

Doctorate Ms. Nantawan Kwanjai

at the Maastricht University School of Business and Economics

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. J. Friso den Hertog.

Title: *“Cross cultural intelligence amid intricate cultural webs – A tale of the UnDutchables in the land of 1001 smiles”*

Thursday 17 February 2011, 16.00 hours

Abstract

The Dutch are famous for their “unDutchably” piercing bluntness; the Thai their obscurely accommodating smile. What happens when the two different cultures meet, work and live together? Is it always the case that the piercing Dutch bluntness will burst the accommodating Thai smile?

This study probes the cross-cultural work life of real Dutch and Thai individuals at five Dutch firms in Thailand. The study reveals striking lessons about what entails when diverse cultures come to meet and mingle, and how real people deal with its consequences. Besides the well-known clashing effect of cross-cultural interaction, the study uncovers three other, more subtle, consequences of cross-cultural life – those of reciprocal, unification, and variation. To deal with and thrive in such complex conditions, we need more than our IQ and EQ and must resort to a unique kind of social intelligence: *cross-cultural intelligence* or XCQ. Most importantly, to balance the popular and dominant view of cross-cultural life as a war, inevitably fraught with differences, clashes, and fault lines, this study propounds the less celebrated yet intriguing view of cross-cultural life as a dance, constantly searching for complements, unison and contact lines. This study’s findings indicate that XCQ helps us discern when we need our cross-cultural life to be a war or a dance, and how to make it just so.