

'Book review: "The French culturalist way: an interpretative approach on 'national culture" on Philippe D'IRIBARNE (2012) Managing corporate values in diverse national cultures, the challenge of differences New York: Routledge

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Book review:

Philippe D'IRIBARNE, 2012

Managing corporate values in diverse national cultures,
the challenge of differences

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Book review

Philippe D'IRIBARNE (2012)
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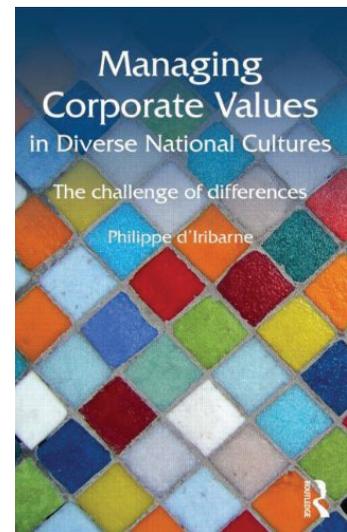
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THE FRENCH CULTURALIST WAY: AN INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH ON 'NATIONAL CULTURE'

"Managing corporate values in diverse national cultures, the challenge of differences" (hereafter 'Managing Corporate Values'), is the English version of a French book published in 2009 by Philippe d'Iribarne, Managing Director of Gestion et Société (Management and Society), at CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) in Paris, France. Reading this book, one is immersed in a thorough and original piece of work showing in different cultural working contexts, how relative the meaning of certain values can be: in this instance, corporate values. Such values are not necessarily the same things for different people – nor are they seen the same way. The author, Philippe d'Iribarne, looks at the way a set of corporate values is diffused within a multinational company. D'Iribarne is able to detail how these values materialize in the employees' daily practices in several subsidiaries, thanks to in-depth investigations within the Lafarge group – 'an industrial group with French roots and a humanist tradition' (Foreword in d'Iribarne, 2012). The Lafarge group is a world leader in cement, aggregate and concrete, employing 68,000 people in 64 countries ("Lafarge - Etude Xerfi " (2012). In this book, d'Iribarne compares what it means to the French, the Americans, the Chinese and the Jordanians to comply with the values defined in a corporate text called 'Principles of Action'¹.

Overall, d'Iribarne's contribution is to provide evidence that companies are mistaken when they believe they are spreading (or that they could spread) the same universal values to all their subsidiaries. This assumption seems true until one zooms in to analyze how employees actually interpret the abstract meaning of these values through their behavior. Values only become truly meaningful for them when they find the necessary and even essential slack to re-contextualize these values within their own cultural framework. Through his analysis, d'Iribarne also interestingly questions the validity of two extreme and opposite views in international management. Can Western companies impose their values and style of management? i.e., can they and should they promote a "cultural imperialism"? Or should they let the local subsidiaries totally rely on the local culture? i.e., adopt an attitude of "value relativism"? (Introduction in d'Iribarne, 2012: 1)



1. The 'Principles of Action' set the vision of the Group, the values which should inspire all employees at Lafarge: the 'Lafarge Way'. Originally designed in 1977, they have been regularly rewritten to fit the evolution of the group – and such was the case in 2003-2004, when the 'Leader for Tomorrow' project was launched to boost performance and growth, particularly in emerging countries.

This review proposes to discuss the main added-value of the book, summarized in the following four ideas:

- an original perspective on the articulation between corporate culture and national culture,
- the literature is enriched by another relevant example of the concepts of recontextualization and semantic fit,
- an additional resource for non-French speaking researchers, giving them access to d'Iribarne's research on national culture and on his interpretative approach,
- an enlightening qualitative analysis of how values are diffused across the Lafarge group.

Before developing each of these key features and some possible limitations, it is useful to have a broad outline of the book.

THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The author has organized his discussion in five chapters, summarized below. The first three chapters explain the findings of d'Iribarne's interpretative research in four different cultural settings: French versus American (Chapter 1), Chinese (Chapter 2) and Jordanian (Chapter 3).

Chapter 1: d'Iribarne compares the French and American English versions of the 'Principles of Action' by dissecting each text's chosen turn of phrase and vocabulary. This reveals two different conceptions of life - and more specifically of life in companies. For the Americans: "A company (...) strives for prosperity by satisfying the demands of its customers and shareholders as best it can. It is also part of a community to which it is accountable with regard to its moral stance (...)." On the contrary, for the French, there is a "reticence towards both the mercantile vision of a company and the vision of integration into a community" (D'Iribarne, 2012: 8). According to the methodology d'Iribarne developed, comparing a text simultaneously written in two different languages allows researchers to decipher their respective unconscious conceptions of life (d'Iribarne, 2011; d'Iribarne, 2012: 110-111).

Chapter 2 points out that Lafarge's values in China could not drastically affect the weight of managers' authority: employees would never openly challenge it. However, by encouraging more respect and concern for subordinates, it shows the 'Principles of Action' made room for a 'Chinese way' of applying these values, allowing more consultation, less favoritism and more consideration for personal development.

In Chapter 3, d'Iribarne explains that it was too early to make conclusions on the Jordanian setting. Indeed, Lafarge had - at that time - just acquired a 40% stake in the only local cement works company (Lafarge Annual Report 1998 2nd part, 1998). However, initial reactions of Jordanian employees to the Lafarge values showed strong hope and high expectations for a more equitable recognition of employees' work. In the meantime, they rejected open

criticism and the decisions which could exclude certain workers from being part of a united community (e.g., training that would only be proposed to certain employees, privileges for certain categories of workers).

These first three chapters show that the Lafarge set of values, although understood and endorsed by the subsidiaries does not materialize as similar practices across the Group. The Principles are even often adapted, as a result of the text being translated - and in particular - not by the headquarters ("The Principles of Action were adapted locally into Arabic, without consultation with the parent company, by a committee of Jordanian managers working from the American version" (D'Iribarne, 2012: 54)). The Lafarge values are naturally given a local meaning, which is shaped by the style of management that is socially acceptable in each context.

Then, in Chapter 4, d'Iribarne adds a few insights about commitment and contribution to the company's success, provided by the quantitative processing of a questionnaire. Although submitted to thousands of employees in the Lafarge group, the analysis of the questionnaire in this book mainly focuses on the same national cultures as in the qualitative data (French, American, Chinese, Jordanian,). However, d'Iribarne also analyzed data from Malaysian respondents. By comparing the patterns of coherence in the answers, the author shows there are very different approaches between, on one hand the USA and France, on the other hand China, Jordan and Malaysia. The author also warns one should not base one's understanding of a culture only on "a few figures", which do not necessarily determine the outcome - interpretations need to be grounded in each mental universe.

In the last chapter, d'Iribarne extends his findings from the Lafarge business context to the world at large: "the unity of a national culture accommodates a wide range of practices associated with very diverse orientations in terms of values" (d'Iribarne, 2012: 93). Accordingly, it's very hard to predict when an encounter might lead on one hand to a culture clash - or on the other, to cooperation - let alone to be able to measure 'cultural distance'. Finally, d'Iribarne concludes it is desirable neither to promote 'cultural imperialism', (morally unacceptable), nor 'value relativism', leaving one to abandon inter-cultural dialogue. His proposal is to use an ethnographic study to systematically examine situations of cultural interactions: "Choose a field of observation, watch, analyze, try to understand." (D'Iribarne, 2012: 103-104). For d'Iribarne, such an approach is the only way to understand properly different conceptions of living together and their associated values. Ultimately, he assumes humanist companies such as Lafarge, which seek to enhance democratic values, would benefit from this less ethnocentric approach. The possible recontextualization of democratic values in other cultural settings shows evidence of mutual tolerance and constructive debate.

A DIFFERENT CONCEPTION OF THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN CORPORATE CULTURE AND NATIONAL CULTURE

D'Iribarne has his own definition of national culture: "To describe a culture that can be called national is to bring all these elements to light: on the one hand, **the ideal representations of social life** to which, in practice, reality can conform more or less strictly; on the other hand, **the fears that these visions conceal**; and in addition, **the connections** between everyday working life and these representations (bold added) (d'Iribarne, 2011). His definition is to be distinguished from determinist views that consider a national culture as a well-defined and homogeneous entity, as can be found in Hofstede's research (Hofstede, 1997). As Dupuis stresses, referring to Hofstede's approach: "Philippe d'Iribarne proposes for his part, in his 1989 book, an alternative to this approach based on statistical scores, derived from attitudes and values scales, which would distinguish societies and cultures from each another ²." (Author's translation from Dupuis, 2009: 129). D'Iribarne does not subscribe either to the extreme relativism of culture, as a perpetual negotiation of significance. His conception, in line with anthropologist C. Geertz's (1973), reconciles both aspects of society: continuity and change. Culture is the shared framework of meaning leading to a diverse range of practices (d'Iribarne, 2009a: 168)

D'Iribarne does not try to give a definition of what a corporate culture is, not even to define Lafarge's. It is simply specified that Lafarge expects to "gradually join forces around core values that help create and give meaning to a common and shared identity." (Foreword d'Iribarne, 2012). But through his observation and interviews, he shows how the Lafarge values articulate with foreign national cultures. For example, in the Chinese section about hierarchical relationships and authority: "What Lafarge's influence achieved was to steer these practices within a Chinese universe of possible solutions, but still in line with the Group's values of respect and concern for subordinates" (D'Iribarne, 2012: 35). The conclusions of the book go against a common myth that: "When people talk of "the corporate culture", they usually mean values and practices that are shared across all groups in a firm, at least within senior management." (Kotter & Heskett, 1992: 6). D'Iribarne rather demonstrates that although certain values are meaningful across many cultures, their meaning is not necessarily the same everywhere. As a consequence, the behaviors and practices which will be considered in line with these values will also take different forms.

Therefore, according to his approach, there is no competition between corporate culture and national culture. The corporate culture is interpreted by individuals through their shared framework of meaning, giving birth to specific meaningful and socially acceptable behaviors. That said, d'Iribarne does not answer the concern of many business researchers and managers: could corporate culture and values leverage performance in companies? In an American context in the 80s, it was proven that alignment of individual and organizational values lead to higher productivity and performance (Peters & Robert H. Waterman Jr., 1982; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985). At the same period, the idea of using corporate culture to succeed in internationalization of companies was still controversial (Schneider, 1988). Critical Management Studies could even blame d'Iribarne for being a 'culture purist', not truly questioning the political,

2. "Philippe d'Iribarne propose pour sa part, dans son livre de 1989, une alternative à cette approche basée sur des scores statistiques, produits à partir d'échelles d'attitudes et de valeurs, qui distingueraient les sociétés et les cultures les unes des autres."

moral and manipulative ends a corporate culture can serve (Willmott, 1993: 520-521). Does he indeed remain critical about Lafarge's humanist tradition and wish to enhance democratic values in their various subsidiaries? By providing a renewed perspective on the impact of corporate values across borders, he reveals the possible cross-fertilization between the values of a Western company and the diverse local foreign cultures' potentialities. This is not achieved by manipulation, but rather by the unconscious behaviors of employees themselves, who happen to exploit the corporate values to bring about some change in the local management. Although the link between supposedly shared values and success may still be an expected outcome nowadays in multinational companies, the book does not aim to provide any demonstration of it. However, for Bruno Lafont, President and CEO of Lafarge: "There is little doubt that this book gives us keys to understanding how we can be more efficient." (Foreword in d'Iribarne, 2012)

MORE EVIDENCE OF THE RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF CORPORATE MESSAGES

D'Iribarne's book seems to be in line with the concept of 'recontextualisation' (Brannen, 2004): "how transferred organizational assets (...) take on new meanings in distinct cultural contexts." Brannen explains that recontextualization is closely linked to semantics as: "The transmission of meaning of organizational practices and other firm assets across cultures is done through cross-cultural communication. Communication is achieved through the use of language". In this sense, the 'Principles of Action', considered as an organizational asset, are conveying the group values. Every time this document is translated to be accessible in a subsidiary, d'Iribarne shows that the turn of phrase and vocabulary chosen are evidence that 'recontextualisation' has started. Recontextualization happens and is observable in the way employees adopt and adapt these principles in their daily behaviors. Similarly, Brannen explains that "There are shifts in meaning as the transferred offerings are interpreted and even appropriated by various stakeholders with distinct agendas in the new cultural contexts." (Brannen, 2004: 599). "A positive recontextualization can be a source of competitive advantage" (Brannen, 2004: 612). So, analyzing and accepting recontextualization seems particularly important for Lafarge: their internationalization is achieved through mergers or acquisitions of powerful foreign companies in their sector. These processes require some flexibility to collaborate efficiently with the existing firm in its local context.

D'Iribarne thinks companies should not impose a normative way through which to apply the values abroad. On the contrary, he shows that, thanks to some flexibility (or slack), recontextualisation allows employees in the subsidiaries to ensure the values remain locally acceptable and idealized. At first, he shows the choices made for the translation of the 'Principles' already reveal the particular underlying ideal vision of what life together should look like. It is a first step towards a beneficial recontextualisation. D'Iribarne points out that the Western vision of what the relationship between a company and their employees should be does not suit the vision of most other countries in the world. However, recontextualization of values allows the local subsidiaries to legitimate behaviors which were in a latent state in their cultural ideal-types.

A BOOK TO COMPLEMENT ONE'S UNDERSTANDING OF D'IRIBARNE'S RESEARCH

3. French National Centre for Scientific Research
<http://www.cnrs.fr/>

4. Management and Society

This book is worth reading in order to complement one's understanding of how much Philippe d'Iribarne, research director at the CNRS ³ and head of a researcher laboratory called "Gestion et Société ⁴" has achieved. D'Iribarne's theory (D'Iribarne, 2009b; d'Iribarne, 2011) highlights how different cultures are shaped by different "mental universes", different "shared frameworks of meaning" that inevitably lie behind a word or a concept. This unconscious background sometimes misleads people: when referring to a concept, different individuals may think they are all talking about the same thing, whereas the materialization of this concept may take very diverse forms for each of them. For example, when the 'Principles of Action' mention: "Fostering an environment where information is widely available and openly shared", they do not specify how the information will be made available and how it will be shared exactly.

The author provides us here with a concrete application of his interpretative approach. He shares clearly his way of deciphering "national cultures" and collecting useful data: "By comparing the remarks made by different actors on various areas of life, we are able to capture what characterizes a culture (...). Their conversations are full of clues to the implicit vision that they use to judge what surrounds them." (d'Iribarne, 2012: 110) Finding these clues in the interviews or the written documents produced by the company requires a rigorous and sustained effort, going back and forth between these clues and a tentative global picture of the shared framework of meaning. In this book, his interpretative approach is supported by both qualitative and quantitative methods: semi-structured interviews, participative observation, analysis of secondary data and a large survey of employees. Over the years, d'Iribarne has continually fine-tuned his concepts and their dynamics, capitalizing on constructive critics (Dupuis, 2004, 2009). This latest book takes into account d'Iribarne's most recent stage of research. One can however only really appreciate it by charting the progress from his earlier research: reading this book without having read his earlier work is certainly to miss part of its value.

Philippe d'Iribarne is already well known in the field of Intercultural Management, although his work deserves even more attention in both French and English literature. Dupuis and Livian, amongst others, support his research: "P. d'Iribarne's work is essential. One notices disappointingly that many French sociologists and anthropologists neglect it." ⁵ (Author's translation of Dupuis, 2009: 132); "His approach is rich and founded on the necessity of a historical and anthropological knowledge of the cultures concerned. It is anything but reducing international management issues to communication recipes, and it brings with it a long-term reflection on globalization." ⁶ (Author's translation of Livian, 2011: 10). D'Iribarne wrote his first book in France in 1970 ("La science et le prince"), but has worked more specifically on culture since 1989, which his best-seller "La logique de l'honneur" illustrates. That book is a qualitative study comparing three manufacturing plants of a French company in France, in the Netherlands and in the United States. (1989). Although not all of his

5. "Le travail de Philippe d'Iribarne est essentiel. Il est décevant de constater que de nombreux sociologues et anthropologues français le négligent. "

6. "Son approche est riche et fondée sur la nécessité d'une connaissance historique et anthropologique des cultures en présence. Elle est tout sauf la réduction des problèmes de management international à des recettes de communication, et elle est porteuse d'une réflexion à long-terme sur la mondialisation".

work is available in English, d'Iribarne has regularly published English versions of his results by way of articles and books - at least eight including this one. After the "Honour principle in the 'Bureaucratic phenomenon'" (1994), he promoted the ethnographic approach as able to transcend the limitations of a questionnaire-based approach (1997). He then investigated two subsidiaries of Western companies in Morocco and Mexico, and how the local entities could adopt some global management practices (2002). In 2007, he collaborated with Alain Henry on a report for the Agence Française de Développement ⁷. Their research analyzed case studies in Mexico, Morocco, Cameroon and Argentina and sought to provide a new insight on management across cultures in order to foster development in emerging countries and collaboration with Western organizations (D'Iribarne & Henry, 2007). In 2009, his articles aimed at diffusing his conceptualization of 'national culture' and his interpretative approach (d'Iribarne, 2009a, 2009b). Recently, d'Iribarne contributed to a collective book on case study and international business research, (Piekkari & Welch, 2011: 453-473).

While d'Iribarne's research significantly contributes to the field of intercultural management, it is Hofstede's work that remains dominant in scholars' literature reviews and bibliographies. Note for instance that d'Iribarne's work is not referred to in the article "Cross-cultural management" of Clegg and Bailey's International encyclopedia of organization studies (Nielsen & Hrivnak Jr, 2008). Nonetheless, Hofstede himself made several references to d'Iribarne's research as early as 1992. Hofstede finds some consistency between the high power distance rate in France (Power Distance in France: 68) and d'Iribarne's "honor principle": a profound desire of workers for independence, high conscientiousness and professional pride (D'Iribarne, 1994; Hofstede, 1997: 55-56). When Hofstede finds there is usually a correlation between high power distance and low individualism scores, d'Iribarne's "rationale of honor" is used as a good example of an exception to the rule. This "rationale of honor" is qualified as "a stratified form of individualism" (Hofstede, 1997: 84). The sharp and thorough analysis d'Iribarne made in the field - a collaboration between Renault and Volvo (D'Iribarne, 1998) - is also taken as a counterexample of the supposed link between high uncertainty avoidance and lack of creativity. This case showed the French to be more creative than the Swedes, even though France had a higher uncertainty avoidance rate than Sweden (Hofstede, 1997: 184).

D'Iribarne's body of work enlightens the traditionally more quantitative literature in intercultural management: his research is not only built on abstract concepts, but also on a complex interpretation of actual practices and representations in the field, thanks to ethnographic data. It provides a deep understanding of the internal logic of certain national cultures, based on the ideal-typical vision of what it means to live together; and his comparative approach is inspired by cultural interactions. The book being reviewed, "Managing Corporate Values", also provides a useful appendix, clearly explaining d'Iribarne's interpretative approach and methodology. This is well complemented by a chapter d'Iribarne wrote, called "How to use ethnographical case studies to decipher national cultures" (d'Iribarne, 2011).

7. Agence Française de Développement (AFD) "is a financial institution and the main implementing agency for France's official development assistance to developing countries and overseas territories. It finances projects, programs and studies through grants, loans, guarantee funds and debt reduction-development contracts and provides capacity development support to its partners in developing countries."(www.afd.fr, accessed on September, 30th 2012)

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON LAFARGE

“Managing corporate values” casts new light on the Lafarge group, a multinational company born in France, a group in which the top management is known for its deep Christian beliefs and background of French elite engineering schools (the latter a common point with d'Iribarne). It provides us with additional ethnographic and statistical data in different subsidiaries.

Ethnographic data is valuable to flesh out the usual economic data available on the group. Notably, all throughout the book, the author illustrates his analysis by extracts of interviews. For instance, in the chapter about China: ‘The place given to each employee’s personal development was particularly appreciated (...). One supervisor remarks: “Most importantly: I understand that management attaches great importance to humaneness and is closer to people, to each employee; helps employees to succeed. This particularly struck me.”’ (D’Iribarne, 2012: 39). The underlying ethnographic methodology is fully developed in the appendix and clearly describes the extensive work that allowed d’Iribarne to come to his conclusions.

Contrasting with this qualitative approach, a paper by Barjot (Barjot, 2007) reviewed the internationalization of the Lafarge group between 1993 and 2004, when d’Iribarne’s research was conducted. This French article describes the very dynamic period of internationalization through facts and figures: the Group was present in 40 countries in 1993, and in 75 countries in 2004; in 1998, the emerging countries represented almost half the workforce; growth was created through many alliances and joint ventures. It explains the Group’s success is certainly due to the consistency of the top management organization and “good governance” (of Messrs Collomb, Kasriel and Laffont), but also the development of employee share-ownership and investment in sustainable development, and research and development. The information available about the ‘Leader for Tomorrow’ program is limited to its goal: to boost performance and cohesion after the acquisition of two companies (Redland and Blue Circle). However, this article praising the successes of Lafarge does not say much about exactly how the management of alliances was conducted. This remains unexplored. For instance, speaking about the bid on Redland (UK), it states: “Integration is achieved in 6 months: it is a success.” (Barjot, 2007: 97) Providing a lot of figures is supposed to give evidence of the impressive capacity of external growth. But what about the human factor? And how employees themselves experienced the mergers and acquisitions? Such papers in economic journals do not provide any clue. In that sense, d’Iribarne’s book adds valuable material, through verbatim reports, semantic analysis of corporate documents, subtle observations and ethnographic work in the field.

LIMITATIONS

A few questions, however, arise in reading this book.

Firstly, there was a slight paradox in the research methodology in Chapter 3 about Jordan. The team interpreted without distinction speeches and interviews that were originally conducted either in Arabic or English and then translated into English and/or French. In Chapter 1, d’Iribarne however emphasizes the

impact, even the deforming prism of translation on a text: the way one text is written and translated reveals hidden cultural ideal types. One can only wonder if the analysis of speeches would have led to the same conclusions if they had been in their original version only. Research in intercultural settings is usually confronted with such language issues. D'Iribarne's interpretative approach can still nonetheless analyze the cultural patterns of language, even in a translated text.

Secondly, in the section allotted to quantitative analysis of the research (:84), an endnote specifies: "we came up with no clear interpretation of these differences, perhaps because our knowledge of these societies (China, Malaysia, and Jordan) is rather more limited than for France and the United States."

It seemed that this could reveal a limitation of the interpretative approach: it is only through time and repeated experience in a cultural setting that one could really access cross-cultural understanding.

Perhaps the book could also have challenged more the concept of corporate culture itself. Some critical points of view exist on corporate culture, a movement against the misuse of corporate culture, the ill-intentioned management hidden behind would-be values. (Chevrier, 2012; Willmott, 1993). Is that to say that Lafarge is honest about their values? Or that their intentions are not questioned in other countries? Is a humanist intention truly universal? This debate could have been launched.

Finally, perhaps the book could have benefitted from putting the research back in its more general context at Lafarge. Little is said about the growing importance of emerging countries at Lafarge during d'Iribarne's investigations. Actually, the share in the group turnover of Africa, Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia increased from 28.7% in 2002 to 57.2% in 2011 (Lafarge - Etude Xerfi, 2012: 8). Most of the external growth is conducted through alliances and joint ventures, as explained earlier. This context urges Lafarge's governance to determine the best measures which will ensure the cohesion of the growing group and balance in terms of power struggle. One of these measures was the rewriting of the 'Principles of Action'. In this sense, it is interesting to learn about this text's background. In fact, the 'Principles of Action' were originally drafted in 1977 by a small group of people, and were completely revised through several seminars involving firstly the Board of Directors, then 120 top managers of the group, then some operational groups in the subsidiaries. The final version was submitted to all of the 22,000 employees in 1979 (Lecerf, Woot, & Barraux, 1991: 182). These 'Principles' have interestingly evolved over the years: the first version contained region- and division-specific texts, for instance, Principles of Action for Brazil, for Canada or for the cement division. Since then, the text has been simplified – region-specific principles were abandoned - and revised every three to five years, according to each new strategic orientation, often following a major change in the group (merger or acquisition, restructuring, loss of competitiveness). These 'Principles' have become the common reference for all in the Lafarge group. They were translated into 29 languages, and have been simplified and focused mainly on one vision and some values. The five original chapters (Values, Environment, Missions, Objectives, Strategy) have been reduced to three sections: Our Vision, Our Commitments, the 'Lafarge Way' (Lecerf et al., 1991: 181-184). The evolution of this text follows the strategic orientations of

the Group. It is interesting to see it as a sort of foundation stone which became an asset that newcomers were obliged to heed. Appropriating the values of this text is inescapable. It may explain why certain subsidiaries translated the text into their own language instead of using the English or French versions, and did not require an official translation by the headquarters. (e.g., "The Principles of Action were adapted locally into Arabic, without consultation with the parent company, by a committee of Jordanian managers working from the American version" (D'Iribarne, 2012: 54)).

These few remarks are not true limitations of d'Iribarne's work. They simply reflect the thorough reading that was conducted for this review and the need for a holistic vision around this field of research.

CONCLUSION

In this book, d'Iribarne analyses how employees in some subsidiaries of the Lafarge group appropriate the corporate values in their local context.

D'Iribarne provides detailed evidence that we can better understand people's culture if we identify the framework that shapes their unconscious beliefs and fears; that this framework is what lies behind, or reinterprets, people's behaviors and attitudes individually and collectively; and that research in intercultural management can significantly benefit from more ethnographical data collection, as the subtleties and nuances of shared meaning universes cannot be revealed otherwise.

D'Iribarne also extends his findings to suggest that the Western radical view on democracy (which includes freedom of expression) is not likely to match a more restrictive version of democracy in other parts of the world (d'Iribarne, 2012: 98-99).

And finally, a promise is made on the back cover: "By following the example presented in this book, companies who care can deliver economic efficiency as well as progressive people management in the countries in which they operate." Interestingly enough, the original French version does not make the same promise. Considering d'Iribarne's approach, we are unsure that is really what the book aims to do. This perhaps reflects different strategies in marketing the book towards the French and international reader? Notice that even the title of the book differs in French and English versions. In French, literally, the title is 'The challenge of differences – The experience of a global company'. While this title suggests the company has overcome some cultural challenges, it does not explicitly assume it could be a case study to learn from as in the case of the English publication's title. Perhaps the turn of phrase of the translation (for the English version of the book) reveals, as per d'Iribarne's conclusions, the English speaking community could have different expectations than the French... A pragmatic rather than a philosophical consideration?

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