TYPICAL PORTUGUESE BEHAVIOURS, CULTURAL VALUES, AND A DUTCH PERSPECTIVE

MSc Business Administration – International Management and Consultancy

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Abstract

As part of an ongoing effort by the 'One market, many cultures' project which maps cultural differences in the European Union (EU), this paper provides detailed insights into typical behaviours of Portuguese people on the work floor as they were experienced by Dutch people working and living in Portugal. The overarching project has already done several such comparisons to help map cultural differences within the EU, but Portugal has yet to be considered. Moreover, while there are plenty of studies which (attempt to) describe some part of Portuguese culture, even in relation to The Netherlands, only one has sought to study typical Portuguese behaviours (cultural standards) on the work floor and none have linked these to underlying cultural values. This study seeks to add to the current discourse by doing both. Additionally, this study provides a more nuanced interpretation of more general, popular cultural frameworks. To do so, this study uses the Grounded Interpretive Model to both identify and link Portuguese cultural standards to their underlying cultural values. The findings of this paper suggest twelve cultural standards and four underlying cultural values. The latter being "Obeying", "Harmony", "Pride", and "Flexibility". Lastly, this paper explains how these values are related to the discovered cultural standards and how both relate to existing literature before providing actionable recommendations for those who find themselves in the situations identified in this study.

Keywords: Portugal, The Netherlands, culture, cultural comparison, cultural standard, Grounded Interpretive Model, cultural value, typical behaviour

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1. INTRODUCTION

European countries, like every other country, each have their own unique culture (Ege and Budke, 2022) which was formed by the different paths of development that each of these countries walked over the past centuries (Schwartz, 2009). Through their development, and that of the European Union (EU), came the possibility of free movement within and between the EU-member states, and a reduced number of border controls and trade barriers. Therefore, the European Union can be called one single market (European Commission, 2021).

Still, though the advantages of a shared market are clear, there are also some disadvantages which apply to the EU, but not to other big markets like the United States. Namely, EU-member states face cultural, and linguistic barriers that other large markets do not (European Parliament, 2017). However, it has yet to be determined whether this disadvantage is doomed to last forever, or whether it could be overcome. This is an important question, because accounting for and overcoming cultural differences are important when doing international business (Adamczyk, 2017). Moreover, cultural background has a clear impact on behaviour on the work floor (Hooker, 2009) and ethnic diversity is seen as an advantage (Hoogendoorn and van Praag, 2015).

As a part of the wider European 'One market, many cultures' project, this study takes a step towards illustrating and understanding cultural differences within the European Union by comparing the cultures of two EU countries. Specifically, this paper focuses on how Dutch people who live and work in Portugal perceive typical Portuguese behaviours and what cultural logic informs these typical behaviours. To achieve this, the Grounded Interpretive Model is used which clearly makes the separation between cultural standards and cultural values (Enklaar, 2022). Cultural standards are typical behaviours used by members of a cultural community in response to certain situations, whereas cultural values are the underlying (tacit) assumptions which explain why these behaviours occur.

The focus on Portugal and The Netherlands is interesting as, while there are comparisons between them, none has focused on the experiences of one nationality immersed in the culture of the other (Gallie and Russell, 1998; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Anderson and Witvliet, 2008; Marques et al., 2013; Hijzen et al., 2019; Costa et al., 2020). Moreover, it is valuable to compare these dissimilar cultures and to demonstrate their concrete differences in ways that offer more depth than established frameworks (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1984; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Meyer,

2014). Lastly, they are a relevant focus because this pairing has not yet been considered in the wider European 'One marked, many cultures' project this study is a part of.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The last 40 years have seen many cultural studies which aim to quantify or qualify culture. Indeed, culture itself has been the subject of much debate (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1980; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Schein, 2010; Johnson, 2013; Maseland and van Hoorn, 2017). Nevertheless, there is little research on how the Portuguese culture is perceived by members of other cultures (Robalo et al., 2015), and no research about how typical Portuguese behaviours are linked to underlying cultural logic or values. This, and the fact that existing studies have shown that there are differences in how Portugal structures its labour market when compared to other countries (Hijzen et al., 2019; Gallie and Russell, 1998), makes it interesting to investigate what underlies the typical behaviours that the Portuguese demonstrate on the work floor, which is precisely the aim of this study. When considering Portugal and The Netherlands, however, one comes across various cultural studies which attempt to either demonstrate cultural factors or explain cultural differences. However, overall, these studies lack an in-depth explanation detailing why these differences exist.

When considering existing literature, this study separates two major cultural research streams: ETIC and EMIC. ETIC research consists of studies where the researcher positions themselves outside of the culture they study and do not participate directly in it. EMIC research, conversely, consists of studies where the author positions themselves within the culture they study and do participate directly in it (Morris et al., 1999).

In the ETIC space, there are popular cultural models such as Hofstede's framework and Meyer's framework (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer, 2014). However, such models, and other quantitative or qualitative work, have been criticised for being too general, and too broad which leads to an absence of depth and thorough explanations (Shaiq et al., 2011; Lichy and Stokes, 2018; Maseland and van Hoorn, 2017). Further comparisons that were found also lack the depth of a full explanation behind the differences they discuss (Gallie and Russel, 1998; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Anderson and Witvliet, 2008; Marques et al., 2013; Hijzen et al., 2019). Moreover, these studies, while varied in their perspectives, provide a narrowed-down view of the differences they identified and/or confirmed. Therefore, they lack the broader perspective needed to generate detailed explanations (thick descriptions) regarding not only describing behaviours but

also the cultural logic underlying these behaviours (Geertz, 1973). Nevertheless, these kinds of studies can provide a basis when considering various cultures (Carminati, 2024).

On the EMIC side, there are several impressionistic studies which, by their very nature, have the downside of often being unstructured (Boswell and Corbett, 2015), though may be valuable to consider regardless for their rich descriptions which may be validated by the more structured approach of the current study (Dias, 1950). Among the scientific studies, there are those which focus on history. Especially, the Estado Novo seems to be a popular topic (Pina e Cunha, 2005; Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Costa et al., 2020). While a country's history is very important and insightful when it comes to culture, these studies often seem to suggest that the period they consider can be used as a strict reference to explain modern day behaviour. However, in doing so, one may attribute too much to one period of time while, perhaps, misjudging or discounting what came before, or after, it. Thus, overlooking the historical processes in earlier or later periods (Matsumoto, 2007). There are also EMIC studies which seek to identify typical behaviours (cultural standards) of cultural groups, but these studies seem to stop short of providing an in-depth explanation (thick description) of the behaviours they identified which would link them to some form of underlying cultural logic (Robalo et al., 2015; Geertz, 1973). While these EMIC studies provide insightful knowledge on the inner experiences of various cultures, they tend to have an immersed focus which loses the global picture (Carminati, 2024; Harris, 1976).

In all, this study identified two theoretical gaps that it attempts to fill. On the one hand, while there is significant research on Portugal, there is little work that identifies the experiences of members of a culture, other than the Portuguese, who live and work in Portugal. On the other hand, there is no research which attempts to link typical Portuguese behaviours with some underlying cultural logic or values to allow for a deeper understanding of said behaviour. For the purposes of this study, this leads to the following research gaps.

Gap 1: There is a lack of knowledge on how the Portuguese culture on the work floor is perceived by Dutch individuals working and living in Portugal.

Gap 2: Wider research is yet to link concrete Portuguese behaviours on the work floor to the underlying cultural logic which may explain them.

The aim of this study is, therefore, to provide a thick description of the typical behaviours (cultural standards) of Portuguese people as observed by Dutch individuals working and living in Portugal.

1.2   RESEARCH QUESTION

One of the benefits of this study is that it promotes recognizing and understanding Portuguese behaviour which allows for better understanding potential frictions in communication and collaboration between Portuguese and Dutch people. Consequently, this will lead to better joint results in mixed teams and to a smoother closing of deals in the market arena. To study the Portuguese cultural standards and their explanations the following research question, and accompanying sub-questions are proposed:

What are the cultural differences in the workplace between The Netherlands and Portugal?

1. *When do Dutch individuals living and working in Portugal experience friction at work in communication and collaboration with the Portuguese?*
2. *What can the frictions at work, experienced by Dutch individuals living and working in Portugal, reveal about the Portuguese cultural standards?*
3. *What is the cultural logic underlying the cultural standards observed by Dutch people working and living in Portugal?*

Therefore, this paper identifies what Portuguese cultural standards exist on the work floor and explains these cultural standards by suggesting what the cultural values (tacit assumptions one bases their actions on) behind them is. It does so by identifying and producing thick descriptions of Portuguese cultural standards as perceived by Dutch individuals living and working in Portugal and by linking these cultural standards to underlying cultural logic.

1.3   CONTRIBUTIONS

By answering this research question, this study proposes several theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretical contributions are the contributions that address the research gaps that were identified previously while the practical contributions outline how the findings of this study may be useful in practice.

Theoretical contributions

Considering the wider body of knowledge about Portuguese culture, one finds that there are a significant number of works, but that a lot of them rely on historical interpretation or quantitative modelling. Additionally, there is a lack of literature regarding Portuguese cultural standards. However, there is no work at all on the perception of Portuguese culture and behaviour on the work floor by Dutch individuals who live and work in Portugal. Therefore, the first theoretical contribution of this study is the following:

Theoretical contribution 1: *Describe how the Portuguese culture on the work floor is perceived by Dutch individuals working and living in Portugal.*

Another theoretical contribution that this paper aims to make is to describe the underlying cultural logic behind these cultural standards. Since the 1980s, several cultural frameworks have been developed to classify and explain culture and, consequently, cultural differences between different countries. Nevertheless, these frameworks have often been considered too broad and general to provide more than a basic understanding of the culture of a particular country (Lichy and Stokes, 2018). The study by Robalo et al. (2015), however, is closer to the current study as it does identify several cultural standards, but also lacks an explanation of how cultural logic links to the identified cultural standards. Therefore, the second, and final, theoretical contribution is formulated as follows:

Theoretical contribution 2: *Link concrete Portuguese behaviours on the work floor to the underlying cultural values which explain them.*

Practical contributions

In terms of practical contributions that this study offers, the identified cultural standards should help with allowing for easier communication between the Dutch and the Portuguese on the work floor. Consequently, this can aid in both avoiding friction in interpersonal communication and collaboration and bring the collaboration between the two countries closer which is highly beneficial for the European market. Additionally, this study may serve as a basis for practical guidelines on intercultural collaboration between the Dutch and the Portuguese. The understanding gained from this study can benefit various parties such as Dutch businesses who seek to do business in Portugal or politicians who desire to understand their counterparts. Finally, this study provides some concrete recommendations for (Dutch) people who (intend to) work and live in Portugal regarding how to best handle certain scenario's and what to look out for.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theory used in this paper. It starts with the definition of culture itself. Then, it moves on to elaborating on the current situation with regards to intercultural research. Furthermore, this chapter explores the concepts of cultural standards, cultural values, the Grounded Interpretive Model, and the critical incident technique, which are used in this study.

Finally, this chapter provides an overview of Dutch cultural values and Portuguese cultural standards identified in existing literature.

2.1 DEFINING CULTURE

Culture is a phenomenon that binds and connects people in a structured, and generally understood manner so that its members can form a functioning society. However, a concise agreed-upon definition is somewhat difficult to construct due to varying definitions from different authors with varying levels of clarity. The following are some of the different definitions proposed by existing literature: culture is *"a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits […] that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired [...] as a member of society […] best seen not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters', but 'as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions […] – for the governing of behaviour"* (Johnson, 2013, p. 1-4); *"the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another"* (Hofstede, 1980, p. 13); *"a way a group of people act to solve problems"* (Hall, 1959, p. 186); *"a fuzzy set of values, attitudes and behaviours that are (partially) shared by a group of people, and that influences each member's interpretations of the meaning of other people's behaviour"* (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 3).

Given the different aspects of these definitions, the one proposed by Schein (2010) appears to cover the most important points. According to Schein (2010, p. 17), culture is defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptations and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems".

It should be noted that Schein's definition of culture is mainly designed for corporate use rather than to describe a country's culture. Nevertheless, the definition above does contain the points shared among the synthesis of definitions at the start of this section. As such, this study continues to use this definition but emphasises that it ought to refer to the tacit assumptions shared by a cultural group, or country in this case, rather than to business or corporate cultures.

Given this definition, it follows that cultural studies help people understand themselves, others, and their surroundings better, as the rules and assumptions across different cultures can be very diverse (Thomas et al., 2010). Moreover, when one is unaware of a culture's rules or applies them incorrectly, this certainly leads to misunderstandings in communication (Thomas, 2010). If such misunderstandings are not resolved, they can lead to what is known as a "clash of cultures". Such a clash is a conflict which originates when people with different cultural values cannot resolve or align the differences (Guiso et al., 2015). The way to avoid such conflicts, then, is to be aware of, follow, and respect the culture's commonly recognised behavioural patterns. To establish an effective dialogue between people from different cultural backgrounds, knowledge of each party's respective culture appears to be of great importance (Shadid, 2002).

2.2 CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN RESEARCH

To illustrate the current situation in cross-cultural research, one must consider the various research streams. When considering the wider literature, two main cross-cultural directions of research can be identified, namely quantitative and qualitative research (Fink et al., 2005). Quantitative cultural research aims to describe and measure culture to identify differences between cultures. It does so by using surveys and statistics to prove the correlation between certain cultural factors. This often results in various cultures 'scoring' on a scale of 'cultural dimensions' (Hofstede, 1984; Hall and Hall, 1989; Schwartz, 1992; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Meyer, 2014). Qualitative research, on the other hand seeks to explain and understand the meaning behind the observed social constructs within their natural setting without assigning them ordinal (numeric and ordered) values. It attempts to do so by, e.g., conducting interviews (Pina e Cunha, 2005; Queirós et al., 2017). When considering each of these streams of cross-cultural research one finds that they can make use of either an ETIC or an EMIC approach. As mentioned before, an ETIC approach means that the authors take the position of an outsider not participating in the culture being studied. For instance, they may study global cultural patterns or identify culture-specific traits, but they only indicate the presence or absence of something. They may provide good explanations of the phenomenon itself, but not necessarily as to why this phenomenon occurs. The opposite EMIC approach means that the authors take the position of an insider participating in the culture being studied (Morris et al., 1999). They completely immerse themselves in it to obtain a deep understanding of why things are the way they are but may struggle to effectively communicate this on a more global, more easily digestible level.

This chapter considers the existing body of knowledge about Portuguese culture, Portuguese cultural standards, and Portuguese cultural comparisons. It starts with outlining the existing EMIC literature regarding Portuguese culture and its limitations. Afterwards, it discusses the existing ETIC literature regarding Portuguese culture and the limitations of such models.

2.2.1 EMIC studies regarding Portuguese culture

One of the earliest publications which describes Portuguese culture comes from Dias (1950) who sought to identify what he called the "cultural constants" of Portuguese culture. He found that the Portuguese tend to act on imagination, and dreams, as they tend to be idealistic, and emotional. Though not necessarily mystic or religious in the sense the Spanish are. Like the Spanish, however, the Portuguese do not appreciate striving purely for comfort, yet they do value riches and luxury. Nevertheless, the author does specify that outright displays of riches in public started to decline with international influence, though it may well still be present to some degree. Additionally, the Portuguese value humanity. That is, sensibility, love, an amicability without this being necessarily considered weak. In this sense, they tend to avoid conflict and will do their best not to make those around them suffer. This conflict-avoidance also extends to religious displays as illustrations of suffering are few and far between. Nevertheless, the Portuguese are also prideful in that they will not tolerate actions that bear negatively on their pride, potentially growing angry or violent. Moreover, they believe in wonders and miraculous solutions which inspires an ability to adjust to nearly any situation and gives them a certain flexibility to realise ad-hoc solutions. In general, the Portuguese have a critical, ironic sense of humour, but they also fear the opinion of others as they fear to be ridiculed. Once spurred to action, however, they can exhibit a high degree of stubbornness which may either accomplish greatness or lead down the wrong path. Still, it is more likely for them to act when they have an important role to play. Moreover, their actions are motivated by an ideal rather than individual gain. However, when they are given a mediocre task, they will perform at the bare minimum. Being unable to unleash their imagination, their energy will diminish as they reminisce about better times. The importance of their role and the value of their humanity is demonstrated in organisations with strict rules where employees are expected to adhere strictly to the rules without allowing for the influences of imagination and socialisation. These organisations often exhibit strict bureaucracy where employees feel the need to hand off any case which is slightly out of the ordinary to their superior. Additionally, commercial, and industrial companies may illustrate the Portuguese believe in wonders as they often seem to create vague or irrational projects in the hope that, in some way, they will manage

to realise it. However, this 'blind' faith also gives rise to exclamations such as "that person is lucky" or "I'm unlucky" to, either, diminish the qualities of others or justify one's own inability (Dias, 1950).

Aside from Dias (1950), other authors have remarked that the Portuguese are flexible in the way they approach their tasks (Pina e Cunha, 2005). A similar concept was mentioned in the polychronic consideration of time from a study by Hall and Hall (1989). This essentially means that they do not have a very strict view of time and that tasks may be interrupted to focus on something else. Furthermore, a case concerning a Portuguese company suggests that the Portuguese may not be in the habit of speaking up about organizational issues (Cunha et al., 2019).

In further EMIC studies regarding Portuguese culture, one often finds references to the Estado Novo, or the long-lasting period of dictatorship (1926-1974) that made up a large part of Portugal's recent history (Costa et al., 2020; Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Pina e Cunha, 2005). During this period, Portugal's regime took a hard-line conservationist approach founded on pride, traditional Catholicism, paternalism, and corporatism. This led to wide-spread censorship and extreme actions against dissent. To illustrate, Portugal is known for something called the Moliceiro culture (Sarmento, 2009), which involved painting the panels on boats. Even these panels were subject to strict censorship. Which shows both the length to which the people went to express themselves and the effort the government put into quelling dissent. Progressive ideas were considered dangerous and even the Catholic church would eventually consider Portugal 'too traditional' (Poláčková and Duin, 2019). Because of this, Portugal would isolate itself more and more. Even adopting a motto which calls itself 'proudly alone'.

For businesses, the Estado Novo meant a period of near-total isolation in a protected market (Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Pina e Cunha, 2005). Given the isolation, business techniques were often based on administrative techniques used by the state. Additionally, the presence of a state which may intervene in one's business at its discretion left businesses focused on bureaucracy rather than consumers (Pina e Cunha, 2005). Another consequence of this is that managerial skills and structures were virtually absent. In their place, informality and paternalism found their roots. Here, people would get jobs for life in a protected environment in exchange for obedience to the state. It comes as little surprise, perhaps, that businesses were managed based on relationships, as a sort of family.

At the end of the Estado Novo, Portugal opened up and underwent a fast transition. Politically, the country strived to become more democratic and forgiving. Eventually allowing previously banished nationals to return (Poláčková and Duin, 2019). It also did not take long for Portugal to join the European Union (EU) in 1986 (Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Pina e Cunha, 2005). This transition helped attract foreign multinationals and consultancy which brought with them new ways of working. Some of the most important business innovations were the adoption of an open mindset and a focus on strategic planning. This caused a period where the Portuguese had to reconcile imported business techniques and best practices with their own local practices. As such, a generational divide can be observed when considering senior and younger workers.

While a lot of literature references the Estado Novo to explain current tendencies and behaviour, it should be noted that Portugal's history goes back a lot further and that similar regimes have existed before the Estado Novo. As such, it would be too superficial to directly and only attribute current trends, behaviours, and tendencies directly to this period of Portuguese history. Though that is not to say it cannot provide useful insights which is why it is included in the current study.

In summary, EMIC work has identified the following Portuguese cultural characteristics. First, the Portuguese act on imagination, can be stubborn in their actions, and work best when given an important role. They also value riches and luxury, consider humanity one of the greatest virtues, are rather prideful, and believe in wonders and miraculous solutions leading to a certain flexibility. Their sense of humour can be ironic, and they fear to be ridiculed by others (Dias, 1950). Additionally, existing EMIC research indicates the Portuguese are perceived as paternalistic, relationship-oriented, hierarchical, and close-minded. With foreign influences, the close-mindedness has seemed to make place for open-mindedness and has allowed the import of modern business techniques. Finally, authors have indicated that the Portuguese are flexible in their view of time and could be potentially tight-lipped regarding organizational issues (Hofstede, 1984; Meyer, 2014; Hall and Hall, 1989; Cunha et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Limitations of EMIC models

While EMIC models provide a lot of detail on the inner workings of a culture, one should be mindful that they tend to focus on what is going on inside the mind of the members of such cultures (Harris, 1976). Consequently, they often lack a focus for discerning more global or behavioural patterns in the way that ETIC approaches do. In short, they explain which matters are of importance to the members of a culture but not the concrete, observable behaviours

(Harris, 1976). In terms of this study, they can inform underlying cultural values but may struggle to inform cultural standards.

2.2.3 ETIC studies regarding Portuguese culture

This section discusses two major ETIC cultural models: Hofstede, and Meyer. These two models are chosen because they both relate to culture on the work floor, which is what this study focuses on. Moreover, these models are mature, have had quite some attention in the wider literature, and have received criticism which allows their use while maintaining a good awareness of their limitations. Additionally, it discusses some lesser-known ETIC studies which bear relevance to the current research.

Hofstede's cultural model

Hofstede's model distinguishes six cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede et al., 2010). These dimensions allow for a quick glance at the differences between various cultures. As such, they can be used to get a basic understanding of where different cultures might clash, which is relevant to this study as it seeks to investigate those clashes.

In Table 1 below, there is an overview of the aspects of Hofstede's cultural model. This table is used later in this section when a comparison between The Netherlands and Portugal is discussed.

Table 1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010)

Dimension	Explanation
Power distance	This dimension relates to how accepting people are of differences in authority in the social sphere and how much they expect these differences to exist. Scoring high indicates more acceptance.
Individualism	Individualism quantifies how much people value the individual over the collective. Scoring high indicates that people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family; while scoring low means more importance is placed on society as a whole.
Masculinity	Masculinity indicates how much people value assertiveness, achievements, and material rewards for success. Scoring high indicates

	these qualities are valued more, while scoring low indicates a focus on cooperation, nurturing, and modesty.
Uncertainty avoidance	This dimension illustrates how much people attempt to avoid uncertainty about the future. Scoring high means uncertainty should be avoided.
Long-term orientation	This dimension shows how pragmatic and accepting people are of change while looking at their future. Scoring high indicates a pragmatic approach; while scoring low means a higher value is place on tradition.
Indulgence	Indulgence demonstrates how free people feel to fulfil their basic and more immediate needs, e.g. having fun. Scoring high means people feel freer to gratify such needs.

Using Hofstede Insights (2022), the dimensions in Table 1 above can be visualised as a comparison between The Netherlands and Portugal. This visualisation is shown in Figure 1 below and is further explained in the remainder of this section.
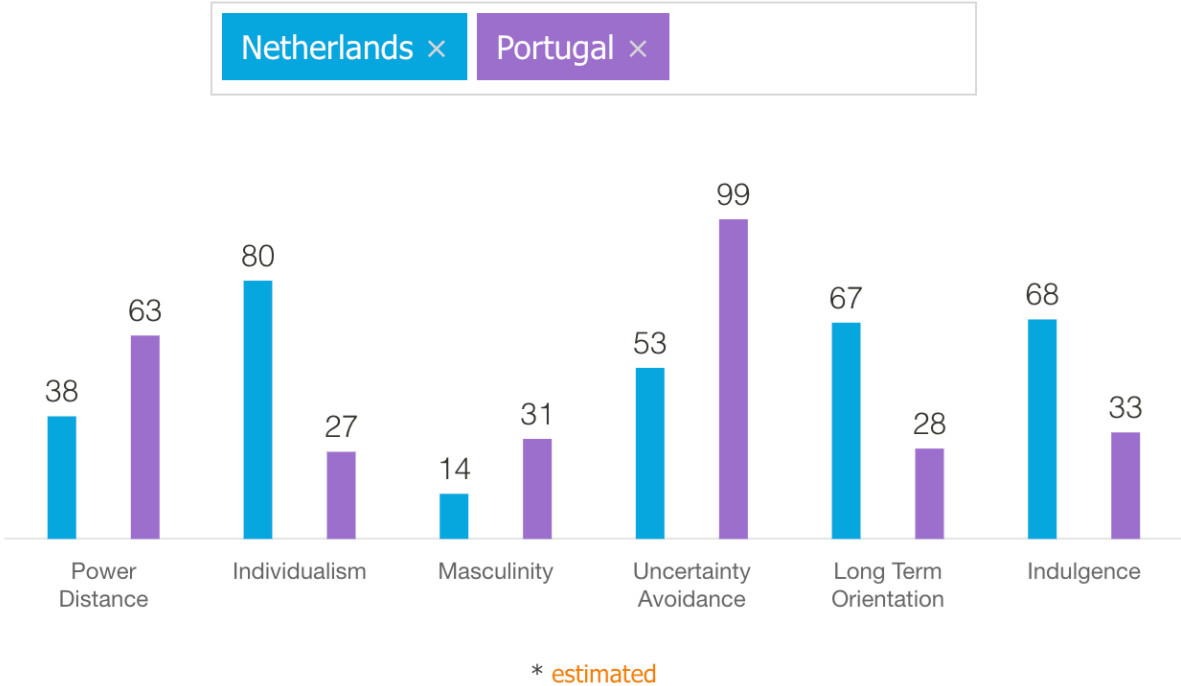

* estimated

Figure 1. *Hofstede's comparison of The Netherlands and Portugal (Hofstede Insights, 2022).*

As seen in Figure 1, power distance is much higher in Portugal than it is in The Netherlands. Therefore, one may infer that, in general, Portuguese respect more hierarchy where those at the top hold power over those below them. In contrast, in The Netherlands, one can often

communicate openly with one's superiors, bring their opinions to the table when a decision must be made, and discuss the best course of action with their superiors. In Portugal, however, this may be considered inappropriate behaviour.

Individualism, on the other hand, is much higher in The Netherlands than it is in Portugal. From this one can surmise that relationships and dependency on the group are considered more important in Portugal and that they may form the basis of many decisions. Whereas, in The Netherlands, the focus is on the individual choices.

Masculinity score in The Netherlands is about half that of Portugal's. This indicates that in Portugal there is a strong focus on achievement, and competition. Symbols of status may also hold an important place in Portuguese culture. In The Netherlands, on the other hand, this is hardly the case as there is more emphasis on nurturing and growing individuals rather than competing with them.

Portugal also scores much higher in terms of uncertainty avoidance than The Netherlands. This predicts a tendency to avoid risks and to stick with that which has been proven effective. This may result in slower uptakes of innovations or unusual partnerships. In The Netherlands, then, people may be more inclined to take risks and try new things.

An interesting observation is that Portugal also seems to exhibit a relatively low long-term orientation compared to its high uncertainty avoidance. In general, one may think that the score of the latter would also translate to a high score in the former, because planning for the long term and looking ahead are ways to avoid uncertainty. However, this does not seem to be the case. In essence, this means that the Portuguese are more focused on the immediate future than the distant, long-term, consequences of their actions. The Dutch seem inclined towards the opposite.

Finally, the Portuguese seem to tend less towards indulgence than do the Dutch. That is to say that they restrain themselves more when it comes to acting on impulse or gratifying their desires. It also implies that they may feel that doing so could be considered wrong in some way. Whereas the Dutch feel it is acceptable to indulge oneself.

Meyer's cultural model

There is another cultural framework which is qualitative in nature but equally has an ETIC approach. Meyer's (2014) model places countries on several continuums based on how its members collaborate with one another. This makes for some global insights into interpersonal

communication which is relevant for this study because it aims to establish and explain cultural standards based on the experiences of participants in interpersonal communication.

Table 2 below shows a comprehensive overview of each of Meyer's dimensions. It also includes an explanation of each dimension.

Table 2. Meyer's cultural dimensions (Meyer, 2014)

Dimension	Explanation
Communicating	This dimension indicates how much people rely on context when communicating and is measured between high- and low-context. The former means a high reliance on context when communicating.
Evaluating	Evaluating indicates how negative feedback is given. Either directly or indirectly.
Leading	Leading shows whether people tend more towards a hierarchical or an egalitarian style of leadership.
Deciding	This dimension determines how decisions are made. Either top-down or in group consensus.
Trusting	Trusting illustrates how trust is built. Either based on the successful completion of tasks or based on relationships with people.
Disagreeing	Disagreeing is a measure of how confrontational people are when they disagree with one another. People can either embrace or avoid confrontation in either extreme.
Scheduling	Scheduling looks at how people allocate their time and is measured between the extremes of linear time, one thing at a time, and flexible time, multiple agendas can be served at once.
Persuading	This dimension shows the type of argument people use to persuade someone else and tends towards, either principled arguments or applicational arguments.

Figure 2 below shows the mapping produced by Meyer's tool between The Netherlands and Portugal. This mapping is used as the basis for a further comparison further down.
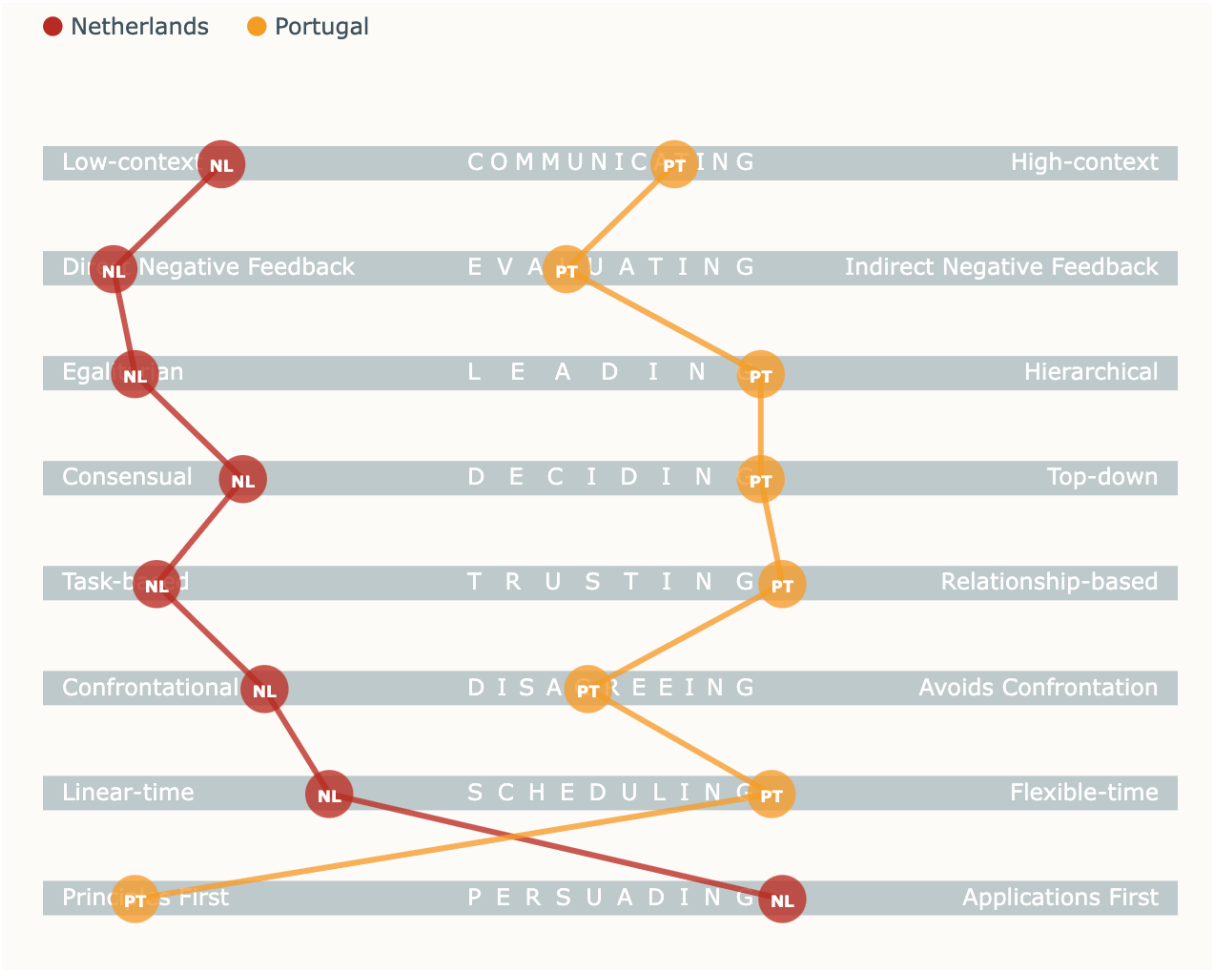

Figure 2. **Meyer's dimensions for The Netherlands and Portugal**

The first thing to note is that Meyer's framework counts eight dimensions visualized as continuums. The second is that The Netherlands and Portugal seem to be a significant distance apart on nearly every one of those dimensions. Below follows an explanation of Figure 2.

Communicating is a dimension which seeks to explain the general directness of language used or its reliability on contextual clues. Comparatively speaking, one may infer that the Dutch communicate significantly more directly than the Portuguese do. This could result in the Portuguese overthinking comments made by Dutch people or Dutch people not understanding contextual clues from the Portuguese. However, it should also be noted that Portugal is not on, or near, an extreme. As such, it may be true that contextual communication is more important in Portugal than in The Netherlands, one should still not discount their spoken word and only look for context.

Evaluating aims to assess the way in which people communicate negative, or correctional, feedback. The extremes are direct negative feedback and indirect negative feedback which indicates the degree of bluntness with which negative feedback is given. One can observe a similar difference between the Dutch and the Portuguese as with the communicating dimension. That is to say that the Dutch are more likely to tell you exactly what they disliked about your work and how you should do better, while the Portuguese may be more inclined to cushion that negative feedback and try to bring it across in a softer way.

Leading indicates the (ideal) distance between a superior and their subordinates and is measured from egalitarian to hierarchical. In the former case, the above-mentioned distance is low, and subordinates are free to disagree, and discuss with their superior. Communication does not have to flow among hierarchical lines and there is often freedom to take initiative. With the latter, however, the opposite is true. It is seen as impertinent to disagree with your superior and work is not started before approval from higher-ups is received. Communication also flows among strict hierarchical lines. Here, we observe that the Dutch are significantly more egalitarian than the Portuguese. This can result in a Dutch working environment to be rather fast paced with people taking initiative to handle problems quickly and efficiently, while the Portuguese will first determine what is to be done with their superiors before acting out the plan of those superiors.

Deciding refers to how decisions are made and is measured from consensual to top-down. That is, together with the team or management decides. Here, the Dutch take a more consensual approach as they will involve all relevant stakeholders to collect their input and make a collective decision. The Portuguese, however, tend more towards the top-down approach. One may expect, therefore, that the Portuguese may make decisions without the involvement of, as many, stakeholders.

Trusting defines how a culture builds trust with its extremes at task-based and relationship-based. The former seems to be the Dutch approach and indicates that anyone who can perform their work properly and efficiently can be trusted. The Portuguese tend significantly more towards the latter which indicates that one must build a more personal relationship with another person to earn their trust.

Disagreeing is the dimension that measures how confrontational disagreements are likely to get and is measured from confrontational to avoids confrontation. Here, the Dutch and the Portuguese seem to be closest together. However, the Dutch do tend more towards

confrontational disagreements than do the Portuguese. This may indicate that the Portuguese will be a little more withheld when disagreeing with someone than the Dutch may be.

Scheduling determines a culture's view on time. Measured from linear-time to flexible-time, it indicates whether a culture prefers to approach tasks in a structured or a more flexible manner. The Dutch tend more towards the linear time which indicates that they keep a relatively tight schedule. Meetings that start at a given time really do start then and being late is not appreciated. The Portuguese, however, seem closer to the flexible-time view. Which may result in interruptions of certain tasks to focus on something else before coming back to it.

Lastly, persuading is the dimension of what arguments focus on when trying to convince someone. It is measured from principles first to applications first. The Portuguese adhere closer to the former which indicates that the underlying principle for doing something is more important to them than what the decision may result in. For instance, if status is an important principle, a Portuguese manager may decide to buy a new (fancy) office building even if funds are tight. The Dutch, however, focus more on the application of an approach or decision. That is, how it can be used to better the organization.

Additional ETIC studies about Portuguese culture

Now that some of the most well-known quantitative and qualitative models about culture have been discussed, this paper considers some other interesting ETIC studies. One such study is that of Lewiński et al. (2018), who considered the differences in arguing between Portugal and the US. Using established frameworks, such as those discussed above, the authors deduced how participants are likely to respond to certain phrasings or questions. Using this assumption, they constructed a survey such that they were able to determine the way the Portuguese perceive arguing. When administering the surveys, they relied on statistics to test how the Portuguese view arguing. In this case, 'arguing' has the conflict definition in English. One of their most interesting findings was that arguing seems to be viewed more positively in Portugal. Not necessarily as a conflict, but as a productive means of discourse, though not necessarily thought-through argumentation as one would see in a debate. In fact, the authors show that the Portuguese were more productive because of arguing than were the Americans. Additionally, Portuguese men seemed more inclined to argue 'for fun' and the Portuguese in general do not seem to take arguing as personally as do the Americans. The authors consider the fact that the Portuguese language itself is very specific about expressing argumentation as a potential explanation. For instance, 'to argue' would be an academic term whereas 'a discussion' would

be the equivalent of a negative argument. However, the verb 'to discuss' will have a more friendly connotation when used in the context of argumentation. Interestingly, this seemingly contradicts the conflict-avoidance found by Dias (1950, though it may align better when considering 'arguing' in the sense of 'explaining' instead of viewing an argument as a conflict.

There are several other ETIC studies which compare The Netherlands and Portugal. The first is a study into the quality of life between severely fatigued patients of the two countries. It mentioned that the Portuguese, as a matter of cultural orientation, express distress with more anxiety and depression than do the Dutch (Marques et al., 2013). Their findings are based on a comparison of clinical qualities though their cultural knowledge derives from European investigations and reports. A different study found that exhaustion impacts the Portuguese significantly more in terms of how much vigour they possess than it does the Dutch (Schaufeli et al., 2002). They based their method on the MBI-GS and UWES methods. Relating more to the work floor, some other research found that the Portuguese expected employers to respect their privacy less than did the Dutch. The same study also saw that interpersonal warmth was, often, less valued by the Portuguese than the Dutch (Anderson and Witvliet, 2008). This study used Steiner and Gilliland's measure as a base for their research instrument which had been used in prior research of the same kind. In a similar vein, there is a study which indicated that the detrimental impact of unemployment on someone's life satisfaction is a little less pronounced in Portugal than it is in The Netherlands. On the other hand, the same study also finds that the values related to someone's work ethic are more intrinsic to the Dutch than to the Portuguese (Gallie and Russell, 1998). The research method for this study was informed by European investigations and reports. Additionally, Costa et al. (2020) investigated the cultures of Portuguese non-profits using the Competing Values Framework and a multi-case-study approach which makes this study a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies though inherently ETIC. They found that the non-profits under investigation have a balanced culture which involves a primary influence of Clan-characteristics. Followed by a comparable influence of Adhocracy- and Market-characteristics. A notable Hierarchical influence was also found. The findings regarding Clan- and Hierarchy-characteristics are also in line with the findings presented in the frameworks above (Hofstede, 1984; Meyer, 2014). A final comparison found that there is more cooperation in drafting collective labour agreements in The Netherlands than in Portugal and that Portugal drafts their agreements more strictly (Hijzen et al., 2019). This final comparison is mainly informed by historical observations which makes one wonder if there are also cultural underpinnings.

In summary, these ETIC studies cover a wide range of topics where each adds something to the discussion. Taken together, they provide a more comprehensive picture of Portuguese culture in the sense that they describe concrete differences. However, they all lack a more detailed explanation that covers why these differences exist or what explains them.

2.2.4 Limitations of ETIC models

While ETIC models suggest a certain "truth" through generalisations which allows them to identify patterns as they are seen from the outside, they often struggle to explain the rationale behind the patterns they identify (Harris, 1976; Carminati, 2024). This may give a global overview of what may or may not be important to certain cultures, but it does not provide any practical guidelines, or in-depth explanations, which may benefit Dutch nationals working and living in Portugal. At best, they may allow such people to get a basic sense of what is going on around them, but that does not mean one really understands the situation. This was demonstrated in studies such as that of Clausen (2010) who illustrated the limitations of such models as those described above while using interviews to gain detailed knowledge about the influence of management practices on whether cultural differences are a hindrance or an asset in an intercultural workplace. Another such study is that of Fang who argued the limitations of bipolar paradigms of analysis in favour of a more dialectical approach (Fang, 2005).

2.3   THOMAS' QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO CULTURE

Having elaborated on the current situation concerning the Portuguese cultural research, this section continues by outlining the theoretical underpinnings of this paper's research model, which is based on Thomas' approach to studying culture. Alexander Thomas is a German psychologist who defines culture as "a system of orientation that provides individuals from the same country with meaning and, to a great extent, defines their sense of belonging" (Thomas et al., 2010, p. 29). Culture permeates and leaves its mark on perceptions, lines of thought, judgment, and actions of all its members that make up a society. An individual has a need for the orientation that is described by Thomas. This need is fulfilled when the individual has obtained sufficiently accurate knowledge regarding the material artifacts and social routines that define their surroundings. The individual should also have obtained the skill and experience to use that knowledge accurately and effectively. However, this means that people from different cultures may have obtained different norms and values. As such, the culture-specific orientation systems that people from different cultures have will also be different which hampers its sense-giving function. In this case, interaction partners may exhibit or experience behavioural patterns which are unknown to them and to which they are unable to assign an

accurate meaning based on their familiar cultural orientation system. To identify situations in which this happens, Thomas et al. (2010) uses the concepts of critical incidents and cultural values.

2.3.1 Critical incidents technique

To reduce errors in workplace behaviour, the psychologist John Flanaghan created the Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) in the 1950s. A critical incident is defined as *"any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects"* (Flanagan, 1954, p. 1).

A study by Fiedler et al. (1971) was the first to apply the CIT to study cultural differences. According to Neudecker et al. (2007), a critical incident occurs when there are misperceptions and misinterpretations of behaviour. For example, when a partner displays behaviour that is uncharacteristic to the observer's culture, this may be misinterpreted. Thomas' study (Thomas et al., 2010) focused on gathering critical incidents that occurred over the course of binational interaction. They recruited people from country X who worked in a different country Y and asked them about critical encounters they had with people of country Y. This allowed for the collection of rich and detailed data which offers the opportunity to adequately describe a culture while accounting for its complexity. Thus, this approach offers a good representation of a culture. Nevertheless, any such description will always be a simplification and, therefore, a reduced representation of the culture under study. It cannot describe a culture with all its facets and there is always a dependency on perspectives (Neudecker et al., 2007).

2.3.2 Cultural standards

Thomas created the concept of 'cultural standards' to help describe the 'typical behaviour' that individuals of different cultures exhibit. Cultural standards affect the perception, thinking, values, and actions of all members of a culture so that these cultural standards are considered normal, self-evident, typical, and binding both for themselves and others. Still, there is a so-called 'tolerance range' for cultural standards. Certain individual and group-specific aspects of cultural standards can differ. If deviations from the cultural norm are within this tolerance range, they are acceptable. When behaviour exceeds this range, however, it is viewed as unusual, abnormal, and deviant and is rejected or punished by the general social environment.

The manifestation of cultural standards within cultures can be different. They can differ for each individual representative of a culture, or there can be similar cultural standards within or between cultures with different tolerance ranges and meanings. Cultural standards that are central in one country or culture can also be completely absent, or play a minor role, in another country or culture. Thomas et al. (2010) suggest that cultural standards can be derived or inferred from real-world intercultural interactions, critical incidents. As mentioned before, individuals follow different cultural orientation systems and adopt different norms, values, and behavioural patterns. Such differences may lead to breakdowns in communication or irritation. These types of interactions may give way to critical interactions/incidents which originate in the different cultural orientation systems used by the parties involved, and could be explained, described, and forecasted by cultural standards.

2.3.3   Grounded interpretive model

The Grounded Interpretive Model is based on the approach originally used by Thomas et al. (2003) in that it uses both the Critical Incident Theory and a concept of cultural standards. However, the Grounded Interpretive Model also focusses on producing a thick description for the cultural standards it identifies (Geertz, 1973; Enklaar, 2022). To do so, this model makes the distinction between cultural values and cultural standards as the cultural standards used by Thomas would sometimes intertwine with cultural values. The Grounded Interpretive Model attempts to define a clear border between these two concepts by, first, defining cultural values as follows:

"Tacit assumptions, general abstract moral principles or ideals that can explain the cultural standards" (Enklaar, 2022, p. 6)

Moving on to cultural standards, Thomas et al. (2010, p. 22) define cultural standards as "forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behaviour as normal, typical and binding". One may observe that this definition could potentially include cultural values as defined above. Therefore, for the purpose of this research the term "cultural standards" is defined according to the definition in the Grounded Interpretive Model:

"Specific concrete behaviours that are normal in one culture" (Enklaar, 2022, p. 6)

This model is the basis for the current study as it provides a clearer separation between cultural standards and cultural values than Thomas' method does. This lends it better to systematic

inquiry as it reduces the risk of misclassifying cultural values as cultural standards as has previously happened with studies using Thomas' method directly (Robalo et al., 2015).

Now that there are clear definitions of the main cultural concepts of this study, cultural standards and cultural values, this paper continues its theoretical discussion by looking at existing literature which describes both Portuguese cultural standards and Dutch cultural values.

2.4 PORTUGUESE CULTURAL STANDARDS AND DUTCH CULTURAL VALUES

This chapter discusses Portuguese cultural standards as well as the Dutch cultural values identified in existing literature. These are both highly relevant as the Dutch cultural values may help to explain the clashes, or critical incidents, experienced by Dutch people living and working in Portugal. The Portuguese cultural standards serve as a preliminary indication of what cultural standards this study may discover and provides a useful point of comparison.

2.4.1 Portuguese cultural standards

While investigating existing work on Portuguese cultural standards, one may observe that there is very little scientific work that discusses this. A lot of work may be found regarding specific cultural aspects, or about leadership, but the typical behaviours of Portuguese citizens seem a foreign subject. Nevertheless, this underscores the relevance of the current study to identify and describe these cultural standards.

There was one paper by Robalo et al. (2015) which sought to identify Portuguese cultural standards from an Austrian perspective. While this may not inform which cultural standards Dutch people living and working in Portugal may experience, it is interesting to contrast the findings. The authors found that the Portuguese hold the cultural standards summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Portuguese cultural standards (Robalo et al., 2015)

Cultural standard	Elaboration
Fluid time management	A way of managing time which means it is not necessarily linear or structured. Like the Flexible Time in Meyer's Scheduling dimension (Meyer, 2014).

Relaxed attitude towards professional performance.	The general attitude towards performing in a professional capacity. This may be informed by the importance of relationships in Portugal (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer, 2014).
Importance of social relationships	Highlights that the Portuguese consider social relationships to be of high importance. Under the definitions of this study, this may be closer to a **cultural value** than a cultural standard (Enklaar, 2007).
Bureaucracy and slow decision-making processes	The tendency for people to pass matters through hierarchical channels before a higher-up provides a decision. This might have links in power distance or hierarchical decision-making (Hofstede et al., 2010; Meyer, 2014).
Indirect communication style	A style of communication which relies heavily on context. Like Meyer's description of high-context communication (Meyer, 2014).
Flexible organisational skills	The tendency to organise matters in a flexible manner without the need for strict structures. Possibly informed by Meyer's Flexible Time concept (Meyer, 2014)

Considering the cultural standards found by Robalo et al. (2015) above, most of them can also be considered cultural standards by the definitions of this paper. However, the "importance of social relationship" does not so much describe a typical behaviour as it does a value. As such, this will not be considered a cultural standard by the definitions of this paper but rather a cultural value. It may, therefore, inform the thick descriptions this study aims to produce.

The further lack of research on Portuguese cultural standards underscores the relevance of this study. To understand the literature on both the Portuguese and the Dutch, this paper continues with an overview of Dutch cultural values.

2.4.2 Dutch cultural values

This section outlines the cultural values underlying the typical Dutch way of thinking and behaving. These values are later contrasted and compared with the Portuguese cultural values, which are investigated in this paper, to highlight the differences and similarities between the two cultures. Enklaar (2007) investigated the values underlying the Dutch culture. This investigation gave rise to twelve fundamental values and ideas. Table 4 below contains a short summary which is further explained below.

Table 4. Fundamental Dutch values

Value	Explanation
Salvation	Accepting of new ideas which lead to a better future.
Guilt and remission	Recognising and accepting accountability for one's actions and mistakes.
Charity	Help and support those in need.
Truth	Always try to be truthful, as lying breaks trust.
Work	Hard work and high quality are good.
Order and neatness	Be structured, organised, and tidy.
Utility	Do that which is useful or profitable.
Reliability	Fulfil your obligations and do what you promised to.
Consensus	Resolve your disputes together peacefully without aggression or violence.
Equality	Everyone should be considered and treated as equals.
Self-determination	Feel free to make your own choices and express your own opinions if they do not harm others.

The first four values originated from Christianity. This makes them common across Europe, though they have been shaped to The Netherlands (Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Enklaar, 2007; Palaver, 2021). This makes it possible that these values are shared with the Portuguese, but

perhaps in a different form. The first value is that of Salvation (Heil) which entails making the right choices which lead to a happy future. Life is an ongoing process, and the current situation is not the end station, so new ideas are welcomed. The second value is Guilt and remission (Schuld). It emphasises the importance of recognising and accepting responsibility for one's actions and mistakes. Apologies are generally accepted and used to repair broken trust. Thirdly, there is the value of Charity (Naastenliefde). It highlights the importance of helping and supporting those in need and is characterised by Matthew 7:12:

Therefore, whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

Or, in more modern words, *treat others the way you wish to be treated.*

The fourth, and final, Christian value is that of Truth (Waarheid). It stipulates that one should always endeavour to speak truthfully, even if it hurts. Lying is considered to break trust. Being critical is seen as a good thing and being open about one's personal life and feelings is seen as beneficial.

The following five values are also known under the name as "Weberian Values", as they were first treated by Max Weber (1920) in his famous essay 'Ascetic Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism'. In essence, they find their roots in Protestantism and, as such, are shared among countries or cultures with a significant Protestant influence. Therefore, it seems unlikely that these values are shared by the Portuguese, because Catholicism has had the largest influence among them. The fifth Dutch fundamental value is Work (Arbeid). This value emphasises the virtue of hard work and the vice of sloth (laziness or doing nothing). Completed work should also be of high quality. For the sixth value, there is Order and neatness (Order en netheid), which describes a desire for order, cleanliness, and rules to avoid confusion and disorder. Being disorganised or untidy are considered signs that one is irresponsible and antisocial. The seventh value is that of Utility (Nut). This value highlights the need for doing only those things which are useful or profitable. Those things which are neither are considered a waste of resources. The eighth value is Reliability (Betrouwbaarheid). This means that one should always fulfil one's obligations. A promise made is a promise kept. Not doing so is seen as a sign of an untrustworthy person. In business, exclamations of agreement, e.g., a vocal 'yes' is taken to mean an agreement has been reached. Dutch society, in general, is high on trust. The ninth and final Weberian Value is that of Moderation (Matigheid) and emphasises the need to do

everything in moderation and to stay in control. Patience, composure, and non-exaggeration are considered virtues. Being out-of-control is taken as being immature.

The final three values fundamental to the Dutch have their origins in Holland, meaning the provinces of Noord- and Zuid-Holland. These values are quite typical and have spread throughout the rest of The Netherlands. In general, these values are typically Dutch, and one would imagine to not find them anywhere else. The tenth value is Consensus (Overeenstemming). It indicates a desire to solve disputes in a peaceful manner which avoids aggression, and violence. To realise this, the Dutch would consult one another to ensure that everyone is heard and maintain a good atmosphere. The eleventh value is that of Equality (Gelijkheid), which means that everyone is considered equal, regardless of position, and is treated as such. One does not order, but rather asks. Finally, there is the value of Self-determination (Zelfbeschikking). This value emphasises the importance of one's freedom to make choices and express opinions so long as they do not harm others. In short, it characterises personal freedom and a tendency to take the initiative.

2.4.3 Portuguese cultural standards and Dutch cultural values in this study

To recap, the aim of this study is to provide in-depth information about the differences between the Dutch and Portuguese cultures. Specifically, it aims to identify and generate thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) for Portuguese cultural standards as they are perceived by Dutch people working and living in Portugal. It does so by using the Grounded Interpretive Model to identify critical incidents and formulate Portuguese cultural standards. The Portuguese cultural standards defined above serve as a point of reference and comparison for the results of this study whereas the Dutch cultural values can provide a background for the experiences of the Dutch participants. The identified Portuguese cultural standards are then analysed using the existing literature to produce a thick description for each of them and to link them with cultural values.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that is used to collect and analyse this study's data. Hence, two methods make up this methodology: a data collection method, and a data analysis method. These methods are discussed in more detail below. Lastly, as mentioned before, this study forms part of the 'One market, many cultures' project headed by the European Institute for Cross-Cultural Studies (CROCUS) and the section of Organisational Behaviour Change

Management and Consultancy (OBCC) at the University of Twente. As such, the respective methods of this study are selected accordingly.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study follows a qualitative ETIC design and is modelled according to the Grounded Interpretive Model. Data is obtained through semi-structured interviews with Dutch people working and living in Portugal who also work together with Portuguese people. To participate, participants must comply with a set of requirements which are discussed further below.

The obtained data is analysed using a form of Thematic analysis specific to the 'One market, many cultures' project to ensure uniformity. From this analysis, several Portuguese cultural standards are distilled, interpreted, and explained. A global overview of the research design is depicted in figure 3.

Figure 3. Research design

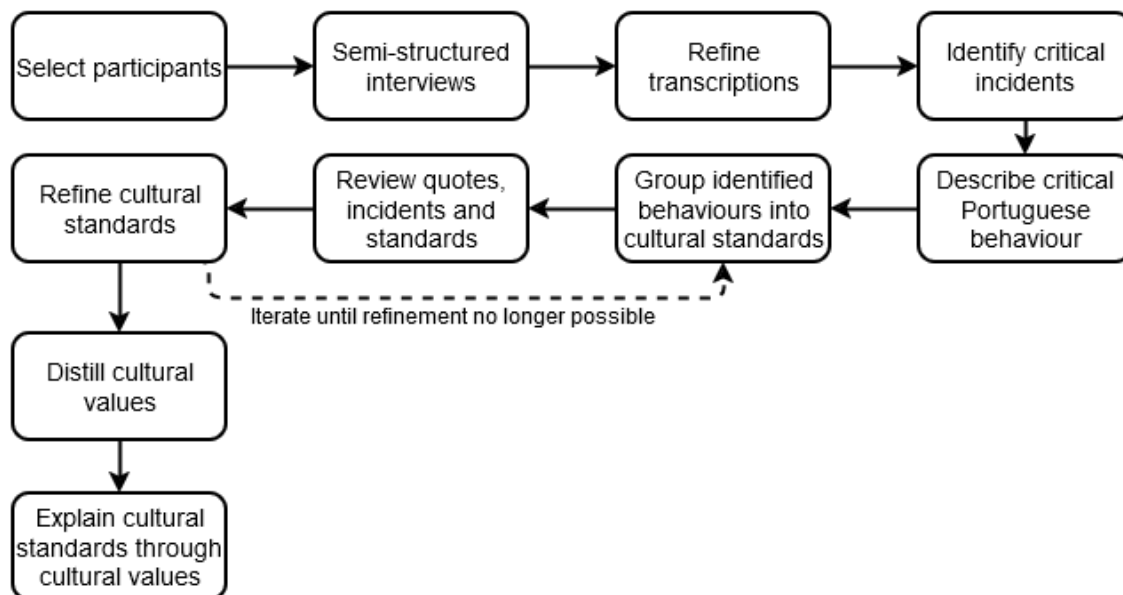## 3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection method is split into an interviewee sampling, and a data collection procedure.

3.2.1 Sampling

To acquire the data fort his study, interviews are conducted with 15 people of Dutch origin who live and work Portugal. The number of participants is selected based on the premise that data saturation is likely to occur after 11 interviews (Thesing, 2016).

To search for, and select the participants, social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook are used. The reasons for doing so are that it allows the researcher to easily reach and communicate with participants over a great distance, which is beneficial as participants are likely to be a large distance away. Beyond this, it also allows for reaching a vast number of potential participants while also using filters to ensure participants comply with the requirements of the study as summarized in Table 5 below. It follows that this study makes use of purposive sampling.

Table 5. Requirements for participation

Requirement	Explanation
Participants must have worked, and lived, in Portugal for a period of at least 6 months.	After this period, it is likely that the 'honeymoon phase' of staying in a foreign country has passed (Pederson, 1995). This should increase the awareness that the participants have regarding potential cultural differences.
Participants must have completed their full education in The Netherlands.	Completing significant education in The Netherlands ensures participants will not quickly forget their Dutch cultural values. Additionally, this requirement was adopted to be in line with the bigger European project this study is a part of.
Participants must have been immersed into the working environment and collaborate daily with their Portuguese colleagues.	This requirement should ensure that intense interaction between the Dutch participants and their Portuguese colleagues has taken place, without which no critical incidents would occur.
The demographic characteristics of the participants should be balanced.	Diverse demographic characteristics help the generalizability of the study. For example, some characteristics may directly

	impact the way cultural differences are viewed (gender, age, duration of stay).
Ideally, participants have work experience in The Netherlands.	This allows participants to clearly contrast working in The Netherlands with working in Portugal.

The above-mentioned requirements are discussed in more detail below.

Participants must have worked, and lived, in Portugal for a period of at least 6 months. After this period, it is likely that the 'honeymoon phase' of staying in a foreign country has passed (Pederson, 1995). This should increase the awareness that the participants have regarding potential cultural differences.

Participants must have completed their full education in The Netherlands. This criterion is used to assess whether a participant was raised into the Dutch culture. This is important as it may be easier to adjust to another culture at a younger age and with limited social interaction in one's culture of origin. Additionally, this criterion limits the degree to which Dutch people have been socialised into Portuguese culture. Finally, being raised into the Dutch culture makes it more likely that the instilled cultural values either predominate or can be easily called to mind. This makes it more likely that the participant experiences the Portuguese culture while being able to contrast it with the Dutch one, thus experiencing more critical incidents which are of interest to this study.

Moreover, this requirement is in line with the focus of middle- to higher-educated people of the larger European project this study is a part of. This allows the experiences between studies within this project to be comparable. Additionally, the wider project considers that experiences and behaviours between the lower end of the labour market and those of the general labour market are different. The implication of this requirement is that participants who have lived in Portugal for less time are preferable to those who have spent more time living in Portugal provided the other requirements are met.

Participants must have been immersed into the working environment and collaborate with their Portuguese colleagues. This requirement should ensure that intense interaction between the Dutch participants and their Portuguese colleagues has taken place which, in turn, should make identifying cultural differences less difficult.

Ideally, the demographic qualities of the participants, e.g., age, occupation, gender, working experience, are balanced. This way, the study can ensure that the results are as generalizable as possible.

The final ideal requirement is that participants have working experience in The Netherlands. This ensures that they can contrast working in The Netherlands with working in Portugal which makes it more likely that they experience critical incidents.

Once accepted into the study, the researcher conducts virtual interviews via a digital meeting, or conference tool such as, e.g., Microsoft Teams.

3.2.2 Data collection procedure

Prior to participation, potential participants receive an invitation to participate in the study via email or otherwise compatible social media messaging services. This invitation contains a clearly understandable text explaining the study in brief terms and ends with a question asking the potential participant if they are willing to participate and consent to the use of their data. The text also refers to a more detailed explanation of the study which is sent as an attachment. A consent form is also sent, though is optional, but recommended, to fill in and sign. Still, a digital response to the invitation indicating willingness to participate also classifies as consent through the wording used in the main text of the invitation.

3.2.3 Research Instrument

The data for this study is collected through a series of semi-structured interviews. This type of interview consists of a structured part which can be used for each interviewee to get the interview started, and an unstructured part which allows the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify, deepen, or elaborate on certain comments made by the interviewee (Barriball and While, 1994). This makes them ideal for gathering data on a person's thoughts, and opinions regarding matters which may or may not be sensitive in nature.

However, one disadvantage of this type of interview is that it is possible that participants may prefer responding in what they consider to be the most socially acceptable manner. As such, the researcher should pay attention to visual and verbal cues that indicate that the participant's answer may not be their own. It should also be noted that this disadvantage is lessened by the fact that two Dutch people (interviewer and interviewee) converse in Dutch about someone else and that few studies in the larger European project have encountered this effect. As such, it is not necessarily likely that the described effect occurs.

The semi-structured interviews are conducted by means of a video conference tool such as, e.g., Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, only one person is interviewed at a time and for no more than 1.5 hours. To help the participant express themselves more freely and naturally, the interviews are conducted in the participant's native language, Dutch. Additionally, a standard questionnaire consisting of open questions is used as the structured part of these interviews. The questions prompt participants to describe typical situations (critical incidents) which illustrate the Dutch-Portuguese cultural differences.

The aim of the interviews is to obtain as many detailed descriptions and stories regarding typical Portuguese behaviour as possible. Given that some participants may tend towards making general statements or move from one train of thought to another without any logical connections, the researcher should endeavour to describe each situation in detail and ask deepening, or elaborating, questions where needed. Successful interviews contain a detailed description of what occurred at the workplace. This should include how the situation came to be, who did what, how one person acted towards the other, and the outcome of the situation.

Finally, to prepare the obtained interview data for analysis, the interview audio is transcribed using a transcription tool which is either built-in to the conference tool used to conduct the interviews, or supports Dutch transcription, e.g. Amberscript or Microsoft Teams. Nevertheless, such software is prone to making transcription errors. As such, the researcher must review, edit, and improve the original transcriptions. As these transcriptions are in Dutch, the researcher translates quotes which are used as substantiation of the results of this study into English.

3.3   DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis can be divided into two phases: the actual analysis, and the interpretation.

3.3.1   Analysis

The analysis method applied to the data is Thematic Analysis. This is an inductive method of analysis which means that it derives concepts, themes, or models through interpretations of raw data. This specific analysis method is used because, by virtue of its theoretical flexibility, it offers a versatile and valuable research tool which can generate thorough explanations. It does so by identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This acquired data is then structured according to Gioia's first-order concepts, second-order themes, and third-order aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012).

In total, thematic analysis counts six recursive phases. That is to say that one can move back and forth between each phase at any time. The first phase involves getting familiar with the data by conducting, and transcribing interviews, and rereading the data. In the second phase, one creates initial codes which correspond to the first-order concepts as suggested by Gioia et al. (2012). This is done by highlighting critical incidents in the transcripts and associating them with a specific concept. In doing so, the participants' exact words are used as much as possible and overlapping concepts are refined into a single concept where possible. The third phase involves searching for themes. This is done by comparing the first-order concepts created in the previous phase and grouping them into second-order themes based on the similarities between them. In the next phase, these second-order themes are linked to the first-order concepts and the transcripts through careful review. In the fifth phase, second-order themes are generalised into Gioia's (Gioia et al., 2012) third-order aggregate dimensions to arrive at the overarching cultural standards. Finally, a report is written. It should be noted that, during this process, the findings are not to be compared with existing literature as this may lead the researcher to generate premature hypotheses which can lead to a confirmation bias (Gioia et al., 2012).

3.3.2 Interpretation

To explain the typical Portuguese behaviour and refine the interpretation of each behaviour, reference is made to diverse literature about Portuguese national culture, with a preference for literature produced by Portuguese authors. Furthermore, texts regarding Portuguese history and language, sociological studies, and characteristic expressions related to the cultural standards are used. This approach allows the development of thick descriptions of the identified cultural standards which, in turn, allows those cultural standards to be linked to underlying cultural values.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of this study. This is done by outlining the cultural standards that were found over the course of this research, providing a short description, describing them using interview quotes, and contrasting them with the Dutch perspective. Afterwards, the cultural standards are grouped into cultural values to gain insight into what motivates the behaviours that the cultural standards describe.

4.1 PORTUGUESE CULTURAL STANDARDS

As a result of the interviews conducted for this study, twelve from originally fifteen Portuguese cultural standards have been identified. The final three were dropped due to not being mentioned more than twice. These are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Portuguese cultural standards

Cultural standard	Definition	Mentioned by interviewees
Painful matters	Shameful or embarrassing matters are avoided	14
Time	Plannings, and time as a whole, are often flexible	11
Procedure	Procedures are followed to the letter	10
Relationships	Building and maintaining relationships is important	9
Boss' decision	The boss decides, and is responsible for all matters	6
Feedback	Critical feedback triggers defensive behaviour	6
Testing the waters	The other person's state of mind is tested by providing context before reaching the core of the conversation	6
Status	One openly shows one's status	5
Resourcefulness	Use your own judgement or improvisation to resolve a situation	5
Authority	Authorities (in their field) are believed	4

| Frustration | Frustration is bottled up, before exploding | 4 |
| Concealing own insights | Results, insights or improvements are not often shared | 4 |

Below, the above-mentioned cultural standards are described in more detail. This description starts with an elaboration of the cultural standard itself which is followed by (several) quotes which describe a situation where the Dutch participant experienced the cultural standard. Finally, it explains why this cultural standard could clash with the Dutch cultural standards described earlier.

Painful matters

Painful matters refer to avoid speaking about anything that can cause embarrassment, fear, discomfort, or damage a relationship. It is innately a mental hurt and not necessarily physical. In general, the Portuguese seem to avoid speaking about this kind of matter at all costs and prefer to tell someone 'yes' to something that cannot be done than to tell them 'no'. For employees this often means that a lot of time is spent solving problems on their own rather than reporting them and asking help or that a lot of effort is put into placating higher-ranked individuals. For employers, this may mean that mistakes, while corrected, are not acknowledged and that they may prefer not to contact a potential applicant with a rejection rather than risk hurting that person's feelings. Additionally, when faced with a tricky or difficult question, the Portuguese may not provide any intermediate feedback regarding their progress. In short, openly discussing potentially painful matters is something the Portuguese avoid.

*"Take, for example, the difference in preparing for a meeting, **the way of talking and of taking ownership of things. Understanding that something is important for the customer and showing that you understand its importance and that you take it seriously**, instead of saying: this is an uncomfortable topic for us as we did not do so well. Let's act as if it did not happen"* (interviewee 1)

*"For instance, if I ask my lawyer to adjust a contract or my accountant to arrange certain matters for me, then they would prefer to tell me 'yes it will be done' and not do it than **to say 'no, sorry, but this is not possible'**. They seem to have great difficulty saying 'no', but this leads to me having to chase after them and they seem to prefer ignoring you than providing an answer"* (interviewee 8)

The Dutch, in contrast, are less sensitive to these matters and will often say what is on their mind if they believe it to be of general benefit, as illustrated with the bold-printed text above, they will sooner indicate that something is impossible than to give the impression that it is. In case of a confrontation, they will attempt to talk it out and resolve it amongst themselves while acknowledging what happened. This causes a clash when a Dutch person expects a Portuguese one to be open about difficulties, they face whereas the Portuguese person would prefer to do anything to avoid acknowledging such (perceived) embarrassment. As the Dutch would assume everything to be alright, they can be in for quite the surprise when, at last, they realise that this is not the case. In the general sense, one could say that the Dutch are mostly acting out of their values of "Truth" and "Guilt and remission" where they value being truthful about matters regardless of their nature or potential consequences and that they place great value upon recognising one's own mistakes.

Time

For the Portuguese, time is a force that should work for you instead of the other way around, meaning that it is often treated flexibly. When an appointment is made, the time is a guideline but no hard rule. Should something come up, rescheduling is an acceptable response even when little to no notice is given. Interestingly, the Portuguese seem to prioritise matters they, subjectively, feel are urgent rather than those which have been scheduled for a particular time. Additionally, matters such as going out or planning some entertainment can be done very ad-hoc and are rarely planned into a calendar. So, the Portuguese take a flexible approach to their view of time.

*"So here [in Portugal], one really decides on the spot if you do or do not want to go and do something. **Unlike in The Netherlands where we tend to plan an outing and look forward to it**. That does not exist here. When I try to plan something, a reasonable time, in advance then, on the very day itself, I will get a message asking if we are still on for that which I planned. Even though I already planned it"* (interviewee 5)

"While they [the Portuguese] seem to find it acceptable to push back things they promised they would do for you, it also seems to work the other way around. If they are doing something else, and you need them in that moment, they appear to be available. Though it seems like your matter does need to have a clear sense of urgency for this to be the case" (interviewee 6)

For the Dutch, this is the opposite. Often, the smallest things that need to be done are placed in a calendar and dealt with when that time comes around. Naturally, plannings can move a bit if

very urgent matters come up, but that is more often the exception than the rule. Being late is not appreciated even if it is 'only' a few minutes. This clashes with the Portuguese stance in that the Portuguese view time much more flexibly and have difficulty understanding the Dutch 'fixation' on time. The Dutch, however, cannot understand how someone can live without a schedule. They may consider such people unreliable when considering the Dutch cultural value of "Reliability", as, from the Dutch perspective, one does not do as they promised they would.

Procedure

The Portuguese, in general, appear to hold to established procedures whenever possible. Note that the term 'procedure' does not refer only to official and strict sets of rules, but also to established, habitual, or standard ways of doing something or handling a situation. Oftentimes, it may be observed that certain meetings always take place around the same time or on the same day. Alternatively, some processes may seem long-winded or convoluted to a Dutch person but always follow the exact same structure. In the absence of such an established procedure, however, it is not uncommon for matters to escalate up the hierarchy so that someone can decide about this unknown case. Interestingly, these procedures are not always documented nor is it a given that the details for them can be found in brochures or online. In summary, the Portuguese value procedures and follow them rigidly even though they may not be the most efficient or well-documented.

*"For instance, a customer sends one of my Portuguese colleagues and email about their order, which hadn't arrived yet. In general, the customer's email address is enough for us to find the order in question and access its status, but my colleague will get back to the customer asking whether they have an order number. The customer provides this in a new email and my colleague then asks about their address details. **Instead of either directly providing the information requested or asking all these questions in one go**" (interviewee 3)*

"We had a certain way of working which involved making a weekly round of the company. During this round we would discuss things that needed to be done or changed. This never happened outside of this round. If something needed changing or an announcement needed to be made, it would have to be done during this weekly round" (interviewee 7)

The Dutch also tend to keep to procedures, but not as strictly as the Portuguese seem to. Procedures for the Dutch are useful guides to fall back on, but it is also accepted to follow one's common sense when dealing with certain matters, though there are certain standards. Nevertheless, these procedures are nearly always well-documented and accessible. This may

cause a clash or conflict when dealing with Portuguese procedures as they appear to be mostly implicit and can be experienced as tedious or unnecessary by the Dutch. When considering this situation, the Dutch seem to act from the value of "Utility" in that the procedure being followed should be useful and efficient, and, hence, profitable.

Relationships

Relationships are important to the Portuguese, both in private and at work. A lot of time is spent building and maintaining them which can manifest itself in elaborate breaks, startup time with one's colleagues, or lengthy introductions to conversations to build common ground. These relationships tend to work for them in that they allow easier access to certain people and in that people are significantly more willing to accommodate you if you have put the time and effort into building a relationship with them. These relationships also tend to blur the line between private and work as they can reasonably easily flow into one another. For instance, you may discuss your private life with a municipal clerk while checking the progress for a permit your business may need. In short, the Portuguese spend a lot of time building and maintaining interpersonal relations and this is important to the success of business endeavours. In short, the Portuguese start by building an interpersonal bond or relationship before discussing the original subject of the conversation.

"Consider a telephone conversation. For instance, I require something from a Portuguese authority [such as the municipality]. Then I actually have to check if there is anyone present that I know and, if not, then I had better ask how they are doing first or discuss some local actuality. If not, chances are that getting the thing I require from them is going to be difficult" *(interviewee 5)*

*"**Let's say we need to start working at eight o'clock, we [the Dutch] would start at working at eight**. Well, do not expect a Portuguese person to actually begin working at that time. Sure, they are present, but they will first strike up a conversation with just about everyone they know regarding what they did the day before or to complain they have to start working again"* *(interviewee 9)*

While the Dutch also have relationships, they tend to be more clearly defined and separated. They do not require a so-called conversational warm-up to allow for discussing something. Having relationships influence both your private and work life is rare. This would clash with the Portuguese way of working in that it is important to build and maintain a relationship on a personal level. The Portuguese might consider the Dutch getting-straight-to-business approach

to be cold, perhaps even uncaring, and, as a result, may be less willing to do business. The Dutch, conversely, would consider spending so much time for getting little done a potential waste of time. This clearly follows from the Dutch values of "Utility" and "Truth" as they feel that time spent should accomplish something other than enjoying a pleasant conversation, especially if that time could be spent on something (potentially) more profitable and that the focus is on having a candid to-the-point conversation.

Boss' decision

In Portugal, the boss is the one who makes all the decisions and is responsible for the overall performance of a company. Additionally, they are the only ones allowed to sign important and/or official documents, even in larger companies. While employees may contribute something to a particular matter, both the responsibility and the credit always belongs to the boss, and they may not be necessarily pleased with any interjections of their employees. When employees run into a situation that causes them uncertainty, they will refer the matter to the boss to get a decision on how to handle it. So, the Portuguese have a hierarchical structure where the boss decides all matters and where employees will refer uncertain situations past their boss to get a definitive decision on how best to handle it.

"Take, for example, my Portuguese manager. If I had an idea and would say: let's sit down for a minute and brainstorm together regarding this topic, then that would not be done. Those kinds of decisions would be taken by my manager on his own. So, if I had an idea or saw things go very wrong, I would need to make a great effort to be heard" (interviewee 1)

"I imagine that the Portuguese can be rather unsure or insecure. For instance, if our employee has a foreign customer, she will still ask us [as Dutch employers] how best to approach this situation even though she has been with us for over eight years. She has handled such situations before, so she does know how to deal with this" (interviewee 13)

In contrast, the Dutch are on a more level playing field regarding their boss. The norm is to speak your mind or give suggestions if you have them. Additionally, a Dutch boss is more likely to delegate certain tasks and place the responsibility for them with the people they delegated them to. Or to give certain employees to sign or approve documents on their behalf. Moreover, the Dutch do not stop at appreciating any suggestions, but also expect employees to speak up if they have a better suggestion or proposal. In short, a Dutch person may have difficulty understanding why suggestions are not acted upon or why they cannot approve certain matters when doing so would expedite the process. In short, the Dutch act from a value of "Equality"

and "Self-Determination" where each employee or boss is considered, about, equal and should be treated as such, and that people should speak up when they have an idea or suggestion.

Feedback

In general, the Portuguese have the tendency of providing feedback a positively as possible. Direct critiques can come across as harsh and will often be experienced as very painful by the person one is talking to, exhibited by causing them to act defensively or to become unwilling to talk. Giving feedback in this manner may cause them to take it personally rather than professionally. It tends to be effective to gently introduce the topic you wish to discuss and form your feedback in terms of suggestions. In that case, they tend to be more open to receiving and understanding it as it was intended. So, the Portuguese tend to give feedback very carefully and often wrapped in suggestions or, generally, as positively as possible.

*"Regarding feedback, they seem more likely to take offence than **to feel helped**. Even if it is super constructive feedback, they will immediately go like: oh sorry, sorry, sorry. I even run into this when I would ask someone if they could, perhaps, give me an update regarding several calls I asked them to make on my behalf"* (interviewee 3)

*"So, **normally, I would walk into somebody's office with a question, and I would simply ask it as I walk in**. Well, I did that once, and the person I was talking to seemed to shut down nearly instantly. Since then, I would start with a little intro story such as: hey, how are you? I see you're doing good work but I'm running into this issue. I would resolve it like this, but I'm wondering if you might have a better way to do this."* (interviewee 7)

For the Dutch, feedback is usually as direct as possible to avoid any ambiguity. It is generally not taken personally, and it is assumed that the one giving feedback is trying to help you. When one is considered at fault for something, apologising generally resolves the situation. The Dutch, meanwhile, may have difficulty understanding why their Portuguese colleagues do not seem to appreciate the feedback they are providing. In case of the Dutch, it seems they are acting out of values of "Utility" and "Truth" in that they are expressing what they feel about the other candidly to help them be more efficient or more in line with what is expected.

Testing the waters

The Portuguese tend to spend a lot of time testing the waters of a situation. When someone would seek help at a help desk, they do not immediately get to the crux of their issue but rather explain the circumstances, expectations, and scenario in-depth before they put forth their actual

question. A similar thing happens in conversation when people may start off discussing something rather banal or personal regarding the situation before sitting down and, for instance, doing business. Context may also cause what is actually being said to be taken in a differently in that a fairly simple question may be taken for admonishment depending on how and when it is asked. In summary, the context of a given situation is what gives meaning to what is being said to the Portuguese.

*"In emails, a lot of the time a question isn't simply answered. This happens in this current project as well. The Dutch party would ask a question of a Portuguese counterpart, but they would not provide **a clear black-and-white answer**. Rather, the Dutch party is bombarded with a fifty-shades-of-grey answer" (interviewee 2)*

*"**To my mind, people should address each other in a short and concise manner** [at work]. However, I see that, during conversations, there is often ample room left for the story of people who do not immediately say what they came for. So, first there'll be some sort of introduction, that is addressed, and only later do they come to the actual problem" (interviewee 5)*

The Dutch, by contrast, hardly depend on context at all. They will generally take what is being said at face value without considering possible ulterior motives or implications. In fact, providing too much context may confuse a Dutch person as to what someone truly means to say. The approach, in general, is to say what is on your mind without any extra information. A Dutch person may lose track of what is being discussed or why so much seemingly unrelated information is being shared. The Dutch, in this regard, act out of a value of "Utility". That is to say that they will avoid any information that is not directly relevant to the situation at hand so as not to waste time.

Status

In Portugal, status is important. This manifests itself in how people are dressed people at work, the cars they drive, or the buildings they work in. In general, it is considered important to command respect and honour from others. An employee is, simultaneously, considered to be a reflection of their boss and vice versa. Additionally, people may speak differently towards people whom they consider have a higher status than them than towards people who are, to their mind, more on the same level. In short, someone's status is determined by attributes such as job title, visible attributes as clothes or cars, or by the people they know.

"At a visit to an institution, for instance, you will be received with some decorum which seems to include a certain dress-code. From what I saw, business-casual is fine, but when a Dutch

*person shows up in flip-flops that is clearly not appreciated while one might think **I can decide for myself what I wear***" (interviewee 2)

In another case, there was a lawyer who was determined to shine in the eyes of their employer.

*"So, the CEO came to Lisbon, and we had informed our lawyer of that. She said that it would be good for us to come by her office in that case. So, when the CEO arrived, we did. I had a question regarding a type of contract anyway, but, once there, she would sit there and monologue about her experience in court, her background, etcetera. **We looked at her sheepishly, as we just asked her a question** and were faced with a ten-minute monologue"* (interviewee 8)

For the Dutch, status is of less importance. Naturally, it is important that you have a positive image, but status showing is not appreciated. It is considered more important that you are honest and that the tasks you are given are performed correctly and efficiently. Seen from the values of "Equality" and "Work", the highest praise a Dutch person can get is that they are "just very common, like everybody else, despite what they have accomplished" and that delivering good, high-quality work is more indicative of someone's standing than any outside attributes.

Resourcefulness

The Portuguese approach to undertaking a particular project or task can be considered flexible. They will take the time to consider various viewpoints or try out numerous things before getting to the core of the job. It is also possible that certain (important) information becomes available over the course of the project instead of being clearly defined in advance. However, once a clear deadline approaches that cannot be postponed, they also ensure that everything is finished by the time they hit that deadline. In fact, the Portuguese are also good at generating solutions on-the-fly through improvisation. So, the Portuguese tend to undertake a project in a flexible manner which is not always clearly structured.

*"So, I posed a question to both my Dutch and Portuguese employees. I drive around with a broken case which is headed for the general pile of usable cases, what would you do with it? And all the Portuguese said: well, you add it to the pile and, once you need it, you go and fix it. While all Dutch people said: **no, if something is broken you put it aside so that you can repair it when you either have time or need it***." (interviewee 6)

"What I noticed [in a project], is that the Portuguese seem to arrange everything on the spot. Not in advance, but through improvisation. Don't get me wrong, they are really good at that,

*but a Dutch person is less so and **quickly gets nervous when something seems out of place***
(interviewee 5)

The Dutch, in this regard, are less flexible. They prefer to have everything planned out in advance and they dislike being surprised. They may take less time to consider the various viewpoints, and generally keep things on track. If improvisation is required, this is less of their strong point. This clashes with the Portuguese approach as the Dutch may have some difficulty in following along with what the Portuguese are doing and why they are doing it. It may also make them nervous when, seemingly, little has been done and a deadline approaches or some improvisation is required to get things sorted. This comes from the Dutch value of "Order and neatness" where they value structure, organisation, and tidiness. A flexible approach inherently has less of these traits which causes confusion or discomfort.

Authority

In general, authorities in Portugal (in any field or in government) are believed implicitly. There is no sensation that the Portuguese may know something better than an authority on the subject and said authorities, consequently, accept no argument regarding what they tell you. They are generally given the utmost respect and not observing this may have serious consequences in some cases. Additionally, employees are seen as a reflection of their boss, and, as such, attempt to behave in a way worthy of representing their superiors and their bosses tend to be protective of criticism of their subordinates. In summary, authorities are considered some of the pillars of society with whom you do not argue and whom you do not doubt.

"So, these girls in question were stopped [by police] and were issued a fine. Except these girls did not take this well and flipped. Swearing and insulting the police officer. In this case, that resulted in them being summoned to court the next day to explain themselves in front of a judge on charges of insulting an officer on duty" (interviewee 5)

*"What I also noticed is that, if you look like an authority on the subject, you do not need to try so hard to convince anyone. This is useful in one way, but **also rather annoying as you actually want to hear some critical thoughts** or know where you may have gone wrong or where your colleagues may have a different opinion" (interviewee 10)*

For the Dutch, authorities are not placed on a pedestal. A Dutch person may, for instance, look up their symptoms online and tell their doctor what they found and what they think may be wrong with them. Similarly, police officers, while treated respectfully in general may also be addressed reasonably informally. These are stark contrasts to the Portuguese mentality as

neither is a common occurrence. This could cause a clash when, for instance, a Dutch person does his research before going to the doctor and feels like sharing their findings or suggesting possible treatment options based on the research they performed. A Portuguese authority would not take kindly to this. Additionally, while insulting an officer in The Netherlands may earn you a fine, in Portugal this could result in a criminal trial. This contrast comes from the Dutch values of "Equality" and "Self-Determination" where everyone, regardless of their authority, should, generally, be considered equal and treated as such and that people should speak up when they have an idea or suggestion. Therefore, they are on a more level playing field with such authorities and can be more open with them.

Frustration

Portuguese people generally do not express their frustration at any situation upfront. They are likely to bottle it up in the hopes the offending party will notice and change their behaviour. However, if this does not happen, it is not uncommon for this frustration to explosively find release. So, a Portuguese person may not easily complain or vent their frustration regarding any specific matter to you, but they may also explode once they reach their limit.

"So, I have worked for years with a young person. He has an education, some sort of HBO [Dutch Higher Occupational Education] and a generally nice chap. We always worked well together, until he suddenly stands in front of me and says: I'm leaving [quitting]. So, then you start asking and find out that there were some things that have been bothering him for a long time" (interviewee 10)

"I remember it happened that someone has been entering data wrongly. The Portuguese colleagues seemed to think the first time that: ah well can happen. And they don't say anything and adjust it themselves. Same for the second, and third times. But the fourth time, they flipped and hurled insults at him" (interviewee 3)

In contrast, the Dutch tend to express the things that frustrate them more directly. Commonly, if someone notices that somebody is frustrated, they will talk to said person to help them work it out. As such, it is relatively rare that frustration is expressed in an explosive manner. This can clash with the way the Portuguese deal with their frustrations as it is very difficult for a Dutch person to realise that their Portuguese counterpart is dealing with significant frustrations. Once they do realise, they may be subjected to a verbal torrent of frustration that may be too much for a Dutch person to deal with. Conversely, a Dutch person may come across as complaining when they honestly express their frustrations. The Dutch approach comes from their values of

"Consensus" and "Truth" in that they value resolving issues, disputes, or frustrations together in a peaceful manner rather than with (verbal) aggression or violence, and in that they tend to express their frustrations directly. This may also be at the root of what could make it difficult to deal with a Portuguese person who has reached their limit.

Concealing own insights

In general, people on the work floor tend to have certain valuable insights. This is no different in Portugal, except that these insights are not often shared on one's own initiative. A particular person, for example, could have thought up a way to do their work more efficiently with a few minor changes. Nevertheless, the chance of them implementing this or suggesting it to their superior is reasonably low. These matters tend to be considered the purview of the boss or superior and, as such, is not for employees to share their thoughts on unless asked for. Concluding, even if the Portuguese have some good insights, they are unlikely to share those on their own accord.

"So, in the first place we worked, we had a lot of contact with the receptionists. That place ran unbelievably poorly, and the owner was a very odd gentleman. However, the receptionists already worked there for a long time and, apparently, **had a lot of good ideas about how to improve things. So, we asked: why don't you say that then***? But they answered: oh no, no, no, definitely not. They also refused to elaborate." (interviewee 12)*

"At one point, we got some new software. So, I was trying to set up and log in, but I couldn't. Then people say, well yes, all that has changed and we got new passwords for everything. And I was already trying for two hours or so and wondering why it wouldn't work. The thing is, though, **they all knew about it. But telling me, oh no***" (interviewee 9)*

The Dutch mentality is different in that they tend to speak their minds about things like possible efficiency gains, lowering costs, or better ways of working. It is normal to discuss these ideas and, perhaps, implement them if all parties involved agree that it is a good idea. This clashes in that a Dutch employer might expect their employees to come forward if they have suggestions, or plans for improvement. The Portuguese, meanwhile, will likely not do this. Portuguese employers, on the other hand, may not expect it at all from their Dutch employees and perhaps not appreciate it. The Dutch mentality originates from their cultural value of "Salvation" where they value the acceptation of new ideas if they have the potential to lead to a better future.

4.1.1 Interesting findings

The last three cultural standards were mentioned very little by the interviewees. So, because we only consider standards that have been mentioned at least three times and, therefore, while there is no solid ground to consider them robust cultural standards, one of them is discussed here as there are some interesting points.

Lunch

While several participants have indicated that the Portuguese tend to take their time for lunch, only a small number were quoted as indicating that it was a seriously important time of day that could not be compromised on. For instance, the length of the lunch break is regulated by law as is the fact that any employer is obliged to either provide their employees a warm lunch, or a fixed budged to obtain one. One participant was quoted as saying.

"Food here [in Portugal] is very important. Look, I usually have a half-hour break, but here it is obligatory to have an hour for the lunch break. It cannot be any less. Usually, people will go out for lunch in restaurants or something and they are also filled to the brim" (interviewee 15)

4.2 UNDERLYING VALUES: ASSOCIATION AMONG CULTURAL STANDARDS

Besides identifying the cultural standards that a lot of Dutch people working and living in Portugal run into, this study also attempts to reveal the underlying cultural values that inform these behaviours. This section, therefore, illustrates several cultural values, their association to the cultural standards, and by what logic these values inform the behaviours captured by the cultural standards. This ensures we arrive at a thick description of the observed behaviours and standards. Additionally, it may be that some cultural standards overlap or that multiple values may inform the same cultural standards. Nevertheless, these values describe why the Portuguese act the way they do regarding the discovered cultural standards.

Obeying

Those in a position of power are to be respected and believed. Authority is an important aspect of Portuguese society and refers to those who are knowledgeable in a particular subject, hold an esteemed position, or are in a position of power. The Portuguese display the utmost respect for those they consider to be authorities. That means that these figures are implicitly believed; that their knowledge and expertise are not questioned; and that matters in their sphere of expertise are deferred to them (Authority). Moreover, even if one holds their own thoughts and insights on certain matters, these may be held back to not interfere with the authority figure or

potentially undermine them in some way (Concealing own insights). Authorities themselves also expect these behaviours from those they interact with as sharing the results of one's own research is not likely to be appreciated. In terms of power distance, authorities stand above those who either report to them or seek their advice or help, though not necessarily as authoritarians or dictators. As such, it is often these figures who are responsible for making the final decisions (Boss' decision). Meaning, only bosses can approve certain changes or sign documents for clients or partners, and unknown situations which do not have a clear resolution will often have to be brought before one of such figures before it can be resolved. As such, they are also the ones setting up generally followed procedures and one is expected to follow said procedures (Procedure). In short, "Obeying" embodies the respect felt towards those who are very knowledgeable or in very prominent positions. Figure 4 below illustrates the relations between different cultural standards and this cultural value.
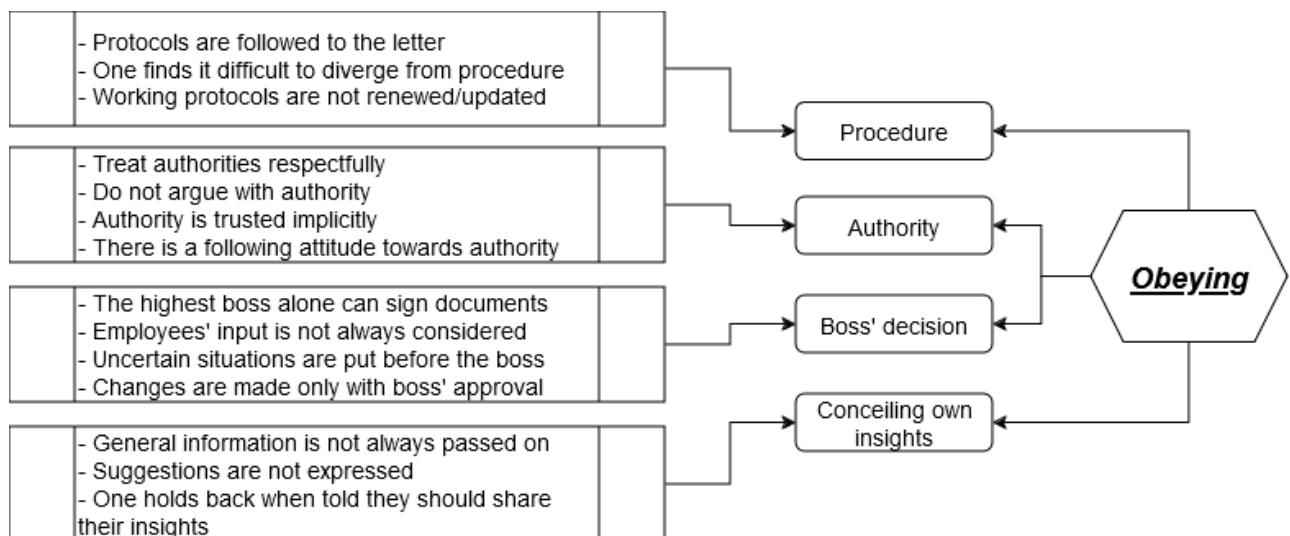

Figure 4. Cultural standards and the value "Obeying"

Harmony

The second cultural value that was found is "Harmony". This encompasses the need to maintain harmony, pride, respect, rapport, and to avoid conflict between people. One way this desire for continuous harmony manifests is the way the Portuguese view relationships. Once established, they are ready to do just about anything for the other person which includes covering for mistakes and defending someone's (potentially poor) performance (Relations). They create a space for the Portuguese where they feel safe, respected and important. Therefore, doing anything that puts these relationships at risk is out of the question. For instance, they would avoid being critical of those around them (Feedback). Instead making sure that any feedback is packed with compliments or delivered in a way that ensures it is seen as helpful rather than critical. Being too direct, or not providing enough context, are also actions to be avoided. Rather, the Portuguese will take the time to give a detailed explanation of all the relevant aspects of a situation to ensure that their counterpart both understands all the nuances involved and does not feel lost or pressured trying to help (Testing the waters). These are all ways in which the Portuguese attempt to maintain interpersonal harmony and avoid putting it at risk. In summary, the Portuguese desire to live a harmonious life they can be proud of and will do anything to avoid infringing on that harmony. Several cultural standards and how they relate to this cultural value are illustrated in Figure 5 below.
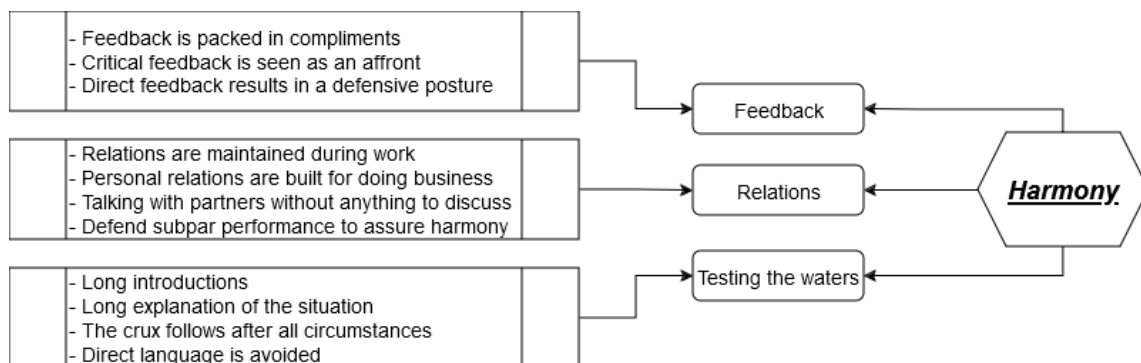

Figure 5. Cultural standards and the value "Harmony"

Pride

The third cultural value that was found is "Pride". This encompasses a desire to take pride in anything one does and to allow others to do the same. The Portuguese seek a certain form of achievement or glory and have a need to express and demonstrate it. They will work very hard if they perceive their work to have some greater meaning, and, consequently, may fall to do the bare minimum otherwise. Therefore, they would be loath to do anything that could disturb their own or someone else's pride. This could include asking for help, providing someone with a negative answer, or allow someone else to take over (some of) your work (Painful matters). All these behaviours would possibly infringe on one's own sense of achievement and pride or on that of someone else. Additionally, they would avoid being critical of those around them: making frustrations immediately known or being too direct as these are all possible actions that could damage one's sense of achievement which has been carefully built up. Still, in the case of frustrations, one may well react explosively if they reach the limit of what they can handle (Frustration). Furthermore, the Portuguese tend to actively seek out status enriching symbols. They do so to both appear important and to make an active display of their own achievements. And, while changes may not be their favourite, once they have proven successful, they are quick to accept, appreciate, and take credit for them (Status). In summary, the Portuguese strive to lead a life they can be proud of and will do anything to avoid hurting each other's pride. Several cultural standards and how they relate to this cultural value are illustrated in Figure 6 below.
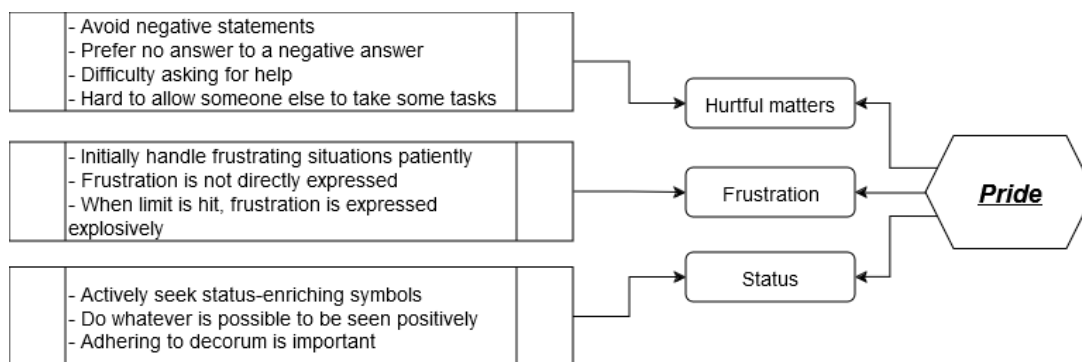

Figure 6. Cultural standards and the value "Pride"

Flexibility

The final cultural value this study found and discusses is that of "Flexibility". This refers to both the way the Portuguese experience time and how they approach projects or other matters. As it relates to time, the Portuguese are not strictly beholden to it. It is fine if one shows up 15 minutes later than planned as well as if an appointment that was made is fully rescheduled. One participant in this study even mentioned that *"being earlier than the time indicated is considered rude" (interviewee 12)*. However, this was the only instance of this being mentioned and, as such, cannot be reliably verified. Nevertheless, it is an interesting point. What could be verified, is a tendency to provide wide time slots during which something is to be done, say a delivery to be made or that it is no problem for an appointment to take longer than scheduled (Time). In relation to the Portuguese approach to projects, this flexibility shows in a very good ability to improvise solutions on-the-fly if need be. Additionally, the Portuguese have no issue working on a project where (important) information may become available later in the project or taking extensive time to look at every angle before starting work. In general, a project is considered a success if it is completed before the latest possible deadline. That is to say that, if a deadline can be moved, likely it will have to be, but, when it can no longer be moved, the work will be done by the time it comes around. Moreover, when prioritising tasks to work on, a Portuguese person is likely to select those which they perceive to be the most urgent regardless of whether their calendar indicates that they have time for it or not (Resourcefulness). So, flexibility guides how the Portuguese approach projects and other such matters. Figure 7 below illustrates the cultural standards as they relate to this value.
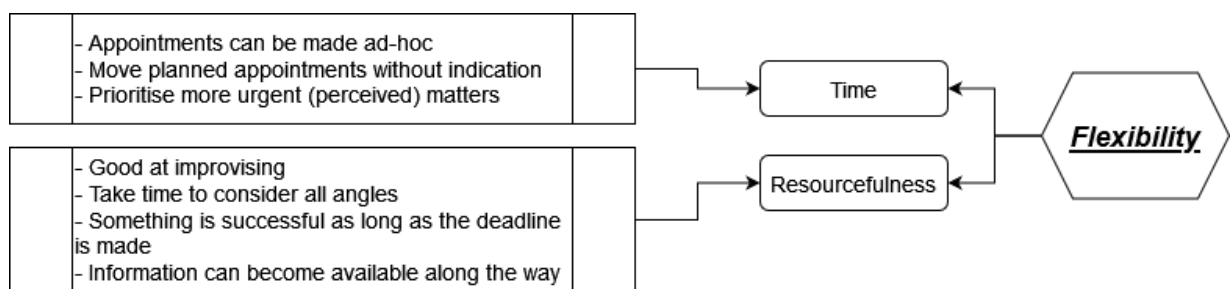

Figure 7. Cultural standards and the value "Flexibility"

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter presents a discussion of this study. It starts with an overview of the discovered Portuguese cultural standards as seen and experienced by Dutch people working in Portugal. It then moves to present the academic and practical relevance of this research which are followed by suggestions for future research and potential limitations of the current study. Finally, this chapter ends with a conclusion about the research that was performed.

5.1 PORTUGUESE CULTURAL STANDARDS AS PERCEIVED BY THE DUTCH

The aim of this study was to address the following research gaps.

Gap 1: There is a lack of knowledge on how the Portuguese culture on the work floor is perceived by Dutch individuals working and living in Portugal.

Gap 2: Wider research is yet to link concrete Portuguese behaviours on the work floor to the underlying cultural logic which may explain them.

This paper achieved this by discovering the Portuguese cultural standards, or typical behaviours, that the Dutch experience while living and working in Portugal and alongside the Portuguese, and to link them to underlying cultural values, as seen from a Dutch perspective. In all, twelve Portuguese cultural standards were discovered during this study, and they are described in detail in section 4.1 Portuguese Cultural Standards. Below follows a list of the different cultural standards as a summary.

1. Painful matters
2. Time
3. Procedure
4. Relationships
5. Boss' decision
6. Feedback
7. Testing the waters
8. Status
9. Resourcefulness
10. Authority
11. Frustration
12. Concealing own insights

To present a thick description of Portuguese culture (as seen by the Dutch) these behaviours are linked to the respective cultural values that inform them. These associations explain why the Portuguese (tend to) behave in a certain way. This explanation creates an expectation of how the Portuguese can behave in certain situations. Four values were found: Obeying, Harmony, Pride, and Flexibility.

5.2   ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

To illustrate the academic implications of this study, this section first provides an overview of the literature which supports its results. For recent supporting literature, it then discusses the ways the results from this work extend it. For older supporting literature, the nuances and slight differences between them and this study are discussed. Afterwards, the implications for other, related, literature are discussed.

Table 7. Portuguese cultural standards and supporting literature

Cultural standards	Supporting literature
Painful matters	Dias, 1950; Hofstede, 1984; Meyer, 2014; Robalo, 2015
Time	Hofstede 1984; Hall and Hall, 1989; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Meyer, 2014; Robalo, 2015
Procedure	Dias, 1950; Robalo, 2015
Relationships	Dias, 1950; Hofstede 1984; Meyer, 2014; Robalo, 2015; Costa et al., 2020
Boss' decision & Feedback	Dias, 1950; Hofstede 1984; Meyer, 2014
Testing the waters	
Status	Dias, 1950; Poláčková and Duin, 2019
Resourcefulness	Dias, 1950; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Robalo, 2015; Costa et al., 2020
Authority	Hofstede, 1984; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Meyer, 2014; Poláčková and Duin, 2019
Frustration	Meyer, 2014
Concealing own insights	Cunha et al., 2019

Table 7 above illustrates that all the cultural standards that were found, aside from "Testing the waters", are supported by existing literature. This, in turn, means that this study also validates a lot of the earlier work. However, more than that, it also adds some nuance in some cases and extends the existing body of literature in others.

First, one may contrast this study's findings with those of Robalo et al. (2015), as they share some significant similarities. While that study concerns the Austrian-Portuguese dichotomy, it is interesting to highlight several points of overlap with the current study. Specifically, Robalo

et al. (2015) identified the following cultural standards: "Fluid time management", "Relaxed attitude towards professional performance", "Bureaucracy and slow-decision-making processes", "Indirect communication style", and "Flexible organisational skills". They also identified "Importance of social relationships" as a cultural standard, though, as previously discussed, this is more akin to a cultural value by the definitions of this study. The exact definitions of these cultural standards/value can be found in Table 3 of section 2.4.1.

Table 8. Robalo et al. (2015) cultural standards compared to the present study's

Robalo et al. (2015) cultural standard	Corresponding cultural standard this study
Fluid time management	Time
Bureaucracy and slow decision-making processes	Procedure
Indirect communication style	Painful matters
Flexible organisational skills	Resourcefulness

However, as Table 8 above illustrates, most of the remaining cultural standards identified by Robalo et al. (2015) have overlap with standards identified in the current study. "Fluid time management" can be related to "Time"; "Bureaucracy and slow decision-making processes" to "Procedure"; "Indirect communication style" can be somewhat related to "Painful matters", though the latter is more nuanced; and "Flexible organisational skills" is a component of "Resourcefulness". This lends credibility to the current study in that, while Australians and Dutch people are no doubt different, they seem to recognise similar cultural standards when interacting with the Portuguese. Beyond that, it has the implication that this study extends that of Robalo et al. (2015) in the sense that it, firstly, identifies the underlying cultural values that inform Portuguese cultural standards, and, secondly, that it provides a new (Dutch) perspective with which to contrast the findings.

However, besides these cultural standards that have found overlap, there is the "Relaxed attitude towards professional performance" which did not make it into this study. This was mainly because, while it was mentioned in some form during the interviews, there were not enough participants who did mention it to warrant a place on this study's list of cultural standards. The

cultural value of "Importance of social relationships" is represented in the current study, however. Though, its cultural standard "Relationships" is more concerned with building and maintaining said social relationships and the cultural value "Harmony" drills deeper than merely considering social relationships to be of importance. Indeed, it may be added that the Portuguese use relationships to avoid discord and create an environment for themselves and others where they feel safe and important.

As Robalo et al. (2015) is the only study which directly deals with cultural standards in the same sense as this research, this section continues by discussing some other work that has attempted to understand Portuguese culture and how the current study aligns with them. An important point from a study conducted by Marques et al. (2013) was that the Portuguese express distress with more anxiety and depression than do the Dutch, which means that they show more signs of fear, and feeling down or depressed when confronted with a situation that causes them distress such as unknown, or uncomfortable, situations. While this did not come up as literally as that in the current study, it may well have links with the cultural standard of "Frustration" in that the Portuguese tend to keep things to themselves more until it becomes too much. That, and the observed tendency to not seek help proactively which is compounded under "Painful matters", may provide some validation for the claim of Marques et al. (2013). The findings of Pina e Cunha (2005) and Cunha et al. (2022) are more clearly in line with the current research. They suggest, respectively, that the Portuguese are flexible in the way they approach their tasks, and that the Portuguese may not be in the habit of speaking up about organisational issues. These claims very well describe the cultural standards of "Resourcefulness" and "concealing own insights" which both validates the claims and the cultural standards. It also implies that these may be traits and behaviours that are expressed strongly, because they are encountered by not just the Dutch, but by a wide variety of nationalities. An additional point of interest from existing literature comes from Dias (1950) who states that the Portuguese "believe in wonders and miraculous solutions which inspires an ability to adjust to nearly any situation and gives them a certain flexibility to ad-hoc solutions". This lines up very well with the cultural value of "Flexibility" and its associated cultural standards "Resourcefulness" and "Time", even though it was not based on the same scientific rigour as this study.

Next, this section contrasts the results of this study with some popular quantitative cultural frameworks so that they may be considered with more context and nuance. In terms of Hofstede's framework, Portugal shows significantly more power distance than The Netherlands. This may flow from the cultural value of "Obeying" which is supported by

existing literature which highlights the importance of authority and bureaucracy (Dias, 1950; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Robalo et al., 2015; Poláčková and Duin, 2019; Costa et al., 2020), and, more specifically, the cultural standard of "Authority", in that the Portuguese have great respect for authority and will obey them, often without question. The following quote demonstrates this well: *"They [the Portuguese] won't protest easily but have a lot of faith in the boss"*. In this sense, the results support the claim that Portugal has a higher power distance than The Netherlands, however they also show that it likely flows from an inherent respect for authority and a desire to maintain harmony. It would be wrong, therefore, to argue that, e.g., Portuguese employees would always meekly do what an employer would tell them based on this alone. Especially, since there may be a point when their frustration reaches the point of explosively reacting. This may follow from an interplay of "Pride" and "Obeying", the importance of the former was highlighted in existing research (Dias, 1950), though their interplay has not been described before. For individualism, Portugal scores significantly lower. This is seen in the way the Portuguese build and maintain relationships under the cultural value "Harmony" and can, therefore, be considered accurate, especially as this has been mentioned repeatedly in existing literature (Dias, 1950; Robalo, 1015; Costa et al., 2020), though that does not mean they do not value the individual as the results of this study point out that the Portuguese will also seek out status symbols and greatly value their individual pride as the following quote illustrates: *"Then you are working on a project and then it seems like the personal status [of the Portuguese team members] is placed above the interest of the project" (interviewee 1)*. Regarding uncertainty avoidance, Portugal scores very much higher than does The Netherlands. This is seen through the results of this paper by their attempts to resist change, keep their own insights to themselves, and leave the decisions to authorities or bosses. Hence, to that extent, the results of this study agree with this assessment of uncertainty avoidance which flows from the cultural values "Obeying" and "Harmony". However, one must not discount the value the Portuguese place on flexibility. While they may indeed resist change, or tend to escalate unknown situations to their superiors, when possible, they are also very resourceful in dealing with unfamiliar situations if they must. In fact, they can often come up with workable solutions very quickly as illustrated by the following statement *"The Portuguese seem very inventive and will arrange everything on-the-spot. So, not in advance, but they improvise very well" (interviewee 5)*. This nuance to their tendency to avoid uncertain situation has been widely described in existing literature (Dias, 1950; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Robalo 2015; Costa et al., 2020). Therefore, it would be wrong to conclude that, because the Portuguese tend to avoid uncertainty, they would perform poorly in fast-paced or changing (business) situations and scenarios.

The remaining Hofstede dimensions are not sufficiently represented in the current study to further comment upon. Therefore, this section closes with a similar discussion and comparison with Meyer's framework. In terms of the communicating dimension, Meyer indicates that the Portuguese communicate in higher context. The findings of the current study, however, paint a more nuanced picture than that, as the way the Portuguese communicate follows most closely the cultural standard of "Testing the waters" and the cultural value of "Harmony" where a topic is slowly, and carefully, brought to the forefront rather than with implicit communication. Unfortunately, prior research has not documented this behaviour as such which makes it difficult to verify. Nevertheless, it has been represented to a significant extent in this study's findings which makes it hard to discount. The following quotes illustrate this behaviour nicely: *"I see that [during conversations] [...] [Portuguese] people will not directly say what they came for. So, first they give an introduction and only afterwards they'll come with the problem"* (interviewee 5). *"They [the Portuguese] think we are very crude, very direct. Here, they all seem to beat around the bush a lot"* (interviewee 9). It is, therefore, fitting that, according to Meyer, the Portuguese seem to find themselves more in the middle of this spectrum compared to the Dutch instead of on the full high-context end of it. The results of this study do support that the Portuguese will try to read the context of a situation when determining what someone else means to say, but only in rather specific scenarios. For instance, the same statement from a colleague or from a superior will likely be interpreted differently. However, these situations may have more to do with the respect that the Portuguese hold for authority than with context as such as illustrated by the following quote: *"Imagine [the boss] asks something like 'what are we going to do tomorrow?' For some reason, this seems to sound to a Portuguese person like 'you are not doing enough and need to work harder', but it is the same thing as when a colleague asked them and then they responded to the actual question"* (interviewee 6). Therefore, it is less accurate to state that the Portuguese communicate in a high-context manner and more accurate that they communicate carefully with each other to maintain harmony. When they read (too much) into a situation, it is worth considering if they are responding to authority in any way before assuming their counterpart was (unwittingly) providing high-context hints. Regarding evaluating, Meyer similarly places Portugal around the centre with the extremes being "direct negative feedback" and "indirect negative feedback". Though, in this case, the behaviour demonstrated in this study under the cultural standard "Feedback" indicates that the Portuguese would avoid direct negative feedback whenever possible, often not providing any feedback or overwhelmingly positively formulated feedback rather than coming close to direct negative feedback (Vieira, 2014). Therefore, Meyer's suggestion that they hover somewhere

between these two extremes is not supported by the results of this study. The following quote demonstrates this very well: *"They [the Portuguese] seem to view feedback as a personal attack or something. If I wanted to address a problem, you'd feel the tension and they'd just crawl into a shell" (interviewee 1).* As such, one should not expect a middle-of-the-road approach to be effective with the Portuguese when it comes to providing feedback as even a hint of direct negative feedback could be met with resistance. This means that factors such as timing, phrasing, and audience are important for providing feedback to the Portuguese if it is to be accepted and appreciated. Beyond that, Portugal is placed reasonably high on the leading and deciding spectra. This aligns with the results of this study as they showed that hierarchical leadership structures and top-down decision-making are the norm. A nuance, however, is that this does not imply an authoritarian, dictatorship-like style of leadership as this top-down approach is also founded on the respect people hold for authority figures. Previous research also indicates a similar nuance with some studies likening this structure to that of a family (Pina e Cunha, 2005; Costa et al., 2020). The trusting dimension indicates that Portugal is mainly relationship-based. This corresponds with this study's findings in that a lot of time and effort is spent building and maintaining relationships, as categorised under the "Relationships" cultural standard, to maintain the harmony between people. This implies that the degree to which people are likely to trust one another follows from the closeness of their relationship. Various earlier studies have also highlighted the importance of relationships to both Portuguese culture and society (Dias, 1950; Robalo, 2015; Costa et al., 2020). Additionally, that Meyer places Portugal in the centre of the disagreeing spectrum is rather apt, as this study found that the Portuguese tend to bottle up their frustrations, which lets them avoid confrontation and maintain harmony, but that frustration will also find explosive release if it becomes too much or threatens their pride, which is likely to cause confrontation. Nevertheless, existing research has scarcely mentioned Portuguese behaviour when they are frustrated. They do, however, agree on that the Portuguese will avoid what are considered "Painful matters" by this study (Dias, 1950; Robalo, 2015) and on the importance of pride for the Portuguese (Pina e Cunha, 2005; Poláčková and Duin, 2019). Nevertheless, this frustrated behaviour is clearly represented in this study's findings as illustrated by the following quote: *"someone has been entering data wrongly. The Portuguese colleagues seemed to think the first time that: ah well can happen. And they don't say anything and adjust it themselves. Same for the second, and third times. But the fourth time, they flipped and hurled insults at him".* Finally, that scheduling tends towards flexible-time in Meyer's spectrum is corroborated by the "Time" cultural standard and "Flexibility" cultural value of this study as the Portuguese indeed tend to be flexible in their scheduling of

appointments and the fulfilment thereof. Still, while previous research agrees with this study's results to this extent (Hall and Hall, 1989; Pina e Cunha, 2005; Robalo, 2015), that the results of this study indicate that, while they may be flexible, the Portuguese tend to prioritise issues that they perceive to be of greater importance or urgency. The following quote indicates this way of prioritising: *"We had set a deadline, but it was a bit earlier than strictly needed. Now this deadline was missed somehow, but they [the Portuguese] seemed to have no problem finishing it by the absolute ultimate deadline" (interviewee 9).* Thus far, existing research has not mentioned this nuance. However, this would mean that it would be wrong to assume that their flexibility means that they will likely squeeze in an appointment. Rather it means that they do not view their time in a way that has a clear start and end point with a linear progression in between, but that they can interrupt one task in favour of another at their discretion.

In short, the academic relevance provided by this study is found in adding more cultural standards and by relating those cultural standards to underlying cultural values which, thus far, has not been done in work on Portuguese culture. Additionally, this study provides validation of an existing study on Portuguese culture which ventured to identify Portuguese cultural standards and related it to this study's findings. Finally, this study provides a more nuanced, and critical, look at widely used, popular cultural frameworks so that their dimensions may be associated with concrete behavioural patterns and underlying cultural values.

5.3   PRACTICAL RELEVANCE

This study provides practical relevance in that its twelve different cultural standards give insight into the Portuguese behaviour as seen from the Dutch perspective. This allows the reader, employers, businesspeople, employees, managers, and potential immigrants to have a better understanding of what to expect when working in a bicultural situation with the Portuguese. It also promotes a higher tolerance for potentially clashing or conflicting situations, because the Portuguese behaviour can be better understood and interpreted by the Dutch people who find themselves in such a situation. Therefore, this research can help lower the barriers that are commonly found in bicultural situations and improve the quality of cooperation between the Portuguese and the Dutch. Specifically, this paper recommends that the reader take some specific actions if they find themselves in certain scenarios. These are outlined in Table 9 below.

Table 9: recommendations

Situation	Advice
Giving feedback to colleagues or employees.	Phrase this feedback carefully and ensure to bring it positively considering timing and audience.
Looking for partners or customers or dealing with authorities.	Take the time to personally get to know your counterpart in both a business and personal setting.
Needing to get something done urgently.	Ensure you communicate very clearly that your issue has extreme urgency. Mentioning an ultimate deadline.
Needing to go through an established process.	Find someone who is already familiar with it to help you through it.

Beyond the advice outlined in Table 9 above, it is important as both a colleague and an employer to keep a close eye on the (mental) wellbeing of your colleagues or employees. The Portuguese may not easily speak up about things that bother them or about matters they perceive to be going wrong, but if they find that they are at their limit it may be too late to do something about it as illustrated by the following quote: *"We always worked well together, until he suddenly stands in front of me and says: I'm leaving [quitting]. So, then you start asking and find out that there were some things that have been bothering him for a long time"* (interviewee 10). Finally, as an employee, it is important to realise that, though you may have excellent suggestions, they may, firstly, not be easily accepted by the decision-makers and, secondly, you may not receive credit for them. This is not to say that making such suggestions is meaningless, but that they are always viewed as a collective improvement. Hence, these situations should not be taken personally, and one should be prepared for them.

5.4   LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study gave some insight into the experiences of Dutch people working in Portugal, and with Portuguese colleagues, in various bicultural situations. Needless to say, these experiences are recorded from the Dutch perspective only. Therefore, this study cannot hope to provide a complete description of Portuguese cultural behaviour as it focuses on the cultural differences between the Portuguese and the Dutch. Future research is, therefore, important to investigate

the Portuguese culture from other cultural perspectives. People from other countries or regions will without a doubt highlight other Portuguese characteristics and behaviours than the Dutch do. Perhaps those who are used to more, or a different type of, authority will consider the Portuguese behaviour towards authority in a different light than do the Dutch.

While this study offers a comprehensive picture of (part of) Portuguese cultural behaviour, it did not consider the possibility of differing regional cultures. Future research could provide an even more specific picture of Portuguese cultural behaviour by noting the differences between various parts of Portugal by, for instance, interviewing those who used to live in a coastal region but now live more land-inwards and vice versa. Naturally, the Dutch would be unlikely to perceive what are, most likely, small and nuanced differences, but such a study could.

Moreover, given the ETIC nature of this study, it may be interesting to see future research embark on a more dialectical ETIC/EMIC approach to further validate and deepen the understanding on Portuguese cultural standards and cultural values (Carminati, 2024). This could add significant depth to the definition and understanding of Portuguese cultural values while still being able to link them to concrete behavioural patterns.

Besides future research opportunities, this study presents with two main limitations. That of social desirability bias and that of recall bias. Social desirability bias means that interviewees may be inclined to answer questions in a way that is perceived as favourable by the interviewer even though the answer itself is, in fact, incorrect or untrue (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960). While it is likely that this bias has been mitigated by clearly stating that all interviews and their contents are purely confidential and that no personal data is processed, with the interview contents only being used for the establishment of typical behaviours and some quotes for illustrative purposes, it cannot be disregarded altogether. Recall bias occurs when participants in a study are systematically more or less likely to recall and relate information on exposure depending on their outcome status, or to recall information regarding their outcome dependent on their exposure (Prince, 2012, p. 126). While ensuring that all interviewees are questioned in the same way helps mitigating this bias somewhat, it remains relevant to all studies that rely primarily on the memory of their participants. Future research may use a more ethnographic design to allow for independent observation of Portuguese behaviours in certain situations.

5.5   CONCLUSION

This study aims to answer the following main research question:

What are the cultural differences in the workplace between The Netherlands and Portugal?

This question has been answered by identifying the following twelve Portuguese cultural standards, or typical behaviours.

1. Painful matters
2. Time
3. Procedure
4. Relationships
5. Boss' decision
6. Feedback
7. Testing the waters
8. Status
9. Resourcefulness
10. Authority
11. Frustration
12. Concealing own insights

A more detailed description of these cultural standards is given in section 4.1 Portuguese Cultural Standards.

To illustrate the differences between The Netherlands and Portugal these cultural standards were then linked to their underlying cultural values, providing the reason why people behave in a certain way. The following cultural values were found during this research:

Obeying: those in positions of authority must be respected and obeyed.

Harmony: one must take care to maintain positive relations with those around them and avoid conflict.

Pride: you must protect your own pride and that of others.

Flexibility: one must be flexible and capable of prioritising what is most urgent.

These cultural values were then compared with known Dutch cultural values to illustrate the cultural differences.

Besides comparing the Portuguese cultural values with known Dutch cultural values, this study also compared its results to previous literature. While similarities with previous research were found, which validates both the literature and the present study, there were also some new additions to the identified Portuguese cultural standards and cultural values. In short, this study provides a thick description of how the Portuguese behave from a Dutch perspective.

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