

# Managing Intercultural Competence in International Theatre Co-productions: Case Mental Finland

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ABSTRACT  
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<b>Abstract</b> An overall aim of this thesis is to examine intercultural management in the context of international co-productions of Finnish theaters. In more detail, the study will contribute to the knowledge of intercultural competence in the theatre productions in the international arena. The thesis will also provide some important practical insights on what are the challenges and opportunities in international co-productions. I have chosen a case, which will give a good, in-depth and fresh look to the subject. The case is Mental Finland by Smeds Ensemble.  This study is a qualitative research. Moreover it is a case study. The theoretical frame of this study consists of the theory of intercultural management to which closely belongs intercultural communication and intercultural competences. The concept of co-production will be defined and the theory of international co-productions will be applied from the arts field. This thesis will contribute towards providing best practices for arts managers in the theatre or in the wider field of performing arts who will want to work or are working on an international scale.	
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Managers are willing to learn how to read their profit and loss statements but many of them tend to see intercultural relations as a minor part of their work. However, intercultural competence is becoming more essential. Nowadays intercultural competence is as important domestically as it is internationally and cannot be divided further to local and global contexts.

Intercultural competence and management is an increasingly vital but difficult area of investigation. Generally defined, intercultural competence is the ability to function effectively in another culture. The theme of cultural differences concerns anyone who meets people from outside his or her own circle; in today's world that means almost everybody. The essence of intercultural management and intercultural competence is that management can operate in culturally different contexts. Cultural differences can be particularly dramatic when comparisons are made across countries.

An overall aim of this thesis is to examine intercultural management in the context of international co-productions of Finnish theaters. In more detail, the study will contribute to the knowledge of intercultural competence in the theatre productions in the international arena. The thesis will also provide some important practical insights on what are the challenges and opportunities in international co-productions.

This study is meant particularly for managers who work in a global context, in multinational corporations and/or are related to trade, exchange, and export. In earlier days we used to discuss about expatriates. The idea is used more in the world of business and when the managers are located in different countries. Intercultural management also offers something for managers whose companies have a diverse employee background.

I am especially interested in how intercultural management and intercultural competences relate to Finnish theatre field, more precisely to international co-

productions in the field of Finnish theatre. What should art managers and producers consider when they plan and implement international projects? And what kind of role this aspect plays when discussing long-term successful export or exchange projects and co-productions in the culture and arts sector? What are the skills that a leader, arts manager or producer needs to have in order to make international co-productions successful?

Increasing globalization obligates the leaders and managers to prepare themselves and others for the challenges that lay ahead. Central to this is the facilitation of capability and effectiveness within the context of global environments, and especially the ability to function in a diverse cultural context.

## 1.2. Research problem

This study will look particularly at what kind of international co-productions exist in the Finnish theatre scene. First, there are not many of them that can really be defined as international co-production and furthermore very little has been written on the subject yet. Hence my main research questions are: What are the main challenges and opportunities of Finnish international theatre co-productions and why? How was it funded and how to manage international co-productions from the intercultural point of view? I have chosen a case, which will give a good, in-depth and fresh look to the subject. The case is Mental Finland by Smeds Ensemble.

I would argue that in future Finnish theatre can find its way to international markets through co-productions. This is why I also analyze the Finnish cultural exports and cultural exchange terminology. Primary importance is also given to the financing of co-productions, which is closely related to the mentioned debate previously.

## 1.3. Research objectives

This thesis will provide new information for managing international theatre co-productions and give guidelines to arts managers in the theatre or to the wider field of performing arts wishing to work or actually work on an international scale. In the current discussion, there is a lot of debate about culture import and

export, the new concept of former culture exchange. How economical and long-term can the export projects really be? Is co-production the future form of (international) collaboration and internationalization? Is it even a new way of working? In regard to funding, is (international) co-production the only way for independent groups to make their way abroad?

International cooperation has already been carried out for a long time in (Finnish) opera productions. One reason for this is that opera as an art form has been more global longer, compared to theatre. The same classic pieces are in every opera house, but this is not the case especially in the field of contemporary theatre. And opera as an art form is also much more expensive than theatre. Accordingly, it is financial considerations that have led the opera houses to cooperation this early.

#### 1.4. Scope of the research

I have chosen to study a case: Mental Finland. My first criteria was that I wanted the leading producer, management team, of the co-production to be Finnish, in order to get the Finnish arts management point of view for my study. This further allows me to study particularly the existing Finnish funding system for international co-productions. Second, I wanted to stay in the field of theatre since I would argue that when discussing international co-productions there are characteristics which define the production, compared e.g. to dance and music. Third, I wanted to study truly international co-production. Meaning, the team would consist of many nationalities and the co-production partners would be from different countries. As well as the co-production would consist of more than two (2) partners and it would be a genuine co-production. This led me to find only one case from Finland which filled all my criteria.

A case study is a suitable way to study the chosen phenomenon since it allows gathering detailed and intensive information about a single case. Case studies are also the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. As a research strategy a case study is commonly used in organizational and management studies.

## 1.5. Research approach

Co-production in performing arts, in particular theatre, has not been studied before. In Finnish art field there is no really much documentation about it. I have used as a reference Miia Lallukka's study about co-productions in opera, Finnish Theatre Information Centre's Theatre Export Strategy and a survey about Canadian international and domestic joint ventures in film industry.

My theoretical framework consists of intercultural management theory to which closely belongs intercultural competence and intercultural communication. The concept of culture is defined by using Hofstede's Culture as software of mind - theory. As well as Bartlett and Davidsson's Global competence theory has been essential to this study.

## 1.6. Structure of the thesis

In chapter two (2) the research methodology used in this study will be presented. This study is a qualitative research. Moreover it is a case study. The chapter presents the ways the data has been collected. In further details this chapter describes how the interviews have been implemented and how the data has been analyzed. As well as the critique and evaluation of the research will be discussed.

Chapter three (3) consists of the theoretical framework of this study. At first, how is the concept of culture understood in this study, will be defined. One of the main theories is Hofstede's culture as mental software. The most important the theoretical frame of this study consists of the theory of intercultural management to which closely belongs intercultural communication and intercultural competences. The concept of co-production will be defined and the theory of international co-productions will be applied from the arts field.

Chapter four (4) presents the analysis and results of this study. In this chapter the case Mental Finland is presented in-depth and in detail, line with the theoretical frame. The chapter explores the key questions: What were the challenges and opportunities in international co-production Mental Finland?



How was the culture and intercultural communication in Mental Finland? How was the co-production financed and what were the forms of the co-production?

Chapter five (5) summarizes the content of this study by stating conclusions and gives suggestions for further studies.

## 2 Research Methodology

### 2.1 Qualitative Case Study Research

Research method consists of the ways in which observations are collected (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997, 182). This research is qualitative and the data was collected through interviews. In addition, documents which the case organization provided, both in paper and in electronic form, were used as research material. This material provided additional information about the case organization and its functions as well as its strategies. Also, the web sites of the case organization and articles about it have been part of the data I have analyzed and cannot be seen as separate from the study. All in all I have gathered adequate information based on interviews and analysis of the web sites, articles and document. I have done that in order to give a wide review of the challenges and opportunities of the chosen international co-production case. Furthermore, I have used the material to give suggestions on how to overhaul the Finnish funding system and make the international co-production process easier by using the theoretical framework of the study.

Hirsjärvi et al. (1997, 161) mention that in qualitative research the principle is to describe a real life. In qualitative research the aim is to examine the object as thoroughly as possible. Hirsjärvi et al. (1997, 130) define case study as a form of research in which detailed, intensive information is collected about a single case or about inter-related small group of cases. Usually the focus is on the processes. The material is collected by using different methods. Yin (1994, 1) states that case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. Case studies are well suited to generating rather than testing hypothesis. As a research strategy a case study is commonly used in organizational and management studies. This research is a case study of one theatre/performing arts organization involved in international co-production: Mental Finland. The main research questions studied are: What are the challenges and opportunities of this case and why, how was it funded

and how to manage international co-productions from the intercultural point of view?

In qualitative research, the analysis of data will cover the entire research process and it is not easy to divide the research process into stages which follow each other. In qualitative research the focus is usually on a relatively small number of cases with the aim of analyzing them extensively. In this study only one case has been chosen to be studied intensively, providing a representative picture of the subject studied. The data's criterion for scientific worth is not quantity but quality. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 16-18) Furthermore, Alasuutari's (1999, 39) view is that in qualitative research large amount of research units and the statistical argument method are not necessary or even possible.

How extensive the data is can be seen from its size, its narrowing down and its generalization (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 60-68). From the point of view of narrowing down the data, the criterion to be used is the theoretical interest of certain data when solving the chosen research problem. The basic idea of theoretical representativeness is to see the case as an example of the general. In such a case it is significant that an organized theoretical framework guides the collecting of the data. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 65) In order to narrow down the data, in this study interviewees from the case organization were chosen according to their duties and responsibilities in the organization and based on how much they know about the research topic. Moreover, since this research is written from the arts management point of view, it is argued that the people interviewed were from the management side of the organization and not from the artistic side. According to Eskola and Suoranta (2005, 65) in case study there is the idea that when the case is comprehensively studied, described and successfully conceptualized - generalizations can be made based on the particular case. The idea is that by examining the case in enough detail it becomes apparent what is significant in the phenomenon and what factors reoccur often when perceiving the phenomenon at a more general level. (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997, 181-182)

In this study the main sources of the research were in-depth interviews, but the data was supplemented with the documents and web sites of the case

organization and with articles written about it. Triangulation means, in simple terms, the use of multiple sources of evidence, researchers, theories or methods in the same research. (Brewer & Hunter 1989; look Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 68) Yin (1994, 78-80) mentions that the use of different sources increases the validity of research. In addition to interviews, such sources as documents, archives, direct observation, participant-observation and participation, can be used. Different methods complement each other and a good case study takes advantage of multiple sources of evidence. The use of triangulation is argued, since with a single research method it is hard to get a broad image of the research topic, and with a variety of methods it is possible to repair the validity error which arises from describing the object from one single point of view. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 68)

In qualitative research it is possible to encompass both ideas on the nature of theory; theory as an objective and theory as an instrument. Theory can function as an instrument; it can be used to build interpretations from the material collected and with its help interpretations can be stated in a scientific form. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 89) In an inductive analysis the starting point is not the testing of the theory or hypotheses but careful and extensive study (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997, 165). According to the deductive model, theory guides the researching of new information at the same time as systematizing and arranging the material collected (ibid. 141). In this research has been used deductive analysis. Deductive is used in such a way that first the viewpoint and theory have been described according to which the data is being analyzed. In spite of this the main task of theory is to help analyze the data and to originate such a report which can then be generalized through theory into the academic discussion.

## 2.2 Implementing the interviews

Before the interviews, in accordance with Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 73), the time, place, approximate duration as well as the equipment of the interviews was decided. In this study total, two interviews were carried out as part of the research, both of which were one on one. As stated by Hirsjärvi et al. (1997, 206) an interview can be executed as a single, couple and group venture. The most usual is to do one on one interview. There is also evidence (Hirsjärvi &

Hurme 1991, 2000) that a one on one interview can be relaxed and natural. What kind of interview is conducted depends upon on the interviewees are and the subject of the research. For this study the Head of Production and the Executive Director were chosen from Smeds Ensemble to represent Mental Finland.

The first interview (with the Head of Production of Smeds Ensemble) of this study was conducted on 21st of May 2010 at Kafe Kiasma in Helsinki, Finland. The second (with the Executive Director of Smeds Ensemble) was undertaken on 11th of June, also at Kafe Kiasma. The times for these interviews were selected by agreement with the interviewees, an arrangement that suited them because they work internationally and are not often in Finland. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and were transcribed straight after the interviews were carried out. In the opinion of Alasuutari (1999, 84-85) it is characteristic for qualitative data that it is rich and multi-layered. Using a recorder is absolutely more precise than detailed notes taken by the interviewer. Furthermore as claimed by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 92) that using a recorder is conducive to the nature of the theme interviews because it is only in this way the interview can be advance quickly and without interruptions. In the beginning of the interviews the interviewer was acting like the usage of the recorder would be self-evident according to the example of Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 93).

An interview outline was used in this study as a guide for the interviews in which the topics of the interview were themed and the questions were put in accordance with the themes. Theme interviews can be also named semi-structured or theme interviews, corresponding to the practices of Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 47). In theme interviews the subject matter is known but the exact form and order of the questions can vary (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997, 204-205). In such interviews the topics are decided beforehand. The interviewer assures the interviewee that all the theme disciplines determined in advance will be gone through with the interviewee but the order and extent will vary from one interview to another. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 86) The interview focuses on certain themes under discussion and the interview proceeds following the outline of the main themes (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 47-48). In this study the

same questions were not gone through precisely with the each interviewee; instead their background and knowledge of the subject was taken into account. Also, the information received from the first interviewee on the case organization had some effect on which topic was emphasized more in the second interview. The interviews took from just over 1 hour (1:06) to 1 hour and 25 minutes (1:25).

In this study the interviewees were informed in advance by e-mail, but at the beginning of the interview further information on the background of the research/thesis was clarified further and the usage of the recorder was pointed out. Following this the outline of the interview was gone through briefly before the interview was started. The interviewees participated enthusiastically and the interview progressed smoothly. The interviewees were allowed to speak about the subject in accordance with their own views and in their own words.

The aim of the interviews was to obtain information that would not be possible to collect by other means. The duty of the researcher was to analyze the data collected pertinent to theory and to make the professional conclusions and interpretations so as to achieve valid results.

As stated by Hirsjärvi et al. (1997, 201-204) the interview method is often chosen if it is already known in advance that the research subject will produce diverse answers and lead in different directions. It can also be used to clarify and deepen the information gained. When discussing research interviews it is wise to remember that an interview is a systematic form of data collection through which it is intended to acquire as reliable and logical information as possible. An interview is an interaction process in which both parties influence each other. An interview is part of normal life and normal physical, social and communication issues affect the interview situation. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 85)

It is typical of an interview as a communication situation 1) that it is planned in advance, 2) initiated by the interviewer, 3) commonly the interviewer has to motivate the interviewee and keep up the interview, 4) the interviewer knows his/her role, an aspect and the interviewee will also learn 5) the interviewee

must be able to trust that what he/she says will be dealt with in confidence. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980, 41) An attempt to take these matters into consideration was made while preparing and carrying out the interviews of this study.

### 2.3 Analyzing the data

In this study immediately after the interviews they were transcribed from the recorder into text format. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 135) recommend that data be transcribed shortly after the collection so that the data is still fresh in the memory and so that the information can still be supplemented if necessary.

The study applies Alasuutari's (1999, 39-51) view on the stages of the qualitative analysis. Analytically, qualitative research constitutes two stages: simplifying findings and solving the puzzle. When simplifying the findings the data is being studied from a certain theoretical and methodological point of view only. When examining the data the attention is put solely on what is relevant from the perspective of theoretical framework. In this way the large amount of text to be analyzed becomes more clearly visible and more controllable amounts of separate raw observations are made possible. The next step is to continue filtering the number of observations by combining the data. The separate observations will be combined as a more succinct group of observations by searching for common features in the observations or by forming a rule which applies to the entire data without exception. Data, it is assumed, will include examples of the same phenomenon.

The second stage is to solve an enigma which can be also named the interpretation of the results. In qualitative research this means finding the key to the enigma and comparing it with previous research and the theoretical frame of the study. (Alasuutari 1999, 39-51)

In the study, the material was coded by theme segments. The Word Processing text program was used to facilitate this. Seven (7) code categories were formed and were formed from the foundation of the theory, for example Intercultural Communication in Mental Finland and Forms of International Co-productions.

The results of the data, qualitatively analyzed, can be presented in numerous ways: as a text, as numbers, as images and figures (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 169) In this study the research findings are presented in text format for the reason that it is the most understandable and suitable way for this data and research to be understood.

## 2.4 Evaluation and critic about the research

In qualitative research evaluation is reduced to a question about the validity of the research process. The starting point is the obvious subjectivity of the researcher and an admission of the fact that the researcher is the central research instrument of the research. In qualitative research the data analyzing stage and the assessment of validity cannot be separated from each other to the same extent as in quantitative research. In qualitative research the researcher has to constantly ponder the decisions he/she has made and in this way simultaneously take a stand on the extensiveness of the analysis and on the validity of his/her work. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 208-210) In this study research validity and extensiveness has already been taken into account when narrowing down the data and when choosing the interviewees as well as when choosing the interview method.

In this study the interviews proceeded as planned for the most part. Both of the interviewees considered the subject important and were pleased to participate in the interviews. Even though the interviewees were Finnish (mother tongue) they were not reluctant or uncomfortable about conducting the interviews in English, as both of them normally use English as their working language, and the vocabulary used was familiar to them. Both interviews were interrupted when the interviewee's phone rang but otherwise the interviews progressed without problems till the end. The interview outline was being used flexibly in the interviews and the interviewees were allowed to speak freely about the subjects they felt important, though related to the research topic. The course of the interview was guided by the theme questions and an attempt was made to keep strictly to the research phenomena. Additional questions were asked when necessary. There was no difficulty hearing the recorded material afterwards



when transcribing the tape; the voices were clear and it also helped that the material was transcribed immediately.

Certain characters belong to the qualitative research, which either dismiss or solve the problem of generalization. One of these is the combination of raw observations with meta-observations, reflecting researcher's attempt to perceive his/hers subject on a more general level than that of just a single case. (Alasuutari 1999, 237) In this study the attempt to do this has been made by coding the data from a theoretical point of view, by combining the observations gained from the data with a wider unity and constructing the final conclusions based on the theories used in the research.

Generalizations are not made directly from the data but from the interpretations of the data. This way the criteria for generalizations are tied up with the proper collection of the data. When collecting the data, particular focus was placed on choosing the interviewees, the form of the interview form and the recording of the interviews. The results of this study can be also generalized to other contexts, such as dance, but mainly for the performing arts field.

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 186-190) state that the concepts of validity and reliability lay in quantitative research. Common forms of reliability and validity cannot be used anymore in the qualitative research. The research must nevertheless strive towards what reveals the ideas of the ones being studied as well as possible. The researcher already influences information gained while it is being collected. And the study is a lot about interpretations of the researcher, the ideas that are studied are fitted into conceptions of the researcher. The researcher has to be able to document how he/she has ended up to with the categorizes and descriptions of the world of the object of the study. In qualitative research where reliability is mainly in reference to the researchers' actions, how reliable the analyses of the researcher are. In order to reach this I have aimed at preparing the interviews well, transcribing the interviews word by word and by taking the whole data into concern when analyzing it. In the analysis, I have tried to state the views of the interviewees as objectively as possibly. The validity of the study has been tried to guarantee by collecting the data from the multiple sources. In the study interviews, documents of the case

organization and their web sites were used in the analysis. This way it was possible to compare the information received from multiple sources to each other and verify that the results of the data gave answers to the research questions, to which they were meant to refer.

## 3 Theoretical Framework of the Study

### 3.1 Defining Culture - Culture as mental software

The term culture implies an excessive amount of meanings, including, age, skill, religion, geography, occupation, language, knowledge, communication, education, ethnicity, gender, learning styles. (Hyatt, Evans, Haque 2009, 113). Culture commonly means, in most Western language and narrow terms, civilization or refined mind, including education, arts and literature. Hofstede (2005, 2-3) argues further that culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from others. "

Hofstede & Hofstede (1991) state that every person carries within himself/herself patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime and they call these patterns mental programs (or software of mind). They also argue that since culture is learned, not inborn, a person's behavior is only partially determined and he or she has the possibility to react in ways that are creative, new or unexpected. With the term mental software Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) refer to culture.

According to Hofstede (2005, 11) people carry several layers of mental programming within themselves:

- national level, according to one's country
- a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic levels
- gender level
- a social class level
- a generation level
- organizational, departmental and/or corporate, professional levels

From this point of view leaders, managers, producers and the people they work with are part of different levels of mental programs and especially national societies. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005, 20) debate that if we want to understand

their behavior, we have to understand their societies. According to Hofstede's logic the natural culture and mindsets that people have determines how they act in intercultural encounters. The data (IBM employees) used for his research was collected three decades ago but the dimensions are still used as a starting point for many cross-cultural studies. While national characters may influence people in organizations, other factors such as values are also important (Clausen 2006, 54-55).

Trompenaars has identified five dimensions (below) of how people relate to each other in business.

1. universal versus particular
2. collectivism versus individualism
3. emotional versus neutral
4. specific versus diffuse
5. achieved versus ascribed status

These can be seen like Hofstede's categories, liked pairs of opposites, which have been used to make generalizations to describe cultural values. There are several risks in these approaches: a) stereotypes oversimplify nations and cultures, b) national characteristics do not automatically describe characteristics in business contexts, especially in the case of intercultural business context c) it provides a static approach, often without a context (how perceptions and environments change over time). (Clausen 2006, 55-56)

Countering that position, other researchers such as Soderberg, Holden, Brannen and Salk (2002) see culture as a collective and relational construct that is continuously being redefined in new contextual settings. Rather than being static, culture is therefore understood as something that is negotiated and emerging. It is important not only look at the national characteristics and values but to see the communication between individuals in organizations as complex and dynamic process. In this way one can go behind the stereotypes and explore and describe cultural encounters in-depth. When dealing with cultural issues and those several contextual levels, last but not least, the individual level of knowledge and accumulated personal experience in intercultural encounters is

an important factor of influence. (Clausen 2006, 16, 45) Intercultural communication in this project is presented as being influenced by global, national, organizational, professional and individual factors.

The loss of cultural signals can lead to, e.g. in a communication situation, wide range of different outcomes. For example in Japan, when one person listens to another speaking, it is quite common for the listener to utter "hi" from time to time to communicate, "I hear and understand you". Two Westerners in the same example might merely nod frequently or say "uh-huh". Yet putting the Westerner and Asian together, to translate "hi" as "yes" would be misleading to the Westerner; as would the habit of nodding to convey "I accept and give honor to you" be confusing to the Asian. (Tobin 2009, 61)

### 3.1.1 Organizational culture

Organizational culture is an umbrella concept covering a variety of organizational phenomena. Organizational culture concerns the integration of symbols (logos), legends (stories about past successes and failures), heroes (influential manager or company leaders), shared experiences (projects) and values (business philosophies encompassing vision, mission and objectives).

If culture is understood through the classic definition of A) functionalist view - culture is something that you "have" and "belong to", culture is seen as an internal system of assumptions, values and norms that are held by an organization or nation collectively and which are relatively stable. From this perspective organization culture is seen as collection of values that can be installed, modified, or acted upon in order to convince desired employee behavior. B) In social constructivist view - culture is something that is mutually constructed among participant and depended on a context. Definition of social constructivist perspective would be that culture is based on "shared or partly shared patterns of meaning and interpretation which are produced, reproduced and continually changed by the people identifying with them and negotiating them" (Soderberg & Holden 2002, 112). People identify and associate with many different values and meanings of these values are continually being negotiated. Is culture seen more as rooted in relationships or in predetermined structures? Do managers enter intercultural situations with certain mindset based on

national and organizational cultural values? The role of individuals and their influence of communication can be seen as contributing to the formation of new cultural norms and rules for interaction. (Clausen 2006, 50-51)

When discussing national cultures and organizational cultures in Hofstede's (1991) opinion we discuss two different cultures of nature. He argues that national culture contains most of our basic values and organizational culture consists mainly of the organization's practices. I would claim that in art and culture organizations the managers and leaders work much more from value base than in common corporate and business organizations. In that sense I agree with of Peters and Waterman (1982) that shared values represent the core of a corporate culture instead of shared perceptions of daily practices. In a small organization where the founders and key leaders are the main core of the organization their values shape much of the organization culture. Though when employing personnel from a variety of nationalities, leaders and managers cannot assume common values. (Hofstede 2005, 284-287) I am curious, what happens when the personnel chosen are based on shared values rather than certain nationality, gender, age or education?

According to Hofstede (2005, 281-283) the people in organization X have a specific way of acting and interacting that sets them apart from people working for other organizations, even within the same region. An organization culture does not only exist in the minds of the members but also in the minds of its "stakeholders", everybody who interacts with the organization.

All business activity involves communicating. Within global businesses, activities such as leading, negotiating, exchanging information, problem solving, motivating, and decision-making are all based on the ability of managers and employees from culture to communicate successfully with colleagues, clients, employees from other culture. Communicating effectively is challenging to managers even when working domestically with culturally homogeneous workforce. When colleagues speak another language and come from a different cultural background, communicating becomes considerably more difficult. Managers face even greater challenges in their efforts to develop adequate intercultural competencies for cross-cultural interaction. (Clausen 2006, 44-45)

### 3.2 Intercultural management

Intercultural management deals with effective functioning of diverse groups. Traditionally thinking diversity can arise because of ethnicity and nationality. Nowadays, it can be more important the different organization culture (corporate culture), culture, subcultures that the person belongs. For example an organization which has different branches located in the same region of a country may function completely differently though the personnel qualifications/competences when applying the job have been exactly the same; still the organizational cultures may evolve differently.

Those leaders, managers and businesspersons who operate across cultures, must be conscious of the cultural perspectives of all players. This awareness is obligatory when focusing on transcultural legal activities, such as contracts and law. (Tobin 2009, 61) Early and Ang (2003) suggest that cross-cultural players must acquire a broad situational awareness that accounts for what is seen and heard in the minds of both.

The experienced people who work internationally have a lot of tacit knowledge. One of the challenges is: How do we manage that tacit knowledge and how to implement and share all the knowledge that these people possess? An interesting question is - are these skills and competencies inborn or can one learn them?

Most international projects involve also managing the knowledge and communication between the parties. According to Bartlett & Davidsson (2003, 118) culture has an impact on all areas of international project management:

- professional expertise
- leadership
- project management tools
- social skills
- communication skills
- virtual communication expertise
- political skills

- team contributions

It is important not to be traditional in one's approach to management. One should try to mix things up and create variety. In order to operate internationally one needs to know how his/her communication style affects others and how he/she is affected by other people's communication styles. How one's own culture operates in the different cultural dimensions and the stereotypes one has about others. One needs to be flexible, have a range of communication styles he/she can use, to accept and manage differences and to use one's experiences to modify his/her knowledge. (Bartlett & Davidsson (2003, 125)

International and intercultural activities focus on cooperation. It is very important to have a realistic view in order to be successful in intercultural activities. On Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 137) view the essential for success are:

- Encountering parties relate to each other as equal partners
- Contacts between the parties are meaningful, not arbitrary
- Both parties experience the encounter situations as positive and fruitful
- Both parties try to find win-win solutions actively.

### 3.2.1 Intercultural competence

In the knowledge management literature knowledge is defined as "a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information" (Davenport & Prusak 1998, 5). Communication can be understood as sharing knowledge. One should remember that part of cultural knowledge such as norms and values are often tacit or implicit. This means that although cultural practices and know-how are often drawn upon in given situations, it is difficult to recall or talk about them because these practices have become natural or tacit implicit knowledge. Cultural knowledge is also person dependent since knowledge is "sticky" - cultural knowledge and personal relationships belong to people. It is therefore important that companies make room for (international) information sharing. (Clausen 2006, 51-52)



Professionals often tend to see intercultural relations as more secondary to their work compared for example to reading profit and loss statements. However, intercultural competence is becoming more and more important. While much of the past research has been divided into global and local context, the trend is towards recognizing that intercultural competence is equally vital domestically and internationally. In the past the “expatriates” have been given the greatest attention in the international business context when referred to the intercultural competence. Until 1990’s few organizations prepared other managers for the global interface. (Bennett 2009, 95-96)

Intercultural competence has been explored by researchers in many academic disciplines such as global leadership and management. Though there is variety of perspectives used in analyzing this topic, there is a consensus what constitutes intercultural competence. It is a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and an appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. (Bennett 2009, 96-97)

1) The cognitive (knowledge) dimension, or mindset

Includes knowledge of culture-general maps or frameworks, of specific cultures, of identity development patterns, of cultural adaptation processes, and of cultural self-awareness.

2) The behavioral approach, or skill-set

Includes the ability to empathize, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, build relationships, resolve problems, and manage social interactions and anxiety.

3) The affective (emotions) dimension, or heart-set

Includes first and foremost attitudes and motivation, curiosity, as well as initiative, non-judgementalness, risk taking, cognitive flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility, and resourcefulness. (Bennett 2009, 96-97)

It is important to examine both the existing and desired intercultural competences. It is important to go beyond the assessment since "people may learn how to do something, but they do not know why they are doing it" (Bennet 2009, 97). Leaders and managers may find themselves working around the world and the workplaces are global. Therefore it is important to be able to transfer the skills to new environment. And in order to transfer skills a person needs the understanding of how and why. (Bennett 2009, 96-97)

Besides linguistic skills, the concept of intercultural competence integrates a set of human relation skills. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 131)

- interpersonal skills (social interaction)
- dialogue
- cultural curiosity
- flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty and the ability to cope with them without too much anxiety or stress
- patience and respect
- cultural empathy and low level of ethnocentrism
- a strong sense of self, ego
- the ability to recognize cultural differences
- the ability to adapt one's behavior according to the context

Developing intercultural competence is a slow, gradual transformative process consisting of language studies, intercultural training, and hands-on experience of other cultures and their people. Knowledge and understanding of one's own culture (self-awareness), has major importance in this process. The aim of intercultural learning is to help people understand what dimensions every intercultural encounter involves. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 130-133)

### 3.2.2 Intercultural communication

"Culture is communication and communication is culture." (Hall 1959, 186).

Recently there has been growing acknowledgment that intercultural communication is a bridge between the domestic and global perspectives. It focuses on the interaction between groups and individuals who have different

shared and learned values, beliefs and behaviors. Intercultural sensitivity can help leaders and managers to decode the workings of geographically scattered teams, master negotiations across cultures and find culturally appropriate motivational strategies.

Intercultural communication is viewed as a complex, multilayered, and dynamic process through which global managers exchange meaning. For example the study of intercultural organizational communication which researched five corporate cases in Japan suggests that managers who work in intercultural business settings have developed special competencies in intercultural communication. The competence they have developed almost the intuitive skill of reflecting on both cultures in their strategy formulation. They understand the business and cultural conventions, as well as the particular industry in the countries they deal with and the core competencies of their own companies. Understanding these factors is essential in communicating successfully. (Clausen 2006, 44)

Language is one of the most visible elements of culture and in that sense a central aspect in intercultural communication. Language allows communication to occur but it is also a source of misunderstanding and it is not without limitations. In an environment where people have different mother-tongues and where one or two languages become the main means of communication it is often difficult to avoid situations of frustration experienced by those who are not fluent in the chosen languages. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 59)

Different countries also differ in the amount of detail they put in communication. In so called "high context" cultures, very little detail needs to be said aloud and a large amount of information is taken from the situation and this information is used to interpret the speaker's words. For example Japanese can understand the exact meaning of "yes" (which varies from "yes, absolutely" to "yes, but no") when spoken by other Japanese because they can read the speaker's expression - the context. There are a lot of nonverbal clues - read between the lines. "Low context" cultures, on the other hand, tend to be very specific about spoken information and there is emphasis on written communication. The solution according to Bartlett & Davidsson (2003, 22-24)

is to understand whom you are dealing with and plan your communication to suit them.

They are also differences in directness and conflict avoidance when it comes to communication (direct or indirect cultures).

- Formal British: "I was wondering if you could possibly get me those figures?"
- Finnish: "Get me those figures today." (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 47-48)

There are two different communication models: 1) The Western model of transmission and 2) Eastern model of dialogue. In the latter the communication is seen more as an integrated co-creation of meaning and strategy through dialogue. In Western logic the communication is perceived as a linear process of information transmission from sender to receiver. Yan (1997) has criticized the transmission model which places the sender in a dominant role. Eastern model usually places a great deal of importance on the context in which communication takes place, while Western model tends to focus on the explicit content of communication. Another difference is that Western models are more concerned with the results (effects) of communication, while Eastern models are more focused on the process of communication (Clausen 2006, 45).

Yoshikawa's double swing model is based on the idea that the communicators cooperate to create meaning; communication is seen as a dialogic which points to a common sphere "in-between". Yoshikawa's model can be seen as a search for new ways of understanding interpersonal, intercultural, and international relations within which people of diverse cultures can reflect on their cultural differences as well as their similarities. Important point is that the awareness of self and other is created in the communication process through reflection. Communication through a dialogical process strengthens our consciousness or our own identity while at the same time strengthening our consciousness of the identity of others. This reflection and mental negotiation of cultural knowledge are critical competencies in intercultural communication encounters. (Clausen 2006, 48-49)

Clausen argues that the main way to overcome cultural barriers in communication is through raising awareness. Clausen also states that there are

two facts that can make the communication easier: 1) In professional communication shared technical understanding and 2) according to negotiated culture, intercultural cooperation can create a new common culture. (Clausen 2006, 59) Adler (2002, 99) suggests that when working with other cultures, we can emphasize description rather than interpretation or evaluation. In the process of describing cultures, rather than evaluating them, we minimize stereotypes and premature judgments. Clausen (2006, 60) also suggest "value trumping" which means that people who are familiar with an array of values are able to foresee which ones are most important in the given situation. Understanding of cultural values allows managers to have insight into situations and enables them to behave and communicate in the most successful way.

The simple answer to questions is that practice, learning by doing, motivation and ability are important factors states Clausen. In Clausen's (2006, 61) opinion working with different culture will result in high stress levels throughout the various stages of adjustment. A global mid-set, personal ability and professional confidence are therefore important cornerstones for success.

Diverse teams are a source of great strength if the communication issues are managed well. It is important to have good kickoff meetings that do not just focus on the tasks, but also on the communication, the procedures, the ways of leading and participating so that everyone knows what to expect and agrees. It is also important to ensure that team communications are relationship oriented as well as task oriented. Any activities, which build up shared knowledge and familiarity between team members help. In general, calmness, open-mindedness, friendliness and flexibility are essential skills for successful team working.

Bartlett & Davidsson (2003, 121-122) claim that trust building is one of the essential issues concerning new technologies. Is it possible to build trust via technology? Trust is something that is built between people through long lasting relationships. Some research argues that face-to-face communication is a precondition in building trust relationships. Nowadays the work is more temporary, connected with projects, still trust is essential. It is crucial not to ignore the trust, while communicating virtual. It has been shown that it is

possible if the group has enough time to communicate. "On-line trust" is developed by expertise.

Bartlett & Davidsson (2003, 116-117) declare that the following basics should be remembered:

- Make sure objectives and goals are transparent and unified
- Entire group face to face meetings are essential, especially early in the team's life. It can be used as a kickoff meeting, and to build relationship (especially if in latter the communication will be virtual)
- Make sure the rules of communication are explicit and clear to everyone. You must put detail in and be explicit. Write more than you think is necessary and show your feelings and attitudes.
- Have specific, well defined descriptions of all roles
- The team needs: clear leadership, motivated people and a lively vision
- Develop a separate project culture
- The project leader must be fluent in the project's main language and sensitive to everyone's needs

### 3.2.3 Leading across cultures

The need for global perspective is increasingly clear in our shrinking world. Cultural awareness consists of views and experience. "The global economy is here to stay...Businesses need employees who can think globally" (Hyatt, Evans, Haque 2009, 115). Bryan, Rall, Fraser, and Oppenheim (1999) made a prediction suggesting that by the year 2029, 80% of the world's output would be in global markets. The environment where the leaders and managers nowadays need to operate is highly competitive. Economic integration and advances in transportation and (tele)communications technology have broken down geographical isolations; world is mobile and virtual. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 11) Diversity has been increasing dramatically over the last 20 years; businesses operate worldwide with an international staff.

The costs of diversity can lead to problems such as reaching agreement, standardizing procedures, communicating in teams, leading and participating. The benefits of diversity are increased creativity, range of ideas and a greater

filter for “bad ideas”, which might go unnoticed by in a homogenous group. It also in a way protects against over-conformity and “mass mentality” which can be dangerous to organizations. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 72-73)

“The quest to build a strong global position is no longer an option - it is a necessity...Global thinking, truly acting across all borders, is becoming the fact of the day”. This has an impact on leadership and management; it makes it necessary to have interpersonal skills to conduct global business, comprising emotional and cultural intelligence. It is a must for the future leaders to possess cultural awareness and a global perspective because global thinking can bring together people from different background and different understandings. A broader range of thinking can often create a truly innovative approach into collaboration. (Hyatt, Evans, and Haque 2009, 113-117)

It could be also argued that if people around the world are becoming more similar through the influence of international business, global media and material consumption, then understanding cross-cultural differences should be less and less important (standardization). If on the contrary people are retaining or reinforcing their unique cultural identities, then understanding of cross-cultural differences in organizations will become increasingly important. Leaders today have to be incredibly flexible, and they have to be able to adapt their management styles. (Clausen 2006, 45)

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness research program, commonly referred as the GLOBE Study, provided important findings regarding the impact of leadership and culture. “At the present time there is a greater need for an effective international and cross-cultural communication, collaboration and cooperation, not only for the effective practice of management but also for the betterment of the human conditions. ” Further the study identified 22 leadership attributes, illustrated in a box 1. The research involved more than 170 international investigators to study over 17,000 leaders in more than 950 organizations representing 62 countries. (Hyatt, Evans, and Haque 2009, 116)

Figure 1: 22 leadership attributes (Hyatt, Evans, and Haque 2009)

Trustworthy	Foresight	Positive	Confidence builder
Intelligent	Administrative skilled	Excellence oriented	Win-win problem solver
Just	Plans ahead	Dynamic	Motivational
Decisive	Communicative	Coordinator	Honest
Encouraging	Motive arouser	Dependable	Effective bargainer
Informed	Team builder		

### 3.3 International co-productions in the arts

Whilst there is no single formula for co-production – it is a broad and flexible approach - still co-production often requires fundamental partnership. In this study when discussing co-production it is not referring to rented or bought productions, but it achieves to study more a genuine form of co-productions. Though, what needs to be noticed that even inside a genuine co-production when there are more than two parties involved there can be found different level and types of co-productions.

In opera field a genuine co-production is defined "a collaboration where all parties are involved from the beginning" (Lallukka 2008, 28). And no other kind of collaboration should be called co-production. Often the planning of co-production starts between two parties and then they possibly both try to find other partners.

For example in a film production a co-production usually refers to a production where two or more different production companies are working together. In the case of an international co-production, production companies from different countries, typically two to three, are working together.



A survey conducted by Hoskins, McFadyen and Finn (1996) about Canadian international and domestic joint ventures identified the following benefits and cost of international co-productions:

#### Benefits of international co-production

- the ability to pool financial resources
- access to the partner government's incentives and subsidies
- Access to the partner's market, or to a third market
- Access to a particular project initiated by the partner
- Access to a desired location; or to cheaper inputs
- Cultural benefits
- The opportunity to learn from the partner

#### Costs of international co-production

- Increased co-ordination and shooting costs
- Increased costs of dealing with government
- Loss of control and cultural specificity
- Opportunistic behavior by production partners

The authors identified financial pooling as the most important benefit and increased coordination costs as the greatest drawback. This suggests that co-production is more suited to larger budget productions, primarily film productions in this case, which have greater capital needs but do not carry the same coordination costs as smaller projects.

International co-productions open new markets for films and television programs so in many cases, international co-productions can offer solution for some companies to whom the demand on domestic market would be small. For film makers, the key attraction of a co-production is that it qualifies as a national production in each of the partner nations and can access benefits that are available to the local film and television industry in each country, such as government financial assistance. In my opinion in theatre in many cases the artistic goals and new ways of doing theatre are also the main reasons to cooperate.

Although a co-production agreement may make available more resources, there is a risk in an international production being less relevant to its target audiences than purely local productions. This leads to debate whether international co-productions have little cultural specificity in any of its home countries. On the other hand I would claim that in these days the world is more like a global village and people share lifestyle and values outside national borders.

Another noticeable point is that internationalization brings tensions in terms of cost, benefit and opportunity. In the face of such challenges, producers need to learn how to internationalize local film and television production in order to retain and hopefully build market shares; and how to develop new models of financing that combine both local and foreign sources. (Hoskins et. al. 1996)

In the opera field the co-productions have strongly increased between the different opera houses. According the research done by Lallukka (2008, 49-50) savings per production is forty to sixty (40-60) percent of the production costs. From the economical point of view co-productions are a cost-effective way to produce opera. The most common reasons for creating co-productions are to save money and to save resources, but there are also some artistic reasons for collaborations.

### 3.3.1 International co-productions in Finnish theaters

Finnish theatre field is slowly but surely becoming more international. There are more foreign premiers every year and increasing number of theatre artists are crossing Finnish border in both direction. (Kurki 2007, 2) However, internationally Finnish theatre is still relatively unknown.

The goal of the Finnish Theatre Export is, as defined by the Finnish Theatre Information Centre in its Theatre Export Strategy 2007-2012 that the amount of international co-productions would increase from two to approximately five in annual base. They also argue that the basic precondition for the export is that essential funding to the vital theatre group field will become stronger. Many operations are required in order to support the theaters ability to network and do co-productions as well as international exchange, which would in the end lead accomplishing the strategy. In economical and artistically wise it is relatively inexpensive to increase the international co-productions. The artists

who have gained study and work experience in abroad naturally foster the possibilities for international co-productions and guest performances.

The international co-productions need production support both from the international and domestic sources. In order to develop the Finnish competitiveness in the international theatre export markets, the travel expenses of the theaters visits to abroad needs to be supported. The travels from Finland are expensive and only few festivals and bodies, which host visits, can pay the travels and accommodation and also the performance fee. The funding needs to be increased also export the international performances to Finland since import and export usually function in interaction with each other.

In current discussion on the field it has been noted that the lacks in skills of producers and managers, especially in marketing, are one of the main obstacles of Finnish cultural export. Especially in the case of the smaller actors the question is also the lack of producers and production structures. This yet again leads to the question of funding.

### 3.3.2 The Finnish funding system in International Co-productions

Ministry of Education and Culture has two different funds for culture export. The first one is the grant for planning and preparing culture export projects. The grant is particularly for developing business and entrepreneurship, producing and management skills, product development and innovation. The aim is to increase export and employment. Projects can deal e.g. with searching finance, preparing marketing and sales. The second grant is for the same purpose but then actually implementing the planned culture export project (Kulttuuriviennin kärkihanke). Through this grant the government wants to strengthen creative industries by increasing cultures role in economics.

Arts Council of Finland has grants for individuals and working groups and organizations for projects involving international cultural cooperation, cultural export (activities) or cultural exchange. Grants are awarded for project-specific costs, not in support of ongoing activities. Applications must include a description of the project including an estimate of costs, and an itemization of

the costs for which the grant is sought. There are two application periods annually (November and May).

Decisions on grants will consider the artistic quality and the significance of projects, their overall impact on the internationalization of Finnish art and culture, the organization of implementing the projects, the realistic nature of the estimate of costs and other funding for the project concerned.

In addition to those grants the Arts Council of Finland has for example Artist-in-Residence grants and travel grants which enhance the cultural exchange and maybe further co-productions.

As well as the Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes and embassies abroad help and make some cooperation with the export projects. For the Nordic cooperation exists two good funding organizations: Nordisk Kultur Fond and Kulturkontakt Nord. There are also many private foundations and funds, e.g. Finnish Cultural Foundation, from where grants can be applied.

### 3.3.3 Culture export versus cultural exchange

The Ministry of Education and Culture argues that the domestic market is fairly small for the abundant art supply. The creative economy is in a phase of robust development and its significance for the Finnish national economy is expected to grow further.

The economic impact of cultural services and arts is also monitored by statistical means. Up to now, art has been seen as a subsidized sector and its economic and employment effects have not been gauged in the national accounts.

In 2003 the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry initiated a joint review of cultural exports. The report "Staying Power to Finnish Cultural Exportation" by Dr. Hannele Koivunen came out in 2004 and Proposal for Finland's Cultural Exports Promotion Program in 2007. At the Ministry, matters relating to cultural exportation come under the Cultural Exports Division.

## 4 Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Case: Mental Finland

Kristian Smeds wrote and directed *Mental Finland* for the Flemish National Theatre (KVS) in Brussels, Belgium, for season 2009. The premiere was 11th of February 2009. *Mental Finland* had nine shows in Brussels between 11th and 22nd of February 2009. Another main co-production partner was Finnish National Theatre in Helsinki, Finland. *Mental Finland* was played in September 2009 at the main stage in Finnish National Theatre. It had total 10 performances between 16th and 20th of September 2009. *Mental Finland* was performed as well in Vilnius 2009, 16th of October in 2009, Festival Sirenos, European Capital of Culture 2009, in Strasbourg 2009, Le-Maillon, 22nd of October and 23rd of October in 2009 and in Linz 2009, 29th and 30th of October in 2009, European Capital of Culture 2009. The two interviewees of this study are Eeva Bergroth, the head of production and Ville Hyvönen, the executive director.

#### 4.1.1 Brief history of Kristian Smeds

Kristian Smeds, a Finnish theater-maker, who has received all the recognition that a person could wish for. Smeds is one of the most profound theatre directors and playwrights in Finland. His name jumps up in any place connected with the European theatre scene. Smeds himself has defined his work: "My theatre is a folk sauna, in which the stage is the stove in the middle. Water is thrown on the hot stones until everyone gets a real sweat going." That is how many spectators have also described the experience after seeing his performance. The actors who have worked with him have told that the feeling is like cleansing, which also relates to Finnish sauna experience. It is said that the power of his work lies in its big emotions; he reveals an unseen world without forgetting that he has very often a strong local starting point. (Ruuskanen 2007, 4)

If Smeds' works have always strong local roots, how can they function abroad so well? One explanation is that they have such a powerful individual vision which

makes them able to communicate internationally. Other one is that they have universal deep structures; his works make use of the imagery of myths and archetypes, which have crossed cultural boundaries and opened themselves up - like a subconscious. (Ruuskanen 2007, 6)

From the periphery to the world is a slogan that indeed fits Smeds. Kristian Smeds (b. 1970) graduated from the Theatre Academy of Finland and its dramaturgy program in year 1995. Right after his graduation he founded in Helsinki the Theatre Takomo, in which he worked as an artistic and theater director in 1996-2001.

After that in 2001 Smeds did a radical decision by taking over as director the Kajaani City Theater (a small provincial theatre 600 km north of Helsinki). Kajaani is located near the Russian border and is one of Finland's worst depopulation and unemployment black-spots. During his stay he directed several works, which investigated the state of the provincial region. First, wild dialogue about regional politics (his own play) *A Cry in the Wilderness* (Huutava ääni korvessa). Following Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* made in the style of hectic rock concerts yet localized. Smeds' last direction to Kajaani was Chekov's *Three Sisters*, which was very massive, carnivalesque fresco about the mental and political state of the region. "The Kajaani" works where highly successful both in Finland and abroad; they travelled to e.g. Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium and Sweden. This time period was very important to Smeds since it was during this time that he formed his international ties, especially with Baltic countries.

When Smeds left Kajaani (after three years) in spring 2005 he went to direct a play in Estonia at the Von Krahl theatre which is a Tallinn-based ensemble theatre. He directed there Arto Paasilinna's *The Year of the Hare* (Jäniksen vuosi) and two years later 2007 he returned to the same theater to direct Chekov's *The Seagull*. From this direction Smeds himself said that the performance was "very Estonian, which meant that the audience was able to read it better than I was myself." Yet this proves again that Smeds really presented something that the Estonian audience connected strongly with; fact and fiction, truth, imagination and memory. In 2006 he continued his

cooperation with Baltic area by writing and directing polyphonic monologue for Aldonis Bendoriute who is regarded as one of the most important actresses of Lithuania. The monologue is called Sad Songs from the Heart of Europe, and it is based on Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment. You can say that internationalization has been a conscious project for Smeds and a satisfying direction for him as an artist.

He wishes the actors in his future projects to be both Finns and natives of other countries. How to come over the language barrier, especially of the small countries? Smeds argues that it is not such a big deal as it is been made. Though text and words are important in theatre while working and on stage, almost everything can be solved. Smeds says, "I do not just write lines, I continuously re-write my own theatre." All his works are born in the rehearsal process without exact script or direction plans. Smeds also says, "The most important thing when I am working is the rehearsal process, and like-minded friends creating a production. The next most important thing is that the work communicates with the audience." He also argues that in the end the theatre-making is quite similar around the world since those involved are connected by passion and sincere artistic search. (Ruuskanen 2007, 6, 8)

#### 4.1.2 Smeds Ensemble

Smeds Ensemble is an international and network-based theatre group, named after its artistic director Kristian Smeds. Smeds Ensemble is a production unit, which functions as a meeting forum for Finnish and international artists. It has cooperated with major Finnish festivals and theaters, and various organizations in Brussels, Tallinn, Vilnius, Linz and Budapest.

Smeds Ensemble works widely in the field of arts. Apart from theatre, the group also produces movies, radio plays, music, workshops, performances and media art. This first international theatre group from Finland is open-mindedly seeking for new forms and practices in the stage.

In its projects Smeds Ensemble takes advantage of the wide contact networks of its members and it aims for long and continuous collaboration with various artists and institutions. Performers and artists are hired on project-by-project

basis. Smeds Ensemble does not have a permanent residence. Venues for performances are provided by the co-operation partners, such as international festivals. Hence, co-production model is their way of doing things. Smeds Ensemble is based on the idea that it is a small production unit. They do co-productions which are mainly based on their own networks and contacts.

Smeds Ensemble has three permanent members: Artistic Director Kristian Smeds, Executive Director Ville Hyvönen and Head of Production Eeva Bergroth. The compactness of the core team and the way of working without their own theatre stage or premises, directly frees resources for artistic work. Light structure guarantees the group greater freedom, flexibility and mobility. On the other hand since it is such a small organization the members have to wear "multiple hats", as Hyvönen says.

#### 4.1.3 Mental Finland

As discussed in the previous chapters Kristian Smeds has already had a long career abroad. The Mental Finland project has gained visibility abroad because of Kristian's previous hard work abroad. Mental Finland is theater group Smeds Ensemble's first international co-production, which is directed and written by Kristian Smeds. The Mental Finland's production consists of artistic team of approximately 20 people from over ten (10) different countries. Mental Finland started already before the Smeds Ensemble was established. The dramaturge of the Flemish National Theatre (later KVS) Ivo Kuyl had been scouting for new directors and talents all over Europe and he had ended up in Kajaani while Kristian worked there and saw one of his piece (2001). Mr. Kuyl had already proposed cooperation to him but the time Smeds declined. Still they kept in contact and Mr. Kuyl kept on following Smeds' pieces. At 2005/2006 Kristian Smeds got the first ideas of Mental Finland, based on Asterix, the comic. Brussels, the capital of the European Union, would be like the Roman Empire and Finns would be the Gallic village who defend something old, their own habits, their own village, their culture. That was the starting point for Mental Finland from where the idea started to develop. When Kristian Smeds and Ville Hyvönen first started to gather the funds they only had 10 lines of synopsis. The first budget meetings were in 2006-2007 and the Smeds Ensemble was founded in 2007. All in all the producing took approximately two and half (2,5) years.



The premiere was in February 2009 in Brussels. This means that Kristian worked approximately eight (8) years to develop the idea and the whole process, before it came to premiere.

The making of Mental Finland was a living process. Both of the interviewed, Bergroth and Hyvönen from Smeds Ensemble tell that Mental Finland could as well be described as a learning process. Though the people working in the Ensemble have a long history in the theatre and culture field, still it was the first time they did something on this scale. It was tiring for an organization three people to put together such a big scale production. The benefit of working with freelancers is that you get the people you want to work with but fitting 20 freelancers' schedules together is a difficult task. Bergroth tells that scheduling was one of the important learning points for them moreover how to communicate, more European model how to have conversations and negotiations.

#### 4.2 Culture of Mental Finland

Both Bergroth and Hyvönen agree that Mental Finland was a success. Firstly since Smeds Ensemble's internal goals were just to show that this kind of huge intercultural production is possible for a small group. It was a success for both of them in a personal professional and professional level. It was both of their first major production that took place in many different countries with budget over half million euros, and yet they were able to make it happen. The production got more money than they expected from Finland and they managed to solve some really severe difficulties in financing.

The most important goal for Smeds Ensemble, which Hyvönen and Bergroth both emphasize, was that they could create a working process, where people from different nationalities would not just be present but be committed to the work together. Most of all that the working team enjoyed what they were doing. The group really became an international Mental Finland family and it became a playground and network for new future projects between the people. Bergroth argues that such a family is not unimportant, "it may sound, but I think that is how artists work that is where the future projects are born. So I think creating

this kind of atmosphere and working environment is really fruitful and important for future projects”.

In Hyvönen's opinion they had a dream team in Mental Finland: “Best actors of Finland, one of the best set designers of Europe and an amazing director”.

*“Kristian has a very different way of working, normally we rehearse for five months, which was a shock in Belgium, since the productions are usually rehearsed in three weeks from which only one or two weeks are rehearsed on the stage”, tells Hyvönen. “Kristian's mentality is so different that you need to explain many times why things are done in a certain way”, adds Hyvönen.*

Bergroth states that though there were 11 nationalities and big number of people involved there were no crisis in the production, which you so often hear about. No one was questioning the project and instead the team members felt united. Almost all of the people who were involved have expressed that they want to continue somehow and while looking back they are saying that it was a very nice experience. Bergroth summarizes that the process itself was a big success.

The project got also a good visibility both in Brussels and Finland and also in the other performance cities. The critiques were as well overall good and most people who saw the play really liked it. Furthermore, many performances were sold out. Smeds Ensemble also got quite a lot responses and questions from the audience, mainly by email, which they took very positively since the idea of theatre is to raise emotions.

Mental Finland is planning for another tour in 2011 or 2012 but the problem is that for many places the production is too expensive. In addition, since there will be a break of more than a year the piece needs to be warmed up again, which costs money as well. Hence, the continuity is still a question mark for Mental Finland.

### 4.3. Competent International Arts Manager

First adjective that comes to Bergroth's mind when she is thinking about ideal and competent international arts manager is passionate. In her opinion one has to be passionate about what one does since one has to work so so much, one has to be there for the people even when they are tired, so one has to be really into it.

Second, patience. One needs to be able to keep things for him-/herself and have a "poker face" and be calm even though it would be very difficult behind scenes. The internationalization adds a level that arts manager should know a lot of people (it helps at least), be well connected (network) as well as feel comfortable in communication with those people and simply enjoy being with people, concludes Bergroth. It is useful for arts manager also to network with each other's, since generally in a working team the producers might be alone with their questions and problems, not being part of artistic team. In Hyvönen's opinion one needs a lot of patience as well and good social skills. Sometimes one has to be very bold. Hyvönen sees it as important that a person has worked on the other fields outside theater, he thinks that it gives a person different perspective.

Diplomacy and mediating are additionally something that Bergroth lifts up. An arts manager is cooperating and communicating with various kinds of people, different stakeholders such as artists, ministry level, funders and in a way manager needs to change the role many times during the day.

Bergroth strongly emphasizes that many of the skills are something that you learn by doing but with time. Being an arts manager is like being a part of constant learning wheel. When not working under a specific title, an arts manager should know everything about everything, perfectionist mind, so it is crucially important to know ones weaknesses and strengths. Furthermore it is significant to know how to operate in the environment, in theatre and performing arts since it is not a "normal" working environment and in changing cultural environments.

Figure 2: Attributes for International Competent Arts Manager

Patience	Networker	Diplomacy	Communicator
Cooperator	Passionate	Bold	Social (skills)
Perfectionist	Mediator	Self-awareness	

#### 4.4 Intercultural Communication in Mental Finland

The first thing that Hyvönen tells when discussing on communication in Mental Finland is that “it is a cliché to say but you have to say it, the middle European people talk a lot more”.

“When a Finn is in a negotiation and the partner promises something as a Finn you take it as a “yes”, so it is a promise, a commitment. Then the Finn just goes home and is not in any contact for half a year, relying that these people already said “yes”, so it is okay”, describes Hyvönen.

He sees that the Middle European people are much more positive, polite and they need more conversation and confirmation as well as active communication. Hyvönen explains that he feels that sometimes the negotiations in Middle Europe are more like shouting competitions, especially when discussing about funding. “Finnish style is to do a phone call and ask directly: Do you want to give us money? Good, bye. That is it, Finn thinks that everything is okay until they get some other signal”, continues Hyvönen. The communication style has a direct affect in financing as well. It is clear that in all aspects of the project manager working in Middle Europe needs to be more active in communication and particularly in lobbying for finance.

*Bergroth shares also her opinion saying that “I think it is a culture thing that somehow for us in Finland, if you do not have a problem, everything is okay and you do not have to be calling and doing this small talk stuff, checks, all the time. I found out very late that the other partners, they were kind of always worried, but did not really say it openly and then they were kind of expecting us to keep in contacts just*

*like hey, how are you, even though everything is fine. On the other hand, it is not just difference of communication culture, but in your work you have to live years, at least two, ahead and you are busy with your daily tasks in Finland and you realize that you haven't been calling your partners or been in touch with them".*

Bergroth informs that this was realized afterwards, it did not cause really any problems, but things could have been done differently to run them smoother.

Some of the Mental Finland staff did not speak any word of other languages apart from their mother tongue. Meaning, they did not speak any English, for example the Lithuanian set designer, who was crucially part of the core team. That naturally brought about extra difficulties.

*"The rehearsal process of course was a bit more tiring, because it was conducted, so to say, in bad English and "foreign" people had to also hear a lot of Finnish, which might have, from time to time given them an outsider feeling. Though we used translators, you have to be careful that none of the information gets lost on the way, but I would say that we had by far no real difficulties with that issue", describes Bergroth.*

She continues that, "of course you could say that when you know the mentality and when you know the way of working, it makes the work easier." Hyvönen states an important point as well that, "if you are not being understood you might feel that your way is not being respected."

Bergroth thinks that though with the nowadays technology, such as Skype, it is easy to have conference calls around the world but yet, it is different when you have people face-to-face in a meeting for almost the whole day. It is additionally important to recognize cultural differences in communication as to further think how to communicate and the ways of communication. In Mental Finland there should have been more face-to-face meetings, even though it is expensive. They are important particularly in international projects, and these meetings should have a well prepared agenda. In particular meetings where all partners are involved, or at least the main partners, are crucially important. Mental Finland

did not have any such a meeting though Smeds Ensemble's projects are often planned in a very personal way, almost nothing happens before people have sit down and discuss face-to-face.

*"In emails things just seem to disappear and everybody speaks English, but at the end it is not their native language, which leads to things are understood or meant in a different way. Like "yes" is not always a "yes yes", but it is "rather not yes" and things like that, " clarifies Bergroth.*

In Mental Finland extra work was needed afterwards, since they did not have those personal meetings with people. Bergroth suggests that one should make sure in the beginning that both are talking about the same things. It is a significant factor to remember that there is always a risk when one goes and works or makes a project somewhere where one does not know the language or the people one works with.

#### 4.5 Forms of International Co-productions

As Bergroth summarizes, "you choose your partners". The Mental Finland partners were:

The Smeds Ensemble (FIN) + KVS (BEL) + Finnish National Theatre (FIN) + Linz 2009 (AUT) + Vilnius 2009 (LTU) + Le-Maillon (FRA).

The main co-producers, and at the same time the main partners, in the Mental Finland project were Smeds Ensemble, Finland and KVS (Royal Flemish Theatre), Belgium. These two organizations were the main responsible ones in the project and they together designed the whole production. Then they had the other co-producers, which were the Finnish National Theatre, Finland and two European Capitals of Culture Vilnius '09, Lithuania and Linz '09, Austria. The project was supposed to have two more co-producers (festivals), but in the end neither of them participated in the project. However they got one more new co-producer Le-Maillon, Théâtre de Strasbourg - Scène européenne, France. All these organizations were co-producers in such a way that they invested money. "They invested money and in that way they were able to be involved in Kristian Smeds' production", tells Hyvönen. In a way they bought a part of the market

value of Kristian Smeds. Hyvönen opens up that the visit to Vilnius, which was more like a festival visit (Sirenos Festival), was based on them covering the expenses of that one performance. This shows that there are many different models of co-production inside one co-production.

Though KVS, which was the main partner, had invited Kristian Smeds to direct, Smeds Ensemble still had to sell KVS the idea of co-production. KVS had originally planned that they would invite only Kristian Smeds, pay him salary and in that way get him to direct a play. Instead, Smeds Ensemble suggested that "let's invest together into this production, let's do it together," tells Hyvönen. Though both parties knew each other for many years, Smeds Ensemble had to convince and sell the idea of co-production to KVS - since there was a higher risk to do a co-production. Hyvönen opens up that once they had convinced the KVS and the Finnish National Theatre, it was much easier to convince the other partners.

In Linz and Vilnius there were people that Kristian knew already personally (he had worked with them before), so they had the will to cooperate. Smeds Ensemble usually did a strategy, together with the person whom they knew already, about how to help him/her sell the project in his/her organization or city. Almost all the Mental Finland's co-production partners were quite natural choices; they were already interested in Smeds (Ensemble). Most of the main co-production partners were, as Hyvönen uses the word, "older friends". Hyvönen summarizes that all the contacts of Smeds Ensemble are results of traveling and meeting people all over the world for approximately ten years. So it is a long process to create the network and contacts.

The Mental Finland case is a good example on how the brand of your organization/artist(s) effects of creating partnerships. There is a difference when working with "big name", instead of being an emerging new group or name. If you are working with already established group or artist(s), you do not really need to sell yourself or the performance. That tells something that Smeds Ensemble does not even need to do marketing. They have usually five to six (5-6) different venues, festivals or people asking them if they would like to

cooperate. Maybe due to this reason, Mental Finland had, so to say, "serious and big" partners involved already quite in the beginning of the process.

There was an aim in Mental Finland that they would have had two festival partners 1) The Wiener Festwochen, Vienna Festival (one of the biggest festivals in Europe) and 2) Baltic House, International Theatre Festival in St. Petersburg. In the end, they did not have either of them. The problem concerning these partners in the case of Mental Finland was that Smeds Ensemble relied on its partners too much. What happened in a real life was that big festivals who wanted to co-produce, in the end cancelled on a short notice. The biggest mistake was that there were no contracts, nothing was written. There were only promises from the festivals such as "yes we have to see, we think, we hope, we should be able to finance." Smeds Ensemble was trusting too much on promises, hopes, which were not guaranteed. "The discussion went on and on, we were already rehearsing, counting on them", memorizes Bergroth. The cancellation reasons where that the other festival, Baltic House, got less money from grants than they had planned. And with the other festival, the Wiener Festwochen, it was kind of bad timing, even bad luck, since politics got involve, it become a fight between two parties. "Those were much more distant contacts to us, and in the end they failed", says Hyvönen. These are vital matters to think of when an organization starts planning a co-production. Whether to search new partners or just focus on those that already exists?

The Mental Finland case shows that it is good to remember when co-producing with festivals that they do not do planning that much in advance (approximately 1-2 years advance, not necessary 5 years like theaters). Still, it is crucial to start the negotiations in early stage, since it can take a long time before everything is fixed. Hyvönen and Bergroth agree that it would be good to have all the co-production partners confirmed at least one year before the premiere of the production. A good amount of partners depends of course heavily on the project/performance itself; the size and volume and how much money is needed. Of course, it is easier to coordinate and communicate if you have just two co-producers; it is already more challenging if you have four or five co-producers.



Co-production means as well sharing the production work. In Mental Finland the practice was mainly shared between Nicole Petit, who is in charge international touring at KVS and Eva Bergroth, Head of Production of Smeds Ensemble. The dancers, light designer and technicians were on KVS' payroll and actors, director, set designer and choreographer were on Smeds Ensemble's payroll. Both Bergroth and Hyvönen agree that there were no problems between the two organizations, KVS and Smeds Ensemble, concerning who is in charge of who is doing what. In Mental Finland there were no difficulties either with the question, whose production is it or who owns the project. It was clear that the auteur is Kristian Smeds since he is the author and director, after his name will come the different organizations.

Hyvönen emphasizes that the most important factor to consider when one does co-productions is with whom one partners. He imagines that it would be horrible to be co-producing something with people whom one does not share the same values with or one senses that they are not on the same level. It could be very conflicting to work with such people and have a big shared financial responsibility at the same time, so one should not get tied up with people whom one does not really want to work with. "Aim for the nicest possible partners and nicest possible people", says Hyvönen.

#### 4.6 Financing International Co-productions

Mental Finland's overall budget was approximately 550 000 euros. The budget was roughly divided between the co-production partners in such a way that 1/3 came from Smeds Ensemble, 1/3 from KVS and 1/3 from other co-producers. In other words, Smeds Ensemble's part of the budget was approximately 200 000 euros, which they needed to "donate" for the cooperation project. Smeds Ensemble invested their entire annual budget into Mental Finland; it was their biggest production by far. Smeds Ensemble gained its funding from the Finnish Cultural Foundation (Suomen Kulttuurirahasto) 90 000 euros, Ministry of Education and Culture (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö) 50 000 euros, Alfred Kordelin Foundation (Alfred Kordelin Säätiö) and the City of Helsinki Cultural Office (Helsingin Kulttuurikeskus).

In Mental Finland the financing was a concrete challenge, there were difficulties in funding. That has to do also something with Kristian Smeds' way of making art, since he is very much a process-oriented theater maker. Hyvönen describes that during the first year when he was trying to find funding for the Mental Finland, he had to sell something that no one really knew anything about, even the title of the play changed four times after that. When trying to find funding, no matter from which source, it is about convincing. The manager needs to convince the partners/funders to invest for the project. The manager has to have trust towards the artist that he/she delivers what has been agreed. In the case of Mental Finland Smeds Ensemble brought the skeptical people over to Finland, to see the Unknown Soldier that was running in the Finnish National Theatre. "Especially if you are an emerging artist, it is crucial to be able to convince that you are not just a strange guy/girl from Finland trying to sell some air", summarizes Hyvönen. This describes well the whole art business, especially performing arts; managers are selling something which does not exist yet.

When designing the budget of Mental Finland, Smeds Ensemble had counted on getting funds from the European Union. They applied from the European Commission 150 000 euros, but they did not receive anything from the EU. Hyvönen and Bergroth feel that EU money is like Russian roulette. In their opinion, it is difficult to know really the criteria, and which people are making the decisions, since it is secret who sits in the jury. After the decision, one receives a paper where it is explained why the project was not suitable for the guidelines. But what one does not necessary know whether it was the application why the project was denied. Smeds Ensemble's guess was that the jury wanted to support different kind of things, not really a performance but more sustainable structures, such as networks, which are kept alive even after the project ends. With a performance one cannot ever guarantee that kind of continuity, people might network within the group (which happened in Mental Finland) or not, but one cannot know it in advance or force it.

From the Finnish Cultural Foundation Smeds Ensemble had applied for a certain grant during the official application period in October. When they found out that they did not receive any money from the EU, and at the same time some

planned partners packed up, they were really worried about what will happen to the project. Smeds Ensemble heard from a possibility to apply outside the deadline period from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, if one could really justify why one needs the grant. Smeds Ensemble sent in a new application of 90 000 euros and they ended up getting the full amount, which they had applied for. The year 2009 was Finnish Cultural Foundation's 70th anniversary year. It was actually a quite unique case in Finland that an organization receives full amount they have applied outside the application period. The case was noted in the press and it gave good publicity to Finnish Cultural Foundation. In the end one could say that it was really up to the Finnish Cultural Foundation (in their power) to decide whether the Mental Finland project should happen or not. It was such a huge amount of money (in Finnish scale) that Smeds Ensemble would have not been able (most probably) to apply or fundraise that kind of sum of money from anywhere else. Furthermore, it was quite phenomenal that they received the exact amount they had applied, but it was really the concrete amount Smeds Ensemble needed. As Bergroth describes, in a way it is good that there are ways outside the so called "normal ways of applying funding", but she also hopes that they do not have to rely on this kind of unorthodox methods within the next projects, since they really take so much time, effort and energy.

Mental Finland applied also for Culture export grant (Kulttuuriviennin kärkihankkeet) from the Ministry of Education and Culture. They did not get the fund from the Ministry at first. When Smeds Ensemble found out that they did not get the fund, they took it to the press and it almost became a scandal. They also contacted all kinds of people whom they knew could contact the Ministry people. Bergroth assumes that they did not make enough lobbying work in the beginning. She thinks, it could also be the weakness of a new project/organization that you do not know the people yet who are doing the decisions, or moreover presenting the applications to the board as a conclusion. But Smeds Ensemble put a lot of pressure to the Ministry, which at the end was worth it, since they got the grant. In the end Smeds Ensemble was allowed to hand out a new application, though there was no official application deadline period. Officially the grant, 50 000 euros came from the Culture Exchange/Cooperation fund, not from the Culture Export fund.

*“So we did not actually know where the money came from. It is very interesting. We never complained obviously because we got the money...but...You can make things happen if you really want to and it made to me the Ministry work look very random and result of a huge lobby work. There should definitely be some clarification. Not to forget the question that why overall performing arts is in such a bad position in the whole process”, tell Bergroth.*

In addition to the funds mentioned above, Smeds Ensemble received from the city of Helsinki a three (3) year Development Project Fund (Kehityshanketuki) for Mental Finland project and a grant from Alfred Kordelin Foundation.

Hyvönen adds up that though the funding was challenge, his observation is that it is also about taking the risk - and fortunately in Mental Finland the risk was worth it. Though he must admit that from time to time it was stressful. In his point of view, the grant system can make artists passive in a way that one first applies for a grant and if one does not get it, one does not do the project. Instead in Mental Finland they started the project and were applying the money at the same time.

Another observation that Hyvönen shares is that one has to be very active in the application process, communication is very much related to the financing. Before applying one has to call or meet the person who is responsible of putting the application forward. One should inquire what and how one should say in the application. One should be communicative - lobby. The advice is to make the project that one is doing transparent to the funders and get into dialogue. Hyvönen thinks that this is one of the key questions. He continues that manager needs to be very bold in asking the funds and persistent. Most probably on the first time one asks the money from the officials they will say no. One should not accept it but to keep on asking and giving arguments and defend ones project.

#### 4.7 Culture export versus culture exchange

In Hyvönen's opinion co-production is a good way to go abroad since it is not one way traffic only. Hyvönen sees the concept of culture export an old fashion, kind of nationalistic idea that Finland would have some unique things and

should export them and get benefit from that. Instead, co-production usually goes in both ways like exchange, one brings something, one takes something. Hyvönen describes co-production with word "shared responsibility." Considering those facts Mental Finland project was culture exchange project by nature.

*"Of course you give something to the people you are with a longer time and it is a natural exchange, it is a give and take. We learned something about Brazil because we had a Brazilian dancer and I mean you are always working with individuals but somehow you can learn from the people also and they perhaps learn something also...It is two way traffic, if you bring something somewhere it means you want to gain something, you want the exchange to happen, and it has to go both ways", describes Bergroth.*

Eva Bergroth considers everything they do in Smeds Ensemble as a cultural exchange. Bergroth is questioning the whole culture export idea by saying that should culture at all be measured by economical standards? She thinks that performing arts will never be the factor that makes the GDP grow in Finland. Maybe pop music can do that, though even bands need touring funding, but at least they have other (mass) products like CD's and merchandises they can sell. "Internationalization or export should not be self-value, there has to be some artistic value and to recognize that culture has an added value, which cannot be measured" argues Bergroth. In Bergroth's opinion if you are talking about export you are always talking about exchange, especially in the case of added value.

Hyvönen thinks that the Culture Export fund (Kärkihankkeet) is at the moment supporting products and formats, which is not how it should be in the creative industries, especially in the performing arts. "Is there a point of financing such artist and groups who are already at the international market, do they need to be exported", Bergroth is asking. In Hyvönen's opinion the funds are now going to the multinational record companies, which should succeed by themselves since they are businesses. Hyvönen sees another reason as well why there are

export grants in the music business, since the theater and performing arts people have not been active in asking and demanding.

Bergroth would also wish some kind of open fundamental discussion about the aims and purposes of the culture export. Why are we exporting culture? Moreover the export criteria should be more transparent. It should be also made more clear how to navigate between the different fund applications and be more outspoken and written that for what kind of project one can apply what kind of grant. There should be clear definitions on what culture exchange is and what is culture export and exactly on what purpose is the grant meant for when applied.

As we know, currently the problem with the culture export funding is that the amount of the grant has been kept the same for a long time, and it is quite fuzzy. During the last application period the applications were transformed from Ministry of Education and Culture to the Finnish Art's Council. Hyvönen is really hoping that there will come some development concerning the culture exchange grant. On the other hand, Hyvönen wants to emphasize that if people and organizations want to do culture exchange they should first actively make contacts and create opportunities. Hyvönen has faith as well since things are still in process concerning these two funds and that there is a lack of dialogue. He thinks that the term culture export fits when discussing about industrial design, films and music business, but it does not apply to the performing arts.

Bergroth thinks that most fruitful and successful funds are the ones for longer processes/period like residency or long-term tour funding. For example, when a group would come to Finland it would not perform only in Helsinki. "Compared to Holland or France where a created piece automatically tours at least nine cities and the whole tour is planned before you even have the creation", tells Bergroth.

#### 4.8 Managing Intercultural Competence of Mental Finland: Challenges and Opportunities

##### Challenges in Mental Finland

- Long-term preparation and coordination. In such a big production there are many things that need to be planned carefully beforehand. The preparations will take at least two (2) years.
  - The physical distance of partners and the amount of partners
  - Financing
  - Managing time tables when so many people are involved. In Mental Finland almost 30 people were involved. Especial attention was needed since there where people from so many different countries; 11 nationalities.
  - When there are big organizations as partners (especially cultural capitals) it is difficult to find out who is in charge of what, who to contact or how their organizations function.
  - Communication
  - Cultural differences
- Hyvönen mentions both artistically and practically different working cultures. He tells that in Mental Finland they had many kinds of clashes related to intercultural communication. He adds that for him the differences are partly the thing that makes it interesting to do this work. Though he moreover recognizes that the clashes can be violent sometimes.
- It is also expensive to co-produce since the coordination costs can be high. Also there are not many places which can afford a big production such as Mental Finland.
  - Though all of the Smeds Ensemble people have a long history in the theatre and culture field, still it was the first time they did something on this scale and they were only three people. It made them all very busy and in a way lonely since you do not have a team to support you. It might create oddness or mistrust towards new partners since they are only three people, it does not sound so official or professional.
  - Hyvönen would put audience on the side of challenge and possibility, depending on which side of the coin you look at. "In a way when you are doing a co-production you do not really know what is the audience that you are facing or whom you are speaking to but it can be interesting as well", says Hyvönen. Since in his opinion theater is not anymore only something that is done for a community of spectators around oneself, nowadays often one does not know ones audience. He also argues that people do not go to theater

anymore because of loyalty but because they want to see for example an interesting direction.

## Opportunities in Mental Finland

- Artistic freedom

- As Ville Hyvönen claims if one is doing a co-production (instead e.g. freelancing) one will get part of the budget which also means that one can easily define with whom one wants to work with. One will in a way get more power and share the responsibility than if one would be just visiting some venue. Especially for Smeds Ensemble co-productions give more freedom to choose with whom they work with, how they work with (how to organize schedules, etc.).

*“The biggest thing for us in Mental Finland was that we wanted to bring the great Finnish actors, take them with us outside Finland and let them have this kind of experience. Moreover to show people in other countries that we have very good actors. We wanted to be the catalyst for this kind of exchange”, explains Hyvönen.*

- Financing

- Although financing is a challenge, through co-production opens new funding possibilities. “If you have like couple of big festival which will support you and you produce; you create with that money and then you also have a platform to present your work so it opens of course new possibilities to work”, tells Bergroth.

- New contacts, new influences, able to be present at festivals, chance to meet colleagues

- One can create and have/be part of the network of people. These people in the network are important ones to spread the word; word of mouth, and give recommendations based on trust. Through this new artists/groups get discovered. One can create personal connections. “It is very important to be present at festival or in theaters that have name”, summarizes Bergroth.

- Hyvönen sees that Mental Finland was a great opportunity, to be able to make new connections and to work with also surprising partners, the audiences and



theaters where they toured were all totally different. Hyvönen argues that it is a value itself to meet all these people and see all these audiences and places.

- New audiences
- New projects will be created, people find each other (also inside the group)

*“Personally at least, I do not want to consider that this was just one production and when it is finished then that is the end. We found lots of new interesting artists, people and places whom we want to work in the future. Now it seems that is slowly happening it just takes time”, clarifies Hyvönen.*

- Advantage for such a small organization as Smeds Ensemble to do co-productions is that they can be very flexible and there is no hierarchy (or bureaucracy). There is in a way more freedom to do what they want to do and it is easier for a partner to know who is in charge of what and whom to contact. Smeds Ensemble is easily movable group, and it does not cost much to move three people.

## 5 Conclusions

It is clear that Mental Finland was able to create its own culture. In Hofstede's (2005, 20) logic, as stated in the theoretical framework of this study, natural culture, particularly national societies, and mindsets are the ones that determines how people act in intercultural encounters. I would argue that in the case of Mental Finland as Clausen (2006, 54-55) states, other factors such as values are also important and have in this case more impact on defining the intercultural counters, at least inside the Mental Finland's working group. They were able to create a working process were the team was committed and united.

As it was seen in the case of Mental Finland, the national characteristics had an effect on some level to the intercultural communication. But as Clausen (2006, 55-56) argues there is a risk that stereotypes oversimplify cultures and nations. Moreover, what I see particularly applies to this case is that national characteristics do not automatically describe characteristics in a business context, especially in the context of intercultural business. I state again that art field, and particularly performing arts field, has special characteristics. People work very much on value base and are often very aware of their "mental softwares". Peters and Waterman (1982) argue that in a small organization in which the founders and key leaders are at the heart of the organization their values shape much of the organization culture; this can be seen also in the case of Mental Finland.

It came out in the analysis and results, firstly Kristin Smeds has his very own characteristics style of working, secondly Smeds Ensemble has its very own organization culture based very much on values and how they want to work, third the emerging of 11 national cultures and different working cultures which created the very own Mental Finland culture, Mental Finland family, which were based on some shared and negotiated values. As Soderberg, Holden, Brannen and Salk (2002) see that culture is understood to be negotiated and emerging, has Mental Finland negotiated its managing culture with its different partners based on contextual settings. As Soderberg & Holdern (2002, 112) continue further about the organizational culture, they argue, from the social constructivist point of view, that culture is something which is mutually

constructed among participants and depended on a context. In Mental Finland people have shared (at least partly) patterns of meanings and interpretations which are produced and continually reproduced.

As Soderberg, Holden, Brannen and Salk (2002) emphasize when dealing with culture and several contextual levels, the individual level of knowledge and accumulated personal experience in intercultural encounters is an important factor. This can be seen also through the entire study from the interviews of Bergroth and Hyvönen. I fully agree with Early and Ang (2003) that successful intercultural management depends on the manager's broad situational awareness of what is seen and heard in the minds of both parties.

Regarding intercultural competencies, many human relation skills that Bartlett & Davidsson (2003) listed came out also in the interview of Bergroth and Hyvönen. These skills are crucial for competent international arts manager. The self-awareness, what is strongly emphasized in intercultural competencies, is one of managers' key competencies as well. The set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills are the key to successful international management.

Clausen states (2006, 44-45) that communicating effectively is challenging even to managers who work with culturally homogenous workforce, so when colleagues speak another language and come from different cultural background communication becomes considerably more difficult and this was seen also in the case of Mental Finland. Mostly this "loss of cultural signals" in the case of Mental Finland happened in the communication situations, exactly as in the example of Tobin (2009, 61) about Japanese and Western communication previously in the theory of this study. One should not forget the communication towards different stakeholders even when one is executing daily tasks. It is important to keep the discussion going on all the time with partners, working group and people who are involved.

In order to have more successful co-productions there needs to be more communication and dialogue between different people. How to develop and take care of the intercultural communication? The list of Bartlett & Davidsson's

(2003) basics that should be remembered is a good checklist. In more general level based on this study, things to learn for the future:

- Always have written contracts, even if there would be trust and some things might still be moving, at least with main partners
- Have more time for the coordination, especially scheduling
- Try to fix things already earlier, minimum one (1) year before the planned premiere
- Make sure that there is a sure "yes" from different partners, from performance dates to the budget figures
- Calculate budget according to the real situation and not with the ideal one, wishful thinking versus risk taking
- More planned communication towards all stakeholders, financiers, partners, etc.
- More face-to-face meetings, especially the first planning meeting with all partners

Hyvönen argues that the most important thing in the artistic process is that there is conversation. Philosophical, why things are done, going on; people share ideas, ideologies, and values. Hyvönen thinks such conversations are essential since the processes are quite abstract, even in a level of producing.

Highly important aspect which is related to the communication, financing and partnership is trust. Bartlett & Davidsson (2003) say that trust is something that is built between people through long lasting relationships. In the case of Mental Finland when forming the co-production there had to be trust between the partners and this was due to long-term personal relationship. Yet, here again the values will play a significant part. Since I argue that the co-production is less risky if the partners share the same values.

The model of how the theater is being produced in Finland is actually very different from what it is in many other European countries. Most Finnish theaters, e.g. Finnish National Theatre, run tight repertoires with lot of permanent actors. This is one reason why the model of doing co-production is much more unknown in Finland than in most of the countries in Europe, where

it is more like a norm. Many theaters in Europe produce some performances completely themselves, have some visiting groups and actually co-produce most of their productions.

A lot of capital or resources are involved in buildings which is sort of left over from the 60's and 70's when an effort was put into building the infrastructure of cultural organizations. Once a good system has turned against itself. Are we more keen on investing on properties and technology rather than for example on people's salaries? Free theater groups instead of adopting the same model as city theaters should invent more suitable structures. The biggest challenge why co-productions do not to increase in Finland is that it is so difficult to find the gap between repertoires.

In order the Finnish funding structure would serve better the performing arts field and moreover theatre, the structure should be more flexible. It should be able to react more quickly. At the moment the structure is impossible already for the reason that one only has one application deadline per year. "Sometimes it might happen that one is invited somewhere with very short notice, but there are no ways how to react. We would need a new system of tour funding" argues Bergroth. Most commonly the travel costs are the ones the organization needs compensation.

Currently there is tension between cultural and economic objectives. There is a risk that when building a program that requires to be predominantly economic or cultural reduces its effectiveness in vice versa and the outcome does not help the whole art field to develop. At the moment there is no funding for arts managers to create network and search opportunities, since the funds are allocated to ones who already have connections. There is no support for the emerging artists and groups in order to develop. The culture export funding increases the static positioning of arts, particularly performing arts. As in renaissance there is only one leading artist who will carry the Finnish flag with him/her. Different travel grants should be increased and the application period should be open. Resident opportunities should be created more for performing arts and in all these the management portal should be noted. Money should be allocated from these "top and high profile export projects" to projects which

actually are high quality and create cultural exchange and dialogue. One of the main purposes of mobility and exchange during times has not been only trade but the exchange of information and knowledge, this seems to be lacking at the moment. If there is no information exchange there will not be increase in competencies.

As it came out through this case the finance is a challenge and opportunity in co-productions, as it was in the survey of Hoskins, McFayden and Finn (1996). Financing takes a lot of time and resources. The question for the future international co-productions is that how with the help of this case analysis they can manage to conduct a co-production where the finance is only on the side of opportunity.

As stated, the networking and being present in different international forums is crucial. But instead of only creating opportunities for artists, how can art managers enhance cultural exchange and create co-production networks if they do not have mobility opportunities? Also often the problem in the field of Finnish theatre is that the actors are so small. For this reason it is significant to pull resources together by cooperating. For further development it is critical to have examples of good practices and identify barriers. In order to do this there needs to be structures which support arts managers capacity building meaning scholarships and grants and funds for research in arts management field.

There should be an umbrella organization, such as Opera Europa, which would promote co-productions among its members and facilitate seminars on the subjects in which members can create best practices of co-productions. We are lacking a forums where to discuss and develop co-productions. I also suggest that a co-production workbook should be written. It would help to make better co-productions, start them and to encourage further discussion about them. Could this kind of online database be built also for theatre and performing arts producers and managers concerning the international co-productions?

This study can later work as "best-practices" for managers who will work in the context of intercultural management, international co-productions and culture exchange in performing arts. A case study is excellent way to describe processes and share knowledge. There are few Finnish managers who have a lot of tacit knowledge, experienced and competent people who work or have worked

internationally. As stated previously in this study the question is how do we manage that tacit knowledge when it is fragmented and how do we implement and share all the knowledge that these people possess? This study was one step forward in the practice of collecting relevant data from the relevant people, and further analyzing and documenting that.

For further studies I suggest collecting more interview data from different arts managers who have done co-productions in the performing arts field or wider in the arts field. Another further study could be foreign market exploration, market mapping, from different and new countries to find out suitable future co-producers in order to widen market and audience base. It is noted that in order to develop the Finnish arts management field there is future generation who is competent enough to work and do international co-productions and culture exchange it is crucial that there is continuation of sharing this tacit knowledge which will be gathered and documented, and that there will come best-practices which are shared on the field. Finland is small country and there are not many managers working in the performing arts field. Instead of competition, cooperation should be the key word when discussion internationalization.

Kristian Smeds: "Teatteri on tahtotila".

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Interviews:

Eva Bergroth (May 21st, 2010)

Ville Hyvönen (June 11th, 2010)

# Appendices

## 1. Production credits: Mental Finland

Direction and script: Kristian Smeds

Video design: Ville Hyvönen

Choreography: Ari Numminen

Scenography: Juraté Paulekaité

Technical direction and light design: Gérard Maraite

Sound design: David Simeon Lipp & Thomas Binder-Reisinger

Dramaturgi: Ivo Kuyl

Performance: Juhan Ulfsak, Kalle Holmberg, Eva Klemets, Tarja Heinula, Tommi Korpela, Hannu-Pekka Björkman and Janne Reinikainen

Dance: Eleonore Valère, Milton Paulo, Domenico Giustino, Milla Koistinen, Stefan Baier and Ana Cristina Velasquez

Choreographer's assistance: Laura Lee Kamppila

Director's assistance and subtitling: Reeta Tuoresmäki

Technical production management: Jean Schols

Sound: Steven Lorie

Light: Dimi Stuyven

Camera: Lennart Laberenz and Margareta Andersen

Set building: Petri Tuhkanen, Jonathan Kyöttinen, Silver Zombie, Simona Biiksaite, Jegi Pekkala and Mykolas Budraitis

Video software: Pauli Ojala

Atelier costumes KVS: Claudine Bogemans and Nicole Bynens

Tutu's: Ihanus and Anneli Partanen

Props manager and carpenter: Willy Van Barel

Carpenter: Jimmy De Boelpaep

Subtitling assistance: Inge Floré

Producer (Smeds Ensemble): Eeva Bergroth

Project coordination (KVS): Nicole Petit