they think the people in Bangalore are very friendly. They react enthusiastically when someone from Sassenheim contacts them for help or a specific task.<sup>74</sup>
- People in Bangalore act humble when they shouldn’t  
People in Sassenheim feel awkward when people in Bangalore act humble. To them it seems as if people in Bangalore feel they make themselves smaller or under inferior to Sassenheim. In Sassenheim they feel this is not necessary. For them it is normal to help each other, because they work for the same project and company. One respondent says this might have to do with the Dutch being ‘nuchter’ while the Indians are friendly/kind.<sup>75</sup>
- People in Bangalore go against their world and don’t tell you when things are going wrong in a project or assignment  
Several respondents made a stereotypical remark while talking about people in Bangalore: “They say yes, but do ‘no’.” This also relates to things people in Sassenheim ask them to do. Or when they get an explanation or assignment from Sassenheim, people in Bangalore

<sup>72</sup> B6:5, B6:12, B7:2, B10:2, B13:1, B19:5, B19:8, B20:1, B21:9.

<sup>73</sup> The translation of the Dutch quotes in English can be found in the Appendix. Look at the stars and numbers (\*1) in the boxes for the right quote translation.

<sup>74</sup> S1:11, S4:2, S4:3, S4:11.

<sup>75</sup> S1:11, S4:3.



say they understand it, but when they work on the assignment for instance, it becomes clear to the people in Sassenheim that they did not understand because they are doing it incorrectly or insufficiently.

Several respondents also said they usually get a positive message from people in Bangalore, also when things are not going right or as they were supposed to. They feel that if they don't ask many times or deeply enough, they will not know how things are really going. Sometimes tasks are being told to be completed in time, but after a while it appears they have not been finished yet. One respondent said that you have to be very clear to people in Bangalore, being vague will not help in working with them. Another respondent said you have to support them and 'take them by the hand' to guide them through the work and tell them when they do it right. You have to monitor their activities.

<sup>76</sup>

*"Indiërs zeggen vaak 'ja', ook als ze het niet hebben begrepen. Als je vraagt of ze het hebben begrepen, zeggen ze ook 'ja'. Dat helpt niet."* [S9:21] \*1

*"Als het niet af kwam, dan hoor je daar niets van. Ook niet een week later. Ze durven niet."* [S9:19] \*2

- People in Sassenheim feel there is a huge difference between the Dutch and Indian culture/society

Almost all the respondents feel the cultural difference with Bangalore is big. Some respondents even stated that the difference in culture between Sassenheim and Bangalore is bigger than the difference between Sassenheim and Troy. Examples of these differences are given related to the position of women in society, the caste system and inequality, the different languages and people throughout the country (national diversity), etc. In most interviews, respondents speak negatively of the Indian culture being different from Dutch culture. Only when it comes to language and groups within India, there is a certain amount of admiration. One of the topics most spoken of is the contractors in India. They wear blue suits and almost work separately from the other employees. Normal employees are called FTE's. They feel they have a higher value in the company compared to contractors and should be treated that way.<sup>77</sup>

*"FTE's hebben allemaal een academische graad en zeggen 'wij komen hier niet voor meng- en spuitwerk'."* [S5:20] \*3

- Bangalore is very hierarchal and formal compared to Sassenheim and the Dutch in general

From the perspective of the people in Sassenheim, the relation between a boss and his subordinates is very formal and has a huge distance. A respondent mentioned how he got an email by accident, which was meant for the Indian boss of the Indian person who had sent it. The email was very formal and polite, he felt. In his point of view, Dutch people would never approach their boss in this kind of a polite or formal manner.

Several respondents mentioned that they have experienced that people in Bangalore give high value to the statements of their

*"Wat de baas zegt is waar. (BAN medewerker) accepteerde meteen mijn labnote. Ik irriteerde me daaraan."* [S9:18]  
*"Ze nemen een ondergeschikte houding aan, dat is niet goed voor research doen. Een onderzoeker moet namelijk iets gek bedenken waar die in gelooft, dat gaat meestal tegen de stroom in. Creatieve ideeën gaan tegen de stroom in, maar dat doen Indiërs niet."* [S4:3] \*4

<sup>76</sup> S2:4, S5:6, S5:7, S9:19, S9:21, S11:7, S15:4.

<sup>77</sup> S1:11, S2:5, S4:17, S4:18, S4:19, S5:4, S5:20, S5:21, S5:22, S11:3, S11:4, S12:2, S12:3, S13:4, S13:5, S13:6.

boss, even if they are not right or are arguable. Some even think people in Bangalore are afraid of their boss and therefore are afraid to make mistakes.

Compared to Dutch mentality this is very strange. The Dutch are content oriented and challenge each other on that level, even their bosses. One respondent said the behaviour of people in Bangalore has to do with the old guru-student model in which the student absorbs the knowledge of the teacher and will never challenge that knowledge or authority.<sup>78</sup>

- In Bangalore they have difficulty handling critique or challenging others with new ideas<sup>79</sup>

First of all, respondents in Sassenheim said that people in Bangalore have a hard time taking critical remarks from people in Sassenheim. They feel people in Bangalore are afraid of face-loss or facing a hard time from their boss if they would come out with their mistakes.

Sassenheim finds this an obstacle, because they have to be careful while discussing things with Bangalore that have gone wrong. Although some respondents said there are exceptions within Bangalore. Some people do speak their mind, can handle negative remarks or results.

*“In Bangalore moet je daar voorzichtiger mee zijn. Maar positieve feedback zullen ze in Bangalore wel waarderen. Maar als je aandachtspunten wil bespreken moet je dat voorzichtig masseren. En dan nog weet ik niet of je het goed doet hoor. Ze pikken het wel op, maar...ik weet niet wat er qua gevoelens speelt of wat ze echt vinden.” [S15:6] \*5*

#### *Sassenheim: The cooperation with Bangalore*

- Job leaves

Several respondents mentioned that it has been frustrating, particularly over the last two years, when people in Bangalore joined the company, got training from people in Sassenheim and Bangalore, but left the company after a short time. They feel this is a loss of effort and knowledge. They find it frustrating that they have to start over again: hiring and training someone new.<sup>80</sup>

- Work pace

A lot of respondents mention that they feel the work is handled differently in Bangalore compared to Sassenheim. Sometimes people in Sassenheim cannot understand why certain tasks take so long to complete, or why there are time gaps in the schedules of people in Bangalore. In most cases respondents in Sassenheim wonder if this has something to do with the Indian culture. For instance, when they work in groups a lot or negotiate a lot, the work takes more time.<sup>81</sup>

*“Daar (een test) staat 7 weken voor en dan zijn ze met 3 of 4 mensen aan het screenen. Dan denk je, het is binnen 7 weken af. Maar ze doen het wel in 7 weken, maar met de volgende serie beginnen ze pas een paar weken later, een gat van weer 7 weken. Wat doen ze dan? Doen ze heel veel dingen in groepjes? Veel overleggen? Of hebben ze veel andere taken? We hebben het ze wel eens gevraagd maar komen er niet uit.” [S7:2] \*6*

<sup>78</sup> S4:2, S5:1, S5:14, S7:6, S7:10, S9:15, S9:18, S10:1.

<sup>79</sup> S3:1, S4:3, S4:15, S5:10, S5:20, S5:23, S6:7, S6:10, S7:7, S7:9, S8:3, S9:12, S9:15, S12:7, S12:9, S12:11, S12:12, S15:6.

<sup>80</sup> S4:14, S5:3, S5:4.

<sup>81</sup> S3:6, S3:7, S5:2, S5:11, S7:2, S7:4, S9:4, S9:5.

One respondent also felt that compared to the work pace in Sassenheim, Bangalore is working much slower than they should be. On the other hand, another respondent said that you cannot compare people in Bangalore to people in Sassenheim, because the work environment in Bangalore is so different that it is inevitable that the work will take more time.

Another annoyance to people in Sassenheim is the lack of explanation from people in Bangalore when deadlines are not met or tasks are not fulfilled in time.<sup>82</sup>

*“Maar ik snap dan niet precies waarom ze dan zeggen dat het vrijdag klaar is...wat is er dan gebeurd waarom het niet klaar is? Dat krijg ik nooit boven tafel. Dat wordt niet echt duidelijk. Dus dan vraag ik: ‘wanneer is het dan wel klaar?’ (reactie) ‘Nou, eind van deze week.’. Nou, dat moeten we dan maar weer afwachten...” [S9:4] \*7*

- Mistakes and unsolved issues

A couple of respondents mentioned how they find it difficult to find out when a certain test goes wrong (in Bangalore) and when neither Bangalore nor Sassenheim can seem to find out what the cause is. They apply a root cause analysis as prescribed for projects, but there is no clear outcome. Respondents in Sassenheim said they feel the problem lies in Bangalore: they don't know what they are doing there and what causes that problem. They don't have a clear picture of the processes there.

In one specific case, a whole spray-out task was sent back to Bangalore to be redone over again because it was not neatly done and there appeared to be a mistake in the paint mixtures. The person in Bangalore was shocked to hear she had to do it over and couldn't understand it. The person in Sassenheim thought his reasons were enough to ask for a new spray-out.<sup>83</sup>

- Use of information

What several respondents from one department mentioned was the way their group in Bangalore presented data from tests in lab notes. In their opinion some individuals do a so called data-dump. This means they collect the data from the tests, but do not write a story or guideline with test results. So the reader of the lab note or report needs to draw his/her own conclusions. The group in Sassenheim finds this annoying and is of the opinion that it is the report-writer's task to interpret the results and make clear what the conclusions are. One respondent thinks the people in Bangalore do not think about what they write and have difficulty in understanding the test results and drawing right conclusions. Other respondents felt it is more a matter of being used to certain standards (see quote below).

*“In India zijn ze gewend een data-dump te doen. En wij zijn gewend daar iets bij te schrijven voor mensen die het minder goed kennen. Een uitleg van de analyse enzo. Dat is daar niet. Het is niet dat ze het niet kunnen of willen, maar niet gewend zijn aan onze standaarden.” [S8:7] \*8*

- Departmental problems

In one department (A) more specific problems are appearing in the cooperation. The problems of this department with Bangalore are:

That certain people in BAN complain to the manager in SAS about the work environment in BAN and,

<sup>82</sup> S3:6, S3:7, S5:2, S5:11, S7:2, S7:4, S9:4, S9:5.

<sup>83</sup> S7:2, S7:3, S7:4, S7:5, S7:6, S7:8, S8:4, S8:5, S8:6.

There is a conflict between one department member in Bangalore and one in Sassenheim. In this last case the group in Sassenheim felt that individuals in the group in Bangalore are too stubborn and think they are better than their people in Sassenheim, which they feel is not the case (and in fact feel the case is vice versa).

Two respondents in Sassenheim mentioned how during the transfer of jobs from the colour department in Sassenheim to Bangalore, mistakes were made. On the one hand, it was an illusion to think that the transfer of knowledge would be possible in one day. On the other hand, because people in SAS were afraid of losing their job, only few people transferred knowledge and gave training to people in Bangalore properly and consistently. Others purposely sabotaged the cooperation by holding back information from the new colour group in Bangalore. This was a huge obstacle in the cooperation between Sassenheim and Bangalore. (As can be seen in the interviews in BAN, people there still wonder if the loss of jobs in SAS makes people in SAS feel reluctant in the cooperation with BAN).<sup>84</sup>

- Improvements

One respondent, who has a lot of experience in cooperating with people in Bangalore, said it is very important that people in Sassenheim accept the existence of Bangalore and are willing to put in more effort in the communication. Because those people are far away, sending an email or dropping information will not work. What can be improved for example, is the way people in Sassenheim write emails. This has to be more precise. You have to check if they (BAN) understood what you (in SAS) are saying, by letting them summarize and explain to you what they have understood. People in Sassenheim also have to encourage people in Bangalore and make them feel comfortable about making mistakes from which they learn. People in Sassenheim often have the wrong expectations. They have to check and guide people in Bangalore through their tasks, give them responsibility and check regularly how they are doing and what they need, and ask them if they have any questions to stimulate a questioning process.

*“Dat betekent dat de mensen hier meer moeten doen dan alleen het koffiepraatje bij de machine, omdat je collega in het verleden twee kamers verder zat. Maar nu dus 8000 kilometer verder. En dat is denk ik wat onderschat wordt hier, dat je moet niet denken ‘ik zeg het en ik geef het mee’. Nee, zo werkt het dus niet. Je moet extra geven hier en nu. Je rol is anders geworden. Je moet veel meer aan de telefoon zitten als je met mensen in andere locaties moet samenwerken. En niet alleen maar het afdoen met emailtjes. Dus dat is wat hier nog een hele slag moet worden.” [S5:11] \*9*

Another respondent said it would be better if Bangalore was not so hesitant in the cooperation or in a situation in which they have the lead. They have to be clear about their target and strategy. This would help people in Sassenheim know where the project is going.

No other suggestions for improvements were made, although a lot of the complaints about Bangalore contain indications for solutions. This will further be explored in the analysis.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> S2, S5, S10:2, S10:3, S10:6, S13:8.

<sup>85</sup> S5:6, S5:7S5:11, S5:12, S5:13, S5:14, S5:16, S5:18, S5:19, S5:23, S6:3, S9:19.

*Sassenheim: The culture of Troy*

- Troy is more hierarchal compared to Sassenheim  
Respondents in Sassenheim said Troy is hierarchal because the structure in the organization is stricter. For instance, in the hierarchy, by function, the technicians don't have a say in the assignment they have to carry out, whereas in Sassenheim, no matter what the function, people have a say.<sup>86</sup>
- The cultural difference between Sassenheim and Troy is less then Sassenheim and Bangalore  
One respondent said the cooperation with Troy is more equal. You can discuss things with them, while with Bangalore you can just give them an assignment. In the West, people want an equal say, while in Bangalore they will just carry out the order.<sup>87</sup>
- Americans are friendly and helpful  
All the respondents who mentioned something about Troy are positive about their relation with them. One respondent explicitly said that Americans are friendly and helpful.<sup>88</sup>
- Americans have a 'can do' mentality  
One respondent mentioned the mentality of Americans, which he admires. Americans take opportunities without question. They have a hands-on mentality. They don't want to talk a lot, they want to start working.<sup>89</sup>

*“Maar ze zijn wel sympathiek en behulpzaam. Hij houdt wel van de 'can do' mentaliteit, dat spreekt hem aan. 'Niet lullen, schouders eronder, we gaan het doen'. Pioniersinstinct is wat ze hebben. Dat zit ook in hun ontstaansgeschiedenis.” [S4:20] \*10*

*Sassenheim: The cooperation with Troy*

About the cooperation with Troy, respondents mentioned positive and negative aspects. The most important remarks have been summarized.

- Joint projects  
Sometimes products are made in Sassenheim and later transferred to Troy. In some cases the goal of the project changes. For people in Sassenheim it is frustrating when they have worked hard on a product for Troy, which is later not be used or if the project is cancelled. These decisions happen at the level of group leaders.<sup>90</sup>
- Not much cooperation at the level of scientists (and lower levels)  
According to the four respondents who mentioned the intensity of the cooperation, most of the interaction happens at the group leader level. The scientists and technicians hardly interact or work together. Apart from the meetings through conference calls and emails in which they

*“Als je aan een project werkt verdeel je toch de werkzaamheden en communiceert de resultaten. Geen nauwe samenwerking, dat je samen, hoe moet je dat werken, je bent samen aan dat project bezig maar je doet niet samen experimenten. Je hebt een gezamenlijk resultaat, dat geldt eigenlijk voor alles.” [S3:8] \*11*

<sup>86</sup> S1:8, S1:11, S4:20, S4:21, S6:8.

<sup>87</sup> S1:11, S4:20, S4:21.

<sup>88</sup> S4:20, S4:21.

<sup>89</sup> S4:20, S4:21, S14:2, S15:3.

<sup>90</sup> S1:3, S1:4, S1:5, S1:6.

inform one another, the tasks in a project are divided over the locations. The end result is shared, but the tasks are split.

In one specific lab, they split the tasks to prevent groups from doing the same work twice (to be efficient). Now that they have more experience in working together however, they do not draw very hard lines between tasks anymore.<sup>91</sup>

- Working climate

In one specific group there was a disagreement about the set-up of some tests. The group leaders in Sassenheim did not agree with the design of a group member in Troy. Because they couldn't agree with each other, the working climate in the group was affected. One respondent said they were making less jokes and people were less relaxed. The atmosphere became tenser.

Another respondent said the group has difficulty asking questions when a particular person in Troy gives a presentation. These issues are joked about, but not discussed.<sup>92</sup>

- Different styles and perspectives

Two respondents said they appreciate how you can discuss ideas with people in Troy. In their specific group they are happy about the fact that people in Troy give responses and are open to discussions (content discussions, project discussions).

On the other hand, both respondents experience that these different viewpoints sometimes make it difficult to understand one another. Because the group in Sassenheim is closer to the group leaders and managers, for them it is easier to discuss things right away when they have doubts or a different approach. But it's also difficult to transfer the idea for a test to Troy in a way that they understand and do not change the test set-up while working.<sup>93</sup>

*"Soms deden we een variatie in een test die je nooit zou gebruiken. Dan zie je wel dat dat af en toe niet overkomt. Dat was wel hardnekkig. Hele erge focus op het eindproduct. Dat kwam naar voren dat het experiment was uitgevoerd maar twee of drie dingen waren weggehaald omdat ze het toch niet gingen gebruiken. Maar het idee was om dat juist wel te doen om te kijken of het werkt."*  
[S14:2] \*12

- Improvements

All people in Sassenheim feel that visiting the other locations is important for the cooperation. Although the opinions differ when it comes to the number of visits needed for good cooperation and communication.

Most respondents mention the quality of the phone line. They would like a better connection over the phone. Now the sound has a delay or they get cut off.

*Sassenheim: Other aspects in the cooperation with Bangalore and Troy*

- Time difference

Respondents said they have to take the time difference into account. Some respondents make sure their time schedule is organized in a way such that they can contact Bangalore in the mornings and Troy in the afternoon. In one specific project group, they make sure all three locations can have a meeting at the same time. They schedule these meetings at

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<sup>91</sup> S3:7, S4:4, S3:8, S4:4, S6:5, S6:8, S14:1.

<sup>92</sup> S4:12, S14:5, S14:9.

<sup>93</sup> S14:2, S14:3, S14:4, S15:1, S15:2, S15:5.

least a month in advance. Nobody mentioned that the time difference is a big problem in the cooperation.<sup>94</sup>

- Language & accent

One respondent said that Dutch people can't write in English, which causes communication problems between Bangalore and Sassenheim. For people in Bangalore it is difficult to understand what people in Sassenheim want them to do. Not much has been done about this problem.

Other respondents said they find it difficult to understand people in Bangalore, because their English accent is so different.

In communicating with people in Troy, the dialect is not a problem. Only in one case a respondent mentioned how an individual in Troy has a different accent because of his foreign background. But is not an obstacle in the communication as such. One respondent in Sassenheim however, said he himself finds it difficult to communicate in English.<sup>95</sup>

*“Het taalgebruik is verschillend en beperkt soms. In een vreemde taal kan ik minder goed mijn emoties, gevoelens en nuances uitdrukken. Dat is lastig en heb ik niet in mijn eigen taal. Ik heb ook weinig ervaring met me uitdrukken in het Engels. Door weinig gezamenlijke projecten en weinig interactie.” [S3:2] \*13*

- Use of media

Sassenheim uses different types of media to communicate, interact and share information with Troy and Bangalore. They use emails, phone, teleconferences, and shipping of samples. They also use CarNet and a kind of shared work place on the internet where they can post presentations and share comments. Some times people from Sassenheim get to travel to Troy or Bangalore. This usually happens when a certain project is not going well, important tests need to be done or people need special training. All people in Sassenheim feel that visiting the other locations is important for the cooperation, although the opinions differ when it comes to the number of visits needed for good cooperation and communication. Many respondents feel that at least one visit should be organized to get a feel of the people, their work circumstances and work processes. One respondent explicitly stated that after a first visit, you must be able to start a good cooperation. More visits are not necessary.

*“Als je de mensen gezien hebt, dat maakt zo'n groot verschil. Het is gewoon veel makkelijker om elkaar te benaderen. Ik had 14 man getraind in India. Ook hun collega's nemen nu zo veel makkelijker contact op.” [S8:2] \*14*

A lot of complaints have been made by respondents about the quality of the phone lines. To be able to phone/call Bangalore and Troy is very important to people in Sassenheim as in this way they can explain things better and have a better rapport with the other person. The phone line with Bangalore is especially sometimes of bad quality. Respondents in Sassenheim find this is very annoying while speaking, and very frustrating. Also when the connection fails, they spend a lot of time figuring out what the problem is and trying to

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<sup>94</sup> S4:14.

<sup>95</sup> S1:9, S3:6, S4:16, S5:17.

call each other again. While calling, some people also use Windows Messenger to keep connected when the phone is dead.<sup>96</sup>

- Meetings

In project teams with people from Sassenheim and Troy, or Sassenheim and Bangalore, the group leaders have the most interaction. The scientists working on specific tasks and testing, most of the time only communicate and share information with people from the other locations in project meetings in a conference call. They usually make a presentation, put this on the internet for others to download and go through the presentation in the meeting. These presentations do not go well however, when someone is just keen on telling their own story without giving the other the opportunity to comment. For the rest though, people in Sassenheim are fairly positive about the meetings they have with other locations. Although other aspects of the communication, like the quality of the phone line, can sometimes interfere.<sup>97</sup>

- Decisions

Two respondents feel that people in Troy sometimes do not consider the leadership or authority of people in Sassenheim. In one case the managers in Sassenheim had made a decision about certain tests. During the work in Troy, people changed the tests. This respondent said it could be they didn't understand what the tests were for, but still they didn't have the authority to make changes.

In another case, a respondent mentioned how a group in Troy would sometimes take on a project without the consent of management in Sassenheim. This respondent said it has to do with the 'can do' mentality of Americans. But this would not be done by people in Sassenheim or even the Dutch in general.<sup>98</sup>

### *Sassenheim: The culture of Sassenheim*

- In Sassenheim people do not accept an assignment easily

One respondent said that people in Sassenheim are suspicious when you ask them something. They always feel they are busy and are not so much willing to take on extra work. When you ask for a small thing, they will help you. But bigger projects they will keep off their plate. They also want a say in what they have to do, more than the people in Bangalore for instance.<sup>99</sup>

- Dutch people are straightforward and direct and want to hear arguments with a statement

The Dutch can be very critical and open about their critique to others. They say the positive as well as the negative things. Apart from being direct, they can handle critique of others as well, although they demand good arguments and proof of the validity of the statements or opinions of another person<sup>100</sup>

*“Nederlanders zijn altijd redelijk direct enzo, zo van ‘Ja, dit is gewoon een waardeloos resultaat.’  
(.) Hier word meer ondersteuning of informatie gevraagd. Kijk, de strategische lijn is gewoon een  
beslissing van bovenaf, maar iets inhoudelijks dan moet je daar experimenten tegenover zetten.”*  
[S6:7] \*15

<sup>96</sup> S1:9, S1:11, S2:7, S2:8, S3:3, S3:8, S4:10, S4:14, S5:23, S6:2, S6:5, S6:6, S7:1, S7:11, S8:1, S8:2, S9:14, S9:19, S12:1, S12:13, S14:1, S14:2, S14:6.

<sup>97</sup> S1:3, S3:8, S4:10, S4:12, S7:1.

<sup>98</sup> S13:12, S14:2.

<sup>99</sup> S1:11.

<sup>100</sup> S1:8, S3:1, S5:14, S6:7, S6:10, S7:7, S15:6.



- Sassenheim is not very hierarchal

When someone new comes into the company in Sassenheim, they first have to build up a reputation and develop themselves as chemists. After a couple of years the newcomers have established themselves and the work relationship with other chemists becomes more equal. Compared to Bangalore and Troy, the group members in Sassenheim are more equal, stated one respondent<sup>101</sup>

In this part of Chapter 4 the perspectives of employees of each R&D sites on the culture of and cooperation with other R&D locations has been presented. In the next part of this chapter, the case studies of three project teams will be presented. At the end of this chapter, a summary of the data presentation in Part I and Part II is given.

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<sup>101</sup> S3:2, S7:10.

## Part II Case Studies of R&D Project Teams – the Team Level

In the previous part of this data chapter, the themes that came up from the interviews, which have been focused on the perception of culture and cultural differences were described. Other themes that have been described were subjects that the respondents mentioned in the interviews, which have a relation to culture. The perceptions of culture and cultural differences give us an answer to the first research question: *How do employees perceive cross-cultural differences at work?* In the next part of this data presentation, I will start to answer the question as to *how this perception of cultural differences influences the cooperation in general and the efficiency in particular?*

I will start with the description of three cases of project teams from Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim in which team members come from two different sites. The codes used in the headers and text (for example TRY-1) refer to the case number (which is related to a specific project team: 1, 2 and 3) and the location of the project members of that specific project team (Troy = TRY, Bangalore = BAN and Sassenheim = SAS).

### 4.4 Case 1: Troy – Sassenheim 1

This case is an example of the co-operation within a project team between its members in Troy and Sassenheim. Both parties are fairly positive about the cooperation and feel they can work together. There are some minor issues which they did address and which I will describe below. After the description I will make a comparison between the perspectives of the members in Troy and the members in Sassenheim.

*How members of SAS-1 feel about the cooperation with members from TRY-1*

One member of the group in Sassenheim made significant remarks about the cooperation. Most remarks are based upon this member's interview. The other member who was interviewed was not so much involved in the cooperation. Both members though, are positive about the cooperation. They feel they can have good discussions in project meetings. The only remark SAS-1 gives is that people in TRY-1 sometimes do not have a lot of ideas about the projects. They also have more of a hands-on mentality which makes them work fast, but sometimes overlook things or forget to file the idea up for approval with the board or managers.

One thing which was mentioned that could be an issue is the fact that people in Sassenheim tend to be very open and critical or direct. This has not always been appreciated by members in Troy.

In one case there was a discussion between a member in SAS and a member in Troy. This led to an intense discussion which ruined the atmosphere and mood of the group. After this incident, the atmosphere was less open and relaxed.

*“Ik vermoed dat onze openheid en directheid niet altijd wordt gewaardeerd. Ik moet me zelf ook wel inhouden, dat draag je bij je. Maar voor mijn gevoel waardeert Amerika die directheid wel.” [S15:6] \*16*

SAS-1 does not have an outright strategy on how to cooperate with Troy or how to address the issues that have been mentioned above. One of the significant things they did add to their comments is the fact that the atmosphere in the group is good, especially because they make jokes about each other and can laugh about it. When there is a disagreement in scientific opinions, this is not good for the group because the relaxed atmosphere disappears. In such cases, it takes time to come back to the same openness with each other again, they said.

Nothing has been mentioned as a solution or ideas on how the cooperation can be improved. Although the atmosphere is an aspect which does play a big part in how they feel about the cooperation.<sup>102</sup>

*How members of TRY-1 feel about the cooperation with members from SAS-1*

Members of TRY-1 are pretty positive about the cooperation with SAS-1. They feel meetings go well because they present each other their results, give feedback and have fruitful discussions. One member felt the group is pretty open. The ideas they share are ‘out of the box’ ideas and people keep an open mind.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, members in TRY-1 indicate they sometimes find it difficult to cooperate with SAS-1 because members in SAS-1 ask a lot of questions and want to know the arguments and theories behind everything. One member in TRY-1 said Americans do quite the opposite: they rush into things and want to start working instead of talking about it for too long. To them this is not a huge issue, but something they have to deal with sometimes. They feel that the questions are also a way of controlling the process and making sure others have done their job correctly. They feel this is a bit too much.<sup>104</sup>

*“They want to know theory behind everything. But the American way is more like hurry up and jump into it. Sometimes [SAS 1] talk the subject to death.” [T12:4]*  
*“They like to think and talk a lot in theory. And just almost over think an idea. And that is definitely true because we’ll get emails from Huig and Keimpe of: ‘Well, what’s the theory behind that? Why do you want to try this?’. And then continue to talk a subject to death. We’re just like: Let’s just try it. So yeah I definitely see that as a difference...” [T12:13]*

One of the things that stands in the way of good cooperation according to TRY-1, has to do with the process in which they communicate with each other. From the Troy side, the communication of information, remarks and opinions goes through the manager and the group leader. The other members do not send emails with results and other information on their own. The reason is that this way the manager knows what data is being reported to SAS-1. This works really well for them, because it gets the TRY-1 group members to talk with each other, and make sure all agree with the results before they send it on. This way they can send one clear consistent message (instead of five different ideas, or five different data presentations).<sup>105</sup>

The problem according to TRY-1 lies in the fact that members of SAS-1 come with ideas and directly fire them off. All the ideas are not bundled through anybody. This makes it hard for the receivers of the emails in Troy to understand what is going on in Sassenheim, and what they should do with the ideas sent over email. The members of SAS-1 sometimes say things that are in direct contradiction with other members at their end, which leads to confusion in TRY-1, because they don’t know whom to listen too.<sup>106</sup>

*“So that’s where it can get confusing, we’re not being able to following information through one particular person.” [T12:16]*

The members of TRY-1 did not mention how they deal with the overload of questions or the long talks with Sassenheim. With regard to the chaotic email problem, the members in TRY-1

<sup>102</sup> S14:2, S14: 3, S14:4, S14:5, S14:9, S14:12, S15:1, S15:2, S15:5

<sup>103</sup> T12:4, T12:9.

<sup>104</sup> T12:4, T12:10, T12:13.

<sup>105</sup> T12:14, T12:15.

<sup>106</sup> T12:16, T12:17.

cope by telling members in SAS-1 they can't do much if they are not clear about the assignment or ideas they need to use. Members of TRY-1 even think that members in SAS-1 might email so much because they don't have the ability to sit together and talk. They don't have a clue why Sassenheim communicates in this way. To them it doesn't make sense.<sup>107</sup>

#### *Case 1: Comparison of the perspectives of SAS-1 and TRY-1*

Both sides feel pretty much the same about the quality of the cooperation and the discussions they have with one another. The difference between the talking mentality of Sassenheim and the action mentality of Troy was acknowledged by both. Also, the critical questioning of Sassenheim was a topic for both.

For SAS-1 members, the atmosphere is very important. The members in TRY-1 did not mention this directly, although the openness in the group, which can be related to this topic, is important for them as well.

The issue with the communication process, especially the use of email and diverse messages from SAS-1, was not mentioned by SAS-1. TRY-1 has addressed the issue by telling SAS-1 they have to be clear about their assignments. Nevertheless, the issue still persists for TRY-1.

The solutions or improvements mentioned by both parties differ. For SAS-1, the atmosphere is important, for TRY-1, the dealing with questions and asking for clarification on the emails is a priority.

#### **4.5 Case 2: Bangalore – Sassenheim 2**

This team, here called project team 2, consists of several groups with different tasks. The groups have members in Sassenheim and Bangalore. The cooperation takes place on a regular basis. Some members are daily in contact with each other using phone, email and MSN Messenger. On both sides, members are fairly positive about the cooperation. They do mention some challenges in the cooperation. I will describe the challenges and how they feel about cooperation.

#### *How members of SAS-2 feel about the cooperation with members from BAN-2*

The members of the project team in Sassenheim see good development, as well as challenges and some problems in the cooperation between their project members in Sassenheim and Bangalore. They highlight that the problems should be seen and handled from both sides:

When the members look at the team in Bangalore they feel that first, things there are usually done last-minute. The second problem is that members of SAS-2 have certain expectations about tasks being done by BAN-2, and are surprised when close to the deadline they hear that nothing has been done yet. They are not informed by team members in Bangalore when things are going wrong or deadlines cannot be met. This is different from the culture in the Netherlands and the United States, they say.<sup>108</sup> The third problem they see is the high rate of people leaving the team in Bangalore (quitting their jobs), which leads to delays because new people have to be recruited and introduced to the company and their new job.<sup>109</sup>

Apart from these problems, they feel BAN-2 has made a huge improvement by giving more input to the conversations and cooperation with SAS-2.<sup>110</sup>

The problems they see which come from the Sassenheim side of the team are first, the high volume of complaints and blames coming from people in Sassenheim about people in Bangalore. This is related to the lack of effort on the part of the people in Sassenheim to solve

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<sup>107</sup> T12:16, T12:17.

<sup>108</sup> S2:4.

<sup>109</sup> S5:3, S5:22, S5:23.

<sup>110</sup> S5:13.

problems or talk with members in Bangalore about them. One of the problematic changes affecting the cooperation was that people in Sassenheim were losing their jobs to people in Bangalore. This did not motivate people in Sassenheim to help people in Bangalore. Both members of SAS-2 felt that other people in Sassenheim do not realize that from the start of the cooperation with Bangalore (in general,) their roles have changed. It is not like working with people from the same culture in the same building. You can't just say something and be done with it. You have to intensify phone calls, email alone is not enough. Some people in Sassenheim don't want to put this much effort in the cooperation with Bangalore, they said.<sup>111</sup>

*“Verwachtingen waren te hoog vanuit NL. De mensen in NL die mensen moesten inwerken die hadden zoiets van: Nou, ik leg het je uit en dan moet je het maar begrijpen. Maar er is duidelijk meer voor nodig. Je moet die Indiase mensen gewoon op sleeptouw nemen, ze door dingen heen leiden, ze steunen in stukjes werk die ze doen.” [S5:6] \*17*

Another critique from the interviewed members of SAS-2 is that other people in Sassenheim often don't realize how bad their English is in speech and writing. People in Sassenheim often think they know more and do things better than Bangalore. But according to SAS-2 members this is not true.<sup>112</sup>

The first problem with regard to time management at BAN-2 has been addressed by a member of SAS-2 by helping members of BAN-2 plan their activities and explaining to them why it is good to do so. The second problem has been addressed by discussing things in small groups and getting things done by talking both with group leaders, and with others operating under the group leaders. This way they involve different layers in the organization. One member said he gets positive feedback about this approach.<sup>113</sup>

The third problem with the high rate of people leaving the company in Bangalore, has been attempted to be solved by letting people move internally to another job in this department. This has improved the situation in a few cases. They also work with back-ups, people who can take over a job temporarily.<sup>114</sup>

Other things they do in their cooperation with Bangalore is to discuss tasks with group members of BAN-2 and inform their bosses. The fact that they (BAN-2) don't have to report everything to their boss gives a feeling of trust and respect, but such a relationship has to be built over time, as one member mentioned.<sup>115</sup>

The problems which exist on the Sassenheim side according to these members have not been solved yet. One of the members said he gives feedback to the people in Sassenheim about their (negative) behaviour towards Bangalore.<sup>116</sup> The two members of SAS-2 also inform people in Bangalore about the developments and changes that are going on. Other people in Sassenheim should also take the initiative to inform them. Also, when Sassenheim is on the phone with Bangalore, they ask the person in Bangalore if the other person has any questions. Members from SAS-2 indicate prior to the start of a project or test what problems might occur, and in which cases members in Bangalore should notify them. Also, they let the people in Bangalore talk and tell their ideas on the process and tasks.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>112</sup> S5:12, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>113</sup> S2:1, S2:5.

<sup>114</sup> S5:3.

<sup>115</sup> S2:5.

<sup>116</sup> Observation 8-01-09, S5:7.

<sup>117</sup> S2:5, S5:7, S5:16.

*“Als je dit ziet, laat mij het weten”. [Groep leider] doet dat met zijn groep. Hij laat ze vertellen en geeft aanwijzingen.(...) Gooit werk over de schutting, maar klimt zelf ook over de schutting.” [S5:16] \*18*

In relation to their ideas for further developing the cooperation between Sassenheim and Bangalore, the respondents of SAS-2 have mentioned several things. I will give a short list with their ideas and remarks:

1. For good knowledge transfer, people should be put together in front of a whiteboard and made to talk.<sup>118</sup>
2. People should be put together in a team with shared responsibilities.<sup>119</sup>
3. The crossing of hierarchal lines between India and the Netherlands will also help the sites to be connected with each other.<sup>120</sup>
4. It is not about culture, but having the right people in the team. Some people function well in teams, others don't.<sup>121</sup>
5. Visiting the other site and having face-to-face contact is only important in the beginning phase of a project team: to have a base, to get to know one another and to have a feel for the circumstances and context/environment of the team members in Bangalore.<sup>122</sup>
6. For good communication good technical support and facilities are needed.<sup>123</sup>
7. People in Sassenheim should learn to write emails clearly by organizing the content using topics like a. problem, b. background information and c. expectations.<sup>124</sup>
8. Things shouldn't be expected to go the same way as in the Netherlands, the situation in Bangalore is quite different.<sup>125</sup>
9. People in Bangalore should be allowed to describe the process themselves. Let them think and talk and become co-owners of a new working method. It means that people in SAS should talk and dictate less.<sup>126</sup>

#### *How members of BAN-2 feel about the cooperation with members from SAS-2*

The members of BAN-2 are fairly positive about the cooperation with SAS-2. They feel there is a lot of interaction and communication, which is good. There are some things they find problematic or wonder about. They have also mentioned things they feel they can improve themselves. I will describe these items below.

First of all, members of BAN-2 complained that meetings can take a long time. They feel that members in SAS-2 talk a lot, even when the point is already clear. Some conversations or statements could be made shorter, which can save time in meetings.<sup>127</sup> The second problem they indicated is how they feel about being appreciated for doing overtime. They have worked on holidays and didn't get any compensation or recognition for their hard work.<sup>128</sup> The third problem is that when people in Sassenheim take a holiday it is usually for a long period, like

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<sup>118</sup> S2:1.

<sup>119</sup> S2:1.

<sup>120</sup> S2:3.

<sup>121</sup> S2:3.

<sup>122</sup> S2:6, S2:7, S2:8, S2:9, S5:4.

<sup>123</sup> S2:7.

<sup>124</sup> S5:12.

<sup>125</sup> S5:4.

<sup>126</sup> S5:14.

<sup>127</sup> Observation 30-03-09, B6:8, B7:8.

<sup>128</sup> B9:4, B9:5.

two or three weeks. No back-ups are arranged; so a project might get delayed because people in Sassenheim are not available.<sup>129</sup>

*“Cooperation is ok. Sometimes it is difficult because it’s better to have face-to-face interactions (...). Face-to-face is better, but it’s fine. We bridge the gaps with these calls.” [B6:2]*

Things that are difficult for BAN-2 are time management, and people leaving the company. One member said that at Bangalore, they were not so good at preparing things in advance. And the main issue with people leaving the company has been to hire new people; it takes time to teach them new skills and how to do their new tasks. The third issue is about language. They are aware of the fact that their English is different from the Dutch and they have to talk slow when they communicate with people from Sassenheim.<sup>130</sup>

Finally, BAN-2 members wondered how SAS-2 members felt when they were losing their jobs and had to teach the people in BAN-2 their old tasks. For people in BAN-2 this was difficult because the situation was awkward, and they got a lot of negative response when they handled the tasks in a different way than their predecessors did.<sup>131</sup>

The first problem with the meetings taking too much time has not been addressed. The second problem about their feeling of lack of appreciation, they have been trying to bring to the attention of the management in Bangalore by sending a letter. This problem might not have to do with the department in Sassenheim, apart from the fact that they compare their situation with the situation in Sassenheim and therefore feel unappreciated and treated unfairly. The third problem with the holidays of members in Sassenheim has not been addressed.

On the Bangalore side, time management is something which BAN-2 is open towards learning from people in Sassenheim. The problem with people leaving the company has not been addressed because it is currently less of an issue due to the bad job market and economical recession. BAN-2 is aware of some problems with language and accent, but they try and keep this in mind and talk slow on the phone.<sup>132</sup>

It is not clear what they have done to satisfy their curiosity about the effect of the job transfers to Bangalore, on Sassenheim. They have learned for themselves that they are now the new job owners, and they determine themselves how they fulfil their tasks. They can take the advice and remarks of members in Sassenheim if they want to, but experience more freedom in the practice of their new tasks.

The members in BAN-2 have mentioned several things that have been done or still can be done to improve the cooperation in their department. In the list below I have summarized the different statements:

1. Rapport can be built between people by using the phone. People feel less hesitant to speak or pick up the phone. In this way, contact can improve.<sup>133</sup>
2. By using the phone, information exchange goes faster; one gets an immediate response.<sup>134</sup>
3. Interaction sessions and meetings will help make people talk and help in creating new ideas. Research labs shouldn’t work in isolation.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> B7:3.

<sup>130</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:.

<sup>131</sup> B6:2, B10:2.

<sup>132</sup> B6:2, B9:3, B10:2, B10:4, B11:.

<sup>133</sup> B2:11.

<sup>134</sup> B2:11.

4. Some people in Bangalore would like to know if Sassenheim have problems. They would like to help them.<sup>136</sup>
5. When more people are involved in a meeting, it helps to organize the meeting in a structured way.<sup>137</sup>
6. It is very helpful when there is an extra person is present in the communication between Bangalore and Sassenheim, that someone from their own team in Bangalore can help and explain something face-to-face.<sup>138</sup>
7. It would be helpful if people in Bangalore could be sent to Sassenheim at least once to meet people face-to-face.<sup>139</sup>
8. The presence and guidance of a Dutch expatriate in Bangalore has really helped to improve the understanding of ‘the Dutch’, and working with Sassenheim.<sup>140</sup>
9. Bangalore has learned that even if something goes wrong, it is very important to communicate that to keep the communication channels open.<sup>141</sup>

*Case 2: Comparison of the perspectives of SAS-2 and BAN-2*

When we compare the perspectives of BAN-2 and SAS-2, we can see that on the part of the problem definition, BAN-2 and SAS-2 agree on two points: the fact that BAN-2 has issues with time management, and the high rate of people leaving the department. The first problem has not been addressed by BAN-2 directly, although it is on their minds and they do aim to practice it. Sassenheim helps Bangalore by stimulating and explaining the benefits of time management. The problem that SAS-2 has with members in BAN-2 not being transparent about their planning of tasks or when things go wrong, was not mentioned as an issue in Bangalore, although it was addressed implicitly; when asked about improvements one member specifically mentioned it is important to inform others even when things go wrong. In this case I would say that this issue is still ‘under construction’: some members acknowledge it and adjust to the need of Sassenheim to be informed, while for others it is not a priority (yet).

The astonishing thing is that the problems that Sassenheim mentioned about themselves were not an issue for Bangalore (apart from the language difficulty that both address). The complaints against Bangalore have probably not reached Bangalore, so Bangalore remains unaware that it is so much of an issue in Sassenheim. This also happens the other way around: all the problems Bangalore mentioned about Sassenheim were not mentioned as an issue by SAS-2 members. The problems with long meetings, appreciation and the delays in projects due to holidays in Sassenheim, were not addressed by SAS-2. Only the long meetings were implicitly addressed by Sassenheim in their idea to make people in Sassenheim talk less and let people Bangalore talk more. But this doesn’t mean they are aware of the fact that Bangalore feels the meetings are too long.

Overall, in this case we see that problems in Sassenheim mentioned by Sassenheim are totally different from the problems in Sassenheim mentioned by Bangalore. One item that was mentioned by both parties is the loss of jobs in Sassenheim and the effect this had on the work transfer and cooperation between the two. Members in Sassenheim felt this was poorly dealt with, and members in Bangalore felt this was an awkward situation.

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<sup>135</sup> B2:12, B3:4, B6:9, B8:8.

<sup>136</sup> Observation 30-03-09, B6:9.

<sup>137</sup> B3:6.

<sup>138</sup> B6:3.

<sup>139</sup> B9:10.

<sup>140</sup> B9:2.

<sup>141</sup> B10:8.



Finally, when we compare the solutions and ideas for good cooperation, we can see that SAS-2 aims at the more technical and process related aspects of the cooperation, for example when they mentioned how to organize meetings, how to organize the hierarchy and how to write emails. While BAN-2 focuses more on relation and content related solutions: a better understanding, being helpful, building rapport, etc. BAN-2 and SAS-2 both agree that people should get together in meetings and talk to create new ideas. BAN-2 also mentioned technical support as something that can be improved and is important to them in the cooperation.

#### 4.6 Case 3: Bangalore – Sassenheim 3

Department 3 works on several explorative scientific projects.<sup>142</sup> In one project, a team has been made involving people from Sassenheim and Bangalore. The project leader is often someone from Sassenheim. Several projects consist of members from Bangalore and Sassenheim. There is also a lot of interaction when they ask each other for information or a specific expert opinion.

In this department, members in Sassenheim are unsatisfied about the cooperation. The members in Bangalore are not as negative, but do mention some problems which affect the cooperation. Most complaints from Sassenheim have to do with their expectations of members in Bangalore, more specific to the tasks and input of BAN-3.

##### *How members of SAS-3 feel about the cooperation with members from BAN-3*

From the perspective of SAS-3, the first problem is that the atmosphere in BAN-3 is not good. The manager in Sassenheim has been anonymously informed about this. The team leader in Bangalore has been notified about this complaint and given the assignment to solve the issue in BAN-3. But the manager in Sassenheim also feels that it is problematic that people in BAN-3 do not tell their problems to their team leader at location.<sup>143</sup>

The second problem is that lab notes are not written in the way that members in Sassenheim want them. According to Sassenheim, they consist of a data-dump without explanations and analysis, or they are too short or lacking interpretations from the writer. Also, sticking to the deadlines is another issue.<sup>144</sup>

A third problem related to the second one is that members in SAS-3 want BAN-3 to think more about what they are doing. Sometimes SAS-3 is shocked by the “stupid questions” they ask, as if they have no idea of what they are working on. This troubles SAS-3 and makes them feel insecure about the outcome of the tasks done in Bangalore. They would like BAN-3 to give more critique and be more creative in the projects.<sup>145</sup>

The first problem regarding complaints against the work atmosphere at BAN-3 has not been tackled yet. The manager in Sassenheim got frustrated about the problem because he feels that this responsibility does not belong with him but with the team leader in Bangalore. The manager in Sassenheim then forgot about the problem and went on holiday. When he came back he addressed the problem by instructing the team leader in Bangalore to solve the problem, which according to the manager, the team leader should have done all along. The manager adds that if members of BAN-3 are not willing to talk about their problems with their team leader, this problem is a natural consequence.<sup>146</sup>

The problem with lab notes in the department has escalated into a conflict between two team members, one from Bangalore and one from Sassenheim. Their bosses have been called in for

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<sup>142</sup> See the description in the Internship Report in the Appendix.

<sup>143</sup> S10:2, S10:3, S12:13.

<sup>144</sup> S9:4, S9:5, S12.

<sup>145</sup> S9:8, S9:9, S9:13, S12:6, S12:8, S12:11, 12: Observation 1-12-08, Observation 11-12-08.

<sup>146</sup> S10:2, S10:3, S12:13.

a meeting (telephone conference) to try and solve the issue with the two members. The two bosses talked with each other. In this conversation the boss in Bangalore was quiet, while the boss in Sassenheim was talking a lot. The difference of opinion between the two members could not be solved, so they proposed to ask a third party, their customer (someone from the marketing department), about the requirements of the lab notes. They both agreed to accept the third party's demands. The issue is still tense and the dissatisfaction of the member in Sassenheim with the member in Bangalore still exists in the cooperation.<sup>147</sup>

The third problem in the department was handled by a member of SAS-3 by giving critique and asking critical questions about the lab note of a member of BAN-3 with which he cooperates. These critiques and the lab notes and tests are being discussed in telephone conferences. After one of the meetings, this member in Sassenheim got an emotional email from the member in Bangalore. This member felt very displeased and disrespected by the tone of the remarks and questions of the member in Sassenheim. The member in Sassenheim was shocked and surprised to see the emotional reaction of the member in Bangalore. This was later discussed by the two persons and resolved.

This member of SAS-3 also sends scientific articles to the member in Bangalore to challenge the other person to do something more with the project they are working on. The member of SAS-3 wants more input from the member of BAN-3. The input has become better, but could still be improved. Other members of SAS-3 also feel that BAN-3 is not giving a lot of input or scientific creative ideas.<sup>148</sup>

*“Je kan ze er bijna niet op betrappen dat ze er over nadenken (Over een lijn in een grafiek). Nu hebben ze allebei een labnotitie met interpretaties gemaakt. Maar het kost wat moeite om ze zover te krijgen om er interpretaties aan te hangen.” [S12:6] \*19*

*“Toch ligt daar de nadruk op discipline en uitvoerend werk en hier op creativiteit, zelf nadenken en kritiek geven.” [S12:11] \*20*

*“Ik vond het een beetje kneuterig daar (BAN-3). Ja weetje, als je nou niet eens je smoel open doet tegen een groepsleider...wat wil je dan?!” [S10:2] \*21*

SAS-3 suggests that the solutions that can be taken on to resolve these problems, apart from the things they have already undertaken, are more travelling and face-to-face contact. Another thing that SAS-3 thinks should help the cooperation is to create an atmosphere of trust. One member of SAS-3 wants to do this through the tele-meetings and if possible through face-to-face contact. The manager in Sassenheim feels the open environment and atmosphere in Sassenheim should also be created in BAN-3. But he thinks this can only be accomplished if he goes to Bangalore too, because he feels he can't change the atmosphere and culture in BAN-3 over the phone.<sup>149</sup>

#### *How members of BAN-3 feel about the cooperation with members from SAS-3*

The problems the team members in Bangalore describe are firstly the problems within their department in Bangalore. Several members in BAN-3 indicated that they feel excluded from conversations and feel the credits for the work are not fairly distributed. Because their team leader knows about this, but will not do anything about it, they are afraid to speak out. To

<sup>147</sup> Observation 8-01-09.

<sup>148</sup> Observation 8-01-09.

<sup>149</sup> S10:3, S10:6, S12:2.

prevent other people in the organization from not taking them seriously if they should know about this problem, they keep the problem within their department.<sup>150</sup>

Another problem in their opinion is the writing of lab notes. Members of BAN-3 feel they are first given the responsibility to write the lab notes, but then after writing them they have to modify it to suit the criteria of members of SAS-3. One member says that there is a difference in opinion on what data to show in the lab notes and what not. This has escalated to a conflict which has been addressed by their two bosses. But the problem could not be solved during their meetings with their bosses from Bangalore and Sassenheim. One member of BAN-3 feels they always end up doing more work than necessary.<sup>151</sup>

The third problem is that members of SAS-3 ask for arguments and explanations with the conclusions in lab notes and reports. Members of BAN-3 say they have not been educated this way. It is not in their nature to be argumentative. They have a lot of knowledge, but don't know how to apply it or how to verbally express their (scientific) opinions and assumptions. This has been difficult for them, but they try and develop it.<sup>152</sup>

To address the first problem, the team members in Bangalore have discussed this issue with each other. Also the manager in Sassenheim has been informed about this problem anonymously. But no serious action has been taken so far.

The second problem with the lab notes has been addressed by asking both bosses to have a meeting to solve the issue. For the member in Bangalore the problem has not been solved, because the work for the lab notes stays the same and according to the norms of the member in Sassenheim. This has become a sensitive subject in the cooperation and now has negative effects on other parts and assignments of the cooperation between the two members and the members working with these two people.

The third issue on the ability to be argumentative has been acknowledged but not further addressed. The members in Bangalore are aware of this issue and most of them attempt to practice this in giving their (scientific) opinions in their encounters/cooperation with members in SAS.

One thing a member of BAN-3 said is that he will always communicate through his direct boss, the project leader in Sassenheim. If he has any doubts or a decision needs to be made, he will inform his boss and wait for the decision. This works best in his opinion.<sup>153</sup>

Another solution a member gives is to include an extra person on both sides in a meeting between SAS-3 and BAN-3. This way, if one person does not understand what has been said, the other person might be able to explain it in a better way, bringing the right message across.<sup>154</sup>

*“Prevented by including other people. (Person from Bangalore) was not here, she was on leave. If she was here she would have corrected this. An extra person from SAS would be also good.”*  
[B21:7]

### *Case 3: Comparison of the perspectives of SAS-3 and BAN-3*

If we compare the problem definitions of BAN-3 with those of SAS-3 it seems that both parties indicated the same type of problems: first related to the Bangalore work atmosphere,

<sup>150</sup> B18:3, B18:4, B18:8, B18:9.

<sup>151</sup> B18:1, B18:7.

<sup>152</sup> B18:1, B18:7, B20:5, B20:6, Observation 31-03-09.

<sup>153</sup> B21:2.

<sup>154</sup> B21:7.

second about lab notes and third about argumentation from the side of Bangalore. The only topic which is an issue for members in SAS-3 but not for members in BAN-3 is the lack of creativity in BAN-3. We can conclude that both parties agree to a large extent on what the issues and challenging factors in their cooperation are.

The actions that have been taken to address these issues are very different. While members in SAS-3 feel that a lot of the changes should be made by the members in Bangalore (in changing culture and atmosphere, changing lab notes and being more creative and argumentative). Members of BAN-3 feel that the atmosphere is out of their hands and the lab notes are a difference of opinion which they cannot resolve. Only the fact that SAS-3 wants BAN-3 to be more argumentative, they accept and will practice.

Also, on the part on solutions the two parties offer different suggestions do not agree: The SAS-3 members emphasize the need for face-to-face contact and creating an atmosphere of trust. This is directed at what needs to be changed on the BAN-3 side. The BAN-3 members didn't mention the media for interaction (phone or face-to-face), but emphasize the better understanding between the two parties. This solution is directed at a two way effort. Also the idea of SAS-3 members of creating an open atmosphere in BAN-3 has itself never been mentioned by any of the respondents in BAN-3. It is unclear if this idea has even been discussed by SAS-3 members with BAN-3 members.

When we look at this comparison, the issues experienced in the cooperation by SAS-3 and BAN-3 are pretty much the same. BAN-3 also seems willing to make changes and adapt to most of the wishes of SAS-3. Only the ideas about the way the problems should be solved have not been discussed between the parties. We can say that there is a match on the point of the problem definition, but a mismatch on the ideas for solutions. The actions that have been chosen in SAS-3 so far have not been able to solve the issues in the long term. Short term frustrations have been dissolved, but the core issues have not been solved yet.

#### **4.7 Summary of the Data Presentation**

In this paragraph I will attempt to broadly summarize the data of this chapter. Some of the parts of this chapter are more relevant to answering the research question than other parts. Please note that this summary is focused on the research question and its sub-questions giving an overall idea of the important themes.<sup>155</sup>

The focus of this chapter is to answer the first sub-question on two cultural levels (the context level and team level). The first sub-question is: *How do the employees of the R&D sites of Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim perceive cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural issues at work?*

In Part I, the data from the interviews has been presented according to each location (focusing on the context level of the cultures of the locations). When we look at the sub-question, we can see that employees from Troy say there are large cultural differences with Bangalore, but do not experience much hindrance by those. An example: Troy and Bangalore hardly work together, so their cultures hardly interact. Employees in Troy find employees in Bangalore dedicated workers. On the other hand, they find them too rigid and formal in their work.

In their cooperation with Sassenheim, employees in Troy experience some cultural differences. They do not feel as if there is a large cultural gap between the two sites. On the contrary, they feel that despite some differences, they are very capable of working together. An example of what employees from Troy find positive about employees in Sassenheim is

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<sup>155</sup> In the Appendix a summary of the cultural characteristics mentioned by employees of three locations can be found. This summary contains the perspective of employees on the culture of employees of other locations.

their open communication. What they find negative is the way employees from Sassenheim can talk a subject to death before they start working on it. They would prefer a faster decision making process.

In general, employees from Bangalore experience several (large) cultural differences with employees from Sassenheim. Some of these cultural differences are seen as positive assets while others are seen as problematic. For instance, people in Bangalore feel that the open way of communicating and sharing knowledge by employees in Sassenheim is a positive cultural aspect of Sassenheim, experienced as helping the cooperation. On the other hand, the argumentative and challenging attitude of employees in Sassenheim is seen as an excessive need for explanations and is sometimes felt as (unnecessary) negative critique.

Employees in Bangalore hardly experience any cultural differences with employees from Troy. Although employees mention there are cultural differences with Troy, due to the lack of cooperation and joint projects, they hardly interact to have much experience of these differences.

Employees from Sassenheim have several issues with the culture of employees in Bangalore. Some departments or project team members are more negative about the cooperation with Bangalore than others. Although it can be said that the employees who were very negative, are also the ones who explicitly state that problems in the cooperation are caused by the Indian culture, while employees who experience some difficulties but still feel cooperative state that the cause of the problems lie in both Bangalore and Sassenheim. An example of what employees from Sassenheim find positive in the cooperation is that employees in Bangalore work hard and are very friendly. What they find negative or challenging in the cooperation is that employees in Bangalore have a tendency of not telling others when things in a project are going wrong or mistakes have been made.

The overall feeling of employees in Sassenheim about the culture of employees in Troy is very positive. For example: Although employees in Sassenheim have critique on the hierarchal atmosphere in Troy, they are positive about the American 'can do' mentality.

One conclusion we can draw from this summary is that the intensity of the cooperation has a large effect on the experience of culture as having a negative effect on the cooperation. When there is less cooperation, culture is not or hardly seen as having a negative influence. Another conclusion is that the cultural distance between Troy and Sassenheim is, by both, considered smaller as compared to the cultural distance between Troy and Bangalore and Sassenheim and Bangalore. And when we go into the nature of the experience of cultural differences, these differences are often opposites of each other. For example, while Troy has a 'can do' mentality, Sassenheim has a favour for more talking and discussions. And while Sassenheim is challenging and has a lot of explicit critique on others, Troy and Bangalore prefer a more subtle or political way of discussing issues.

In Part II, three case studies have been discussed concerning one interface between Sassenheim and Troy, and two interfaces between Bangalore and Sassenheim (focusing on the team level of the cultures in the interface between the locations).<sup>156</sup> To answer the second part of the sub-question, we can see that the cross-cultural issues that have been experienced by employees at the three sites are:<sup>157</sup>

1. Too much talking and questioning each other, and as a consequence meetings taking too much time.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> There was no example of an interface between (only) Troy and Bangalore. Because the issues between Bangalore and Sassenheim were more complex, instead of a case study of Troy-Bangalore an extra case study of Bangalore-Sassenheim was chosen.

<sup>157</sup> In the footnotes it can be seen which locations have mentioned the specific issue.

<sup>158</sup> Bangalore and Troy.

2. (Extended) Discussions over email.<sup>159</sup>
3. Not informing others when missing a deadline.<sup>160</sup>
4. People leaving the company.<sup>161</sup>
5. Working according to your own culture as you have always done, even when you have to work with people from other cultures (acting as if nothing has changed and others are like people from your own culture).<sup>162</sup>
6. Giving colleagues from a different culture/location an assignment without explaining what exactly needs to be done.<sup>163</sup>
7. Lacking motivation to cooperate, due to (the risk of) losing jobs to another location.<sup>164</sup>
8. Bad English in speech and writing.<sup>165</sup>
9. Other team members not accepting feedback, or an unsafe/defensive environment in which feedback is seen as a threat.<sup>166</sup>
10. Lack of recognition for work and extra effort in (shared) projects.<sup>167</sup>
11. Long holidays at a location without sufficient replacement or back-ups for people and tasks.<sup>168</sup>
12. Bad atmosphere/problems within a location or local team, which affects openness and communication with other teams and locations.<sup>169</sup>
13. Not having the same norms or ideas about written documents (reports, lab notes).<sup>170</sup>
14. Not being reflective about your work and the task you are doing.<sup>171</sup>
15. Using stereotypes as an ethnicizing strategy to ridicule others (from a different culture) and make them seem incapable of their work. This is often used as an excuse for problems in the cross-cultural cooperation.<sup>172</sup>

The issues mentioned in the case studies show that most problems are caused by a cultural differences. On the other hand, some aspects have to do with external factors or local circumstances which are hard to control (like 4. and 11.). The points related to culture, can be seen to be from locations with a specific preference. For instance, extended discussions over email is something which is done by employees in Sassenheim. Employees in Troy find this very confusing and prefer clear messages and less discussions.

Now that the data has been broadly summarized focusing on the first sub-question, the next chapter will delve into the second sub-question on the effects of these cultural differences and issues on the cooperation. In Chapter 5 the data will be analysed by using the theories presented in Chapter 3 (from Organization Anthropology and, Cross-cultural Management Theory). Finally, in the conclusion, the research question will be answered from the perspectives of the two pillars of this thesis: practice and theory. This will be followed by recommendations with Humanistic Theory as the foundation.

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<sup>159</sup> Troy.

<sup>160</sup> Bangalore and Sassenheim.

<sup>161</sup> Bangalore and Sassenheim.

<sup>162</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>163</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>164</sup> Bangalore and Sassenheim.

<sup>165</sup> Bangalore and Sassenheim.

<sup>166</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>167</sup> Bangalore.

<sup>168</sup> Bangalore

<sup>169</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>170</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>171</sup> Sassenheim.

<sup>172</sup> This last issue comes only from observations.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter contains the analysis of the interviews and case studies on the context level and team level. In this chapter I will delve into the second sub-question of my research: *How does the perception of cross-cultural differences of employees at work influence the cooperation and the efficiency in specific?*

With the use of the theory presented in Chapter 3, the data from Chapter 4 will be analysed. In the first section of this chapter the data on the context level (perspectives of the locations) will be analysed using the theory of Coping Strategies.

In the second section the team level of the data (the case studies) will be analysed using the theory on Transnational Teams.



### 5.1 Analysis of the Locations: the Context Level - Coping Strategies

The interfaces between the different locations are mostly created between two locations at a time. The interfaces are Troy-Sassenheim, Bangalore-Troy, and Sassenheim-Bangalore. I will analyse the interfaces one by one, using the data from Chapter 4 Part I to evaluate which strategy (synergy, segregation, domination or break-down) is being used.

Each analysis of an interface starts with the perspectives of the involved locations, followed by the analysis of the coping strategy and concluding remarks.

#### *The interface Troy-Sassenheim*

*Troy:* In the cooperation between Troy and Sassenheim, respondents have described how they cooperate and discuss different perspectives and approaches; looking at the perception of members in Troy on the cooperation: On the one hand, the data shows that members in Troy feel that they have an open communication with Sassenheim. They both show results and have fruitful discussions in meetings. They share information through PowerPoint presentations, and overcome the time difference by making appointments for conference calls in advance, making sure everybody can call in at the same time.<sup>173</sup> On the other hand, members in Troy also feel that things sometimes have to be done the way people in Sassenheim want it. The aim of the project, most of the times, comes from Sassenheim, and people in Sassenheim can be pushy. When it comes to holidays, people in Sassenheim tend to take long holidays; people in Troy don't do this, they only take short leaves. This for Troy is very inconvenient because they, to a certain extent, depend on Sassenheim for information or project decisions. When members in Sassenheim are on a long holiday, this process in the cooperation slows down and the work in Troy slows down. This to them is inconvenient because they have to wait with their work till people in Sassenheim come back.

Another cultural difference mentioned by members in Troy is the way people in Sassenheim communicate. In Troy they communicate through their group leader, while in Sassenheim people communicate individually. This difference is sometimes confusing for members in Troy, because they can't follow the discussion through all the different emails and eventually don't know what the conclusion of the discussion in Sassenheim was.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> T1:10, T3:4, T4:4, T4:6, T4:9, T7:4, T8:4, T10:8, T12:2, T12:9, T17:2.

<sup>174</sup> T4:9, T7:4, T11:7, T12:1, T12:2, T12:4, T12:14, T12:16.

*Sassenheim:* Looking at the perception of members in Sassenheim about the cooperation, they are fairly positive about the cooperation as well. They inform each other in meetings, divide the tasks of the project over the locations but have a shared end result. Members in Sassenheim feel they can discuss things with people in Troy. They are happy that members in Troy are open to discussions.<sup>175</sup> On the other hand, members in Sassenheim mentioned that Sassenheim is less hierarchal compared to Troy, though it is not something they find problematic in the cooperation. One incident indicating difficulty in the cooperation, was in a situation where group leaders in Sassenheim did not agree with a group member in Troy. This affected the atmosphere in the group very much. It is not clear how the discussion ended or whose approach was eventually chosen, but it was clear to members in Sassenheim that this became a sensitive subject in the meetings, for members in Troy.<sup>176</sup>

*Coping strategies:* Looking at the interface of these two locations and how members perceive cultural differences and the cooperation, we can distinguish different strategies: Both locations feel open about the communication, information sharing and discussions. They are happy about the way meetings are being organized and tasks divided. These behaviours and processes<sup>177</sup> can be seen as part of a synergy strategy, in which two cultures merge by creating one mixed culture which works for both parties. This is experienced as positive by both locations.

The second type of behaviours and processes are characterised by members in Troy feeling that members in Sassenheim have certain ways of communicating, which to Troy is confusing. From the perspective of Sassenheim, in one case the cooperation got difficult when they didn't agree with Troy. This is part of a segregation strategy. Both locations have different cultural behaviours and processes (ways of doing things) which exist next to each other. There is no intermingling or negotiation about the way things are going, so the cultures stay the way they are and issues keep coming up in the cooperation. There are also cultural differences which do not cause issues in the cooperation, like the way Sassenheim feels about the hierarchy in Troy. In this case the cultures of the locations are different as well, but the segregation does not form an issue.

The third type of behaviours and processes are characterised by Sassenheim being the dominant culture. Sassenheim is sometimes experienced as being pushy. And when we look at the difference in taking holidays, we can see that Troy has to adjust to the way Sassenheim is working. It could have been the other way around: where Sassenheim could not take long holidays because Troy doesn't either. In the observed case however, the culture in Sassenheim dominates the cooperation because it is not negotiable and it requires Troy to adjust, even though the culture is not being transferred to Troy (that they can take long leaves as well); Sassenheim is playing the dominant part. For Troy, this has not been something to make a big deal of, they find it very inconvenient for themselves but accept this cultural difference as well.

As we can see, there have not been any examples of a break-down strategy in the interface between Troy and Sassenheim. Although the example of the affected atmosphere has made the cooperation in that case a bit fragile, still, it has not led to a break-down or forced take over of the culture in Troy by the culture in Sassenheim.

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<sup>175</sup> S3:7, S3:8, S4:4, S3:8, S4:4, S6:5, S6:8, S14:1, S15.

<sup>176</sup> S1:9, S3:6, S4:16, S5:17.

<sup>177</sup> Behaviours and processes refer to characteristics or specific elements of a culture. Because culture expresses itself in behaviour, this is why the word 'behaviour' is used to refer to these expressions of a culture.



*Concluding remarks:* When we look at this analysis, we can see that the main coping strategy in the cooperation between Troy and Sassenheim is segregation. On some topics, there is even a tendency of cultural dominance of Sassenheim. We can explain this dominance for instance, from the fact that the headquarters and most group leaders are situated in Sassenheim. In the organizational hierarchy, this already gives a natural power centre to Sassenheim. But this is not an issue for members in Troy while they can communicate openly. The synergetic behaviours and processes are experienced as positive aspects of the cooperation, which in effect stimulate the effectiveness and efficiency of the cooperation between the two locations. The segregation strategy on the other hand, causes cultural differences to clash once in a while, creating confusion. This is caused by inefficient and unclear communication and leads to delay in projects and mistakes in testing. The combination of these factors can increase miscommunication.

Some cultural differences are not an issue and are part of the segregation strategy. Overall, we can say that due to a combination of a synergy and segregation strategies, the cooperation between Troy and Sassenheim goes well. But some of the segregation can lead to problems in the communication if these cultural differences are not being discussed. They will continue to come up in encounters, and might become a huge obstacle in the cooperation when magnified by other unsolved issues in the cooperation. It is therefore necessary that Troy and Sassenheim start talking about the communication process, before this becomes a hazard leading to mistakes. But because they have a strong synergy strategy as well, they have the potency to come to a communication process which will be beneficial for the cooperation.

#### *The interface Bangalore-Troy*

The cooperation between Bangalore and Troy is very little compared to the cooperation between Troy and Sassenheim and Bangalore and Sassenheim. As we have seen in Chapter 4, there was very little data on the perception of cultural differences and cooperation between these two locations. Nevertheless, with the data we have, we can analyse the different strategies which are being used in this interface.

*Bangalore:* Members in Bangalore said they are happy about the support they get from Troy, although there is not much interaction, because there are not many joint projects between Troy and Bangalore. Bangalore does indicate that they are willing to improve their knowledge of the American market so they can meet product requirements better and give good support to Troy.<sup>178</sup>

*Troy:* Members in Troy said they are happy about the cooperation with Bangalore as well. They are especially positive about the fact that people in Bangalore have the same way of taking holidays as in Troy: they only take a few days off, not whole weeks. For them, this is convenient when they need information from Bangalore. People there can be reached and will help you.<sup>179</sup>

*Coping strategies:* When we look at the cultural strategies in the interface between these two locations, we can only see a small synergy and a large segregations strategy. The synergy comes from the fact that Troy and Bangalore have a cultural overlap when it comes to taking leave from work. This did not come from a merging between the two cultures, but a natural similarity which does result in a positive aspect of the cooperation: being able to reach people in the other location with fewer hindrances, when in need of information.

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<sup>178</sup> B7:3, B14:1, B14:2, B14:5, B14:9.

<sup>179</sup> T2:6, T3:1, T4:2.

The segregation strategy is strong because the two cultures have not yet had enough encounters to create an interface in which cultural differences clash and/or have to be discussed. So the two cultures both stay in their existing state and work separately.

A dominant strategy and break-down strategy has not been seen in the interface between Bangalore and Troy.

*Concluding remarks:* The effect of the segregation on the cooperation is very little for there is not much cooperation. The cooperation that exists has not been affected by the segregation of the two cultures or led to any issues. Apart from the fact that people in Troy find it hard to understand people in Bangalore because of their different accent, things go well. However, looking at the future and the extension of the lab in Bangalore, it could be so that the cooperation between the two locations will increase in due time.

#### *The interface Sassenheim-Bangalore*

The two locations Sassenheim and Bangalore cooperate a lot with each other and have several teams with members in both locations. Bangalore is fairly positive about the cooperation, with some critique on certain issues. Sassenheim is not very positive about the cooperation with Bangalore. Although a few people in Sassenheim are positive and have put a lot of effort in the improvement of the cooperation, the majority of the people still feel negatively about it. The issues described in Chapter 4 will now be analysed.

*Sassenheim:* People in Sassenheim are critical about the cooperation with Bangalore, apart from a couple of members who are fairly positive. People in Sassenheim have a lot of critique on the culture of Bangalore. Critiques are that people in Bangalore are stubborn, too submissive, work slowly and don't communicate what they eventually do. People in Sassenheim feel people in Bangalore should do as they say, they should be less polite, they should be able to handle critique better, and they should work faster. They feel the culture in Bangalore is very different from the culture in Sassenheim. Differences, for instance in the experience of hierarchy, are accepted and not so much seen as an issue. But the other cultural differences are seen as obstacles to the cooperation.<sup>180</sup>

Sassenheim feels their culture is also more effective and facilitates better results in projects compared to the culture in Bangalore.

Although the majority of the people in Sassenheim feel this way about Bangalore, a few respondents in Sassenheim are more positive about Bangalore and feel they have developed the tools needed for a successful cooperation with Bangalore. This small group feels Bangalore works hard, and that people in Sassenheim need to put in more effort in the cooperation and communication.

*Bangalore:* People in Bangalore are happy about the openness of people in Sassenheim. Sassenheim is open about information and with involving people so that they know more about projects. People in Bangalore also feel they can learn from Sassenheim, for instance when it comes to time management.<sup>181</sup>

On the other hand, people in Bangalore feel that people in Sassenheim talk or discuss things too much, or want to explore subjects which to the others in Bangalore are not interesting.

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<sup>180</sup> S1:11, S2:5, S3:1, S3:6, S3:7, S4:2, S4:3, S4:15, S4:17, S4:18, S4:19, S5:1, S5:2, S5:4, S5:10, S5:11, S5:14, S5:20, S5:21, S5:22, S6:7, S6:10, S7:2, S7:4, S7:6, S7:7, S7:9, S7:10, S8:3, S9:5, S9:15, S9:18, S10:1 S11:3, S11:4, S12:2, S12:3, S12:7, S12:9, S12:11, S12:12, S13:4, S13:5, S13:6.

<sup>181</sup> B1:2, B2:1, B2:2, B2:4, B2:5, B2:6, B2:7, B2:8, B2:9, B2:10, B3:4, B3:6, B7:4, B8:1, B8:2, B8:3, B8:4, B8:5, B9:2, B9:3, B10:1, B10:7, B10:8, B14:2, B14:3, B14:4, B14:5, B14:6, B14:7, B14:8, B15:2, B17:3, B17:4, B17:10, B18:1, B21:1, B21:2.

What they find difficult to deal with is when people in Sassenheim want them to do their tasks the way Sassenheim works (because people in Sassenheim feel their way is the better way).<sup>182</sup> Issues and negative feelings about the cooperation arise in situations when people in Bangalore don't get the appreciation and recognition for their good work and overtime effort. In another case, people in Bangalore were angry about new demands of Sassenheim; they do not appreciate the late decision on the part of people in Sassenheim to ask them to do extra work. They feel they have been treated unfair and it is not clear why these decisions have been made.<sup>183</sup>

*Coping strategies:* Looking at the cultural strategies in the interface between Sassenheim and Bangalore, we can see all the four types, though some stronger than others. First, when we look at the difference in experience of hierarchy and the fact that Bangalore feels a difference in openness, this indicates segregation. For both locations, there are some large cultural differences which do not change although they work together. In some cases, a synergy strategy appears when members in Sassenheim and Bangalore share information, help each other and have fruitful discussions. An example is when they share information using PowerPoint presentations in the same format and prepare these presentations by asking several members for feedback. In this case, the communication goes well and the message comes across.

On the other hand, the culture of Bangalore is being threatened by the critique from people in Sassenheim, who in a lot of cases want Bangalore to change their culture and act more like them. In Bangalore, they experience this in the cooperation when Sassenheim wants Bangalore to work like them. This can be seen as a domination strategy in which Sassenheim puts pressure on Bangalore to change their own culture and/or behaviour in order to pay more attention to the things people in Sassenheim find important. In a few cases, we can see this is leading to a break-down strategy when the difference in opinions between members in Sassenheim and Bangalore has resulted in conflicts. These conflicts have not been solved and lead to discontent and feelings of unfairness in Bangalore. The pushiness of people in Sassenheim to make people in Bangalore do things their way has led to a negative tendency in the cooperation, and is seriously affecting the atmosphere and efficiency. Because these issues have not been solved or addressed properly, this is leading to a deterioration of the willingness to cooperate on both sides (van Marrewijk 1999, van Marrewijk 2004, van Marrewijk 2009).

*Concluding remarks:* The break-down of the culture in Bangalore, due to the dominance of people in Sassenheim, might lead to resistance on both sides. In a couple of critical cases we can see a strong tendency towards ethnization in Sassenheim, and less willingness and hesitance to cooperate in Bangalore.

Ethnization is seen when members in Sassenheim talk negatively about the culture of people in Bangalore. Respondents from Sassenheim express feelings of denigration and are of the opinion that the culture and ways of doing things in Bangalore is "stupid or strange". Examples of cultural characteristics of Bangalore are taken out of their context and used to magnify cultural differences and explain their behaviour. A few people in Sassenheim laugh about the culture in Bangalore, ridicule it, and sometimes even get very angry and frustrated about it. In these few cases, they use their opinion of the minority status of the other culture as an excuse for unsuccessful cooperation and bad results. In other words, they blame the culture of people in Bangalore for mistakes, miscommunication and bad results in projects. In Sassenheim, these feelings of frustration and finger pointing are even strengthened when

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<sup>182</sup> B15:5, B15:6.

<sup>183</sup> B9:, B15:2, B15:3, B15:4, B15:5, B15:6, B15:9, B17:5.

people with the same opinion extensively talk with each other about the bad cooperation with Bangalore. A couple of people in Sassenheim are able to keep an open mind and ask friends or colleagues for feedback on the situations. They want to learn how to improve the cooperation. Some of these people feel bad about the way things are going and put in effort to improve the cooperation by trying different approaches.

To respondents who feel positive about the cooperation, it still seems to be hard to get people in Sassenheim to put in more effort in the communication and try and make clear that a different work style is needed (van Marrewijk 2004, van Marrewijk 2009, French 2007).

In these few cases, the unwillingness and hesitance to cooperate on the part of Bangalore, presently still exists on a small scale. But we should keep in mind that if issues will not be solved, this might become stronger and create a serious gap between team members of the two sites/locations.

The difficulty in these cases in which a break-down strategy appears, is that they all happen within a context of unbalance between the two labs on the fronts of knowledge, experience and the presence of management. The fact that the lab in Bangalore exists for 7 years while the lab in Sassenheim has a history dating back to some 100 years, explains the different status. But apart from the fact that Sassenheim has a longer history, we should ask why else this gap still exists. If people in Sassenheim help Bangalore in increasing their knowledge and experience, wouldn't that affect their status and eventually the balance between the two sites? I will further discuss this in Chapter 6 *Conclusion and Recommendations*.

## **5.2 Summary of the Context Level – Coping Strategies**

The analysis shows the main coping strategy in each cultural interface. In the interface Troy-Sassenheim, we can see that both locations have their own ways of working and respect each other in that way. This shows a strong segregation strategy. Although on some aspects they have integrated the same style of reporting or a common format for meetings, which indicates synergy. In some cases Sassenheim clearly plays a dominant role, mainly because managers and project leaders are from Sassenheim. This is accepted by Troy and indicates a weak domination strategy. But in conclusion, the main coping strategy is segregation.

In the interface Bangalore-Troy we can see a strong segregation strategy. The two locations hardly work together on projects, and have weak (not project related) connections between the sites. Because in one joint project, meetings and communication on project results led to the adoption of a common format, we can speak of a weak synergy strategy. In conclusion, the interface of Bangalore-Troy has a main coping strategy of segregation.

In the interface Sassenheim-Bangalore, we can see more or less all the coping strategies in their cross-cultural cooperation. As most experts, project leaders and managers are from Sassenheim, Sassenheim plays a very dominant role in the cooperation. Bangalore has adapted to Sassenheim, though according to the majority in Sassenheim, still not enough.<sup>184</sup> Some aspects of the cooperation are handled differently at both sites and show a weak segregation strategy. Because Bangalore is so focused on Sassenheim and has to meet their expectations and goals, the dominance of Sassenheim is very strong. Due to miscommunication and conflicts, this has, in some cases, led to resistance of employees from Bangalore against this dominance of Sassenheim. Because Sassenheim often 'wins' the discussions with conflicting views, this is beginning to show signs of a break-down strategy.

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<sup>184</sup> What should be noted, is that this adaptation of Bangalore to Sassenheim is not seen as an adaptation to the Sassenheim culture, but to a way of working which is considered 'normal' (by Sassenheim). But in reality Sassenheim asks Bangalore to adapt to their culture.

There is a tendency of negative influence on the cooperation due to the weakening of Bangalore and dominance of Sassenheim, which if not stopped or prevented will cause a further decline in the willingness to cooperate and increase the bad atmosphere, frustrations and lead to new conflicts.

In the next section of this chapter I will describe, in three specific cases, what problems team members experience and the effect this has on the cooperation and efficiency. The problems coming from the case studies will be analysed using Cross-Cultural Management Theory.

### **5.3 Analysis of the Project Teams: the Team Level – Transnational Teams**

We are trying to answer the second sub-questions: *How does the perception of culture influence the cooperation and the efficiency in specific?* In the first section of this chapter I analyzed how the perception of culture is related to a specific coping strategy and how this influences the cross-cultural cooperation.

This section will go into the three case studies described in Part II of Chapter 4. These case studies give examples of cross-cultural interfaces of teams with members from two R&D sites. They show us how, in a specific context, cooperation between two cultures works, more specifically what differences can we see in how team members experience problems and think of positive elements in the cooperation.

The analysis of the case studies will be used to draw conclusions on influences on the cross-cultural cooperation. Theory on transnational teams and humanistic theory will be used in the recommendations. These will be presented in Chapter 6 *Conclusion and Recommendations*.

#### *Problems in the cross-cultural cooperation of transnational teams*

The list presented below contains the seven problems of transnational teams indicated in the literature of Cross-cultural Management Theory.<sup>185</sup> I will discuss these problems one at a time, and place the issues mentioned in the case studies in correspondence with these problems. What we will see is that the theory on transnational teams has provided an abstract description of the problems in transnational teams, while the data from the case studies provide practical examples of these problems.<sup>186</sup>

#### 1. Effort-withholding behaviours (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)

When team members stop putting effort in their communication or information exchange, this can negatively affect the cross-cultural cooperation. It will negatively affect the team's efficiency because gaps in the information exchange will lead to possible misinterpretation, and eventually mistakes or a loss of project focus. In the case studies, this has been described as:

- Lack of motivation to cooperate due to (the risk of) losing jobs to another location.<sup>187</sup>
- Lack of recognition for work and extra effort in (shared) projects.<sup>188</sup>

#### 2. High levels of ethnocentrism (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)

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<sup>185</sup> See the description in Chapter 3: Theoretical frame.

<sup>186</sup> Note that in this analysis, the remarks of employees have been transformed into statements. These statements have been cut loose from the cases and seen as general remarks which we can use in cross-cultural cooperation.

<sup>187</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:, S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>188</sup> B9:4, B9:5.

When team members in one location focus too much on their local way of communicating and executing tasks, there is a misfit between the results of the two locations, or communication problems. In the case studies this has been described as:

- Work according to your own culture as you have always done, even when you have to work with people from other cultures (act as if nothing has changed and others are like people from your own culture).<sup>189</sup>

### 3. In-group biases (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)

Biases could be stereotypes or prejudices that people have about a group of people with a different culture. Stereotypes can negatively influence cross-cultural cooperation when they are used to ridicule other people, or used as an excuse to why other people do not perform well or meet their standards ('they can't help it, it's because of their culture'). In the case studies, these types of behaviours were observed in one of the cases:

- Using stereotypes as an ethnicizing strategy to ridicule others (from a different culture) and make them seem incapable of their work. This is often used as an excuse for problems in the cross-cultural cooperation (van Marrewijk 1999, van Marrewijk 2004).<sup>190</sup>

### 4. High levels of task and/or emotional conflicts (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491)

Task or emotional conflicts occur when two or more team members are unable to agree upon the form or process of tests, tasks or other organizational aspects of the work. Emotional conflicts can also occur when people do not feel appreciated or have been insulted or mistreated. Due to culturally sensitive issues which another team member might be unaware of, these conflicts might even occur without the team member knowing what he/she has done. This can result in the diminishing of trust and/or willingness to cooperate. In the case studies this was described as:

- Not having the same norms or ideas about written documents (reports, lab notes).<sup>191</sup>
- Lack of recognition for work and extra effort in (shared) projects.<sup>192</sup>

### 5. Interpersonal conflict (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)

Related to the previous problem (4.), we can see that conflicts between team members can negatively influence the cooperation. The interpersonal conflict on the other hand can evolve out of cultural differences, but also personal encounters which have nothing to do with the job or task. In the case studies this has been described as:

- Bad atmosphere/problems within a location or local team, which affects openness and communication with other teams and locations.<sup>193</sup>

In one case, the disagreement on the format of lab notes resulted in a personal conflict, because one team member felt, after this conflict, that he was personally bullied by the other team member. We can say that personal conflicts are what task or emotional conflicts can evolve into if not solved properly.

### 6. Communication problems (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)

Communication problems can occur due to several factors. It could be caused by the bad or different use of language, choice of words or specific terminology, the use of media, etc.. From the case studies we could conclude:

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<sup>189</sup> S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>190</sup> Observations 30-03-09.

<sup>191</sup> S9:4, S9:5, S12.

<sup>192</sup> B9:4, B9:5.

<sup>193</sup> S10:2, S10:3, S12:13.

- (Extended) discussions over email.<sup>194</sup>
- Give colleagues from a different culture/location an assignment without explaining what exactly needs to be done.<sup>195</sup>
- Bad English in speech and writing.<sup>196</sup>

#### 7. Frustration and dissatisfaction (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 218-219)

In the case studies, a lot of frustration and disappointments have been mentioned. These are:

- Too much talking and questioning each other, and as a consequence meetings taking too much time.<sup>197</sup>
- Not informing others when missing a deadline.<sup>198</sup>
- People leaving the company.<sup>199</sup>
- Other team members not accepting feedback, or an unsafe environment in which feedback is seen as a threat.<sup>200</sup>
- Long holidays at a location without sufficient replacement or back-ups for people and tasks.<sup>201</sup>

When we look at these frustrations from the case studies, the statements are coming from a specific cultural context. For instance, team members in Troy and Bangalore experience ‘*too much talking and questioning each other*’ as a problem. This behaviour is in both cases not part of their culture. It is part of the culture of Sassenheim and therefore not a problem for them. We can see that frustration can be caused by ‘cultural opposites’: cultural differences which are more than a different habit or approach, but a contradictory habit or approach which excludes another type of behaviour. Another characteristic of these frustrations is that some have to do with local policy or local (external factors), like holidays and job resignation. These are things employees have no control over. The only thing they can do is handle the influences of these external factors on their work and cooperation as best as possible. This category will be referred to as ‘local environment’.

## 5.4 Summary of the Team Level – Transnational Teams

All the problems mentioned in the theory on transnational teams have been found in the data, and are present in the cross-cultural cooperation of the R&D teams studied here. Only one problem did not come from the respondents, but was based on observations: 3. In-group biases. The fact that the negative use of (wrong) stereotypes has not been mentioned by respondents could mean they don’t know of existing stereotypes of their own culture at other locations. Or they are aware of the stereotypes but don’t know how these are negatively used at other locations and negatively influence the cooperation.

Looking at point 7. *Frustration and dissatisfaction*, two types of frustrations have been found:

1. Cultural opposites
2. Local environment

Cultural opposites are difficult to deal with because the choice for one or the other approach in the cooperation would be against the natural behaviour<sup>202</sup> of one of the parties.

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<sup>194</sup> T12:16, T12:17.

<sup>195</sup> S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>196</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S5:12, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>197</sup> Observation 30-03-09, B6:8, B7:8, T12:4, T12:10, T12:13.

<sup>198</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S2:4.

<sup>199</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S5:3, S5:22, S5:23

<sup>200</sup> Observation 8-01-09, S5:7.

<sup>201</sup> B7:3.

Local environment is difficult to change because it is how society, infrastructure, market dynamics, local laws & policy, holidays etc. work at another location in another country. Employees of other sites can only accept these 'facts of life', and if possible prepare each other in the cross-cultural cooperation for these external factors. This means employees of each location should, as much as possible, inform colleagues of other locations about these factors.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, is the final chapter of this thesis containing the conclusion and recommendations. As will be explained there, this chapter is divided into two parts. One for AkzoNobel and one for Humanistics.

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<sup>202</sup> Behaviour refers to the ways in which we express our culture. What could also be said is that the choice for one approach would be against the cultural norms, habits etc. of members from the other cultural group.



## Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This thesis started with the following research question: *What are the main coping strategies of R&D employees and team dynamics in terms of handling cultural differences, and how does this influence the process of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*

In this report, I have tried to answer this question by going into the three sub-questions described in Chapter 1.<sup>203</sup> In Chapter 3 I have described how Organization Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Management Theory provided two theoretical approaches to this topic: coping strategies and the dynamics of transnational teams. The two theories add extra value to the research: they show how culture and team dynamics in the interface of the three sites influence the quality of their cooperation.



In the interviews and observations at the R&D sites in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim, data was gathered on the perception of cultural differences and cross-cultural cooperation of R&D employees. The interviews with R&D employees have provided this research with rich examples of successful as well as unsuccessful cross-cultural cooperation. This has given vital information on what R&D employees find important in cross-cultural cooperation. This data has been organized and presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 this data has been analysed using the theory on coping strategies and transnational teams.

In this final chapter I will answer the sub-questions and research question based on the research and analysis. Because this thesis is also part of an assignment for AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes, this final chapter is divided into two parts. In Part I the conclusion and recommendations relevant for AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes will be presented. Using the data from the field (practice) and analysis of the interviews and case studies (theory), the combination of practice and theory will result in the conclusion on the cross-cultural cooperation in the R&D organization. Recommendations for the R&D Management Team and staff will be formulated, using Humanistic Theory for a more practical approach.

In Part II the conclusions relevant for Humanistics will be presented. These conclusions are focused on the theoretical discussion of the literature in Chapter 3 and what this and the analysis means for the scientific field of Humanistics and Cross-Cultural Studies. I will conclude this part with a reflective note.

Part I and Part II can be seen as isolated parts which can be read separately.

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<sup>203</sup> See Chapter 1 Introduction, sub-questions.

In this part the sub-questions and research question will be answered, focusing first on Practice which contains the perspectives of R&D employees on their cross-cultural cooperation. Then focusing on Theory which contains the conclusions of the analysis of the data with the different theories on cross-cultural cooperation.

### 6.1 A View from the Inside: Conclusions from Practice

One of the principles of naturalistic inquiry is that people actively give meaning to their experiences. This research aims to find these meanings, and try to understand them in their environment by listening to R&D employees and get a feel for their context. The data from the interviews and observations are of great value in this research, because they make these meanings and the context of R&D employees visible.

This paragraph will summarize the most important conclusions we can draw from the data in relation to the research question and sub-questions. The purpose of this paragraph is to throw light on the outcomes of the data.

Again the structure of these conclusions will be as in the rest of the thesis: first the data from the interviews at the context level, and then the data of the case studies at the team level, will be discussed.

*a. How do the employees of the R&D sites of Sassenheim, Troy and Bangalore perceive cross-cultural differences and cross-cultural issues at work?*

As shown in Chapter 4, employees of each site have ideas about the culture of employees at the other two sites. A summary of these cultural characteristics can be found in the appendix<sup>204</sup>. When the characteristics of employees at the other sites are culturally different from one's own culture, they are often seen as having a negative influence on the cooperation. In these cases, cultural differences are seen as obstacles in the cooperation, and the cause of miscommunication, project delays, frustrations and even conflicts. When we look at how employees define their own culture, they mention a few characteristics. The characteristics that were mentioned in most cases were also mentioned by employees from other sites. This means that the employees of the three R&D sites are aware of some of the cultural differences, and how their own culture is viewed by employees from other sites. Two examples of the cultural differences according to R&D employees are:

- Bangalore and Troy have a more hierarchal and formal organization, while the organization in Sassenheim is open and informal. In Sassenheim employees even challenge their boss, which would be unthinkable in Bangalore or Troy.
- Bangalore and Troy both feel that colleagues in Sassenheim want to talk and think too much before they start working on a project. Employees in Sassenheim on the other hand wish their colleagues from Troy and especially from Bangalore would give more input in discussion about a project.

Although Sassenheim and Troy feel there is a smaller cultural gap between them than with Bangalore, the cultural characteristics all employees mention show more similarities between Troy and Bangalore than either Troy or Bangalore have with Sassenheim. The fact that this is not the perception of R&D employees may be explained by the fact that Troy and Sassenheim have a longer history of working together and dealing with the cultural differences between

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<sup>204</sup> See the Appendix for Cultural characteristics.

them, and because Troy and Bangalore hardly have any shared projects, employees don't know much about the cultural differences between Troy and Bangalore.

*b. How does this influence the international cooperation between the three R&D sites?*

Employees from all the sites say they are willing to work with colleagues from other sites. The employees from Bangalore are especially enthusiastic and want to improve and intensify the cooperation. They want to help other sites and would like to have more opportunities to cooperate in projects. Employees in Troy are positive about the cooperation and would like to continue this. They also mention they are willing to assist others. So despite the cultural differences, the willingness to strengthen the relations and cooperation is there in Bangalore and Troy. Most employees in Sassenheim want to cooperate with Bangalore and Troy as well, although some employees in one department are very negative about the cooperation with Bangalore. In their opinion the cultural differences make it impossible to productively work together. They would rather transport the work back to their own group in Sassenheim. They feel this would at first seem to cost more, but it would cause fewer problems and eventually be more efficient.

The two bullet points with examples mentioned above show that these cultural differences are exactly what could cause issues in the cooperation. The interviews also show that employees do not regularly discuss these differences or some of the issues they cause. Because these differences are not being discussed, they cause ongoing frustrations in the cooperation.<sup>205</sup>

We can look at how strong or weak the relations or connections are between the different sites and local groups in the transnational teams. In the theory created by Van Dongen (1996), a group with weak internal connections is called a collection, and a group with strong internal connections is called a network.

When we look at the internal connections at each site, we can see employees having strong relations with colleagues from other departments at the site. These relations are used for information sharing and support. The connections are seen as beneficial for the work. This is the case in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim.

On the other hand, when we look at the connections between the three R&D sites, we see that in the teams the communication lines are open, but, for instance, employees in Bangalore sometimes feel hesitant to approach a colleague in Sassenheim, and employees in Sassenheim hardly ask colleagues in Bangalore for help. This is usually done internally at the locations, not outside or between the locations. Only in projects of transnational teams, these normal things are discussed and tasks are divided.

Outside of the teams, there is hardly any communication between employees of the three sites. There are exceptions: some employees have travelled to other R&D sites and built strong connections with some colleagues. These connections are more easily and more frequently used for information sharing and support.

*c. How can the quality in general and the efficiency in specific, of cross-cultural cooperation in particular, be improved by the R&D Management Team and staff?*

The interviews and case studies collected ideas of R&D employees on how to improve the cooperation, and what elements of the cooperation are experienced as having a positive influence on the cooperation. The list below is a summary of these stimulating elements and ideas for solutions of R&D employees.

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<sup>205</sup> Other problems from the case studies have been summarized in the Appendix.

1. A good atmosphere with the possibility of giving feedback and making jokes (humour).
2. Giving and receiving clear feedback and having fruitful discussions.
3. Clear assignments and (solid) uniform messages to and from different teams and locations.
4. (To be stimulated by other locations/teams/members) To play a part and give input in discussions and conversations.
5. Using different ways of working, suitable for cooperating with people from different cultures.
6. Investing time to bring your message across to people from other locations and checking if the message did come across with the intended meaning.
7. Work with back-ups for people within a project team.
8. Help colleagues with time management and offer time management training.
9. Inform the (hierarchical) bosses of team members.
10. Involve team members in discussions and conversations about the set up and other aspects of projects.
11. Take the initiative to inform other locations. Keep in mind that informal or tacit knowledge has not reached other locations but should be shared. Place yourself in their position and think about what they should know.
12. Open communication.
13. Dealing with time difference by using email and telephone.
14. Give critique and be creative in projects.
15. More travelling to visit other locations and have face-to-face contact to get better acquainted with colleagues at other locations.
16. When necessary, communicate through your own boss.
17. Communicate the seriousness of deadlines.

R&D employees and the Management Team can evaluate the extent to which these elements are present in their cooperative relations with colleagues of other R&D sites. The elements can be used as alternative actions or solutions when facing problems in the cooperation or frustrations. Employees could evaluate this personally, or discuss these items in their team or group.

Group leaders, managers and the Management Team should facilitate meetings in which these things can be discussed, provide teams with extra time to have these conversations, and reflect on their cross-cultural cooperation and the strength of their connections.

Of course, the list is a collection of data from all the sites. Employees, group leaders and managers should discuss and decide what fits their day-to-day practice best.

It is important to realise that if employees want the cooperation to improve, this is not a local activity. To strengthen connections and solve issues caused by cultural differences, there has to be interaction on these subjects between members of both sides (or all three). Only in this way can the exchange become a learning environment. There needs to be a discussion of what works best for members of the different sites. I believe that reflection at the individual sites and conversations between the three sites are in themselves ways of strengthening connection and arriving at a better understanding of each other (-s culture).

The R&D Management Team should use these elements to see what can be improved and what tools can be used to strengthen the organization. Looking at the question of efficiency, the Management Team can discuss what would be the right balance between investing in activities at the individual sites ('local effort') and investing in activities between the sites

(‘cross-cultural effort’) for a better cross-cultural cooperation. What are the possibilities within the budget and policy of R&D Car Refinishes?

## 6.2 A View from the Outside: Conclusions from Theory

In this paragraph the conclusions from Theory will be presented. As the structure of the thesis already indicates, first the conclusions on the context level, referring to the locations and their coping strategies, will be presented. Then the team level, referring to the case studies and the dynamics of transnational teams, will be presented.

### *Coping Strategies – the Context Level*

The aim of this research was to find out what the influence of cultural differences is on the cross-cultural cooperation between the three R&D sites. The theoretical discussion on culture directs us towards the first conclusion: When we study the interface of cultures, we actually study how cultural differences are interacting through people in the interface. An interface is a point of contact between two or more cultures. In the interface, cultural differences become visible and are negotiated. In the interface, people negotiate how to work together and to what extent they should adjust their culture to be able to cooperate. This shows that it is not cultural differences that have an effect on the cooperation, or cause problems; it is how people cope with these differences and how they are negotiated in the interface of cultures which influences the cooperation. To rephrase in a way that shows where to look for solutions: Cultural differences are not the cause of problems in a cooperation, but provide fuel for problems if they are handled incorrectly.

I used coping strategies to analyze how R&D employees handle cultural differences. The coping strategies show how and to what extent groups adjust to each other, and who plays a dominant role in the interaction. The four coping strategies of Child & Faulkner are: domination, segregation, synergy and break-down.

Since in my research I encountered domination and segregation and break-down strategies, I will summarize these here again: In the domination strategy, one of the present cultures in the alliance or cooperation becomes dominant and cultural integration means adjusting to that culture. The segregation strategy consists of a balance between the different cultural groups. There is no dominant culture; all cultures have the same influence in the cooperation or alliance. The cultures are not being mixed and therefore stay the same as they were before the cooperation. The break-down strategy is not a separate strategy, but a negative result of unbalance between groups. This strategy is a result of bad cooperation during a domination or segregation strategy. When a domination strategy is practised against the will of one of the cultural groups, it creates resistance which eventually leads to a break-down of the cooperation.

The coping strategies have been used to analyse the data at the context level. The gathered data (from the interviews) about the culture at each location has been analyzed to find out the main coping strategy in the cooperation with the different sites. The main coping strategies in the three interfaces of the R&D sites are:

Table 6.1 Main coping strategies at the three R&D sites

<b><u>Interface</u></b>	<b><u>Coping Strategy</u></b>
Troy-Sassenheim	Segregation
Bangalore-Troy	Segregation
Sassenheim-Bangalore	Domination and tendency to break-down

The research shows that the main coping strategy in the interface of Troy-Sassenheim, segregation, causes some problems: when cultural opposites stay undiscussed during the cooperation between the two sites, this leads to miscommunication. But overall, not many problems were mentioned in this interface. Overall most employees are very positive about the cooperation between these two sites.

The main coping strategy in the interface between Bangalore-Troy is also segregation. This is merely a result of a lack of need for cooperation between the two sites. Because these sites are not in much contact with each other, no specific problems were mentioned by employees about the cooperation between the sites. The cultures are segregated because they almost never intermingle or merge. However, employees of both sites express a wish to have better connections between these two sites and indicated a willingness to assist each other in their work.

The research also shows that most conflicts in cooperation resulting from cultural differences arise in the relation between Sassenheim and Bangalore. The main coping strategy in the interface between Sassenheim-Bangalore is domination, with a tendency to break-down. The dominance of Sassenheim is mostly accepted, but due to conflicts in a couple of cases, has led to resistance of employees from Bangalore. The break-down is a serious risk, if these conflicts are not solved satisfactorily for employees from both sites.

#### *Transnational Teams – the Team Level*

The second section of Chapter 5 covers the analysis of the case studies using the theories of Cross-Cultural Management Theory on transnational teams. The analysis of the case studies shows that the handling of cultural differences causes several problems in the cross-cultural cooperation of teams:

1. Effort-withholding behaviours
2. High levels of ethnocentrism
3. In-group biases
4. High levels of task and/or emotional conflicts
5. Interpersonal conflict
6. Communication problems
7. Frustration and dissatisfaction
  - i. Cultural opposites
  - ii. Local environment

Cultural opposites cause frustrations and are difficult to handle, because decisions on such a cultural difference would ask for unnatural behaviour from one of the parties. External factors cause frustrations when these influence the cooperation, and one party is surprised or unable to anticipate these factors.

The list of problems in transnational teams shows the issues R&D employees are dealing with. Specific issues at the individual sites were discussed in the analysis in Chapter 5. To see which issues in the teams should be handled to improve the cooperation, the list constructed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 provide valuable information.<sup>206</sup> Employees should use this list to discuss the issues in the cooperation.

The following paragraph will give an overview of the conclusions and discuss recommendation on how to improve the cooperation in R&D Car Refinishes. The conclusions will now be linked to recommendations.

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<sup>206</sup> A summary of the lists from the data can be found in the Appendix 4: *Extra Summary Chapter 4*.

### 6.3 Summary and Recommendations

The analysis of interviews at the location level shows that many R&D employees are not aware of how their colleagues from other sites see them and view their culture. If they are aware of the stereotypes, there is no open dialogue about the difficulty colleagues experience in working with cultural differences. The use of stereotypes further inhibits the awareness. Stereotypes are used by R&D employees as fixed images of their colleagues from other locations. R&D employees should be made aware of the stereotypes they use. More specifically, they should be made aware of the fact that these are not sufficient to predict or explain why things go wrong in projects or why the cooperation is difficult. So the first and foremost the recommendation is to stimulate awareness of cultural differences, stereotypes and the problems in the cooperation. This is a necessity for improvement.

There should also be an awareness of the tendency towards ethnization. Ethnization is purposefully enlarging cultural differences and strategically using these to negatively influence the cooperation. Group leaders and managers have an important role to play here. They should prevent this from happening in their groups by intervening in conversations with a negative tone of the culture of other (not present) group members. During local conversations and in the clustering of a part of the group, it is all too easy to create an ‘us-them’ story which might lead to problems in the projects related to blaming others.

The case studies have shown that there is a lack of awareness of the problems team members experience while cooperating in a transnational team. Within one transnational team, there is a huge difference between the problems (and solutions) described by members from one location compared to members at the other location. Team members are not aware of this discrepancy, but should be made aware to be able to tackle the existing problems from both sides. There is an option of addressing this topic by discussing cross-cultural competencies in the annual performance appraisal of employees (at AkzoNobel also called the ‘Performance & Development Dialogue’).

These problems in the teams have to be discussed in the teams to be solved. Or, in some cases, a clear decision has to be made on how to organize the cooperation. The examples given in the case studies and in the analysis can be used as discussion material by the teams to tackle the existing problems in the cooperation. The theory of transnational teams has provided a list with elements for a successful transnational team. Elements for a good cooperation are:

1. Creating a common purpose (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
2. Setting specific performance goals (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
3. Having the right mix of skills (technical, problem-solving and interpersonal) (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p.220).
4. Having the necessary external support and recourses (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
5. Establishing task and process strategies (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
6. Evaluating and providing feedback on team performance (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
7. Stimulating discussion to come to a shared strategy (goal, task and process) of how the team members will work together (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 220).
8. Leaders should prevent communication breakdowns and surface hidden knowledge (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
9. Developing norms of meaningful participation (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
10. Developing a strong team identity (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 492).
11. Creating mutual trust, commitment, and cultural sensitivity (French 2007).

In this list we can find different types of elements: some are practical solutions, others are focused on processes or tasks, and others are related to attitude. I recommend using these elements by discussing if they are present before and during the cooperation in a transnational team.

The list with stimulating aspects for the cooperation from the case studies, that was compiled in Chapter 5, provides a way to stimulate meaningful behaviour in the cross-cultural cooperation of teams.<sup>207</sup> Further study or evaluation of teams can be done to evaluate the extent to which the elements of both aspects on these lists are present, and what has to be developed to improve the cross-cultural cooperation.

The main objective is to stimulate discussions on a different level than the content. All teams are successful in discussing subjects related to chemistry. But discussions on processes, tasks, attitudes, etc. are hardly present and should be established. This is not easy to do and should be guided by key figures in the cooperation. People who guide these discussions should have a neutral position and need to have some understanding of the culture of the different groups involved. A possibility is to start these discussions in a kick-off meeting of new projects. This way cultural topics and discussions at the process level, can be addressed and negotiated beforehand (Maas a 2009, p. 23-25).

Another recommendation then, is to assign so called boundary-spanners (Newman 1992). As described in Chapter 3, boundary-spanners are people who are able to build a bridge between two different organizations or two or more groups with different cultures. They also show how a bridging activity is performed, and can assist team members by teaching them how to interact with people from another culture. Boundary-spanners can be assigned at each location, which together form a team. They can support staff at the individual locations and inform each other on pending issues and progress of the interactions between the sites. This way, the connections between the sites will become stronger and employees will be assisted in forming a network with colleagues at other sites (Maas 2009 a). Advice can be given on which R&D employees are potential boundary-spanners.

My final recommendations deal with the coping strategies at the locations. In the current situation, the labs are mostly segregated and Sassenheim plays a dominant role. The R&D Management wants the three labs to function as one lab on a global level (see Chapter 1 Introduction). This means that in the cooperation, employees have to transform their focus from a local level to a global level. To make the transformation to a global context, employees at each site should prepare for these global interfaces. When employees enter the global interface, there should be a certain understanding of the local differences, and there should be ground rules and processes to regulate the exchange in this global interface. This means that local rules do not apply. R&D employees should realise this.

In Sassenheim, most employees have not been able to change their local behaviour into behaviour that fits a global multicultural context. This is part of the domination strategy. They haven't adjusted their ways of working to this new environment. It is Bangalore and Troy that have been adjusting to work with Sassenheim. Instead of working in a global context, employees work in a 'Sassenheim-context'. For the locations to be able to work in a global context, they should not simply adjust to one or the other, but create a new dimension with input from all locations. Only then can a merger or emulsification<sup>208</sup> of cultures on a global level, be established.

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<sup>207</sup> See Chapter 4, Part II *Case Studies of R&D Project Teams – the Team Level*.

<sup>208</sup> See the title of the thesis "Emulsifying cultures". Wikipedia: In chemistry an emulsion is a mixture of two or more immiscible (unblendable) liquids. To blend the liquids constant stirring is needed. Another option is to add an emulsifier or surfactant to break the surface tension between the two liquids, to keep them in a mixed state.



To do this, employees can create an extra layer between the content preparation and the actual encounter with the other group. After the normal preparation for a meeting, employees should have a local 'preparation meeting' in which they discuss how to bring their message across. After this preparation meeting, the actual encounter between the three sites in the global meeting should take place. Each location should think of ways of approaching the global interface. Locations should give each other feedback and make reflective remarks based on the process and result of global meetings. Local teams should evaluate how their preparation meetings added to the quality of the global meetings.<sup>209</sup>

To create a global interface, the different locations should increase the number of cross-cultural teams. Without an opportunity of working together, they cannot create such an interface. The formation of cross-cultural teams is therefore needed, especially between Troy and Bangalore where there are hardly any joint project teams.

These cross-cultural teams should be virtually connected. With new technologies such as Skype and Video Conferencing, team members can be in contact with each other. Employees have indicated that only a virtual connection is not enough to build a sustainable working relationship. They feel face-to-face contact is needed as well. A recommendation is to let team members meet each other at least once at the start or at an other crucial moment in the project. Schneider & Barsoux (2003) advise to get the whole team together at the start of a project. In the R&D organization this could be during the kick-off meeting of a project. This way the conditions for proper knowledge transfer are established. After the kick-off, the knowledge transfer between the locations should be stimulated, virtually as well as at the locations (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244-248). The main focus of these recommendations is to intensify the cross-cultural cooperation and establish a solid connection between the sites.<sup>210</sup>

In summary, the following steps are recommended:

1. Create awareness of problems and stereotypes at locations and in teams.
2. Evaluate what stimulating elements for the cooperation are present in the teams and what could still be established (related to the existing problems).
3. Create bridging activities by discussing cultural differences under the supervision of neutral key figures and/or boundary-spanners.
4. Prepare employees for entering a global interface in which they have to make an effort to translate their local activities to a global context.
5. Intensify the cooperation between the sites by creating (more) cross-cultural teams.
6. Establish a virtual connection (for instance use Skype).
7. Organize face-to-face meetings at crucial moments in a project (kick-off meetings).
8. Discuss social and cultural issues at the start of a project.
9. Stimulate a good (virtual) knowledge transfer between and at the locations.

#### *Final note*

The research offers an analysis of the R&D organizations in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim. The conclusion and recommendations can be used to improve the cooperation between the sites and stimulate R&D employees to transform their focus from a local to a global context

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<sup>209</sup> Global meetings are only one part of the interface. Of course, preparations should be made for emails, calls and other media used to cooperate and create a (functioning) interface between locations.

<sup>210</sup> Recommended literature for further reading on this topic: S. Craig & H. Jassim (1995). *People and Project Management for IT*. London: McGraw-Hill.

of cross-cultural cooperation. This means that employees and managers should emphasize the equal position of the three R&D locations and stimulate mutual understanding to create a basis for the improvement of the cross-cultural cooperation between the R&D sites.

In a globalising world, where organizations are situated in very different parts of the world, people might seem far away. But the distance can be bridged by building a strong connection.

In the next part of this chapter (Part II *Humanistics*), the conclusion and implications of this study for Humanistics and Cross-Cultural Studies will be presented.

## Part II Humanistics

In this part of Chapter 6, a discussion of the conclusions for the scientific field of Humanistics and Cross-Cultural Studies will be given.

The research question of this thesis is: *What are the main coping strategies of R&D employees and team dynamics in terms of handling cultural differences, and how does this influence the process of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*

To answer this question, several issues related to the study of culture and the specific context of the R&D organization have been discussed in the thesis. Each issue will be addressed in a paragraph.

### 6.4 The Study of Culture

The study of culture has been complex, and is still creating discussions between scholars on epistemological and methodological choices in cultural research.

Some of the first studies of national and organizational culture were aimed at defining cultures on certain parameters. For example, the famous study of Hofstede (1980) created cultural typologies by scoring different national cultures on a scale of four dimensions. These types of studies have later, and in more recent times, been undergoing a lot of critique. The points on which these studies have been discussed and criticised are:

1. The fact that they give an over simplistic and static image of cultures, while cultures are heterogeneous and dynamic.
2. The dimensions used are often based on Western standards, which are wrongly assumed to be universal or culturally neutral.
3. The focus lies on national cultures, while other cultures or cultural levels are left out.
4. The wrong assumption that national cultures can be universal for an entire country, while there can be cultural differences within a country as well.
5. The lack of the study of power systems and the use of cultural differences in these systems.
6. The wrong assumption that cultural differences can be overcome, while we should ask ourselves if this is the right goal.
7. To be able to understand cross-cultural cooperation, we shouldn't study the cultures but the cultural interface. (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 479-485, Jacobs 2005, Veenswijk & van Marrewijk 2008, p. 4, van Dongen 1997, p. 107).

The main point is that studies like those of Hofstede lack the ability to describe the complexity of cultures and their context and give a too simplistic image of a cultural reality. Also, cultures change during time and during interactions with other different cultures. These influences on the status of a culture are left out of these types of research.

This critique on the old ways of studying culture has made researchers create new ways of studying culture. These ways are part of a social constructivist paradigm in which more room is given to the construction of knowledge and how people interact with each other. This has led to new forms of qualitative research.

#### *The cross-cultural interface*

Recent theory on the study of culture has shown that we should not study cultural differences; instead we should study the interface of cultures. An interface is a situation which creates a point of contact between two or more different cultures. In an interface, cultural differences are negotiated. The differences are part of an ongoing dynamic between different cultures. I believe that we can use these cultural definitions as temporary knowledge of a specific culture

(Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 13-15). They should be open to reinterpretations, instead of being fixed definitions (van Dongen 1997).

Another part of the discussion on culture dealt with the different levels on which it could be researched. Gelfand et al. (2007) distinguish five cultural levels: the context<sup>211</sup> level, the organizational level, the team level, the individual level and the global level. These levels examine culture on the following aspects:

1. The context level: the national background, culture and context.
2. The organizational level: characteristics of the organization and its context.
3. The team level: characteristics and context of the team.
4. The individual level: personal characteristics and context.
5. The global context: how the different levels influence each other and can be seen in a global context. (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497).

#### *Integrating definitions of culture in the study of the interface*

As concluded in the discussion on the concept of culture, there is no meta-culture which we can use to define cultures. And culture is heterogeneous because people incorporate a mix of cultures, and cultures change over time. Does this mean we have to reject all definitions of culture and cultural comparative studies? No, there are certain things in these studies we can use in our study of the interface of cultures.

First of all, the different descriptions of the elements of culture help to give an idea of what cultures consist of and what to look at in cultural research. For instance, the elements described by Gelfand et al. (2007)<sup>212</sup> give us a frame to describe an organizational culture.

Secondly, a description and indexation of different national cultures gives an idea of the features of these cultures. Although not sufficient, and seen from a Western point of view, it gives some indication of what a culture is like. These descriptions are more like a first sketch of a culture, instead of the full picture. When these descriptions are used, the validity of the statements in these descriptions should be tested and verified, for instance, by asking people who belong to that specific culture if they agree with these statements or not. This way, the risk of using false descriptions and stereotyping can be minimized.<sup>213</sup>

Thirdly, these descriptions and comparisons have been used in the past. Theories with typifications of cultures, like the ones from Hofstede, have been spread over the world and are still being used by people in organizations. In some cases, the typifications of Hofstede have been incorporated in the culture of a specific group. The typifications have become part of their assumptions, beliefs and ideas, causing biases and stereotypes. Researchers should use these definitions as material containing information of the possible biases of a group, and to be aware of personal stereotypes and biases (French 2007, p. 27-28, 39-40, van Marrewijk 2008, p. 3-4, van Marrewijk 2009, p. 23).

In conclusion, the discussions of definitions of culture has resulted in the statement that the interface of cultures should be studied. Definitions can be used in these studies if they are used to become aware of biases of the researched and researcher.

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<sup>211</sup> This level was originally called the cultural level regarding national culture and context. The study of the R&D locations in the other hand, could not provide valid data on the national culture of each country. The data is limited to the local culture of R&D employees of each specific site. That is why I call this level the context level, which refers to the culture of the location which is embedded in a national culture (amongst other cultures in that area or local organization).

<sup>212</sup> Culture is the total of behavior, rituals, habits, beliefs, ideas, values, norms, roles, motives, attitudes and ideas about the social and physical world. (Gelfand 2007: 496).

<sup>213</sup> Stereotyping and ethnization will be described in the next section of this chapter.

### *Implications for the thesis*

The study of the interface of cultures and the study of different levels of culture has had a significant influence on this research of the R&D organization. Because culture is heterogeneous, it cannot be defined. This means that to study culture, researchers can only look at the perception of cultures, as perceived by the members of a culture and/or in a cultural encounter. The study of a cultural encounter, an interface, makes cultural characteristics and differences visible as to how the people in the interface experience them. So the aim of the study is to find the perceptions of R&D employees on their own culture and that of others.

The cultural levels in cultural research had to be given a place as well. In this thesis, not all levels could be investigated within the available amount of time. For this study, the context level and team level were most relevant. The context level looks at the national context of each R&D location. The team level looks at the characteristics and context of teams. At R&D Car Refinishes the context level goes into the statement of employees that national cultural background (negatively) influence the cross-cultural cooperation. And the team level goes into the form in which R&D employees work together, namely transnational project teams.

The use of definitions of culture has been minimized in this thesis. A definition of culture has been used as background information to have some indication of the characteristics of a culture and to be aware of certain biases.

## **6.5 Cross-Cultural Cooperation**

The second part of the study of the literature and the analysis has been based on the two cultural levels of Gelfand et al. (2007): the context level and the team level. Organization Anthropology has given a theory on coping strategies to analyse the R&D locations. Cross-Cultural Management Theory has given a theory on transnational teams to analyse the dynamics in the interface described by the case studies. In the following paragraphs the key points of these theories and the conclusions drawn from the analysis will be presented.

### *Coping Strategies – the Context Level*

Because the study of culture is focused on the interface and the dynamics between cultures in this interface, it is not the culture itself that has an impact on the cross-cultural cooperation, it is the way people deal or cope with these cultural differences which has an influence on the cross-cultural cooperation. Organization Anthropology has given a theory on coping strategies which has been used to analyse the way employees at the R&D locations cope with cultural differences. The four coping strategies are: domination, segregation, synergy and break-down. In the domination strategy, one of the present cultures in the alliance or cooperation becomes dominant and cultural integration means adjusting to that culture. The segregation strategy consists of a balance between the different cultural groups. There is no dominant culture; all cultures have the same influence in the cooperation or alliance. The cultures are not being mixed and therefore stay the same as they were before the cooperation. The synergy strategy consists of a merger between different cultures. The cultures have taken aspects of both cultures involved, creating a new joined culture for both parties. The break-down strategy is not a separate strategy, but a negative result of unbalance between groups. This strategy is a result of bad cooperation during a domination or segregation strategy. When a domination strategy is practised against the will of one of the cultural groups, it creates resistance which eventually leads to a break-down of the cooperation. (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497, van Marrewijk 2008, p. 5, van Marrewijk 2004 p. 13-14, p. 10, van Marrewijk 1999, p. 277-280, 339, Bate 2002).

The main coping strategies in the three interfaces of the R&D sites are:

Table 5.1 Main coping strategies at the three R&D sites

<u>Interface</u>	<u>Coping Strategy</u>
Troy-Sassenheim	Segregation
Bangalore-Troy	Segregation
Sassenheim-Bangalore	Domination and tendency to break-down

The research shows that the main coping strategy in the interface of Troy-Sassenheim, segregation, causes some problems: when cultural opposites stay undiscussed during the cooperation between the two sites, this leads to miscommunication.

The main coping strategy in the interface Bangalore-Troy is also segregation. This is merely a result of a lack of need for cooperation between the two sites. Because these sites are not in much contact with each other, no specific problems were mentioned by employees about the cooperation between the sites. The cultures are segregated because they almost never intermingle or merge.

The research also shows that most conflicts in cooperation resulting from cultural differences arise in the relation between Sassenheim and Bangalore. The main coping strategy in the interface between Sassenheim-Bangalore is domination, with a tendency to break-down. The dominance of Sassenheim is mostly accepted, but due to conflicts in a couple of cases, has led to resistance of employees from Bangalore. One of these forms is called *ethnization*. Ethnization means purposefully enlarging cultural differences and strategically using ethnicity to gain power or sabotage the cooperation. The break-down is a serious risk, if these conflicts are not solved satisfactorily for employees from both sites. (van Marrewijk 1999, p. 277-280, 339, van Marrewijk 2004, p. 13-14).

#### *Transnational Teams – the Team Level*

Cross-Cultural Management Theory has been used to analyse the team dynamics of the project teams in R&D Car Refinishes. Theory on transnational teams indicate several problems that can occur during cross-cultural cooperation. These problems are:

1. Effort-withholding behaviours
2. High levels of ethnocentrism
3. In-group biases
4. High levels of task and/or emotional conflicts
5. Interpersonal conflict
6. Communication problems
7. Frustration and dissatisfaction

Transnational teams can be as effective as heterogeneous national teams. But to function properly and deal with the extra challenges of cultural differences and the physical dispersion, teams and their leaders should think about the conditions they need, to make their communication and cooperation successful. This goes from discussing underlying assumptions to more practical considerations for communicating, like considering different time zones and the use of different types of media (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244-248, Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 491-492).

In the analysis of the case studies, all the problems mentioned in the theory on transnational teams (see the list above) have been found in the data, and are present in the cross-cultural cooperation of the R&D teams studied here. Only one problem did not come from the respondents, but was based on observations: 3. *In-group biases*. The fact that the negative use

of (wrong) stereotypes has not been mentioned by respondents could mean they don't know of existing stereotypes of their own culture at other locations. Or they are aware of the stereotypes but don't know how these are negatively used at other locations and negatively influence the cooperation.

Another conclusion we can draw is that two specific types of frustrations (7.) have been found (which have not been distinguished in the literature):

- i. Cultural opposites
- ii. Local environment

Cultural opposites are difficult to deal with because the choice for one or the other approach in the cooperation would be against the natural behaviour of one of the parties.

Local environment is difficult to change because it is how society, infrastructure, market dynamics, local laws & policy, holidays etc. work at a R&D location in another country. Employees of other sites can only accept these 'facts of life', and if possible prepare each other in the cross-cultural cooperation by informing colleagues of other locations about these (external) factors (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, p. 244-248).

## **6.6 Summary and Further Study**

The conclusions on the study of culture show that the focus of these studies should be the interface of cultures: The point of contact between two or more different cultures. In the research of the cross-cultural cooperation between the three global R&D sites, the interfaces between every two sites has been studied and analysed.

Coping strategies show to what extent sites have become able to combine and negotiate different cultural approaches in their work. It can be concluded that the coping strategies are influenced by the intensity of the cooperation between sites. When there is hardly any cooperation, segregation is seen as the main coping strategy. When a break-down strategy occurs, this threatens the quality of any further cooperation because strategies of resistance are being used which stimulate further break-down. Further study of the effect of strategies of resistance and the (possible) turn-around of a break-down strategy could be useful for the R&D organization and insightful for cultural studies.

Theory on Transnational Teams show that, despite the difficulty of working with multiple cultures, cross-cultural project teams can be successful. Apart from the literature, R&D employees have also indicated which elements are obstructing and stimulating the cross-cultural cooperation. This should be seen as valuable information for the R&D organization for the improvement of the cross-cultural cooperation. These lists can be used for further study of team dynamics and possibilities of influencing cross-cultural practices.

To improve the cooperation between the R&D sites, Part I of this chapter has provided a list with recommendations for improvement. One of the recommendations has been to appoint boundary-spanners: people who are able to build a bridge between two different organizations, or two or more groups with different cultures. A boundary-spanner is a person who performs the bridging activity between the different groups (Newman 1992).

## **6.7 Humanistics**

Finally, I would like to say some things about my role as a student of Humanistics in the research and Humanistics in general.

The aim of Humanistics is to study people and their meaning-making processes. In specific the Master KOIS<sup>214</sup>, looks at an organization and its employees from different perspectives and scientific fields. It tries to unravel the relations between people and connect the goals of

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<sup>214</sup> Critical Organization and Intervention Studies (KOIS).

the organization with the capabilities of the people working in them. This is done from a holistic point of view with the purpose to make society and organizations more humane. To do this, I believe we have to understand how people think, feel, experience and give meaning to their life and work.

Apart from the aim of Humanistics to research meaning-making processes and try and understand the dynamics of people in organizations and society, Humanistics also provides a specific attitude of (student-) researchers. This attitude can be characterized as being reflective, critical, curious and open for different perspectives. The study of Humanistics has taught me a lot of things, but this attitude has helped to guide me through this research. It made me be aware of my own culture and biases. It made me question and dig deeper into the facts and stories that were presented to me by the R&D organization and its employees. It made me eager to try and unravel this new world of R&D and find out what drives and motivates people to work there. It made me curious why certain problems appeared, and it made me be open for the different stories and experiences of R&D employees and what that had to say about the subject of this research: cross-cultural cooperation.

My studies in Humanistics have made it possible for me to do this research and write this thesis. I hope this thesis is a contribution to the Humanistic field of study in that it has given new insights in the study of culture and the aspects of cross-cultural cooperation. And I hope that this research will contribute to the improvement of the cross-cultural cooperation of the R&D sites in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim of R&D Car Refinishes.

In the future, I hope to be able to further explore how to connect the world of people with the world of organizations. For this has been my drive during my studies in the Humanistic Master *Critical Organization and Intervention Studies* (KOIS).





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# Management Summary

## Research Project at AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes

This report comprises the Master thesis for the Master of Humanistics in *Critical Organization and Intervention Studies* (KOIS) at the University for Humanistics, Utrecht (The Netherlands). The thesis covers a research project at AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes<sup>215</sup>. BU R&D Car Refinishes has three global R&D locations: in Troy, Michigan (United States), Bangalore (India) and Sassenheim (The Netherlands). These global research centres work together on projects for the research and development of car paint.

The objective of the research is to investigate the influence of culture on the cross-cultural cooperation between these three global R&D sites. Employees and management have indicated that problems occur in the cross-cultural cooperation due to cultural differences. This research aims to find how employees experience cultural differences at work, and how this influences processes of cross-cultural cooperation.

In Humanistics, cultural diversity is considered an important value. Humanization is one of the pillars of Humanistics and stands for the aim of creating a more humane and just society in general, and in organizations in specific. To research a multicultural environment and to look for possible ways to stimulate humanization has been one of the motives for this research in the study of Humanistics. In this thesis the scientific approach of Humanistics is the basis for the research project, the research design and execution. Humanistic Theory has been used to provide a perspective for recommendations.

The thesis broaches the following research question:

*What are the main coping strategies of R&D employees and team dynamics in terms of handling cultural differences and how does this influence processes of cross-cultural cooperation within the international organizational structure of R&D Car Refinishes?*

The study of culture is difficult because culture is not a static entity, and consists of different levels. Because of this complexity, the research method of a qualitative inquiry in the form of naturalistic inquiry has been chosen. Naturalistic inquiry is characterised by an open and flexible way of information gathering with the purpose of coming as close as possible to the social and personal reality of those investigated. The assumption of naturalistic inquiry is that multiple realities exist next to each other. The goal of this type of research is to grasp these different realities. Research tools such as interviewing and observing have been used to collect data from the research field. Interviews and participative observations were held in all three R&D locations; Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim (Guba & Lincoln 1985, p. 35-43, Erlandson et al. 1993, p. 11-19. Abma & Widdershoven 2006, p. 33-37, 91-93, Maas 2009, p. 33).

## Cross-Cultural Cooperation

The study of culture has recently taken a different turn. Instead of defining cultures and comparing them to each other (like in the studies of Geert Hofstede (2005)), the study of culture is now focused on the interface of cultures. An interface is a point of contact between two or more cultures. In the interface, cultural differences become visible, and are negotiated. People become aware of commonalities and differences. The negotiation refers to discussing

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<sup>215</sup> R&D stands for Research & Development. Car Refinishes refers to the business of developing and producing car paint for the refinishing of cars: the repair of car surfaces after scratching or other damage.

how to work with each other while dealing with these cultural differences (van Dongen 1997, p. 69-73). Apart from using this new way of studying cultures, we also have to look at the different levels in a culture. Gelfand et al. (2007) distinguish the context level and the team level.<sup>216</sup> The context level focuses on the national background, culture and context. The team level focuses on the characteristics and context of the team. In R&D Car Refinishes, the context level has been researched through interviews at the individual locations. This data has been analysed using the theory on Coping Strategies from Organization Anthropology. The team level has been researched by three case studies of project teams with members in two different R&D locations. This data has been analysed by theory on Transnational Teams from Cross-Cultural Management Theory (Gelfand et al. 2007, p. 496-497).

## Conclusions

From the perspective of R&D employees at the three locations, it can be stated that employees of each site have certain ideas about the culture of employees at the other two sites. When the characteristics of employees at the other sites are culturally different from one's own culture, they are often seen as having a negative influence on the cooperation. In these cases, cultural differences are seen as obstacles in the cooperation, and the cause of miscommunication, project delays, frustrations and even conflicts. When we look at how employees define their own culture, they mention a few characteristics that in most cases were also mentioned by employees from other sites. This means that the employees of the three R&D sites are aware of some of the cultural differences, and how their own culture is viewed by employees from other sites.

Although Sassenheim and Troy feel there is a smaller cultural gap between them than both of them have with Bangalore, the cultural characteristics employees mention, show more similarities between Troy and Bangalore than either Troy or Bangalore have with Sassenheim. The fact that this is not the perception of R&D employees may be explained by the fact that Troy and Sassenheim have a longer history of working together and dealing with the cultural differences between them. And because Troy and Bangalore hardly have any shared projects, employees don't know much about the cultural differences between Troy and Bangalore.

The analysis of the coping strategies shows how and to what extent groups adjust to each other, and who plays a dominant role in the interaction. The four coping strategies of Child & Faulkner are: domination, segregation, synergy and break-down. Since in my research I encountered domination, segregation and break-down strategies, I will summarize these here again: In the domination strategy, one of the present cultures in the cooperation becomes dominant and cultural integration means adjusting to that culture. The segregation strategy consists of a balance between the different cultural groups. There is no dominant culture; all cultures have the same influence in the cooperation or alliance. The cultures are not being mixed and therefore stay the same as they were before the cooperation. The break-down strategy is not a separate strategy, but a negative result of unbalance between groups. This strategy is a result of bad cooperation during a domination or segregation strategy. When a domination strategy is practised against the will of one of the cultural groups, it creates resistance which eventually leads to a break-down of the cooperation.

The main coping strategy in the interface between Troy-Sassenheim, segregation, causes some problems: when cultural opposites stay undiscussed during the cooperation between the two sites, this leads to miscommunication. But overall, not many problems were mentioned in

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<sup>216</sup> Gelfand et al. (2007) distinguishes five cultural levels in total. These levels are discussed in Chapter 3. Only the context level and the team level have been argued to be the most relevant for this research.

this interface. Most employees were very positive about the cooperation between these two sites.

The main coping strategy in the interface between Bangalore-Troy is also segregation. This is merely a result of a lack of need for much cooperation between the two sites. As these sites are not in much contact with each other, no specific problems were mentioned by employees about the cooperation between the sites. The cultures are segregated because they almost never intermingle or merge. However, employees of both sites expressed a wish to have better connections between these two sites and indicated a willingness to assist each other in their work.

The research also shows that most conflicts in cooperation resulting from cultural differences arise in the relation between Sassenheim and Bangalore. The main coping strategy in the interface Sassenheim-Bangalore is domination, with a tendency towards break-down. The dominance of Sassenheim is mostly accepted, but conflicts in a couple of cases, have been leading to increasing resistance from employees in Bangalore. The break-down of this cooperation is a serious risk, if these conflicts are not solved satisfactorily for employees from both sites.

Looking at team dynamics, the analysis of the case studies shows that the handling of cultural differences causes several problems in the cross-cultural cooperation of teams, namely:

1. Effort-withholding behaviours
2. High levels of ethnocentrism
3. In-group biases
4. High levels of task and/or emotional conflicts
5. Interpersonal conflicts
6. Communication problems
7. Frustration and dissatisfaction
  - i. Cultural opposites
  - ii. Local environment

The list of problems mentioned above are the result of the tendency of Bangalore and Troy to adjust to Sassenheim and the lack of conversations and negotiations about the cultural differences and preferences of employees working together on projects.

In Sassenheim, most employees have not been able to change their local behaviour to behaviour that fits a global multicultural context. This, in Sassenheim, is part of the domination strategy. They haven't adjusted their ways of working to this new environment. It is Bangalore and Troy that have been adjusting in order to work with Sassenheim. Instead of working in a global context, employees work in a 'Sassenheim-context'. For the locations to be able to work in a global context, they should not simply adjust to one another, but create a new dimension with input from all locations. Only then can a merger of cultures at a global level, be established.

To tackle these problems, respondents have mentioned several elements that they believe are needed for good cooperation. These can be found in Chapter 4, 5 and 6. Also the theory of Cross-Cultural Management Studies and Humanistic Theory have been used to give recommendations on how to improve the cooperation between the global R&D sites at Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim. These recommendations can be found in Chapter 6.

The research offers an analysis of the R&D organizations in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim. Conclusions and recommendations can be used to improve the cooperation between the sites and stimulate R&D employees to transform their focus from a local to a global context of cross-cultural cooperation.

## About the Author



**Suzanne van Duin** is master student at the University for Humanistics in Utrecht (The Netherlands). She will graduate for the Master Humanistics in *Critical Organization and Intervention Studies* in March 2010. She is specialized in organizational development, change management, international and cross-cultural cooperation, diversity in organizations, business ethics, human resources and processes of globalization. She did several internships which were related to the field of consultancy and Human Resources. Her master thesis, entitled “*Emulsifying Cultures*”, covers a research project of the cross-cultural cooperation of R&D laboratories of a multi-national company. Her research covered three R&D centers in The

Netherlands, The United States and India. The main objective of this research was to recommend to the R&D Management Team how to improve processes of cooperation in the cross-cultural context in which employees operate.

Suzanne is a Dutch national, born in South Korea. She has spend her childhood and education in various parts of the world. She has been exposed to various cultures in her life, while living with her parents in South Korea, Bangladesh and Mozambique. In addition she has travelled around Europe and visited countries like South Africa, Tunisia, Nepal and India. In the latter country she also attended a Summer School on Human Development and Human Rights. She is currently living in The Netherlands.

For additional information and CV, please contact Suzanne van Duin at [suzannevduin@hotmail.com](mailto:suzannevduin@hotmail.com).

# Appendix

- 1. World map: R&D locations in Troy, Bangalore and Sassenheim*
- 2. Internship Report*
- 3. Research Plan*
- 4. Extra Summary Chapter 4*
- 5. Translation of Dutch Quotations*



# Research & Development Locations



## Appendix 2. Internship Report

### *The skin of the holy cow*

**Internship assignment: AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes**



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Internship tutor: R&D Manager dr. Klaas Kruithof

University for Humanistics

July 19 2009

## **Title**

In The Netherlands a car is sometimes called a ‘holy cow’. The title of this report ‘*The skin of the holy cow*’ (Dutch: *De huid van de heilige koe*) refers to the core business of AkzoNobel R&D Car Refinishes: The development of coatings for the repair of car surfaces. In The Netherlands we can say this organization focuses on the skin of our holy cows.

The photo on the front page shows a car being prepared for a new coating.

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## Introduction

The assignment for my internship is to describe the R&D Car Refinishes organization. This description will be the background information for the thesis following this report. The internship took place from November 17 2008 till July 3 2009 at three global R&D sites: Sassenheim (The Netherlands), Troy, Michigan (USA) and Bangalore (India).

During my internship I learned a lot about the organization of R&D Car Refinishes. This was the first time for me to work in a multinational company but also the chemical industry. To my surprise, I did not only learn a lot about how such a large company works, but also a lot about paint chemistry. This part of my learning process in this internship helped me to better understand the world of chemists and the R&D department, in which doing research and developing (new) products is the core business.

During my conversations with different people from different departments it helped me to first ask them about their work and how that work is situated in R&D. I started small by going into the labs on a so called 'lab stage' in Sassenheim. Here people explained to me what paint actually is and told me about the developing process. I even got to make paint myself. I had a lot of questions on what we were testing, how the instruments worked and how to interpret results. For me this was a totally different world. During this time in the labs, I did not only got to talk about paint, but also about the team or group, their background, and experience the group spirit during work, coffee breaks and celebrating birthdays.

Apart from the activities in the labs I had separate meetings with people from the other departments. In these meetings we would have conversations about their work, their department and day to day interactions with others on site and with other R&D centres. With this information I could make the puzzle more and more complete and figure out how the organization works as a whole.

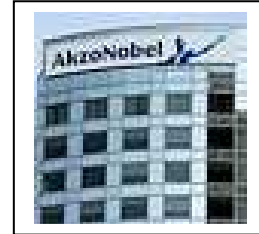
I also went to project meetings, team meetings and other meetings. This gave me an idea of how the people interact with each other and how the different aspects of the paint development process and everything around it needs to be organized.

In the beginning of this internship, learning about chemistry and getting a clear overview of the people and departments was hard. When I started I sometimes got overwhelmed by all the information. What helped me was keeping track of my experiences and the information I got in a research journal. In total my internship and thesis research made me write about 300 pages. The journal and my experiences functioned as a guide to write this report. I hope it will give insight in the locations and structure of the R&D organization in Car Refinishes.

## AkzoNobel, the multinational company

This internship and research has taken place in *AkzoNobel Business Unit Car Refinishes* in the global R&D<sup>217</sup> department (R&D Car Refinishes). The sponsor of this research and Director of R&D Car Refinishes is Business Unit R&D Manager dr. Klaas Kruithof. The global R&D research centres are situated in Troy Michigan (USA), Sassenheim (The Netherlands) and Bangalore (India).

In this report I will give a short overview of the AkzoNobel organization and describe the structure of the organization of R&D Car Refinishes in particular, going into the departments and people of R&D.



### 1.1 AkzoNobel

AkzoNobel is a multinational chemical company and the largest global paints and coatings producer of the world. In 2007 the company's revenue was €14.4 bln (pro forma). AkzoNobel has businesses in over 80 countries and approximately 60.000 employees worldwide. The organization is divided into three Business Areas (BA) which are specialized in coatings or chemicals. These BA's are *Performance Coatings*, *Specialty Chemicals* and *Decorative Paints*. The Board of Management of AkzoNobel consists of CEO Hans Weijers, CFO Keith Nichols and a chief of every BA: Leif Darner for *Performance Coatings*, Rob Frohn for *Specialty Chemicals* and Tex Gunning for *Decorative Paints*. ([http://www.akzonobel.com/aboutus/company\\_overview/](http://www.akzonobel.com/aboutus/company_overview/)).

### 1.2 Car Refinishes

Each BA consists of several Business Units (BU). BU Car Refinishes is part of the BA *Performance Coatings* and is specialized in developing and producing coatings<sup>218</sup>: car refinishes paint for the repair of passenger cars, paint for trucks and busses, and paint for plastics car parts (for the automotive industry). The R&D department of Car Refinishes under Manager Klaas Kruithof develops paint for body shops and car part factories. I will shortly explain what a coating is and its purpose.

A coating is a protective layer of paint applied onto a surface by spraying it in a liquid state and letting it dry. The coating has insulating properties and protects the product from damage or rust. In the BU Car Refinishes they are specialized in making paint for car surfaces. When the paint layer on a car gets damaged, the car will be brought to a body shop where they will sand the surface of the car and apply a new layer of paint. This paint layer has special features, because it needs to stick to the sanded car surface and to the paint already on the car. The paint also needs to match the original color of the car. The goal is to have an invisible repair. This means that the paint of CR matches the original paint of the car so precisely, that after repair it is not visible that there was a damaged spot. It is the core activity of the R&D department of Car Refinishes to develop different kinds of paint and colors for body shops. So the body shop can use their paint for any color or type of car.

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<sup>217</sup> R&D = Research & Development.

<sup>218</sup> Coatings are a protective layer on the surface of products and cars to protect them from damage and give them a nice look. In Car Refinishes the coatings used are mostly paints. But they also work with plastic and other coatings technologies/solutions.

Apart from paint for the repair of car surfaces, Car Refinishes also supplies factories with paint for the automotive industry. For instance, when a new car gets manufactured by Volkswagen, the body (the frame) of the car will be painted by the car manufacturer with the doors and other metal parts.

Volkswagen has decided which color they will give their new product line and paint the bodies of the car. But the other car parts, like the plastic bumper, need a protective layer of paint as well.



Volkswagen might want the bumper to be painted in the same color as the body of the car. So the paint developed for the bumper needs to match the color of the body so well that it is not visible that someone else has made that paint. Like with the refinishes paint for passenger cars, the color accuracy is one of the most important features of their paint technology.

The plastic car parts, like bumpers, are made and coated by other factories. R&D Car Refinishes supplies these factories with paint of the right color for the coating of these car parts.

R&D has several laboratories where the chemists make paint, develop colors and do the necessary testing with special instruments.

Director of BU Car Refinishes is General Manager Jim Rees. (AN website: [http://www.akzonobel.com/nl/over\\_ons/akzonobel\\_at\\_a\\_glance/](http://www.akzonobel.com/nl/over_ons/akzonobel_at_a_glance/)). The turnover of the BU in 2007 was about €900 mln. Car Refinishes has several disciplines playing a role in the process of paint development (Car Refinishes Portal on CarNet: BU disciplines). The discipline *Research & Development* of Car Refinishes is lead by BU Director R&D dr. Klaas Kruithof. The departments are:

- *Research & Development (R&D)*
- *Color*
- *Health Safety & Environment (HSE)*
- *Marketing*
- *Finance & Control*
- *Legal, Production & Logistics*
- *Human Resources (HR).*

BU Car Refinishes is a global organization. Apart from the different departments for every discipline, they have divided the Marketing/Sales organization into market area's. There are three market area's, each market area is a subBU (SBU) and has a subBU director. These three area's are:

1. *EMEA* for Europe, Middle East and Africa.
2. *Asia-Pacific* for Asia and Oceania.
3. *The Americas* for North and South America.

In the next organization chart (Figure 1) you can find the organizational structure of the BU Car Refinishes under BU Managing Director Jim Rees. The orange box shows the location of BU R&D in Car Refinishes under Manager Klaas Kruithof.

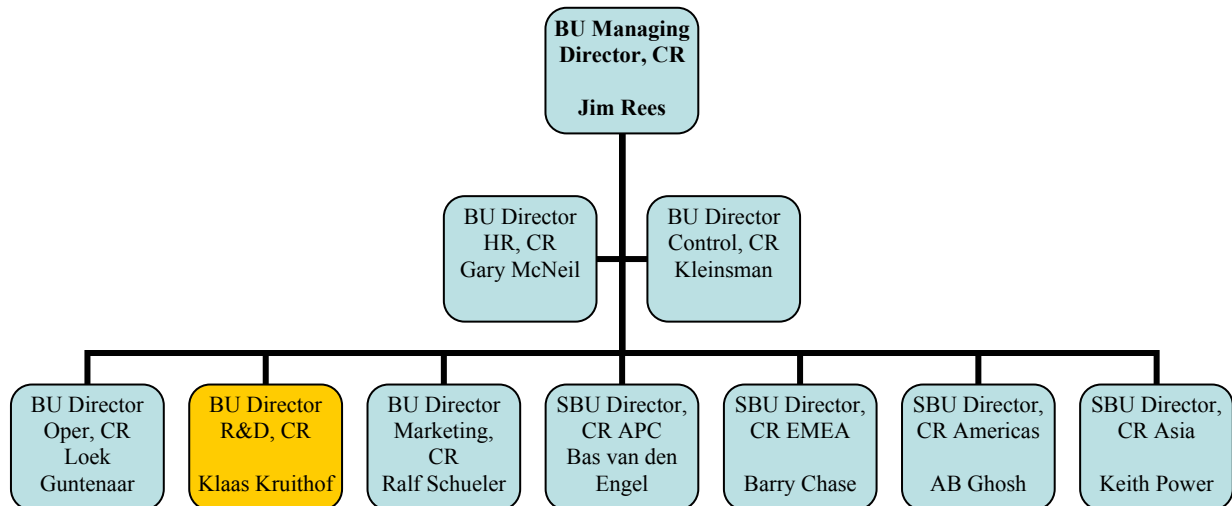


Figure 1: Organization chart of BU car Refinishes of AkzoNobel (part of BA Performance Coatings).

What is not visible in the organization chart is that there is an overlap between managing a certain Car Refinishes discipline and managing a market area. For instance, all the R&D labs fall under Klaas Kruithof, but because of the different location all over the world, they are also connected to different SBU managers. The three global research centres fall directly under Klaas Kruithof, but work on project bases together with the SBU's. And there are a few R&D labs which belong to a SBU and work only for a specific market area. But these too are connected to the Global R&D department of Klaas Kruithof.

In the next paragraph I will describe the structure and activities of the Car Refinishes R&D organization, in particular the global R&D centres.

### 1.3 Global R&D

R&D is responsible for the innovation and development of existing and new paint products. In the laboratories they develop new products and application tools. They introduce them to the market in cooperation with *Marketing*. They are also responsible for the maintenance of the existing products, handling complaints and improving products by coming up with more environmental friendly and profitable ideas.

#### Matrix organization

R&D Car Refinishes is structured as a matrix organization. This means that employees are multi-reporting: Employees with the same kind of skills, like researchers, are pooled together and report to a research manager on a hierarchal level. At the same time these researchers are assigned to different projects. While working on a project they report to a project manager, only this is focused on their task in the project. In the organization chart, the hierarchal relations are visualized by a continuous line and the indirect or project relations by a dotted line.

Secondly, projects can be local or global. Which means that it is possible for a project team to consist of people from different countries. (French, Cross-cultural management, 2007, p.74. Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matrix\\_management\\_1-07-2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matrix_management_1-07-2009)).

#### Departments

The research is mostly done by *International Product Development* and *International Color Development*. But R&D does not only make paint. They also make tools to support the paint



application process for clients (body shops), like color matching software and special spray guns. This is done by other departments. In total R&D has 7 departments:

- *International Product Development (IPD)*
- *Service & Regulatory Affairs (S&RA)*
- *International Color Development (ICD)*
- *Technology Center Colorimetry (TCC)*
- *New Business Technologies (NBT)<sup>219</sup>*
- *R&D OEM/After market (OEM/AAM)*
- *Automotive Plastic Coatings R&D (APC)*

BU R&D Manager dr. Klaas Kruithof is the director of R&D Car Refinishes. The Board of R&D consists of dr. Klaas Kruithof (BU R&D Manager), Pieter Peters (Manager *International Product Development*), Luc Turkenburg (Manager *Service & Regulatory Affairs*) and Michiel Veenstra (Manager *Financial Controlling*). In some occasions *Human Resources* joins the Board as well. The Board is located at the Car Refinishes headquarters in Sassenheim, The Netherlands.

Two R&D executive managers also reporting to R&D Manager Klaas Kruithof are Stefan Wieditz (Technical Manager *OEM*) and Sudha Dantiki (Managing Director Bangalore).

The research centres of R&D are located all over the world. Regional R&D centres are for instance the R&D centres in São Bernardo do Campo (Brazil) and Suzhou (China). They support a specific market area. There are also three global research centres which can support their own market area as well as the global market. These global research centres are located in Troy, Michigan (United States), Bangalore (India) and Sassenheim (The Netherlands). Several hundreds of people work in these global research centres.

Every site has a manager or managing director. The Site Manager in Troy is Mike Shesterkin. In Bangalore this is Manager Sudha Dantiki. And in Sassenheim it is Luc Turkenburg. See Figure 2 down below for the organization chart of R&D.

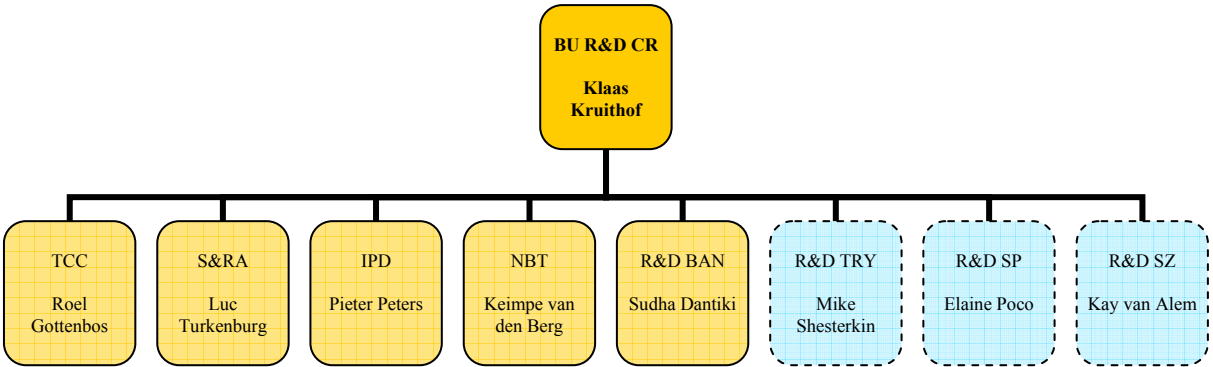


Figure 2: R&D Car Refinishes. The orange box refers to the organization chart in Figure 1. The light orange colored boxes are the direct reports of Klaas Kruithof. The light blue boxes are dotted lines reporting to Klaas Kruithof.

<sup>219</sup> During this research period the Car Refinishes Team (CRT) has decided to transfer the NBT department as part of a cost-savings plan to anticipate on the economical crisis and downsizing of the market. Innovation has now been transferred to a new department called the *Innovation Platform*, which will continue the innovation in R&D.

I will now go into the structure and activities of the global research centres and explain who works where and how the three centres are connected to one another.

### R&D Sassenheim



The site in Sassenheim was established in 1792 and has a long history within AkzoNobel.<sup>220</sup> Sassenheim headquarters the Car Refinishes organization.

The global R&D labs in Sassenheim can support the regional EMEA market but also the global market. Because the R&D Board is stationed in Sassenheim and because some projects are in cooperation with Troy and Bangalore, there is a lot of communication between this global research centre and the other two.

As described earlier the departments in Sassenheim are *International Product Development* (IPD), *Service & Regulatory Affairs* (S&RA), *International Color Development* (ICD), *Technology Center Colorimetry* (TCC) and *New Business Technologies* (NBT) (See the organization chart in Figure 2).

IPD is lead by manager Pieter Peters from Sassenheim. IPD in Sassenheim is split into two divisions: *Product Development* and *Maintenance*. Head of *Product Development* is manager Rob Lagendijk. Head of *Maintenance* is manager Mike Hannah.

Sassenheim also has a *Polymer Lab* and *Analytical Lab* which support R&D projects. The *Polymer Lab* in Sassenheim is part of IPD and is managed by Marco Koenraadt.

*Service & Regulatory Affairs* (S&RA) under Manager Luc Turkenburg is responsible for the legal part of paint development and for Knowledge Management. The legal part is for instance keeping track of changes in the law for transportation and labelling of paint. Knowledge Management keeps track of documents being made in the departments and maintains the R&D part of *CarNet*, the Car Refinishes intranet. Another group in S&RA is *Pigment Screening* under Arthur van Rooijen. Pigment gives the paint its color and is the most expensive component of the paint. This group is responsible for the screening of new color pigments on the market. They test if the new pigments are of the right quality and price to use as a possible substitute of the pigments they are using in their paint now.

*International Color Development* (ICD) is lead by Manager John van Diemen. Most people of this department are stationed at the site in Bangalore. But Manager John van Diemen and his direct report Pim Koeckhoven (Manager Global Support Team, color software) are stationed in Sassenheim. This department is responsible for the development of color formula's and color software. They support the body shops in finding the right color in a product line to match the color of the car which needs to be repaired.

*Technology Center Colorimetry* (TCC) is managed by Roel Gottenbos. TCC is specialized in color measurement and calculation. They have different projects for improving color

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<sup>220</sup> For the history of the site in Sassenheim within AkzoNobel see the book (internal publication) *Tomorrow's Answers Today, de geschiedenis van AkzoNobel sinds 1646* (2008) published by AkzoNobel Amsterdam. See also 'We are different' (internal publication).

measuring instruments and developing color models. These models are used to for instance predict what the color will be when you mix different toners<sup>221</sup>.

*New Business Technologies* (NBT) is lead by Manager Keimpe van den Berg. He has a small team of people working on new ideas for paint products and application tools. This department has a different set up compared to the departments: NBT hires chemists from the IPD labs to work on a NBT project. These projects are lead by NBT but staffed by IPD.

### R&D Troy

The lab in Troy came to AkzoNobel in 1984 after the acquisition of Wyandotte. As I already mentioned, the manager of the R&D site in Troy is Mike Shesterkin. The site in Troy is split into two groups. The group reporting directly to Mike Shesterkin supports the regional Commercial Vehicles market of *North America* of the SBU, *The Americas*. This group is connected to global R&D under Klaas Kruithof by a dotted line.

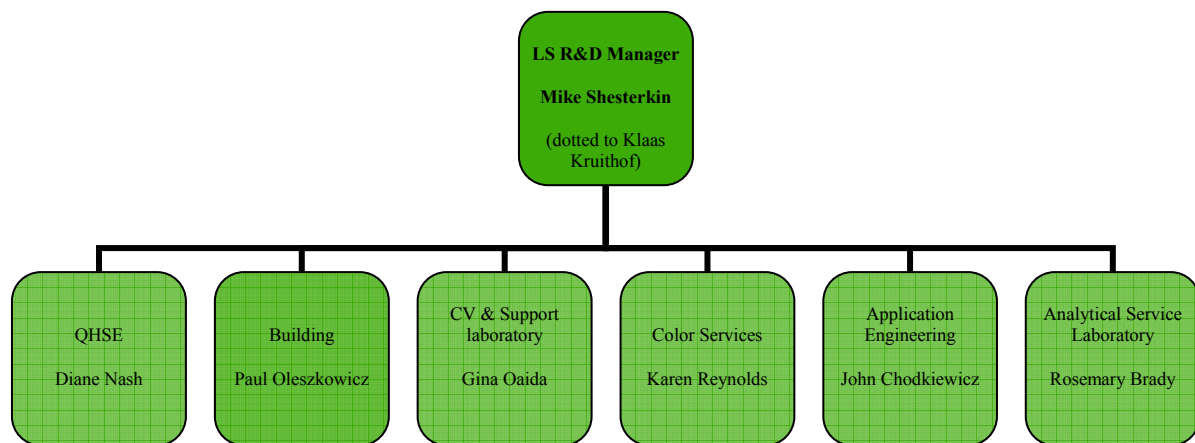


Figure 3: CV Car Refinishes Troy, North America under Manager Mike Shesterkin.

The other department is *International Product Development* (IPD). The IPD labs are directly connected to global R&D under Klaas Kruithof. IPD Troy can support *the Americas* market area and the global market. IPD Troy is, like IPD Sassenheim, split into two divisions: *Product Development* and *Maintenance*.

Head of *Product Development* is Manager Alex Yahkind. Head of *Maintenance* is Manager Andy Robertson. Alex Yahkind and Andy Robertson report directly to Pieter Peters in Sassenheim. These departments are the counterparts of the departments in Sassenheim.



*New Business Technologies* (NBT) also has a group in Troy, and like in Sassenheim the people are a part of IPD. Because NBT Sassenheim hires staff from *Product Development* under Alex Yahkind, a special NBT group has been assigned for these projects.

<sup>221</sup> A toner is a basic color they produce, like for instance red and blue. By mixing these basic toners, you are able to make several thousands of colors. At TCC they can calculate or predict how much you need from each toner to create a certain car color.

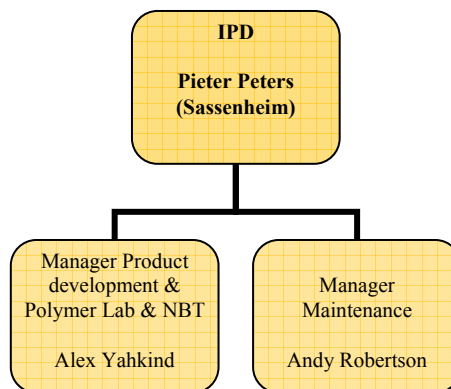


Figure 4: Global R&D Car Refinishes Troy under Manager Pieter Peters.

The R&D site in Troy also has a *Polymer Lab*, *Analytical Lab* and *Color Lab*. The *Polymer Lab* is part of IPD and reports to Alex Yahkind. This lab is the counterpart of the *Polymer Lab* in Sassenheim under Marco Koenraadt. The *Analytical Lab* and the *Color Lab* support the regional CV market under Mike Shesterkin (See organization chart Figure 3).<sup>222</sup>

The last department in Troy is HSE under Diane Nash who reports to Mike Shesterkin. This department is related to *Service & Regulatory Affairs (S&RA)* in Sassenheim. HSE cooperates with its global counterpart in Sassenheim to share information and work on a global computer system. But the HSE Troy activities are focused on the regional market of *North America* (See organization chart in Figure 3).

#### R&D Bangalore

The global R&D site in Bangalore is lead by Managing Director Sudha Dantiki. The site was opened in 2001 and has grown fast in the last 8 years. This site has a different organizational structure compared to Sassenheim and Troy. In Bangalore, the building is divided into two sections: R&D and Color.



The R&D section consists of three groups working on IPD and other projects. The three groups are IPD Group 1 under Group Leader Dada Herle, IPD Group 2 under Group Leader Ganesh Bhuvaneshwaran and IPD Group 3 under Group Leader Sudarsan Kothandaraman. Group 1 works on IPD projects. Group 2 mostly does projects for *Pigment Screening*, the department in Sassenheim under Arthur van Rooijen. Group 3 works on different IPD projects of which one of them is a global product called *Color Build Plus*. This group is also responsible for HSE on the site.

<sup>222</sup> After my visit in Februari 2009 and during my visit in Bangalore the CRT (Car Refinishes Team, top management of CR) had decided to close the local color labs in Troy and Jakarta as part of cost savings strategy, anticipating on the economical recession.

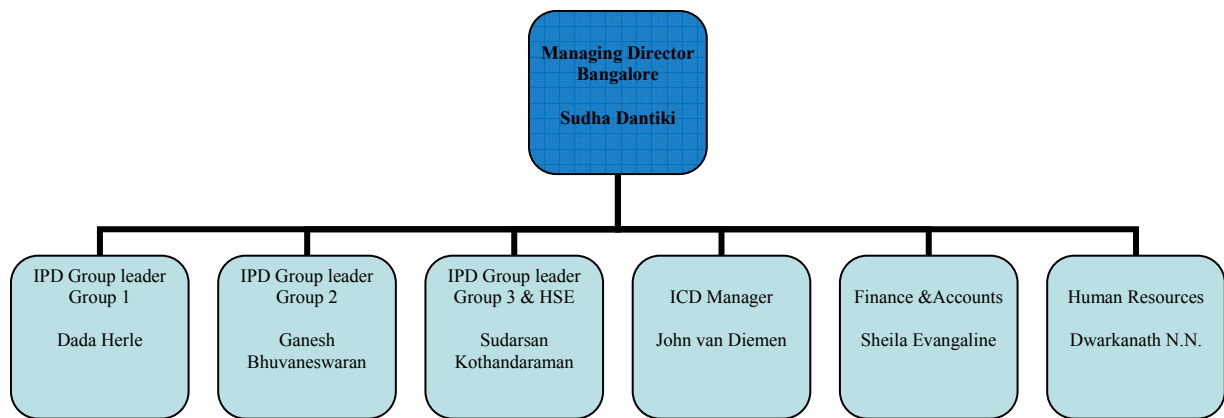


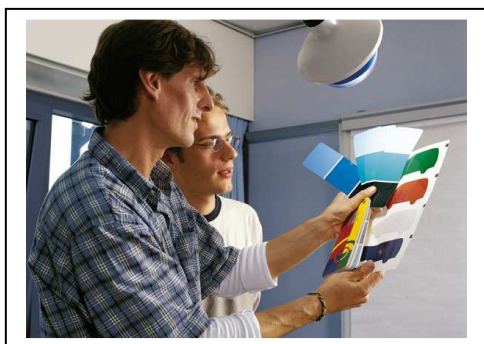
Figure 5: Global R&D Car Refinishes Bangalore under Manager Sudha Dantiki.

Color falls under *International Color Development* Manager John van Diemen. This department of ICD is responsible for color development, planning & control, color software and global color training. There are several color development groups working in Bangalore. These consist of formula developers which make the formula's for new car colors coming on the market.

The Color Development Center has a large spraying unit as well. Here about 76 contractors work. They support the formula developers making the color formula's by mixing and spraying a trial color and sending the sprayed panels to the developers so they can check their formula's or see how they need to adjust them. The whole color development centre falls under Manager Arun Kumar Leo Royan who reports to Manager John van Diemen.

Apart from the color development group, Color also has a group developing software for the body shops for color matching. This group is the Global Support Team (GST) which falls under Pim Koeckhoven, he also reports to Manager John van Diemen<sup>223</sup>.

Both R&D and Color report directly to Managing Director of Bangalore Sudha Dantiki. Other people reporting directly to him are Sheila Evangaline for *Finance & Accounts* and Dwarkanath N.N. for *Human Resources* (HR) and site management (See organization chart Figure 5).



The last department on the site is *Technology Center Colorimetry* (TCC). This department is the counterpart of TCC in Sassenheim and reports to Manager Roel Gottenbos. This department works in cooperation with TCC Sassenheim and with ICD in Bangalore. See Figure 6 down below.

<sup>223</sup> ICD manager John van Diemen was an expat in Bangalore for 4 years. During this research period he moved back to The Netherlands and started working in Sassenheim again. Jan Moos, a Dutch-American APC manager in Troy Michigan (USA) moved to Bangalore as an expat for the R&D department.

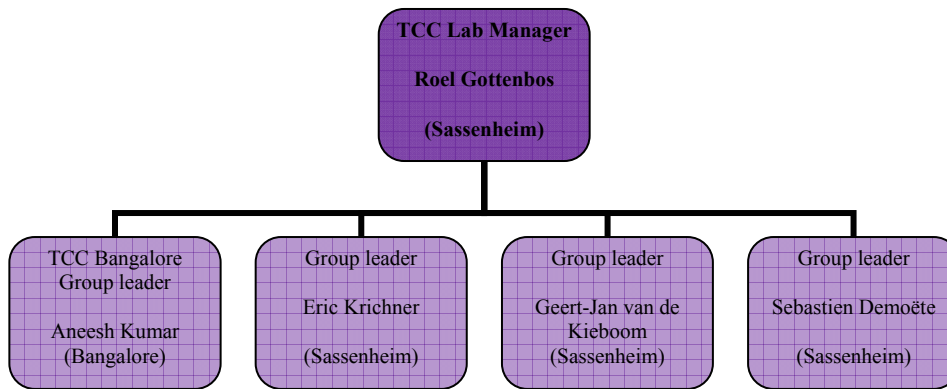


Figure 6: Department TCC of R&D Car refinishes in Sassenheim and Bangalore under Manager Roel Gottenbos.

As you can see, the departments are spread over the three location but the organizational structure is not the same everywhere. The three global research centres are seen as one lab situated in three countries. The idea behind the global labs or global R&D is to divide the work over the three labs. This way they have a large pool of people with different skills. They divide the projects by looking at the capacity of a site and the most suitable skills present at a site. This way different people can be working on projects and the match between the nature of a project and the people working on it, is better. (Pieter Peters, July 3 2009).

And as you have read in the footnotes below the pages, the structure of the global R&D organization is always changing or in transition. People change jobs or positions, new organizational structures are put into place, etc. In the seven months of this research period lots of things have changed. Also the economical crisis has had its impact on the organization. The impact of these changes have been different for every location. What this means for the cooperation between the global R&D sites, I will go into in the thesis following this report. I hope this overview has given some insight in the structures in and connections between the three global sites of R&D Car Refinishes.

#### 1.4 Final remarks

The purpose of this internship was to get an overview of the global R&D organization at the three locations in Sassenheim, Troy and Bangalore. The internship activities made it possible for me to do the research for my thesis. The assignment of my thesis is to research the influence of cultural differences on the cooperation between the global R&D sites. This report will function as background information for the thesis.

In the thesis I will answer the research question<sup>224</sup> (see the assignment mentioned above) and give recommendations, based upon the outcomes and conclusions of the research, to R&D Manager Klaas Kruithof and the Management Team of R&D (See Figure 2).

<sup>224</sup> (See Cultural Crossroads, onderzoeksopzet November 2008).

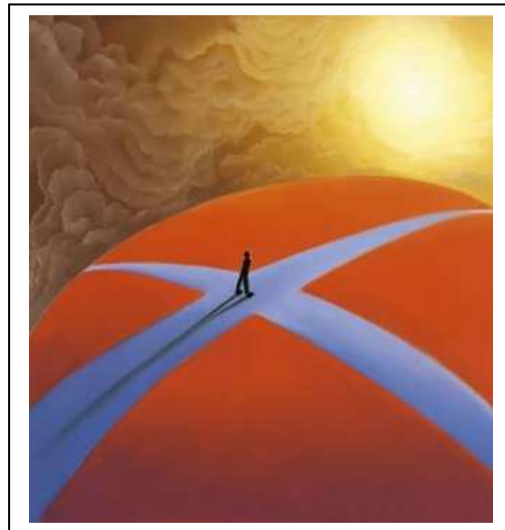
## Appendix 3. Research Plan

### Cultural Crossroads

#### *Cross-cultural cooperation within AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes*

#### Research plan: Internship and Thesis

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#### Research plan Thesis

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Sponsor: AkzoNobel  
BU R&D Manager Klaas Kruithof

University for Humanistics, Utrecht

November 2008

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# Inleiding

## 1. Achtergrond AkzoNobel

Deze onderzoeksopzet is voor mijn thesis van de Master Humanistiek, afstudeerrichting KOIS (Kritische organisatie- en Interventiestudies). Ik doe dit afstudeeronderzoek in opdracht van Klaas Kruithof, R&D manager of the Business Unit Car Refinishes van AkzoNobel. Het onderzoek zal plaatsvinden in Sassenheim (Nederland), Bangalore (India) en Troy, Michigan<sup>225</sup> (V.S.), drie grote onderzoekslocaties van deze BU van AkzoNobel. De eerste vraag die ik hier beantwoord is: welke plaats dit bedrijfs onderdeel in AkzoNobel inneemt.

AkzoNobel is de grootste verf- en coatingsproducent ter wereld. Het bedrijf heeft organisaties in verschillende landen (multinational) en omschrijft zichzelf als een multiculturele marktgerichte organisatie. Er werken wereldwijd zo'n 68.000 mensen in meer dan 80 landen. De organisatie is opgesplitst in drie business units (BU) die gerelateerd zijn aan de sectoren coatings en specialty chemicals waarin AkzoNobel actief is. Deze BU's zijn gegroepeerd in zogenaamde Business Areas: Decorative Paints, Specialty Chemicals en Performance Coatings. Elk van deze BAB's heeft een vertegenwoordiger in de Raad van Bestuur van AkzoNobel.

Decorative Paints houdt zich bezig met de ontwikkeling en productie van decoratieve verf, zoals schilderslak. Specialty Chemicals richt zich op de productie van chemicaliën voor het gebruik in verschillende producten zoals voedingsmiddelen en voor industriële toepassingen zoals de productie van asfalt en papier.

Performance Coatings ontwikkelt en produceert *coatings*, zoals verf, die o.a. functioneren als een beschermende laag op producten. Voorbeelden hiervan zijn de verf op mobiele telefoons, colablikjes, boten en auto's. Voor elke toepassing worden andere eisen aan deze verfproducten gesteld. Deze Business Area is daarom onderverdeeld in 5 BU's: Car Refinishes, Industrial Finishes, Powder Coatings, Marine & Protective Coatings en Packaging Coatings.

Dit afstudeeronderzoek richt zich op R&D Car Refinishes, en heeft de R&D Manager dr. Klaas Kruithof, als opdrachtgever. De BU Car Refinishes<sup>226</sup> is gespecialiseerd in de ontwikkeling en productie van verven voor de reparatie van personenauto's, commerciële voertuigen en plastic voor de auto-industrie. Deze BU opereert met regionale winstverantwoordelijkheid (in zgn subBU's) en heeft daarnaast verschillende afdelingen, waaronder Research & Development (R&D), Marketing en Human Resources (HR). Afgezien van de lokale klant-ondersteuning, is de BU R&D discipline verantwoordelijk voor het gehele productontwikkelingstraject, van innovatie, via ontwikkeling tot marktintroductie en ondersteuning.

De afdeling R&D is onderverdeeld in 5 departementen: International Product Development, Service & Regulatory Affairs, Int. Color Development, Technology Center en New Technologies. Daarbij komen twee ondersteunende departementen: Financial Controlling en contacten met de auto-industrie (OEM-AAM). Ook de manager van het research center in India rapporteert aan de BU R&D Manager.

Het dagelijkse bestuur van CR's R&D bestaat uit Klaas Kruithof (BU R&D Manager), Michiel Veenstra (Financial Controlling), Pieter Peters (Hoofd International Product Development) en Luc Turkenburg (Hoofd Service & Regulatory Affairs).

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<sup>225</sup> Troy, Michigan ligt vlakbij Detroit.

<sup>226</sup> Finishes = verf.

De afdeling R&D heeft drie grote Research Centers. Deze staan in Sassenheim (Nederland), Bangalore (India) en Troy, Michigan (V.S.). In totaal werken c.a. 400 mensen. Klaas Kruithof vergadert regelmatig met de International R&D Managers van de twee andere grote Research Centers: In Detroit is dat Mike Shesterkin en in Bangalore Sudha Dantiki.<sup>227</sup>

## 2. Afstudeeropdracht

De drie Research Centers moeten met elkaar samenwerken bij de ontwikkeling en productie van autolak. Het gaat hier met name om product- en kleurontwikkeling: Via natuur- en scheikundig onderzoek kunnen honderdduizenden kleuren worden gemaakt. De afdeling R&D werkt op projectbasis waarbij tussen de afdeling veel afstemming nodig is. Omdat de locaties zover uit elkaar liggen wordt onder andere veel getelefoneerd en gebruik gemaakt van Video Conferencing (VC). Soms worden medewerkers van andere locaties ingevlogen voor een opleiding of ondersteuning bij een project op locatie.

BU R&D Car Refinishes, onder leiding van Klaas Kruithof, wil een onderzoek naar de multiculturele samenwerking tussen deze drie locaties (Sassenheim, Bangalore en Troy). Het gaat hier om een onderzoek naar de culturele verschillen tussen de drie locaties van AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes in de V.S., Nederland en India, en het effect daarvan op de samenwerking en efficiëntie tussen die locaties. Het doel van dit onderzoek voor AkzoNobel is dat de drie laboratoria optimaal met elkaar kunnen samenwerken. Het gaat erom dat de processen in de labs niet gehinderd worden door cultuurverschillen, of beter nog, dat er in positieve zin gebruik wordt gemaakt van deze verschillen. Voor een optimale samenwerking is het volgens Kruithof noodzakelijk dat er:

1. een beter begrip ontstaat tussen de verschillende partijen (locaties, culturen), want met een beter begrip ben je in staat processen te optimaliseren, en
2. er inzicht gegeven kan worden in een aantal duidelijke praktijkvoorbeelden van wat er in een aantal projecten goed en fout is gegaan (op het gebied van crossculturele samenwerking).

De twee bovengenoemde punten zijn middelen om het doel van AkzoNobel te bereiken. Dit onderzoek draagt daar aan bij. Het advies dat uit dit onderzoek voortvloeit zal op de twee bovengenoemde punten aansluiten.

## 3. Mijn motivatie

Het onderwerp van dit onderzoek is crossculturele samenwerking tussen verschillende internationale locaties binnen een multinational. Het gaat hier om het bestuderen van gedrag van werknemers van AkzoNobel die met elkaar samenwerken, maar hun wortels hebben in drie verschillende (nationale) culturen: de Nederlandse, Indiase en Noord-Amerikaanse cultuur.

Ik heb me in de afstudeerrichting KOIS gespecialiseerd in: organisatiekunde, consultancy, cultuurverandering in organisaties en globaliseringsprocessen. Mijn interesse gaat uit naar hoe mensen in organisaties met elkaar samenwerken en wat daar de kansen en moeilijkheden van zijn. In mijn stage heb ik me met name gericht op organisatieadvies en training van groepen binnen organisaties. Dit afstudeeronderzoek bij AkzoNobel brengt een andere dimensie van kijken naar een organisatie met zich mee, namelijk het gedrag en de cultuur van mensen in een multiculturele setting. De drie locaties van AkzoNobel zijn zelf multicultureel, maar ook de ruimte waarin die drie locaties met elkaar samenwerken en elkaar ontmoeten. Cultuur betekent hier niet alleen de organisatiecultuur, maar ook de (nationale) culturele achtergrond van werknemers. Het bijzondere aan dit onderzoek vind ik dat binnen dit thema

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<sup>227</sup> [www.akzonobel.com](http://www.akzonobel.com). Gesprek met Klaas Kruithof maart 2008.

organisatiekunde en crossculturele studies met elkaar gecombineerd worden binnen het kader van de Humanistiek.

Het crossculturele aspect vind ik persoonlijk interessant omdat ik in verschillende landen (Zuid-Korea, Bangladesh en Mozambique) ben opgegroeid en daardoor met verschillende culturen in aanraking ben gekomen. Daarnaast vind ik het belangrijk dat mensen elkaar beter leren begrijpen als het gaat om cultuurverschillen. Ik denk dat door meer begrip tussen mensen, zij op een prettigere manier met elkaar kunnen werken en leven. Door vanuit de Humanistiek naar dit vraagstuk van AkzoNobel te kijken, denk ik dat verschillende aspecten hiervan belicht kunnen worden die recht doen aan de diversiteit onder AkzoNobel medewerkers. Dit betekent dat vanuit verschillende invalshoeken (organisatiekunde, crosscultureel studies, gesprekken met medewerkers) nieuwe perspectieven op deze situatie gegeven kunnen worden. De kern van dit onderzoek is namelijk een integraal beeld te geven van de organisatie: BU R&D Car Refinishes. Dit houdt in dat ik als onderzoeker door de hele organisatie loop en met medewerkers uit alle lagen in de organisatie praat en meekijk. Hierdoor komen niet alleen de cultuur en wensen van het management naar voren, maar ook vooral die van de mensen op de werkvloer en in de laboratoria. In de Humanistiek wordt een grote waarde gehecht aan het zien van alle medewerkers van een organisatie. In de consultancywereld blijven onderzoek en adviezen vaak op managementniveau hangen. De Humanistiek verzet zich hier tegen, omdat zij vindt dat dit een onrealistisch beeld geeft van de organisatie. Ik wil in mijn onderzoek juist met de werkvloer praten en concrete voorbeelden uit de werkpraktijk vinden, die laten zien wat er leeft onder de mensen en speelt tussen de drie locaties. Dit geeft een vollediger beeld van de werkprocessen en de organisatie in zijn geheel. Daarbij doet dit in mijn ogen meer recht aan de mensen waar het om gaat: de mensen die het werk uitvoeren en waartussen de samenwerking in de labs plaatsvindt. Daarnaast geeft deze focus juist de inzichten die de organisatie nodig heeft om beter op cultuurverschillen te kunnen inspelen. Ik denk dat als AkzoNobel in de organisatie een brug wil slaan tussen culturen, dat het nodig is te weten waar die bruggen moeten komen. Het is nodig de verschillende perspectieven te kennen, omdat dit de startpunten zijn vanwaar de bruggen gebouwd kunnen worden.

Ik hoop met dit onderzoek en mijn eigen ervaringen een bijdrage te kunnen leveren aan 1. nieuwe inzichten in het wetenschappelijke domein van cross-culturele samenwerking en management en 2. aan het bevorderen van de samenwerking tussen medewerkers van R&D Car Refinishes en de doelen van de onderneming.

#### **4. Dit onderzoek binnen het onderzoeksprogramma Humanistiek**

Dit onderzoek raakt aan twee onderzoeksthema's uit het onderzoeksprogramma Humanistiek<sup>228</sup>. Binnen kritische organisatie- en interventiestudies is dat thema "*Humaniteit, integriteit en duurzaamheid in organisaties*". Het gaat hier om het bevorderen van drie waarden/doelen door middel van onderzoek in (commerciële) organisaties. Mijn onderzoek sluit hierbij aan omdat het hier een onderzoek betreft in een commerciële organisatie waarin door zowel managers als werknemers vragen worden gesteld over samenwerken en het omgaan met cultuurverschillen. Ik zie samenwerken, en het verbeteren daarvan als een manier om humaniteit in een organisatie te bevorderen. Het omgaan met cultuurverschillen door de toenemende diversiteit in organisaties is ook een relevant thema voor de organisatiekunde en Humanistiek. Voor de Humanistiek is dit een onderzoeksgebied waarin nieuwe vormen van zingevings- en humaniseringsvraagstukken naar voren kunnen komen.

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<sup>228</sup> Onderzoeksprogramma 2005-2010 Humanistiek.

Dit brengt mij tot het tweede onderzoeksthema van het onderzoeksprogramma van Humanistiek: “*Morele educatie en democratisch burgerschap*”. Hierin gaat het onder andere over de gevolgen van economische en culturele globaliseringsprocessen en Noord-Zuid verhoudingen. Tenslotte sluit het onderzoek aan bij het werk van het Kosmopolis Instituut van de UvH dat zich onder anderen richt op mondiale ethiek, en waarin internationale en interculturele dialoog een belangrijke rol speelt.

In mijn afstudeeronderzoek komt dit naar voren in de crossculturele samenwerking binnen AkzoNobel, die ontstaan is door de plaatsing van laboratoria in drie verschillende werelddelen. Deze ontwikkeling kan gezien worden als een verschijnsel van globalisering en brengt zo ook crossculturele vraagstukken met zich mee in de organisatie.

## 5. Opdracht en Probleemstelling

De vraag van AkzoNobel is in hoeverre cultuurverschillen tussen de drie AkzoNobel werkplekken in Sassenheim, Bangalore en Troy van invloed zijn op hun onderlinge samenwerking en efficiëntie. Dit houdt in:

1. Het in kaart brengen van (relevante) cultuurverschillen.
2. Met deze gegevens kijken of en hoe processen/efficiëntie etc. kunnen worden geoptimaliseerd.

Dit beschouw ik als de opdracht.

‘Efficiëntie’ verwijst hier naar het proces waarin samenwerking plaats vindt en de beste manier waarop dat proces zijn doel kan bereiken. Ik zal, voor zover relevant voor het onderzoek, ook kijken naar de effectiviteit: de mate waarin werknemers in de richting van het gestelde doel werken.

Onder cultuur versta ik hier het geheel van gedrag, rituelen, denkbeelden, waarden, normen, rollen, motieven, houdingen en ideeën over de sociale en fysieke wereld (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 496. Jacob 2005: 525). Het begrip cultuur is niet beperkt tot de nationale cultuur van mensen. Crosscultureel management in een organisatie is het managen van meerdere culturen: nationale culturen, regionale culturen, industriële culturen, organisatieculturen, professionele culturen en afdelingsculturen (Veenswijk & van Marrewijk, 2008: 2).

Cultuur kan op deze verschillende niveau’s onderzocht worden. Door via deze verschillende culturele niveau’s naar gedrag in een organisatie te kijken kan onderzocht worden wat precies van invloed is op de samenwerking. Gelfand e.a. (2007) onderscheidt de volgende niveau’s:

1. Het culturele niveau: de nationale achtergrond, cultuur en context.
2. Het organisatie niveau: kenmerken van de organisatie en zijn context.
3. Het team niveau: kenmerken, eigenschappen en context van het team.
4. Het individuele niveau: persoonlijke kenmerken, eigenschappen en situering.
5. De globale context: hoe bovenstaande niveau’s van invloed op elkaar zijn. (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 496-497).

Dit crossculturele onderzoek richt zich op de culturen en bijbehorende gedragingen die effect hebben op de samenwerking tussen drie werkplekken van AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes. Het gaat hier niet om een algemene beschrijving van de cultuur van AkzoNobel werknemers, maar om relevant gedrag voor de samenwerking en het culturele niveau waar dat gedrag vandaan komt.

Voor dit onderzoek is op basis hiervan de volgende vraagstelling tot stand gekomen:

### Vraagstelling:

1. Wat zijn voor R&D werknemers relevante cultuurverschillen tussen en in de drie werkplekken van BU R&D Car Refinishes (op de drie locaties Sassenheim, Bangalore en Troy)?
2. Welke invloed hebben deze cultuurverschillen op de samenwerking tussen deze drie locaties?
3. Wat is de invloed van de cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen op de efficiëntie (en effectiviteit) van de drie locaties?
4. Hoe kan met deze gegevens en inzichten de samenwerking en efficiëntie binnen R&D Car Refinishes geoptimaliseerd worden? (advies)

**Deelvragen:**

1.
  - a. Wat zijn waarneembare verschillen in gedrag van werknemers van de drie locaties?
  - b. Hoe wordt door werknemers het gedrag van werknemers uit het eigen land ervaren?
  - c. Hoe wordt door werknemers het gedrag van werknemers uit een ander werelddeel ervaren?
  - d. Welke betekenis geven werknemers van de drie locaties aan hun (nationale) cultuur in hun werk?
  - e. Welke culturele niveau's (Gelfand e.a. 2007) spelen hier een rol?
2.
  - a. Welke invloed hebben het verschil in gedrag en de cultuurverschillen op het samenwerkingsproces voor de werknemers van AkzoNobel?
  - b. Hoe wordt door werknemers de samenwerking met werknemers uit het eigen land ervaren?
  - c. Hoe wordt door werknemers de samenwerking met werknemers uit een ander land of werelddeel ervaren?
  - d. Bij b en c: Welk gedrag en cultuurverschil van henzelf speelt volgens hen daarin een rol? Welke gedrag en cultuurverschil van de ander speelt volgens hen daarin een rol?
  - e. Welke culturele niveau's (Gelfand e.a. 2007) spelen hier een rol?
3.
  - a. Wat is het effect van cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen op de efficiëntie van het samenwerkingsproces?
  - b. Welke indicatoren gebruikt AkzoNobel om efficiëntie en effectiviteit te meten?
  - c. Wat ervaren werknemers als positieve en negatieve effecten van gedrag, cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen van een werknemer uit hetzelfde land op de efficiëntie van hun samenwerking?
  - d. Wat ervaren werknemers als positieve en negatieve effecten van gedrag, cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen van een werknemer uit een ander werelddeel op de efficiëntie van hun samenwerking?
  - e. Wat ervaren werknemers als positieve en negatieve effecten van gedrag, cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen van henzelf op de efficiëntie van hun samenwerking?
  - f. Voor zover dit een rol speelt in het onderzoek en de samenwerking: Wat is het effect van cultuurverschillen en de omgang met cultuurverschillen op de effectiviteit van de samenwerking?

g. Vraag b,c en d ibidem voor effectiviteit.

### **Doelstelling:**

De vraag vanuit AkzoNobel gaat over hoe je als multinational omgaat met cultuurverschillen tussen en in verschillende werkplekken. Ik veronderstel vooralsnog dat werknemers verschillende perspectieven en manieren van denken hebben ontwikkeld door verschillen in o.a. nationale culturele achtergrond. Vanzelfsprekend zal ik de relevante verschillen inventariseren<sup>229</sup>. Met dit onderzoek heb ik als doel AkzoNobel een methode aan te reiken hoe om te gaan met deze verschillende logica's binnen het bedrijf, gericht op het verbeteren van de samenwerking en efficiëntie. Een onderliggende vraag is of er één manier van werken en aansturen in de organisatie moet zijn, of dat het management en werknemers verschillende vormen van aansturen en samenwerken moeten ontwikkelen om als organisatie efficiënt te zijn. Een homogene aansturing zal tot een andere oplossing leiden (iedereen overal hetzelfde gedrag afdwingen) dan een heterogene aansturing die juist met het verschil in gedrag ter plaatse anders zal kunnen omgaan.

### **Theoretische relevantie**

Dit onderzoek draagt in mijn ogen bij aan kennis op het gebied van gedrag en de rol van cultuur in crossculturele samenwerking in een multinational. In crossculturele studies zijn de afgelopen jaren nieuwe onderzoeken gedaan naar de kwaliteit van de onderzoeken van onder andere Hofstede (1980) (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 479-485). Hofstedes culturele typologieën zijn tot stand gekomen door het scoren van verschillende nationale culturen op een schaal van vier waarden dimensies. De kritieken op Hofstede zijn als volgt:

- Een vergesimplificeerd en statisch beeld van het omgaan met cultuurverschillen.
- Een te eenzijdige focus op nationale culturen.
- De veronderstelling dat cultuurverschillen meetbaar zijn en universeel voor een heel land.
- De afwezigheid van machtssystemen en het gebruiken van cultuurverschillen.
- De veronderstelling dat cultuurverschillen te overkomen zijn. (Jacobs, 2005. Veenswijk & van Marrewijk, 2008: 4).

Een van de kernproblemen van Hofstede's onderzoek is dat hij met Westerse eenzijdige maatstaven andere culturen heeft geprobeerd te analyseren. En daarbij geen rekening heeft gehouden met cultuurverschillen binnen een land. Een van de opgaven voor crosscultureel onderzoek van de toekomst ligt volgens Gelfand e.a. (2007) in het onderzoeken van cultuur vanuit verschillende niveau's (*a multilevel perspective*). Aan de hand van de verschillende culturele niveau's van Gelfand e.a. (2007) en het kijken naar gedrag van mensen (*organizational behavior*) zal ik in mijn onderzoek proberen de cultuurverschillen binnen hun context te beschrijven. Mijn onderzoek kan nieuwe inzichten geven in hoe werknemers van een multinational cross-culturele samenwerking ervaren en welk gedrag en welke bijbehorende cultuurverschillen daarbij een rol spelen, door te kijken naar de plek in een organisatie waar mensen van verschillende culturen elkaar ontmoeten. In mijn ogen betekent dit een begin maken met de nieuwe uitdagingen voor crosscultureel onderzoek (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 499).

### **Praktische relevantie**

Dit onderzoek is geworteld in de praktijk van AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes. Omdat de vraag naar dit onderzoek uit de praktijk zelf is gekomen, lijkt mij de praktische relevantie

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<sup>229</sup> Het gaat hier om relevante verschillen voor medewerkers van AkzoNobel. Het gaat hier om de ervaring van zowel werknemers als het management en leidinggevenden.

hiervan evident. Ik denk dat met dit onderzoek gekeken wordt naar wat deze organisatie praktisch vanuit het management en werknemers kan doen om de samenwerking en efficiëntie en effectiviteit te verbeteren. Waar mogelijk zal dit ook praktisch advies kunnen opleveren voor gelijksoortige organisaties als AkzoNobel. Hoe hier mee om te gaan zal worden afgestemd met AkzoNobel.

## **Methodologie**

In dit deel van mijn onderzoeksopzet zal ik toelichten welke methode ik ga gebruiken en mijn onderbouwing daarvoor.

### **Methodologische grondslag**

Dit afstudeeronderzoek is een kwalitatief onderzoek. In een kwalitatief onderzoek wordt een sterke voorstructurering vermeden omdat men het onderzoek zo open en flexibel mogelijk wilt houden. Het doel hiervan is om zo dicht mogelijk bij de sociale en persoonlijke werkelijkheid van de onderzochten te blijven en de flexibiliteit te hebben om ook op het onverwachte te anticiperen (zonder dat daarbij onderzoeksdata verloren door de voor opgezette structuur). Daarnaast wordt kwalitatief onderzoek veelal gebruikt voor situaties die erg complex zijn en/of waarin men de betekeniswereld wil onderzoeken. (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 9-11).

Of de onderzoekssituatie complex is kan ik nog niet overzien, dit zal mede blijken uit de stageperiode die ik voorafgaand aan het onderzoek doe. Naar aanleiding daarvan zou de vraagstelling lichtelijk kunnen veranderen of worden toegespitst. Maar het doel van dit onderzoek blijft de betekenissen en ervaringen achterhalen van de werknemers van AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes op het gebied van cultuurverschillen en crosscultureel samenwerken.

In dit onderzoek gaat het om mensen die van elkaar verschillen in gedrag en betekenisverlening, en met elkaars anders-zijn op beider vlakken in aanraking komen op het werk. Om de verschillen in kaart te brengen en de verschillende betekenissen achter het samenwerken naar boven te halen is het belangrijk met de mensen in gesprek te gaan die deze verschillen produceren en actor zijn in het samenwerkingsproces. Ik baseer me hier op de responsieve methodologie (Guba & Lincoln, 1987. Erlandson, e.a. 1993). De responsieve benadering wil recht doen aan de ervaringen en stem van alle belanghebbenden bij het onderzoek. Dit houdt in dat de onderzoeker in zijn onderzoek een actieve rol toebedeeld aan de onderzochten door niet alleen met ze in gesprek te gaan, maar ook tussentijdse en concluderende bevindingen aan belanghebbenden voor te leggen en hen te vragen om respons. Door het terugkoppelen van bevindingen naar de belanghebbenden worden mogelijke gaten in de data zo veel mogelijk voorkomen. (Abma & Widdershoven, 2006: 33-47).

### **Onderzoeksaanpak**

De volgende vraag is welke stappen ik zal volgen gedurende het onderzoek. En hoe ik daarmee de validiteit en betrouwbaarheid van het onderzoek kan waarborgen.

Het doel van de methode is om zoveel mogelijk de belanghebbenden, in dit geval werknemers van AkzoNobel BU R&D Car Refinishes, aan het woord te laten en de betekenissen en ervaringen op het gebied van crosscultureel samenwerken te achterhalen en begrijpen.

Ten eerste is het belangrijk om de onderzoekssetting goed te kennen. Ik heb basisinformatie nodig over de organisatie AkzoNobel, hoe processen op de afdeling lopen, welke mensen er werken en welke plek zij innemen in die proces, de organisatiecultuur etc. In deze verkenningsfase zal ik gesprekken voeren, observeren (bvb bij vergaderingen) en documenten verzamelen. Daarnaast lees ik literatuur over dit onderwerp (zie literatuurlijst) waaruit ik het theoretisch kader zal formuleren.

Daarna ga ik de dataverzamelfase in. Hierin zal ik gebruik maken van verschillende dataverzamelmethode. Deze zijn het open interview, participierend observeren en documentanalyse. Omdat men zich bij elke afzonderlijk methode kan afvragen of de data een afspiegeling is van de werkelijkheid is het goed om verschillende methoden te gebruiken.



Door het gebruik van deze drie methoden kan ik de data met elkaar vergelijken en toetsen (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 47-55). Bij de interviews zal ik gebruik maken van een checklist om er zeker van te zijn dat onderwerpen relevant voor het onderzoek aan de orde zijn gekomen. Bij het participierend observeren moet duidelijk zijn dat ik als onderzoeker alleen aanwezig ben en geen bijdrage zal leveren aan de betreffende bijeenkomst op welke wijze dan ook (tenzij er iets aan mij gevraagd wordt in het kader van de uitvoering van het onderzoek). Ik zal bij het observeren gebruik maken van *thick description*, waarin ik in mijn aantekeningen zo rijk mogelijk de situatie, het gedrag van aanwezigen etc. zal beschrijven (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Na de periode van dataverzameling zal ik de data gaan analyseren door middel van het programma *Atlas-ti* waarin *quotations* van respondenten met elkaar vergeleken kunnen worden en getoetst aan het theoretisch kader.

Tot slot zal ik mijn scriptie schrijven over de conclusies uit de analysefase. Belangrijk om te vermelden is dat alle correspondentie in het Engels zal plaatsvinden en de scriptie wordt geschreven in het Engels (op verzoek van AkzoNobel). Het onderzoek zal namelijk plaats vinden in een internationale setting. De scriptie moet voor iedereen binnen AkzoNobel toegankelijk zijn.

Van de scriptie worden uiteindelijke twee versies gemaakt. Een exemplaar voor AkzoNobel intern met alle onderzoeksresultaten, conclusies en aanbevelingen. En een openbaar exemplaar waarin in overleg met AkzoNobel gegevens worden geanonimiseerd of weggelaten. Hierdoor worden eventuele negatieve gevolgen van het onderzoek voor AkzoNobel uitgesloten. Het originele exemplaar voor intern gebruik bij AkzoNobel is wel toegankelijk voor de twee scriptiebegeleiders zodat zij die kunnen beoordelen.

### **Betrouwbaarheid**

Betrouwbaarheid gaat over “*de afwezigheid van toevallige of onsystematische vertekeningen van het object van studie*” (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 68). De interne betrouwbaarheid gaat over betrouwbaarheid binnen het onderzoeksproject. Het gaat om consistentie. Ik denk dat voor mijn onderzoek hierin het belangrijkste is dat ik zorg dat ik op elke locatie waar ik onderzoek ga doen dezelfde maatstaven en criteria hanteer als op iedere andere locatie. Maar omdat ik hier een responsief onderzoek doe waarin de onderzochten bepalen wat van belang is (voor hen en dus voor het onderzoek) is er ook flexibiliteit en openheid nodig van mijn kant. Dus op elke locatie op dezelfde manier naar de onderzoekssituatie kijken gaat dan niet. Toch kan ik er wel waakzaam voor zijn dat ik niet van buitenaf, bijvoorbeeld door leidinggevenden beïnvloed wordt om op een bepaalde manier om te gaan of te kijken naar situaties en werknemers. Hierin kan ik de reactie van leidinggevenden naar mij toe ook zien als onderdeel van de data en meenemen in mijn analyse.

Externe betrouwbaarheid gaat om de herhaalbaarheid van het onderzoek. Omdat in een organisatie nooit de hele setting in de toekomst hetzelfde zal zijn kan hier alleen sprake zijn van virtuele herhaalbaarheid. Door uitgebreide rapportage en het zorgvuldig bijhouden van notities, gegevens, data en een onderzoeksdagboek, denk ik hieraan te kunnen voldoen. (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 68-70. Erlandson e.a., 1993: 132-162)

### **Validiteit**

Validiteit is de afwezigheid van systematische vertekeningen. Het gaat hier onder andere om de opzet, methode en conclusies en in hoeverre deze passen bij het onderzochte fenomeen. (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 68). Interne validiteit gaat hier over de deugdelijkheid van argumenten en redeneringen. Om hier zo goed mogelijk aan te voldoen heb ik een aantal activiteiten in het onderzoek ingebouwd om dit te ondersteunen:

Het maken van veldnotities en het bijhouden van een onderzoeksdagboek, *reflexive journal*. (Erlandson e.a., 1993: 161). Ik zorg voor triangulatie door verschillende bronnen te gebruiken, zoals hierboven beschreven. Ik zal verschillende malen zorgen voor *member checking*, het verifiëren van data op een formele of informele manier bij de onderzochten. Bijvoorbeeld door een samenvatting te geven aan het eind van ieder interview en aanvullingen en verbeteringen te vragen aan de respondent. Ik zal ook veel informele contacten hebben op de verschillende locaties, waarin dingen besproken worden die relevant kunnen zijn voor het onderzoek. (zie ook bij 'Methodologische grondslag' en 'Methode' een aantal activiteiten om de betrouwbaarheid te bevorderen).

Ik zal niet kunnen voldoen aan langdurige participatie wat er voor zou zorgen dat ik zo natuurlijk mogelijk gedrag kan bestuderen. Op elke locatie blijf ik namelijk vijf weken, behalve in Nederland (daar zo'n vijf maanden). Dit komt door de beperkte tijd die ik heb voor dit onderzoek. Door de observaties in Nederland denk ik wel eerder tot de kern te kunnen komen in India en de V.S. en heb ik het voordeel de algemene setting van AkzoNobel al te kennen. Door een goede introductie van mijn onderzoek op de buitenlandse locaties en het garanderen van anonimiteit hoop ik alsnog in een natuurlijke omgeving onderzoek te kunnen doen. Daarnaast zal ik in mijn veldnotities en *reflexive journal* eigenaardigheden of veranderingen in gedrag kunnen noteren om eventueel onnatuurlijk gedrag te signaleren/rekening mee te houden. (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 70-73. Erlandson e.a., 1993: 132-162).

### **Interviews**

Door de beperkte tijd voor het onderzoek kan ik niet iedere werknemer op de BU R&D Car Refinishes interviewen. Voor de interviews om representatief te zijn voor de populatie houd ik een minimum aan voor het aantal interviews. Omdat ik naast interviews ook zal observeren en andere bronnen voor data zal raadplegen (zoals informele gesprekken en documenten), gaat die tijd af van de interview tijd. Daarnaast kan ik pas op locatie afspraken maken voor de interviews en kunnen door omstandigheden interviews niet door gaan. Ik zal daarom altijd 5 interviews meer inplannen dan ik als doel heb af te nemen voor dit onderzoek. Ik probeer dus een buffer in te bouwen voor de interviews en zal voor reservetijd zorgen voor onvoorziene zaken.

<b>Locatie</b>	<b>Tijd (weken)</b>	<b>Werknemers</b>	<b>Intv. min.</b>	<b>Doel</b>
Sassenheim	3	180	10-15	20
Bangalore	5	150	10-15	20
Troy, Michigan	5	100	5-10	15

Cruciaal voor dit onderzoek is dat het een objectief onderzoek is. Het management van de organisatie is mijn opdrachtgever, maar ik werk niet in dienst van het management. Dit houdt in dat ik een onafhankelijk onderzoek doe naar de invloed van cultuurverschillen op het werk. Voor de interviews en andere methoden is het daarbij van belang dat ik benadruk dat alle data geanonimiseerd zal worden. Voor respondenten zal ik codenamen gebruiken om zelf mijn data te kunnen ordenen en bijhouden, zonder dat anderen binnen AkzoNobel te weten komen waar de data vandaan komt. Ook in mijn rapportages zal ik de data anoniem beschrijven. AkzoNobel opdrachtgever BU R&D Manager Klaas Kruithof is hiervan op de hoogte gesteld en akkoord met deze voorwaarden.

### **Benuttingswaarde**

Wat ik erg belangrijk vind voor het succes van dit onderzoek is de benuttingswaarde en implementatiewaarde. Zoals Smaling en Maso (1998) aangeven kan je als onderzoeker een

aantal maatregelen nemen om dit te ondersteunen. Voor mijn onderzoek bij AkzoNobel moet ik bijvoorbeeld rekening houden met het verschil in taalgebruik. De meeste werknemers zijn natuurkundigen of hebben een technische achtergrond. Ik doe zelf een sociaal georiënteerde studie. De taal en beelden die zij gebruiken zullen voor mij soms moeilijk zijn te begrijpen, zoals natuurkundige modellen. Anderzijds zullen zij moeite kunnen hebben de taal en beelden te begrijpen die ik gebruik. Hierbij komt nog dat dit onderzoek helemaal in het Engels zal worden uitgevoerd. Dit is niet mijn moedertaal en ook niet van een aantal werknemers van AkzoNobel die ik ga spreken. Hierdoor kan het moeilijker zijn je verstaanbaar te maken voor een ander. Hier zal ik als onderzoeker rekening mee houden door data goed te verifiëren. Daarnaast zal ik in de rapportage proberen zo uitgebreid mogelijk de data uiteen te zetten met vertalingen en uitleg van sociale naar technische taal en andersom. Ook het gebruik van metaforen zal hierbij kunnen helpen, denk ik.

Omdat ik aan het eind van dit onderzoek ook een advies zal uitbrengen aan het management van BU R&D Car Refinishes, zal ik rekening houden met de belevingswereld en belangen van het management. Vragen als “*Welke verschijnselen zijn voor hen van belang?*” en zorgen voor aanknopingspunten voor verandering zullen daarbij helpen. (Smaling & Maso, 1998: 84).

## Tijdspad

In februari 2008 kwam ik voor het eerst in contact met AkzoNobel. Vanaf die tijd ben ik bezig geweest met voorbereidingen voor de onderzoeksopzet. In maart 2008 werd de opdracht voor het onderzoek definitief.

Vanaf maart ben ik aan de slag gegaan met de voorbereidingen voor dit afstudeeronderzoek. In een schema zal ik laten zien wat mijn planning is voor de komende periode en welke fasen van het onderzoek daarbij horen.

<b>Van</b>	<b>Tot</b>	<b>Activiteit</b>	<b>Fase</b>
Februari '08	16 November '08	Vorbereidingen	Ontwerpfase
17 November '08	9 Januari '09	Stageperiode NL	Verkenningfase
10 Januari '09	23 Januari '09	Tussenrapportage NL	Analysefase
24 Januari '09	2 Maart '09	Onderzoek in de V.S.	Dataverzameling/Inquiry
3 Maart '09	19 Maart '09	Tussenrapportage V.S.	Analysefase
20 Maart '09	27 April '09	Onderzoek in India	Dataverzameling/Inquiry
28 April '09	17 Mei '09	Tussenrapportage India	Analysefase
18 Mei '09	14 Juni '09	Onderzoek in NL	Dataverzameling/Inquiry
15 Juni '09	3 Juli '09	Scriptie schrijven	Afsluitingsfase/Writing proces

Voor het schrijfsproces van mijn scriptie heb ik de maand juli als reserve ingebouwd. Ter afsluiting van het onderzoek bij AkzoNobel zal ik mijn bevindingen en een advies presenteren aan de International Managers van BU R&D Car Refinishes. Dit zal waarschijnlijk plaatsvinden in december 2009. De precieze datum wordt overlegd met AkzoNobel. Onderstaand schema geeft de vliegdata en onderzoeksperioden aan, overeengekomen met AkzoNobel.

## AkzoNobel

<b>Destination</b>		<b>Flightdates</b>
From	To	2009
Amsterdam	Detroit	January 24
Detroit	Amsterdam	Februari 28
Amsterdam	Bangalore	March 21

Bangalore	Amsterdam	April 25.
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Location	Research period	Fase	Duration
Sassenheim	November 17, 2008- January 9, 2009	functional processes	6 weeks (part-time) <sup>230</sup>
Troy, Michigan	January 26- March 2	functional interviews/obs +	5 weeks
Bangalore	March 20- April 27	functional interviews/obs +	5 weeks
Sassenheim	May 18- June 14	interviews/obs	3 weeks

<sup>230</sup> Van 17 november 2008 t/m 23 januari 2009 zal ik part-time (50%) stagelopen bij AkzoNobel. Vanaf 24 januari t/m 3 juli 2009 zal ik full-time (100%) stagelopen en onderzoek doen bij AkzoNobel. Zie Stageplan KOIS∞AkzoNobel november 2008.

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## **Bijlage: English summary of this researchplan**

### **Cultural Crossroads**

This is a summary of the research proposal for the project Cultural Crossroads. The project focuses on research on cultural differences between AkzoNobel locations of the R&D BU Car Refinishes in the U.S., the Netherlands and India, and their effect on cooperation and efficiency between those workplaces.. BU R&D Manager dr. Klaas Kruithof has assigned me to carry out this research project. I will carry out this project as a final thesis for my Master degree in Critical Organization and Intervention Studies at the University for Humanistics.

### **Cultural differences**

Culture can be described as the total of behavior, rituals, habits, beliefs, ideas, values, roles, motives, attitudes and ideas about the social and physical world (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 496. Jacob 2005: 525). The concept 'culture' is not limited to national culture. Culture can be examined on different levels. Cross-cultural management means managing multiple cultures. For instance national cultures, regional cultures, industrial cultures, organization cultures, professional cultures and departmental cultures (Veenswijk & van Marrewijk, 2008: 2). The different levels on which culture can be examined are:

6. The cultural level: the national background, culture and context.
7. The organizational level: characteristics of the organization and its context.
8. The team level: characteristics and context of the team.
9. The individual level: personal characteristics and context.
10. The global context: how the different levels influence each other and can be seen in a global context. (Gelfand e.a., 2007: 496-497).

In this research project the aim is to find out if and to what degree cultural differences influence the cooperation and efficiency between the AkzoNobel locations in the U.S., The Netherlands and India. Therefore we will examine organizational behavior and identify the corresponding cultural levels (Gelfand e.a., 2007). This way we can define cultural differences and determine the effect of a number of cultural levels on the cooperation and efficiency.

### **Problem definition**

The problem definition consists of several research questions and the main objective of the thesis. I have come to the following research questions:

5. What are the cultural differences within and between the three locations of BU R&D Car Refinishes (at the three locations Sassenheim, Bangalore and Troy, Michigan)?
6. What is the influence of these cultural differences on the cooperation between those locations?
7. What is the influence of these cultural differences and the handling of cultural differences on the efficiency (and effectiveness) of the three workplaces?
8. How can R&D Car Refinishes optimize their processes and efficiency? (advice)

### **The objective:**

For a multinational such as AkzoNobel it is important to know how to manage cultural differences, because of the cultural varieties in the organization. I think that employees have

developed different perspectives and opinions on their work and the international collaboration because of the difference in cultural background. I will investigate and describe the differences that seem relevant to R&D Car Refinishes employees.

The main goal of the research is to offer R&D Car Refinishes a method on how to manage different cultures in the organization. This method focuses on the cooperation and efficiency of the three locations. One of the underlying questions is if there should be only one preferred way of managing and directing in the multinational organization. Or is it possible and desirable for management and employees to develop different context-driven ways of managing and cooperating in order to be efficient? Is it preferable to have a homogeneous (to enforce the same behavior) or heterogeneous (to enforce differences in behavior) management style and manner of cooperating?

## Method

The research method will include observations, interviews and (document-) analysis. I will start with my internship at the R&D location in the Netherlands. After an internship in the Netherlands I will commence my research in the U.S. (for five weeks) after which I will go to India (for five weeks) and thereafter I will conduct my research in the Netherlands and finish the research there.

One of the inquiry methods in my research is interviewing. This means that I need to make appointments with different R&D employees during the research period at the three locations. An interview can take up to 1,5 hours (max.). To represent the research population, I need to conduct a minimum number of interviews at each location. In the following table I will give an overview of the number of interviews I want to conduct, keeping in mind that due to circumstances some interviews may be canceled.

Location	Time (weeks)	Employees	Intv. min.	Aim
Sassenheim	3	180	10-15	20
Bangalore	5	150	10-15	20
Troy	5	100	5-10	15

The other inquiry methods, observation and (document-) analysis, require access to meetings and relevant information sources. As a researcher I will not actively take part in meetings or other activities of R&D employees, I will only observe. Except in meetings or activities which are directly part of my internship and/or with the purpose of getting to know the organization and its work processes. I will try to keep the two types of participation separated.

Important to mention is that the interviews and other data acquired from employees will be strictly confidential. For this research project it is very important that only the researcher knows where the data came from. With a formal agreement on confidentiality of the research between me and R&D manager Klaas Kruithof, I assure employees that they can speak out and that what they tell me cannot be traced back to the actual person so it will not in any way affect their work or position within AkzoNobel in a negative way.

## Timetable

The following timetable gives an overview of my activities and time schedule during the research project.

From	To	Activity	Phase
February 2008	November 16, 2008	Preparations	Research design
November 17, 2008	January 9, 2009	Internship NL	Exploration



January 10, 2009	January 23, 2009	Report on NL	Analysis
January 24, 2009	March 2, 2009	Research in the U.S.	Inquiry
March 3, 2009	March 19, 2009	Report on U.S.	Analysis
March 20, 2009	April 27, 2009	Research in India	Inquiry
April 28, 2009	May 17, 2009	Report on India	Analysis
May 18, 2009	June 14, 2009	Research in NL	Inquiry
June 15, 2009	July 3, 2009	Writing the thesis	Concluding phase

I will conclude this research with a presentation for the International Managers of BU R&D Car Refinishes of AkzoNobel in December 2009. The exact date will be scheduled in consultation with AkzoNobel.

The next schedule states on the flight dates and research period at the locations, as agreed with R&D Car Refinishes.

### AkzoNobel

Destination		Flightdates
From	To	2009
Amsterdam	Detroit	January 24
Detroit	Amsterdam	February 28
Amsterdam	Bangalore	March 21
Bangalore	Amsterdam	April 25.

Location	Research period	Phase	Duration
Sassenheim	November 17, 2008- January 9, 2009	functional processes	6 weeks (part-time)
Troy, Michigan	January 26- March 2	functional interviews/observations +	5 weeks
Bangalore	March 20- April 27	functional interviews/observations +	5 weeks
Sassenheim	May 18- June 14	interviews/observations	3 weeks

## Appendix 4. Extra Summary Chapter 4

### *Summary of issues in the cooperation:*

16. Too much talking and questioning each other, and as a consequence meetings taking too much time.<sup>232</sup>
17. (Extended) discussions over email.<sup>233</sup>
18. Not informing others when missing a deadline.<sup>234</sup>
19. People leaving the company.<sup>235</sup>
20. Working according to your own culture as you have always done, even when you have to work with people from other cultures (act as if nothing has changed and others are like people from your own culture).<sup>236</sup>
21. Giving colleagues from a different culture/location an assignment without explaining what exactly needs to be done.<sup>237</sup>
22. Lack of motivation to cooperate, due to (the risk of) losing jobs to another location.<sup>238</sup>
23. Bad English in speech and writing.<sup>239</sup>
24. Other team members not accepting feedback, or an unsafe/defensive environment in which feedback is seen as a threat.<sup>240</sup>
25. Lack of recognition for work and extra effort in (shared) projects.<sup>241</sup>
26. Long holidays at a location without sufficient replacement or back-ups for people and tasks.<sup>242</sup>
27. Bad atmosphere/problems within a location or local team, which affects openness and communication with other teams and locations.<sup>243</sup>
28. Not having the same norms or ideas about written documents (reports, labnotes).<sup>244</sup>
29. Not being reflective about your work and the task you are doing.<sup>245</sup>
30. Using stereotypes as an ethnizing strategy to ridicule others (from a different culture) and make them seem incapable of their work. This is often used as an excuse for problems in the cross-cultural cooperation.<sup>246</sup>

### *Summary of stimulating aspects of the cooperation:*

1. A good atmosphere with the possibility of giving feedback and making jokes (humour).
2. Giving and receiving clear feedback and having fruitful discussions.
3. Clear assignments and (solid) uniform messages to and from different teams and locations.
4. (To be stimulated by other locations/teams/members) To play a part and give input in discussions and conversations.

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<sup>232</sup> Observation 30-03-09, B6:8, B7:8, T12:4, T12:10, T12:13.

<sup>233</sup> T12:16, T12:17.

<sup>234</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S2:4.

<sup>235</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S5:3, S5:22, S5:23

<sup>236</sup> S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>237</sup> S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>238</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S2:1, S5:6, S5:11, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>239</sup> B9:3, B10:4, B11:., S5:12, S5:17, S5:23.

<sup>240</sup> Observation 8-01-09, S5:7.

<sup>241</sup> B9:4, B9:5.

<sup>242</sup> B7:3.

<sup>243</sup> S10:2, S10:3, S12:13.

<sup>244</sup> S9:4, S9:5, S12.

<sup>245</sup> S9:8, S9:9, S9:13, S12:6, S12:8, S12:11, 12: Observation 1-12-08, Observation 11-12-08.

<sup>246</sup> Marrewijk, observatie SvD

5. Using different ways of working, suitable for cooperating with people from different cultures.
6. Investing time to bring your message across to people from other locations and checking if the message did come across with the intended meaning.
7. Work with back-ups for people within a project team.
8. Help colleagues with time management and offer time management training.
9. Inform the (hierarchical) bosses of team members.
10. Involve team members in discussions and conversations about the set up and other aspects of projects.
11. Take the initiative to inform other locations. Keep in mind that informal or tacit knowledge has not reached other locations but should be shared. Place yourself in their position and think about what they should know.
12. Open communication.
13. Dealing with time difference by using email and telephone.
14. Give critique and be creative in projects.
15. More travelling to visit other locations and have face-to-face contact to get better acquainted with colleagues at other locations.
16. When necessary, communicate through your own boss.
17. Communicate the seriousness of deadlines.

### *Summary of the Cultural Characteristics*

#### STEREOTYPES ON BANGALORE (FROM TROY+SASSENHEIM)

- People in Bangalore are very dedicated to their work <sup>247</sup>
- Bangalore lab is a more rigid and formal organization <sup>248</sup>
- People in Bangalore don't challenge others a lot <sup>249</sup>
- The people in Bangalore work hard, are friendly and grateful <sup>250</sup>
- People in Bangalore act submissive/humble when they shouldn't (onderdanig) <sup>251</sup>
- People in Bangalore say yes but don't do it ("do no") and often don't tell you when things are going wrong in a project or assignment <sup>252</sup>
- People in Sassenheim feel there is a huge difference between the Dutch and Indian culture/society <sup>253</sup>
- Bangalore is very hierarchal and formal compared to Sassenheim and the Dutch in general <sup>254</sup>
- In Bangalore, they have difficulty handling critique or challenging others with new ideas <sup>255</sup>

#### STEREOTYPES ON SASSENHEIM (FROM TROY+BANGALORE)

- Dutch people challenge you and check your statements <sup>256</sup>
- People in Sassenheim can talk a subject to death or over think an idea <sup>257</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> T4:10.

<sup>248</sup> T10:3.

<sup>249</sup> T7:4.

<sup>250</sup> S1:11, S4:2, S4:3, S4:11.

<sup>251</sup> S1:11, S4:3.

<sup>252</sup> S2:4, S5:6, S5:7, S9:19, S9:21, S11:7, S15:4.

<sup>253</sup> S1:11, S2:5, S4:17, S4:18, S4:19, S5:4, S5:20, S5:21, S5:22, S11:3, S11:4, S12:2, S12:3, S13:4, S13:5, S13:6.

<sup>254</sup> S4:2, S5:1, S5:14, S7:6, S7:10, S9:15, S9:18, S10:1.

<sup>255</sup> S3:1, S4:3, S4:15, S5:10, S5:20, S5:23, S6:7, S6:10, S7:7, S7:9, S8:3, S9:12, S9:15, S12:7, S12:9, S12:11, S12:12, S15:6,

<sup>256</sup> T4:7, T4:8, T4:9, T7:4, T12:4, T12:5, T14:12.

<sup>257</sup> T4:7, T4:8, T12:4, T12:13.

- Dutch people discuss the remarks of their boss <sup>258</sup>
- Dutch people challenge you and want to discuss things <sup>259</sup>
- People in Sassenheim are open <sup>260</sup>

STEREOTYPES ON TROY (FROM SASSENHEIM)<sup>261</sup>

- Troy is more hierarchal compared to Sassenheim <sup>262</sup>
- The cultural difference between Sassenheim and Troy is less than between Sassenheim and Bangalore <sup>263</sup>
- Americans are friendly and helpful <sup>264</sup>
- Americans have a 'can do' mentality <sup>265</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> B1:2, B2:9, B3:4, B9:2, B9:3.

<sup>259</sup> B3:7, B6:7, B10:2, B18:1, B18:7, B20:6.

<sup>260</sup> B8:2, B8:3, B8:4, B21:1.

<sup>261</sup> Bangalore did not have stereotypes on Troy.

<sup>262</sup> S1:8, S1:11, S4:20, S4:21, S6:8.

<sup>263</sup> S1:11, S4:20, S4:21.

<sup>264</sup> S4:20, S4:21.

<sup>265</sup> S4:20, S4:21, S14:2, S15:3.

## Appendix 5. Translation of Dutch Quotations

\* 1

*“Indiërs zeggen vaak ‘ja’, ook als ze het niet hebben begrepen. Als je vraagt of ze het hebben begrepen, zeggen ze ook ‘ja’. Dat helpt niet.” [S9:21] \*1*

“Indians often say “yes”, even if they didn’t understand you. If you ask them if they understand, they will also say “yes”. This doesn’t work.”

\*2

*“Als het niet afkwam, dan hoor je daar niets van. Ook niet een week later. Ze durven niet.” [S9:19] \*2*

“If things didn’t get finished in time, you would never hear it. Not even a week later. They are afraid to do so (afriad tot tell you).”

\*3

*“FTE’s hebben allemaal een academische graad en zeggen ‘wij komen hier niet voor meng- en spuitwerk’.” [S5:20] \*3*

“FTE’s all have an academic degree and say: ‘we are not here to do the mixing and spraying’.”

\*4

*“Wat de baas zegt is waar. (BAN medewerker) accepteerde meteen mijn labnote. Ik irriteerde me daaraan.” [S9:18]*

*“ Ze nemen een ondergeschikte houding aan, dat is niet goed voor research doen. Een onderzoeker moet namelijk iets gek bedenken waar die in gelooft, dat gaat meestal tegen de stroom in. Creatieve ideeën gaan tegen de stroom in, maar dat doen Indiërs niet.” [S4:3] \*4*

“Whatever the boss says is true. (BAN employee) immediately accepted my labnote. I was annoyed because of that.”

“They have a submissive attitude, which is not good for research. A researcher should be able to think of something strange (or new) where he believes in. This often goes against old ideas. Creative ideas go against old ideas, but Indians don’t do that.”

\*5

*“In Bangalore moet je daar voorzichtiger mee zijn. Maar positieve feedback zullen ze in Bangalore wel waarderen. Maar als je aandachtspunten wil bespreken moet je dat voorzichtig masseren. En dan nog weet ik niet of je het goed doet hoor. Ze pikken het wel op, maar...ik weet niet wat er qua gevoelens speelt of wat ze echt vinden.” [S15:6] \*5*

“In Bangalore you have to be careful. But positive feedback is appreciated in Bangalore. But if you have any remarks and what to discuss those with them, you have to carefully tell them. And even than you don’t know if you’re doing it right. They do take your remarks seriously, but...I don’t know how they feel about it and what they really think.”

\*6

*“Daar (een test) staat 7 weken voor en dan zijn ze met 3 of 4 mensen aan het screenen. Dan denk je, het is binnen 7 weken af. Maar ze doen het wel in 7 weken, maar met de volgende serie beginnen ze pas een paar weken later, een gat van weer 7 weken. Wat doen ze dan? Doen ze heel veel dingen in groepjes? Veel overleggen? Of hebben ze veel andere taken? We hebben het ze wel eens gevraagd maar komen er niet uit.” [S7:2] \*6*

“There (a test) would take 7 weeks when they are screening with 3 or 4 people at a time. Than I think, it will be done within 7 weeks. And they will finish the test in 7 weeks, but with the next series of tests they will only start a few weeks later, which creates a gab of 7 weeks. What do they do all this time? Are they working a lot in groups? Are they extensively discussing things with each other? Or do they have many other tasks? We have asked them, but we still don’t know what is going on.”

\*7

*“Maar ik snap dan niet precies waarom ze dan zeggen dat het vrijdag klaar is...wat is er dan gebeurd waarom het niet klaar is? Dat krijg ik nooit boven tafel. Dat wordt niet echt duidelijk. Dus dan vraag ik: ‘wanneer is het dan wel klaar?’ (reactie) “Nou, eind van deze week.”. Nou, dat moeten we dan maar weer afwachten...” [S9:4] \*7*

“But I don’t understand why they tell me it is done by Friday...what has happened why it’s not done? I am not able to discover what has happened. It never becomes clear. So I ask: ‘when will it be done than?’ (answer) “Well, end of this week.”. Well, I believe I have to wait and see if it gets done by then.”

\*8

*“In India zijn ze gewend een data-dump te doen. En wij zijn gewend daar iets bij te schrijven voor mensen die het minder goed kennen. Een uitleg van de analyse enzo. Dat is daar niet. Het is niet dat ze het niet kunnen of willen, maar niet gewend zijn aan onze standaarden.” [S8:7] \*8*

“In India they are used to do a data-dump. And we are used to write something for the people who don’t know it as good as we do. An explanation of the analysis etc. That is not there. It is not that they can’t do it or don’t want to do it, it is just that they are not used to our standards.”

\*9

*“Dat betekent dat de mensen hier meer moeten doen dan alleen het koffiepraatje bij de machine, omdat je collega in het verleden twee kamers verder zat. Maar nu dus 8000 kilometer verder. En dat is denk ik wat onderschat wordt hier, dat je moet niet denken ‘ik zeg het en ik geef het mee’. Nee, zo werkt het dus niet. Je moet extra geven hier en nu. Je rol is anders geworden. Je moet veel meer aan de telefoon zitten als je met mensen in andere locaties moet samenwerken. En niet alleen maar het afdoen met emailtjes. Dus dat is wat hier nog een hele slag moet worden.” [S5:11] \*9*

“This means that people here have to do more than only small talk at the coffee machine, because your colleague in the past was two rooms down the hall. But now he is 8000 kilometres away. And that is, what I think is underestimated here. You shouldn’t think ‘I’ll just say something and they’ll take it’. No, that’s not how it works. You have to put in extra effort now. Your role has become different. You have to be more on the phone when you have to cooperate with people from other locations. And do not only write emails. So, that is what really needs to change here (in Sassenheim).”

\*10

*“Maar ze zijn wel sympathiek en behulpzaam. Hij houdt wel van de ‘can do’ mentaliteit, dat spreekt hem aan. ‘Niet lullen, schouders eronder, we gaan het doen’. Pioniersinstinct is wat ze hebben. Dat zit ook in hun ontstaansgeschiedenis.” [S4:20] \*10*

“But they are sympathetic and helpful. He loves the ‘can do’ mentality, it appeals to him. ‘Don’t talk, let’s get going’. A pioneers instinct is what they have. That is related to their history.”

\*11

*“Als je aan een project werkt verdeel je toch de werkzaamheden en communiceert de resultaten. Geen nauwe samenwerking, dat je samen, hoe moet je dat werken, je bent samen aan dat project bezig maar je doet niet samen experimenten. Je hebt een gezamenlijk resultaat, dat geldt eigenlijk voor alles.” [S3:8] \*11*

“If you work on a project you mostly divide the tasks and communicate the results. There is no close cooperation, that you have to work together, you are working on the same project but not doing the experiments together. There is a joint/common goal, but that usually applies for everything.

\*12

*“Soms deden we een variatie in een test die je nooit zou gebruiken. Dan zie je wel dat dat af en toe niet overkomt. Dat was wel hardnekkig. Hele erge focus op het eindproduct. Dat kwam naar voren dat het experiment was uitgevoerd maar twee of drie dingen waren weggehaald omdat ze het toch niet gingen gebruiken. Maar het idee was om dat juist wel te doen om te kijken of het werkt.” [S14:2] \*12*

“Sometimes we had a variation in the test which you would normally never use. Once in a while you will see that they don’t understand why we do that. It is pretty tough. They have a focus on the final product. It appeared that the tests were done but without two or three variations, because they thought they weren’t ever going to use them anyway. But the idea was to put those variations in on purpose to see if it works.”

\*13

*“Het taalgebruik is verschillend en beperkt soms. In een vreemde taal kan ik minder goed mijn emoties, gevoelens en nuances uitdrukken. Dat is lastig en heb ik niet in mijn eigen taal. Ik heb ook weinig ervaring met me uitdrukken in het Engels. Door weinig gezamenlijke projecten en weinig interactie.” [S3:2] \*13*

“The language is different and sometimes limited. In a foreign language it is harder for me to express emotions, feelings and express nuances. This is tough and I don’t have that in my native language. I also have little experience in expressing myself in English. This is because we have few joint projects and not a lot of interaction.”

\*14

*“Als je de mensen gezien hebt, dat maakt zo’n groot verschil. Het is gewoon veel makkelijker om elkaar te benaderen. Ik had 14 man getraind in India. Ook hun collega’s nemen nu zo veel makkelijker contact op.” [S8:2] \*14*

“ If you have met people, it makes such a difference. It is just so much easier to approach each other. I have trained 14 people in India. Also there colleagues now approach me with much more ease.”

\*15

*“Nederlanders zijn altijd redelijk direct enzo, zo van ‘Ja, dit is gewoon een waardeloos resultaat.’ (..) Hier word meer ondersteuning of informatie gevraagd. Kijk, de strategische lijn is gewoon een beslissing van bovenaf, maar iets inhoudelijks dan moet je daar experimenten tegenover zetten.” [S6:7] \*15*

“The Dutch are fairly direct, like ‘Yes, that’s a bad result.’(..) Here people ask more information. Look, the strategic line is just a decision from management, but something which has to do with content you have to use to experiment.”

\*16

*“Ik vermoed dat onze openheid en directheid niet altijd wordt gewaardeerd. Ik moet me zelf ook wel inhouden, dat draag je bij je. Maar voor mijn gevoel waardeert Amerika die directheid wel.”* [S15:6] \*16

“ I suspect that our openness and directness are not always appreciated. I have to stop myself sometimes, you Carry it with you. But I feel America does appreciate the directness.”

\*17

*“Verwachtingen waren te hoog vanuit NL. De mensen in NL die mensen moesten inwerken die hadden zoiets van: Nou, ik leg het je uit en dan moet je het maar begrijpen. Maar er is duidelijk meer voor nodig. Je moet die Indiase mensen gewoon op sleeptouw nemen, ze door dingen heen leiden, ze steunen in stukjes werk die ze doen.”* [S5:6] \*17

“The expectations from The Netherlands were to high. People in The Netherlands who had to help people there were like: Well, I will explain it to you, and you’ll just have to understand. But more is needed. You have to take the Indian people with you and guide them and support them in parts of their work.”

\*18

*“Als je dit ziet, laat mij het weten”. [Groep leider] doet dat met zijn groep. Hij laat ze vertellen en geeft aanwijzingen.(...) Gooit werk over de schutting, maar klimt zelf ook over de schutting.”* [S5:16] \*18

“If you see this, let me know”. [Group leader] does this with his Group. He lets them speak and gives them indications on what to look out for (..) He gives them the work, but than helps them do the work as well.”

\*19

*“Je kan ze er bijna niet op betrappen dat ze er over nadenken (Over een lijn in een grafiek). Nu hebben ze allebei een labnotitie met interpretaties gemaakt. Maar het kost wat moeite om ze zover te krijgen om er interpretaties aan te hangen.”* [S12:6] \*19

“You can hardly see anyone really thinking (about a line in a graph). Now they have both made a lab note with interpretations. But takes a lot of effort to get them to give interpretations.”

\*20

*“Toch ligt daar de nadruk op discipline en uitvoerend werk en hier op creativiteit, zelf nadenken en kritiek geven.”* [S12:11] \*20

“Still, the emphasize lies on discipline and the execution of work, here it lies on creativity, to think and give critique.”

\*21

*“Ik vond het een beetje kneuterig daar (BAN-3). Ja weetje, als je nou niet eens je smoel open doet tegen een groepsleider...wat wil je dan?!”* [S10:2] \*21

“I thought it was a bit confined there (BAN-3). Well, you know, if you can’t even open you mough to a group leader..than what do you want?!”