

Transfer of Management Concepts and Practices between Western Europe and Russia

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Knowledge Transformation

- Communication and interaction in cooperation processes are **not** a process of **linear** information transfer....
- ... but rather a **social communication process** that has to deal with asymmetric perception and interpretation of information due to different individual perspectives.
 - **Sociological System Theory**, e.g. Luhmann 1996: Knowledge as a structure that enables and enforces selective information handling
 - **Sociology of Knowledge**, especially MEADs (1969) theory on perspective taking
 - **Organisational Psychology**: Individuals interact and communicate against the background of their own social and cultural perception perspective in the respective interaction context (e.g. Raithel, 1983; Lave & Wenger, 1991)

RUSMECO project

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RUSMECO:

Enhancing **R**ussian
SME Collaboration and
Business Development
through **C**ommunities
of Practice

(IST-1999-29107)

RUSMECO challenges

- Building up cultural awareness despite of
 - very different social and professional socialisation
 - language barriers
- Transforming CoP management concept and practice
 - between project members
 - between project members and Russian SME

RUSMECO assumptions I

- A 1: As culture impacts business practices, **cultural awareness is the precondition** for management concept and practice transfer.
- A 2: **Gaining cultural awareness is very difficult** due to the implicit nature of knowledge on cultural roots.
- A 3: **Observation, reflection and analysis of practices and conversations** in the respective business context targeted at are potential means that might help to find out how 'foreign' management concepts and practices can be **integrated** there.
- A 4: **Individuals have to be seen as gatekeepers to culture**: They make cultural assumptions visible within their actions and can be enabled to explicitly formulate their recognitions, thoughts, ideas and experiences.
- A 5: **Observation, analysis and reflection** of cultural assumptions as well as communication on recognition patterns does not happen accidentally, it **needs stimulation**.

RUSMECO assumptions II

- A 6: The future RUSMECO solution has to be **integrated into the existing management and working practices of iSME** and make use of existing collaboration infrastructures.
- A 7: **Terms** used in foreign management concepts need to be **translated** into the language of the target system.
- A 8: **Personal trustful relationships** are key within knowledge transfer processes.
- A 9: The **customers** of knowledge transfer processes need to be heavily **involved into these transfer processes**, and they need to be supported by external experts.

Building up cultural awareness – Best Practices

■ Within the project team

- Dealing with different languages
- Understanding the cultural and historical background of partners
- Development of common working practices
- Development of common understanding on task content
- Defining communication processes

■ Between the project team and Russian iSME

- Regional coordinators as local contact points
- Regional coordinators as mediators between Western European partners and Russian iSME
- Feeling the spirit and gaining attention

Transforming CoP management concept and practice

- **Within the project team:**
 - Proven success: Common understanding developed
 - Long way, trust needed: Explain – Provide examples – Import experts – Bring Russians to Europe – Business games – iSME support
 - Reflection, reflection, reflection
- **Between the project team and Russian iSME:**
 - Identify and link onto existing business practices and infrastructures
 - Translate important terms well – but not necessarily literally.
 - Build trustful relationships: Create a reliable point of contact.
 - Integrate customers into transformation process: Let them decide what the new ideas mean to them, stimulate reflection

Conclusions

- Theoretical framework for knowledge transformation developed → need for further elaboration
- Relevance of assumptions proven for cooperation practice and knowledge transformation in RUSMECO
- Knowledge transformation practices can be recommended to similar projects