

**ARE NATIONAL CULTURES STILL IMPORTANT IN  
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS?  
RUSSIA, SERBIA AND SLOVENIA IN COMPARISON**

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*In this study, we attempt to show managerial cultures in three transition countries, Russia, Serbia and Slovenia. We analyse the values of younger individuals and compare them with the values of older individuals to see if and how the culture of the former reflects globalisation. We use the standard methodology from Hofstede (1981) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) to measure cultural differences and our results confirm a strong influence of national cultures; however, globalisation plays an important role. The results of our study confirm the presence of the influence of national cultures on managers and students in the investigated transitional states. We find that not only the younger differ from the older, but also that young managers and students in all three countries are much more alike than the older age groups. An important finding is that there are not only two main age groups (young and old), but that the middle age group also has its own character. We believe there will not be only one corporate culture, but instead diversified corporate cultures as multinational companies ('MNCs') will originate from more than one country.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The CEO of a large Slovenian pharmaceutical company that does a substantial share of its business in Russia said the following about the stereotypical image of Russian managers: ‘They are supposed to work in the short term. That’s not true. They have a long-term orientation. They are supposed to take forever to make a decision. That’s not true. They make quick decisions. The key to business is relationships. Again, not true. The key is interests.’<sup>1</sup> Can we use this quote to support the idea of the convergence of national cultures? Are we going to bow down to the flags of multinational corporations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century while nation states lose their role (Ohmae, 1996)? What is the influence of globalisation on the theory of international business and what are its consequences for managerial decisions?

For a long time, the prevailing viewpoint in studies of multicultural management was the functionalist and determinist view that the values of people are determined by national borders, are stable in the long run and that values and beliefs determine the behaviour of people, thus national cultures cannot be changed fast (Hofstede, 1991). Globalisation, however, has shaken the foundations of this well-established notion. The author of the McDonalds theory (Ritzer, 1993) argues that these days cultural influence flows primarily from the United States to the rest of the world and it would therefore be natural that the emerging global culture simply involves the exporting of US culture to the rest of the world. On the other hand, based on the World Values Survey, an extensive study of cultural values of the different countries and geographical regions in the world, Inglehart and Wenzel (2005) claim that, in fact, cultural values are not tending to converge, but rather that economic development is pushing all countries in a common direction. To a certain degree, the values are path dependent while the historical baggage and cultural background of society has considerable weight when deciding to move in one direction or another. Bird and Stevens (2003) claim that despite the emergence of a global culture, represented for example by people who work in the international business environment, the elements of national cultures will not simply disappear. Finally, Fang (2006) does not connect the dynamic development of national cultures only with changes in the external environment but also with the dialecticism of the inner essence of culture that incorporates a change in values on its own. The main philosophical foundation is the existence of yin and yang in every national culture, which is constantly changing because of that, and when it comes in touch with another culture, it takes on a new identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jože Colarič, the CEO of Krka, in the *Finance* newspaper, 5.3.2007.

In this study, we attempt to show cultures in the three transition countries of Russia, Serbia and Slovenia. These are all Slavic nations. However, they have different historical paths, but are today well on the way to international business. How similar or different are their national cultures and how are they being pursued according to observations of business people's values? By finding similarities and differences among countries and different groups of business people, we hope to contribute to the above discussion. There are four other reasons why our study is of interest. First, after the fall of the communist regime, virtually overnight many transition countries joined the ranks of open market economies. Our study is one of the first to examine the culture of managers in the transition period from socialism to capitalism. Second, today after the advent of an information-/knowledge-driven society and a cost-cutting globalising economy, the whole planet is increasingly subjected to similar information, similar education, similar events and similar trends. These trends are more evident among the younger generations as they are growing up in this new environment and are more susceptible to the new media and information they bring.

They also receive a different education, a much more global one. In our study, we analyse the culture of young people who finished or are finishing business schools in the three countries and compare them with the culture of more senior people. Third, there is a notion taken from psychological studies (Musek, 2003, Mead, 1998, Helson, Jones and Kwan, 2002) that people's values change during their life cycle. In one's youth hedonistic values prevail. Later on, the values of power become more important, only to be replaced by moral values and self-fulfilment towards the end. This study tries to establish if the culture of different generations fits this notion. Fourth, to measure the cultural dimensions of managers, we use the methodology developed by advocates of the traditional approach to cultural differences (Hofstede, 1991, Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 1997). Although this methodology has often been criticised and treated with denoted suspicion, we believe that it represents a solid foundation for the study of dynamic changes in national culture. This is especially the case when studying significant changes in society, like in our case, the fundamental change of a socio-economic system from socialism into capitalism in the countries included in our study, accompanied by the globalisation process affecting these countries at the same time.

The paper is organised as follows. We continue with Section 2 where changes in the culture of managers in transitional countries are sketched out. In Section 3, we describe the basic hypothesis of our research and the

methodologies we use. In Section 4, we present the analysis and results, while in Section 5, we draw our conclusions.

## **2. CHANGE IN MANAGEMENT CULTURE IN TRANSITIONAL COUNTRIES**

### **2.1. Value transformation**

Culture is usually defined as a system composed of several ingredients. Almaney and Alwan (1982) stated that the three ingredients of culture are artefacts or attitudes, concepts or values and behaviours. Artefacts show the state of mind with regard to some matter, values show a broad tendency to prefer a certain state of affairs over others, whereas behaviours refer to the actual practice of concepts or beliefs. Hofstede (1991) indicated that culture manifests itself on four different levels that can be illustrated 'as the skins of an onion': symbols, heroes, rituals and values. On the outer surfaces of the 'onion', we see symbols, heroes, and rituals that are called 'practices' of culture. To understand a culture more deeply, it is necessary to peel away the 'onion' layers to reach its core. At the core lie the basic assumptions, values and beliefs that guide human behaviour.

According to these approaches, values are the core of culture. They serve as life guidance and can be defined as assumptions about how things ought to be in the group (Mead, 1998). Values motivate people and normatively lead their behaviour, interests, thoughts and actions (Musek, 2003). They have a positive and a negative side and refer to what is considered good and bad (Hofstede, 1997).

Values have different levels. First, there are individual values (like love, peace, power, joy, etc.) which come together as 'middle range values' (sensual, status-driven, social, aesthetic, etc.), then into 'great range values' or value types (hedonistic, power, moral and fulfilling) and, finally, in the two greatest value categories – 'dionysic' and 'apolonic' values, which roughly correspond to Hofstede's individualistic and collectivistic values. Arguably, in different life cycles, these categories of values hold different levels of importance. As seen in the table below, hedonistic values are particularly important for young people. Later on, power values come to the fore, which in the end are followed by moral and fulfilling ones.

Table 1: Values transformation during one's lifetime

Value categories	DIONYSIC VALUES (individualistic)		APOLONIC VALUES (collectivistic)	
value types	HEDONISTIC	POWER	MORAL	FULFILLING
'middle range' values	sensual, health-driven, security-driven	status-driven, patriotic	social, democratic, traditional	comprehensive, aesthetic, cultural, religious
individual values	joy, pleasure, exciting life, comfort, enjoyment	power, reputation, glory, money, political success, patriotism	love, family welfare, understanding relationship, peace, unity	truth, wisdom, beauty, nature, art, culture



younger generations
older generations

Source: adapted from Musek (2003)

Values are relatively stable and are not changing fast (Ule, 2003). The same applies to culture. As Stegner (1993) pointed out, the habits and attitudes that come to us embedded in our inherited culture, especially our inherited language, are incorporated in everything from nursery rhymes to laws and prayers and often have the durability of flint pebbles and puddingstone. Thus, it would appear that we will always have some core elements of national cultures that, even though things are changing at the overall global level, may demonstrate a high level of persistence (Bird, Stevens, 2003). However, the relationship between values and beliefs on one side, and behaviours and artefacts on the other, might be a dynamic one. When cultures interact with each other, a behavioural change process begins, which, in turn, eventually initiates a value change process among the interacting cultures (Fang, 2006). Culture can be compared to an ocean. The ocean embraces not just visible wave patterns on its surface (compared to visible cultural values and behaviours) but also numerous ebbs and flows at amazing depths. Quoting Fang (2006), 'a specific culture learns not only from its forebears as an extension of old traditions but also from its dynamic interactions with other cultures to give birth to "new traditions", new beliefs and new behaviours'.

If cultures are changing, we can expect to find evidence of those changes among young people first. Young people's reactions to social change are a great barometer and herald future social flows (Ule, 2003). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) find that younger people and more educated people accept the new, post-modernistic values much more rapidly than the rest. As young people are announcing social changes, young managers are announcing (and implementing) changes in organisational structures and the business environment.

## **2.2. From socialism<sup>2</sup> to 'capitalism'**

During the times of socialism, the (official) values were mostly egalitarian at the expense of personal freedom and freedom of expression. Individualism was suppressed.<sup>3</sup> As with most revolutions, the communist revolutions started in a bloody way, demanding great sacrifices and hardships in the struggle for the victory of the revolution and for the building of a 'new world' and new society, but in reality it was only the build up of a new regime. Broadly speaking, the agenda of communist leaders was to industrialise, educate and arm. To meet these aims, the people in these people's republics made great inhumane efforts to the project (e.g. implementing the five-year plans in four years) involving personal voluntary sacrifice and dedication (e.g. 'Stakhanovism' and work brigades) or through ruthless punishment (work camps and purges). However, with the stabilisation (stagnation) of these systems, the enthusiasm waned. In a classless society, a new societal elite appeared, also known as the 'nomenclatura' (Voslesensky, 1984). The dream of a 'perfect and fair world' disappeared. This era was marked by the ideological pressure of a totalitarian regime. People had limited knowledge of the principle of self-reliance; the unspecific group interests were the priority (Pokrovsky, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

Although socialism was failing and its expiry date had already passed long ago, its actual collapse at the beginning of the 1990s still came as a surprise. The Cold War had ended and the agenda of all countries was to move towards a market economy. The issues on the agenda of most post-socialist governments

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<sup>2</sup> Here we use the term socialism to depict the period and countries inspired by the former Soviet regime.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is hard to find appropriate studies of what the real values were. The lack of data is also shown in the exclusion of Russia from Hofstede's 1980 study since it was during the Cold War.

<sup>4</sup> Yugoslavia was somewhat different. It was a case 'in between', a country with more than ten ethnicities living together in 'brotherhood and unity', a socialist country with some elements of market policies which was openly trading with both the West and the East and had open borders.

were stabilisation, privatisation, liberalisation and other structural reforms. Their freedom was limited to finding their own pace and sequencing. Another important point of this was that these new countries' leaderships were eager to show how credible and 'democratic' they were, so most of them acted quickly. The results were that the expectations of an automatic 'better life in capitalism' were not met and that a huge difference emerged between the expectations and the realities (Lavigne, 1999). The transition actually created an environment which economists refer to as creative destruction, which held many negative consequences for the social fabric of post-socialist countries. At the beginning, it created instability, insecurity, devaluations and a loss of savings, a loss of trust, an unsure future, a general drop in incomes, a drop in economic output (contraction), stagnation, a rise in crime and what in Russia is called '*the new Russki*' (The New Russians) – the newly rich elites<sup>5</sup> which have prospered in these conditions and grabbed the ownership of companies (Levigne, 1999).

In South-East Europe, one must add war into the equation. The multiethnic experiment of Yugoslavia's 'brotherhood and unity' failed; the tensions that were latent were woken up in the new, looser international environment. It was hard for the older generations to accommodate themselves to the changed environment. For young people, the transition created opportunities and problems. The unlimited flow of information started to introduce people to new, mainly western values. Their ambitions were to become educated, rich fast, and move to the West. The younger generations moved to the West, thrived in the new environment where younger minds with knowledge of business and foreign languages were becoming 'yuppies'. This was a time when a lot of leaders were less than 40 years of age (e.g. Mart Laar was 32 when he became Prime Minister of Estonia).

### 2.2.1. The transition paths of selected countries

Our study focuses on three countries that had quite different transition paths<sup>6</sup>. Slovenia and Serbia both emerged from former Yugoslavia; however, the 1990s held quite a different destiny for the two countries. Slovenia emerged

<sup>5</sup> The mass privatisation of Russian industry of 1992 resulted in 80 percent of the economy moving rapidly into private hands. Despite the voucher programme, much of the privatised state-owned wealth has fallen into the hands of a small minority, including the nomenclature (Bucknall, 1997). Guriev and Rachinsky (2005) refer to industrial tycoons or so-called 'oligarchs'. Moreover, the World Bank's Country Economic Memorandum for Russia (2004) estimates that 22 of the largest industrial groups control about 40% of Russian industry, more than all other private owners combined.

<sup>6</sup> Stark and Burszt (1998) argue that the transition in Eastern and Central Europe is path-dependent – it depends on the cultural and historical background of each particular country.

from the dissolution of the former common state mostly unharmed. The economy suffered somewhat from the loss of the common market, but the country's companies quickly reoriented themselves towards Western European countries and the rest of the world. Privatisation started a little later than in some other CEE countries, but proceeded relatively fast and without major problems. By 1996, most of the Slovenian economy had been privatised, chiefly through mass voucher privatisation and ended with a low percentage of foreign ownership and a relatively dispersed ownership structure. The consolidation of ownership only began later (mostly after 2000).<sup>7</sup> According to Jazbec (2007), Slovenian managers in the new environment are characterised by small power distance and are very individualistic. On the other hand, high uncertainty avoidance prevails.

Serbia, on the other side, although playing the role of the aggressor in the Balkan conflict, suffered a lot – not only because of war, but also because of the UN embargo and later from the NATO bombing. Both had a negative impact on the national economy. Uvalić (2007) notes that the pace of transition was slow during the 1990s when hyperinflation raged through the country and privatisation came to a halt. After the change of regime in 1999, reforms were introduced that boosted growth and privatisation picked up speed. The conflict and the embargo slowed the cultural and value changes in the country and, for a short period, even reversed them. As noted by Cerović and Aleksić (2005), the past plays an important role in the culture of Serbian people. Gordy (1999) adds that culture in Serbia is characterised by a conflict between the traditional rural values that were in power throughout the 1990s and the modern urban values of Belgrade and other cities that took charge after 1999. A re-examination of the original Hofstede data shows that already in 1971 Serbians were characterised by a much higher masculinity and power distance compared to Slovenia (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, Mojić (2003) shows that after 2000, Serbian culture is characterised by a smaller power distance, slightly higher uncertainty avoidance and is even more masculine than before.

Russia was different from the outset. What was perhaps the most real socialist country was also the leader of a big empire that fell apart at the beginning of the transition. Each Russian leader has characterised the transition in his own way. The transition in Russia started with Gorbachow in 1986. The intended reforms were rapid and comprehensive (Hanson, 2002), although there were major differences between the objectives and actual implementations of

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<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed account of Slovenian transition, see e.g., OECD (1997), Mrak et al. (ed.), 2004), Bole and Mramor (2006).

reforms (Kumar Bhaumik and Estrin, 2007). Yeltsin was a firm believer in the market economy. However, his reforms failed in many respects and allowed the rise of 'oligarchs', the new Russian business elite (Desai, 2007). When Putin took charge, he set a new goal – to make Russia strong. His policy was to establish a market economy with a less democratic regime behind it, a process aided by increasing state ownership in key sectors like oil and gas (Desai, 2007). Fox et al. (2003) argue that even though the Russian economy was a centrally planned economy, some market characteristics and marketing began to appear as soon as the 1960s, while since Perestrojka and especially after 1991 marketing in Russia has seen a fast ascent. Pirogov and Tvorogova (2007) find that those people who at the beginning of the transition were in their teens and were never indoctrinated with socialist ideology are now the recruiting base for the new business elite. They also find that the transition period brought an increase in religiosity for Russians; this occurred in a period when religiosity in Europe was in sharp decline. Religion influences the values of people that are now changing. Naumov and Puffer (2000) state that today Russian culture is characterised by relatively high levels of uncertainty avoidance. Russia is also a very individualistic society. On the other hand, feminine values prevail. Being used to the state taking care of people and that the leaders could not be contested, Russians developed a high power distance.

### 2.3. The 21<sup>st</sup> century business environment

The statement, 'Today, however, many Chinese value money-orientation, capitalism, professionalism, knowledge, innovation, creativity, individualism, quality of life and "sex and the city"' (Fang, 2006) can also be attributed to some other nations. People travel more than they did in the past, they are exposed to generally the same movies, TV channels and music. Information is available globally to anyone via the world wide web, with the only barrier being language. The Internet is used for communication, creating new virtual communities. Universities offer similar programmes, students are prescribed the same textbooks. A new global culture is thus arising especially among people in international business. In the view of Bird and Stevens (2003), they are more educated, more connected, self-confident, pragmatic, unintimidated by national boundaries, democratic and participatory, individualistic and inclusive, flexible and open, and begin from a position of trust.

A shift from 'materialistic/career' towards 'post-materialistic/personal' values can be identified especially among young generations (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). According to Moorcroft (1997), the aim of young generations is less to impress through possessions and more to enjoy the intangible qualities of

life: experiences, feelings, relationships, personal self-knowledge and awareness. This shift has also brought some changes to the nature of values. While classical industrial values represented clearly defined social norms and principles of behaviour, today's values are fluid, less clear and difficult to identify. Young people often respond with a mixture of expressed pessimism and inner personal optimism, which is a paradox of this generation (Ule, 2003). However, they want to be independent, free of fear, but not arrogant. They resist taking on norms which are not verified. They want to be true to themselves and not sell their soul to the needs of organisations and institutions, roles and social conventions (Moorcroft, 1997).

The attitude to work has changed, as well. Nordstrom and Ridderstrale (2001) sum this up by saying: 'Soon, we will want to have a life instead of a career. Young people value joy, pleasure and self-actualisation at least as much as they do salary and career development. 'To be, not to become' is what they strive for. Younger generations want to be true to their own individuality. This is not in the sense of selfish individualism, but the development of a greater sense of self, inner strength and confidence (Moorcroft, 1997). They are motivated by project work, by setting up their own rules, and by being autonomous (Erjavšek, 2005). A shift from materialistic to post-materialistic values also brings a shift from an emphasis on maximising income to the quality of work experiences (Inglehart, 1997).

The business environment is one of the factors that causes changes in the value system. On the other hand, it is changing values which have a great impact on the business environment and performance. Certain parallels can be drawn from the new man's values to the new business principles. When people have begun to cherish life, pleasure, self-actualisation, imagination, creativity, etc., impatient and reckless young managers and companies have begun to speak about working 'heartier', increasing companies' energy levels, innovation rather than optimisation.

### **3. HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY**

Our research focuses on studying the changing culture between different nations and different generations as may be observed in the business environment. The main hypotheses that follow from the overview presented in the second part of the paper are:

**H1:** Despite the major social changes in transition countries, differences in national cultures still exist among managers. They are moderated by factors such as education and schooling.

However, changes in national cultures should first be evident among the young generation. The young are those who are more easily programmed as they do not have a pre-existing programme.

**H2:** The culture of young people is different to that of older people.

We base our research on two different systems for measuring culture. The first is the Trompenaars and Hampden Turner ('THT') model which constitutes the majority of our research.<sup>8</sup> A model of seven basic bi-polar orientations was developed: 1) Universalism-Particularism (the tendency to follow standardised rules vs. the tendency to prefer a flexible approach to unique situations); 2) Individualism-Communitarianism (a focus on individual performance and creativity vs. a focus on a larger group leading to cohesion and consensus); 3) Neutral-Affective (controlled emotions vs. overtly displayed emotions); 4) Specific-Diffuse (low vs. high degrees of involvement in personal relationships); 5) Achievement-Ascription (status and power based on one's performance vs. status and power determined by school, age, gender, family background); 6) Sequential-Synchronic (organisation of time in a sequential manner, doing one task at a time vs. organising time in a parallel manner, keeping many things active at once); 7) Internal-External Control (stimulation based on one's inner drive and sense of control vs. one being adaptive to external events that are beyond one's control), as in Trompenaars and Hampden Turner (1997).

In addition to studying the national level, the THT model is also used to test differences between younger and older generations. This part of the study is supported by additional research provided by the Hofstede model (1991). The Hofstede model is based on five cultural dimensions. These dimensions are: 1) power distance ('PDI'), the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally; 2) uncertainty avoidance ('UAI') which describes how people within a country cope with the fact that the future is unknown; 3) individualism-collectivism is a bipolar dimension describing the fact that people put their needs before the needs of society or vice versa; 4) masculinity-

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<sup>8</sup> The THT model is used extensively to study national and organisational dimensions of the culture of managers. The THT database includes 30,000 business people from 55 countries.

femininity basically differentiates between societies in which gender roles are clearly distinct and those where the roles are allowed to overlap; and 5) long-term vs. short-term orientation: the first describes a progressive culture oriented towards the future, whereas the second is a more conservative, past-oriented culture.

The first sample, where the THT model of research was used, consists of 650 business people. Of these, 191 were from Russia, 67 from Serbia, while the remaining 392 came from Slovenia. In these countries, we had access to managers from different companies that were, however, linked internationally between themselves. Besides that, we also interviewed graduate students currently inscribed in an MBA programme. In the total sample of 650 respondents, there were 258 managers and 392 MBA students.<sup>9</sup> Their answers were gathered with a Trompenaars-type questionnaire composed of different types of questions; short scenarios where the respondents needed to choose one of two alternatives, questions where they needed to pick one of many statements, and questions where the respondents needed to answer on a scale from one to five to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a certain statement. Besides the cultural dimensions, several other variables, like gender, age, country and education were collected.

The second sample, where the Hofstede model was used, consists of 700 students and managers from Slovenia. Of these, 140 are business students and 560 are managers on different levels in several companies. Their answers were gathered with a Hofstede-type questionnaire, composed of 20 questions (four for each of the dimensions), where the respondents needed to answer on a scale from one to five to show to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a certain statement. In addition, we had a few demographic questions of which we are only using gender and age since nationality is irrelevant and education is too homogenous for the student group.

We tested the hypotheses using the generalised linear modelling (GLM) methodology that tests the effects of several nominal and interval variables on one or more dependent interval variables (Iversen and Norpoth, 1987). The

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<sup>9</sup> The companies have headquarters in Slovenia and subsidiaries in Russia and Serbia. The number of Slovenian managers is therefore larger than in Serbia or Russia. Due to the limited access to Serbian and Russian MBA students, the number of MBAs in Russia and Serbia is also lower than in Slovenia. However, in each category the number of individuals is not less than 30. The sample used is therefore comparable with other studies in the countries in question. For example, Mojić (2003) uses a sample of 20 managers and 132 non-managers from 14 companies to examine the culture in Serbia. In their examination of the Russian culture, Naumov and Puffer (2000) use a sample of 250 managers, faculty members and students in Russia.

dependent variables were the scores on the cultural dimensions as measured by one of the models for measuring culture. The explanatory variables were country, gender, age group, level of education, function in a company, and a dummy showing whether the respondent is currently a postgraduate or an undergraduate student. Type III sums of squares were used, while Roy's largest root was used as a criterion for significance. Multivariate as well as univariate tests were used in the testing. In the contrast analysis, we used planned comparisons as described in Rosenthal and Rosnow (1985). The aim of planned comparisons using a contrast analysis is to compare specific groups or the relations between them. The contrasts were formed in such a way to test the differences between the countries first for the youngest age group, then for the middle group and finally for the oldest group. We expect to find significant differences between the countries in the older but not in the younger age groups.

#### 4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

##### 4.1. Research based on the THT models

Table 2 presents the results of the multivariate GLM test. The significance levels are based on Roy's largest root; however, the effects presented were also significant with other commonly used measures.

Table 2: Results of GLM multivariate tests using the THT model

Effect	THT - national	Effect	THT - national
Intercept	6.90***	Function	
Country	0.05***	student*gender	
Age	0.02**	country * student	0.03***
Education	0.03***	country * age	0.02**
Student	0.02*	country * education	0.05***
Gender	0.02**	country * function	
		function * education	
		country * age * education	0.10***

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001; \*\* significant at 0.01; \* significant at 0.05

The THT model shows that country is a very important factor in describing cultural differences, as is education. Interestingly enough, the interactions are significant as well. For example, the significant interaction between age and

country indicates that cultural differences between countries are different for different age groups. The same applies for the between-country differences for students and managers. The three-way interaction effect between country, age and education shows that education moderates the age differences. Table 3 presents the univariate tests for the THT national model. Country of origin is the most important factor for determining one's culture. It impacts on four of the six dimensions in the model, i.e. universalism-particularism, specific-diffuse, achievement-ascription and internal-external dimensions. Age mostly influences the universalism-particularism dimension, being a student (as opposed to not being a student, but simply a manager in a company) the achievement-ascription dimension, gender influences the internal-external dimension and education the specific-diffuse dimension. Several interactions are also significant. Table 4 presents the different groups' marginal means.

If one looks at the country differences first, the Russian managers and students are more particularistic than the Serbian and Slovenian ones. Particularistic judgements usually focus on the exceptional nature of present circumstances when encountering particular obligations to known people. As explained by Trompenaars, relationships are more important than rules and have a great impact on many business-related dimensions (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). Our results are in line with these statements and are also supported by Pirogov and Tvorogova (2007) who claim that although business interests are crucial, personnel contacts and friendly relations are also important for doing good business in Russia (Pirogov and Tvorogova, 2007). Slovenian managers and students are less specific than the other two groups – they draw a less distinct line between business and pleasure. According to Trompenaars, in business life, this type of characteristic is usually related to the fact that pay-for-performance is not very popular because it severs relationships (it is the relationship that increases or reduces output, not the other way around), and there tend to be lower turnover and mobility because loyalty is quite important (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). The latter was also found by Jazbec (2007), who claims that feminine values are prevailing in Slovenian business culture and a pleasant work atmosphere, open communication and people-oriented cultures are preferred by Slovenian managers. The former is confirmed by Prašnikar et al. (2000) who found that variable pay among Slovenian managers is evidenced only at the perceptual level; however, in reality, pay systems in enterprises are still very much based on fixed pay.

Table 3: Results of GLM univariate tests for the THT national model

	Universalism (high) - Particularism (low)	Individualism (high) - Communitarism (low)	Neutral (high) - Affective (low)	Specific (high) - Diffuse (low)	Achievement (high) - Ascription (low)	Internal (high) - External (low)
<b>Intercept</b>	1905 <sup>***</sup>	1589 <sup>***</sup>	3670 <sup>***</sup>	2203 <sup>***</sup>	3044 <sup>***</sup>	1752 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Country</b>	24.8 <sup>***</sup>	2.6	5.8	20.4 <sup>***</sup>	25.8 <sup>***</sup>	8.3 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Age</b>	19.5 <sup>***</sup>	1.0	0.3	1.5	1.2	0.1
<b>Student</b>	2.2	3.6	1.3	0.2	6.0 <sup>*</sup>	0.0
<b>Country * student</b>	14.4 <sup>***</sup>	1.5	3.3	1.6	3.8	8.8 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Country * age</b>	11.6 <sup>*</sup>	2.5	1.0	6.0 <sup>*</sup>	1.9	3.4 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Gender</b>	2.0	2.7	2.8	0.9	1.5	11.0 <sup>***</sup>
<b>Education</b>	0.9	3.2	3.1	8.1 <sup>*</sup>	1.9	5.6
<b>Country*age *education</b>	22.2	30.4 <sup>*</sup>	22.0	30.7 <sup>*</sup>	16.5	25.4 <sup>*</sup>
<b>R Squared (Adjusted)</b>	.123 (.094)	.051 (.020)	.064 (.033)	.082 (.052)	.095 (.065)	.086 (.056)

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001; \*\* significant at 0.01; \* significant at 0.05

Table 4: Marginal means for the THT national model

		Universalism (high) - Particularism (low)	Individualism (high) - Communitarism (low)	Neutral (high) - Affective (low)	Specific (high) - Diffuse (low)	Achievement (high) - Ascription (low)	Internal (high) - External (low)
Country	Slovenia	61.5	53.1	54.4	59.6	54.6	51.9
	Serbia	62.4	48.9	62.6	65.7	46.2	58.1
	Russia	52.5	52.2	59.3	67.4	50.3	49.5
Age	Up to 30 years	51.1	55.5	58.9	62.0	49.6	50.1
	30 to 40 years	60.3	51.8	57.1	63.3	53.8	55.9
	above 40 years	62.9	48.6	58.3	66.1	49.9	51.5
In_school	Company	61.6	55.1	57.2	64.7	48.9	53.5
	Graduate school	55.3	48.5	59.0	63.2	53.2	51.4
Gender	Males	57.3	53.1	57.5	64.7	50.5	54.9
	Females	59.6	50.4	58.7	63.1	51.6	50.1

Note: the fields in grey denote those fields for which the univariate test showed significant differences.

Slovenian managers and students also value achievements the most. On the other hand, Serbian managers and students ascribe more importance to status. Serbs also have the most mechanistic view of the world. In addition, the past plays a considerably bigger role than the present and the future. Cerović and Aleksić (2005) argue that Serbian tradition, experiences with socialism and the recent violent return to a nationalistic ideology have revived these values. Taking into consideration the differences between the students and managers, it can be said that the students value achievements more than the managers. This is expected as they still have to prove themselves and have not yet achieved any status, but they want to have it as soon as possible. Managers, on the other hand, want to keep their ascribed status once they have successfully achieved it. This

corresponds to the life cycle development of values, an issue to which we will return in the next chapter.

When observing the gender differences, the men in our research have a more mechanistic view of the world than the women. This can also be expected since the internal-external control dimensions partially correspond to Hofstede's masculinity-femininity. Namely, internal control is often characterised by a dominating attitude bordering on aggressiveness towards the environment, which 'sounds' masculine. External control, on the other side, is characterised by harmony, responsiveness, sensibility, a flexible attitude, a willingness to compromise and to keep the peace (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997), which are more feminine in nature. The national culture analysis proves that certain differences between the three examined states do exist. We can therefore confirm our first hypothesis. However, except for the universalism-particularism dimension, no other dimension in this part of the research showed a statistical significance as to the differences between the age groups. In order to discuss the second hypothesis, we will continue to investigate age differences in more detail. The age profile of the universalism/particularism dimension is presented by Figure 1.

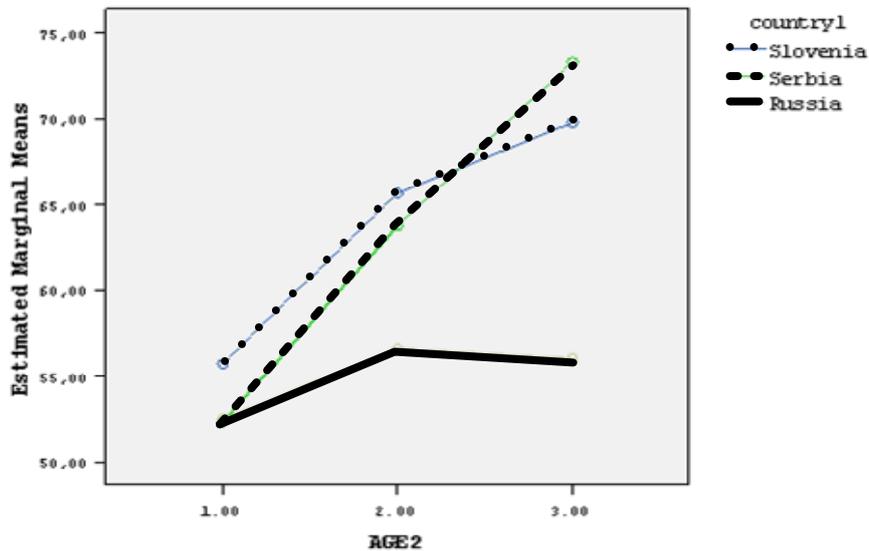


Figure 1: Marginal means profile plot for the THT universalism-particularism dimension

Figure 1 firstly indicates that younger people are much more particularistic than the older age groups – they think that different rules should apply to different people and situations. One of the explanations is ‘life cycle’ effects, as explained in Section 2.1. It shows that young people are *de facto* rebellious, which is why they do not want to adhere to standards which are universally agreed to by the culture in which they live. Also, Helson, Jones and Kwan (2002) show that with age, norm-adherence (measured by self-control, good impression and reversed flexibility) increases. Another explanation can be driven by the intergenerational change which brings post-materialist values to the fore, as discussed in Section 2.3. The era of post-modernisation de-emphasises all kinds of authority, whether religious or secular, allowing a much wider range for individual autonomy in the pursuit of individual well-being. The individual becomes more important than religion and state and the focus on individual concerns such as friends and leisure increases (Inglehart, 1997). This goes hand in hand with particularistic judgments of observed managers and graduate students who would protect or discount a person of unique importance for them no matter what the rules say.

The second important observation from Figure 1 is that the particularistic orientation among Russian managers and graduate students does not change with age. This specific of the national culture is therefore much stronger than the age effect. Slovenian and Serbian managers and students, on the other hand, change from ‘particularists’ to ‘universalists’ when they grow older. This finding could reflect the life effect (when they grow older, they lose their rebellion and become more norm-adherent) or the intergenerational changes that are going on. Time will show which of these two is in fact dominant.

We can also see from Figure 1 that people in different countries are much more alike in younger age groups and they grow apart in older age groups. To test this, we did a contrast analysis test, forming an L-matrix in such a way that the contrast tested all the pair-wise differences between the countries (three pairs, Slovenia-Serbia, Slovenia-Russia and Serbia-Russia) for each age group. Doing this for each of the six dimensions gives us 18 pair-wise differences for each age group. Table 5 summarises the results of these tests (differences are significant at the 0.05 level at least).

The contrast tests found only four of the 18 pair-wise differences between the countries in cultural dimensions in the group up to 30 years, whereas they found 13 differences in the above-40 age group.

Table 5: Number of significant differences between countries in each age group

Age groups	No. of significant differences
up to 30 years	4
30 to 40 years	9
above 40 years	13

#### 4.2. Research based on the Hofstede model

To obtain further support for Hypothesis 2, we present the results of the research based on the Hofstede model. Here, only Slovenian managers and undergraduate students of business are taken into consideration. The students are even younger than the students in the previous research and therefore any age differences should be even more evident. In Table 6, we first present the results between the groups with the GLM model.

Table 6: Results of the GLM multivariate tests

Effect	Hofstede
Intercept	0.40 <sup>***</sup>
Country	
Age	0.08 <sup>***</sup>
Education	
Student	0.02 <sup>**</sup>
Gender	0.02 <sup>*</sup>
Function	
student*gender	0.55 <sup>***</sup>

Note: <sup>\*\*\*</sup> significant at 0.001; <sup>\*\*</sup> significant at 0.01; <sup>\*</sup> significant at 0.05

We see from the results that age has a significant impact on cultural dimensions. Even after controlling for age, there is still a difference between the students and managers. Let us explore the differences in more depth. To do this, we first look at univariate tests, testing each of the cultural dimensions separately. Type III sums of squares are used for the univariate comparisons.

Table 7: Results of GLM univariate tests for the Hofstede model

	Power distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty avoidance	Long term orientation
<b>Intercept</b>	148***	1773***	23***	235***	316***
<b>Student</b>	1.5	1.3	0.0	10.4**	1.9
<b>Gender</b>	5.2*	2.8	0.1	1.3	0.2
<b>Age</b>	3.1	12.7*	12.4*	7.4	9.3
<b>student * gender</b>	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.0	1.2
<b>R Squared (Adjusted)</b>	.038 (.026)	.034 (.022)	.020 (.008)	.037 (.025)	.017 (.005)

Note: \*\*\* significant at 0.001; \*\* significant at 0.01; \* significant at 0.05

Table 7 presents the univariate tests for the Hofstede model. The most powerful explanatory variable is again age, as it affects two of the five dimensions, i.e. individualism and masculinity. Gender has a significant effect on power distance. Being a student, most of all, has an impact on uncertainty avoidance. So how do these groups differ? Table 8 presents the different groups' marginal means, corrected using the Bonferroni correction (this correction accounts for the fact that the cultural dimensions are interrelated and controls for the other explanatory variables).

The students have a lower score of uncertainty avoidance than the managers. They are more willing to take risks and have less emotional resistance to change. If changes occur via the young generation, this is a good sign. Slovenian entrepreneurs lack the element of risk-taking. They prefer predictable and stable situations. Jazbec (2005) states that the reason for this lies in the value of security which is strongly present among Slovenians. From their early years on, Slovenians have been taught to obey and to avoid making mistakes. According to Trstenjak (1991), obedience was highly encouraged in the school system where the ideal pupil or student was the one who was able to repeat the teacher's knowledge. Disagreement with a teacher was not encouraged. Obedience and good behaviour is also encouraged by the Catholic

Church which has a strong tradition in Slovenia. When uncertainty avoidance is encouraged and experimenting, imagination and the motivation to be different is suppressed, this represents a great obstacle to a society to become innovative (Jazbec, 2005).

Table 8: Marginal means – Hofstede model

		Power distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty avoidance	Long-term orientation
	<b>Manager</b>	26.1	109.2	20.8	70.3	16.2
	<b>Student</b>	38.2	107.3	22.6	38.9	16.2
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	22.3	113.9	21.2	57.2	16.1
	<b>Female</b>	36.7	103.4	21.4	65.5	16.3
<b>Age</b>	<b>up to 24</b>	37.0	96.0	23.3	49.2	17.1
	<b>25 – 29</b>	33.2	113.0	23.7	51.4	17.6
	<b>30 – 34</b>	20.5	112.0	35.9	72.3	17.0
	<b>35 – 39</b>	26.2	118.3	25.1	79.6	15.0
	<b>40 – 49</b>	25.2	107.9	6.2	64.2	15.7
	<b>50 and above</b>	31.3	100.7	11.5	61.6	13.2

Note: In grey fields denote, significant differences are detected by univariate tests.

The data in Table 8 also allow us to conclude that the youngest group (up to 24 years) is, on average, less individualistic. In this respect, our results are slightly different compared to what was presented in Table 1. We found that individualism stands out in Slovenia in the middle age groups. Linked together with increased masculinity, this might mean that managers of these ages are striving hard for positions in the management structure. However, higher uncertainty avoidance is also evidenced, which paints a strange picture of how they position themselves. It seems that Slovenian managers in their thirties become competitive and assertive, and they exercise power. They strive for

individual achievements in terms of recognition and wealth. At a higher age, feminine values come to the fore.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we deal with the culture of managers and students in three transition countries that not so long ago underwent a radical change in their socio-economic system and have become part of the global economy. The results of our study confirm the presence of the influence of national cultures on managers and students in the investigated transitional states. While Russians tend to be more particularistic, Serbians look more to the past, have a more mechanistic (insider) view of the world and ascribe more importance to status, while for Slovenian managers and students feministic values are evidenced. It seems that changes in recent history cannot replace the national characters of the three countries which had been evolving for a long time before. Particularism has been evidenced in Russian history for centuries. The Serbians have several symbols from the past and status ascription has always played an important role. The Slovenian character has also been developing for a thousand years (at least since 1335) in the direction of adherence to norms which were delegated by political powers (Trstenjak, 1991).<sup>10</sup>

When testing the hypothesis that the culture of the managers and students is different than that of older managers, we found out that differences between the different age groups of managers do exist. The most prominent is the high particularism of the young managers and students in all three countries in the research. The disrespect for current norms is one of the forms of the manifestation of hedonistic (dionistic) values that in the life-cycle appear mostly at a young age. There is joy, pleasure, enjoyment and self-affirmation that are not accompanied by responsibility that is characteristic of a more mature person. The young managers and students are also much more characterised by individualism brought in by modern times. In our study, we showed that not only the younger differ from the older, but also that young managers and students in all three countries are much more alike than the older age groups. However, we found that differences exist not only between the young and old managers, but that the middle age group also has its own characteristics. Young people (up to 24 years) followed by the oldest age group (50 and above) are, on average, less individualistic compared with the middle

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<sup>10</sup> The Yugoslav experiment of a self-managed socialist society, where the workers were supposed to manage their own companies, grew out of the roots of Christian socialism from before WW2 and was put into practice by Slovenian communists after WW2. See Prašnikar, Prašnikar (1986) and Prašnikar, Svejnar (1991).

age group. The latter is also more masculine, whereas feminine values come to the fore at a higher age. The middle age group stands out in the study of the culture of Slovenian managers as an important age segment when observing cultural differences between managers.

Our conclusion with respect to the 'McDonaldisation' of culture suggests that corporate cultures will continue to be important. The CEO quoted in the introduction is right. For managers, the key to making business decisions is business interests. However, there will not be only one corporate culture (i.e. US-dominated), but instead diversified corporate cultures as multinational companies ('MNCs') will originate from more than one country. In the future, for instance, more and more Chinese and Russian MNCs will appear with their corporate cultures being influenced by the national cultures of the countries of their origin.

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**JESU LI NACIONALNE KULTURE JOŠ UVIJEK BITNE U  
MEĐUNARODNOM POSLOVANJU?  
USPOREDBA RUSIJE, SRBIJE I SLOVENIJE**

**Sažetak**

U ovoj studiji smo pokušali prikazati menadžerske kulture u tri tranzicijske države, Rusiji, Srbiji i Sloveniji. Analizirali smo vrijednosti mladih pojedinaca i usporedili smo ih s vrijednostima starijih pojedinaca, kako bi uvidjeli da li i kako dosadašnja kultura utječe na globalizaciju. Koristili smo Hofstedeovu (1981) i Trompenaar/Hampden-Turnerovu (1997) metodologiju kako bi izmjerili kulturalne razlike. Naši su rezultati potvrdili snažan utjecaj nacionalnih kultura; međutim, globalizacija također ima važnu ulogu. Rezultati naše studije potvrđuju prisutnost utjecaja nacionalnih kultura na menadžere i studente u istraživanim tranzicijskim državama. Smatramo da se mlađi ljudi razlikuju od starijih, kao i da su mlađi menadžeri i studenti sličniji u sve tri države nego što je to starija dobna grupa. Važno saznanje je to da ne postoje samo dvije dobne grupe (mlađa i starija), već i srednja dobna grupa, s vlastitim karakteristikama. Stoga unutar multinacionalnih kompanija neće postojati samo jedna korporacijska kultura, već diverzificirane korporacijske kulture .