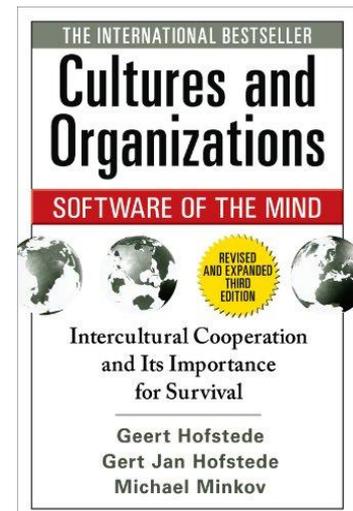


## Book reviews

Reviewer Patrick Schmidt, SIETAR member  
Author Geert & Gert J. Hofstede, Michael Minkov  
Title Cultures and Organizations:  
Software of the Mind  
Publisher McGraw Hill  
(available in French at Editions Pearson)  
Details € 24.50, 561 pages,  
ISBN 978-0071664189



Perhaps no other social scientist in the last 30 years has revolutionized the field of culture and business more than Geert Hofstede. Because his initial *Cultural Consequences* was too “scientific” for most people, he published a simpler and more accessible version--*Cultures and Organizations*--in 1991. It became an instant best-seller, translated into 18 languages.

This revised, third edition (2010) offers a monumental perspective on cultural and organizational paradigms. The first section begins with an excellent overview of culture and explains the concept of “dimension” — an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. The authors then examine nations according to a six-dimensional plan and the culture of organizations. The final section deals with the implications of cultural differences.

The work itself features substantial additions and new contributions. Among other things, Michael Minkov reveals a novel, sixth cultural dimension: *indulgence versus restraint*. The gratification of basic desires, such as happiness, leisure and life-control, is juxtaposed with our very human guilt at “wasting” time or money. The statistical results explain why Filipinos, for example, are far more content than the citizens of Hong Kong.

Another absorbing chapter relates the 2002 study asking 1800 MBA students in 17 different countries what they considered the priorities of business to be. Americans listed growth, respect for ethical norms, personal wealth, this year’s profits and power. Quite a contrast with the German “top five” of social responsibility, respect for employees, innovation, profits ten years from now and ethical norms. These types of differences allow us to better understand national character and idiomatic behavior...such as why the 2008 sub-prime loan crisis was Born in the USA.

The final chapter--written by Geert’s son Gert--gives a Darwinian spin to the evolution of societies and shows why we shouldn’t expect global monoculturalism any time soon. And *Vive la différence!*

Easy-to-understand tables summarize key concepts throughout, as do a plethora of entertaining anecdotes. I found myself returning to the multidimensional index scores as I pondered those differences. And then plunging on to read more.

The writing is fluid and helps us along but it must be noted that this is a very long book--a bit too long. Nonetheless, it’s a reader-friendly introduction to cross-cultural research and a definite “must” for anyone trying to understand our turbulent new century.