

# **Managing the effects of cultural diversity in HR in a non profit organization**

**Case organization: Moniheli (non-profit)**

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<p>Non-profit organizations traditionally operate within limited resources. They cannot spend much of their resources to increase motivation. Especially when the bigger goal of the organization is to promote cultural diversity in society, it is very interesting to observe how a non-profit organization manages the cultural diversity that exists within its own human resources. This report is an attempt to identify the ways through which the case organization Moniheli, a non-profit network of different cultural representative organizations, can manage the cultural diversity of its human resources. The focus is on, how to develop cultural diversity in Moniheli's HR structure in order to achieve excellence and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision.</p> <p>The theoretical framework discusses cultural diversity in detail, the factors leading to cultural diversity, cultural diversity in non-profit organizations and the ways in which cultural diversity should be managed. The research is qualitative and a series of five in-depth interviews were conducted among the staff of the case organization.</p> <p>The findings revealed that at the present stage, the organization manages its cultural richness very well, but there can be improvements in the measures to prevent future threats.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Diversity management, Cultural diversity, Cultural diversity management,, Cross cultural management, Non-profit organization, Volunteer	

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# 1 Introduction

Moniheli is a non-profit organization that was founded in 2010. Moniheli has a vision of an open, cohesive, and multicultural Finnish society where cultural, linguistic, and religious diversities are understood, valued, and supported. This thesis is an attempt to analyse the cultural diversity that prevails in human resources of Moniheli. How it is being managed and what could be done further to take its effectiveness at its most.

## 1.1 Background

Differences exist everywhere, and are necessary resources for the sustainability and evolution of all systems. Every group has degrees of differences regarding values, physical and mental capabilities, opinions, feelings and gender. (Hogan 2007, 213.) Mor Barak (2014, 116) emphasizes that workforces are becoming increasingly diverse, because of mostly to the interaction of demographic trends, economic evolution, and to the international human rights movement.

Global shrinkage and cut throat competition in the markets have made it possible for the companies to utilize cultural diversity as a potential advantage and companies that manage it poorly suffer a great deal. Sharing of ideas, resources, methods, and approaches on this tremendous level had never been experienced in human history before. However, the opportunities do not come easy. Successful management of presently increasing diverse manpower is one of the most important global challenges faced by corporate leaders, human resource managers, and management consultants (Mor Barak 2014, 2). Effective diversity practices help organizations attract and retain human talent, enhance marketing efforts, increase creativity and innovation, improve problem solving, and develop flexibility (Cox 1993, 13).

While diversity refers to the key differences in gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religious and political beliefs, language, and norms; culture is but one of difference. There are levels of cultural difference in all groups and are normally useful in most cases. Some prejudice and stereotyping, either positive or negative, are normal. (Hogan 2007, 13.)

The case organization, Moniheli, regards diversity as one of its key values. The employees and volunteers working for Moniheli are from different cultural backgrounds. Being a non-profit organization, maximum results have to be produced by using least of the resources. This particular area of research requires more attention as not so much literature has been produced to facilitate the management of cultural diversity in non-profit sector. One reason is that cultural diversity has not yet gained the due importance in non-profit sector. According to a study conducted by Commongood Careers and the Level Playing Field Institute (LPFI 2012), majority of the employees in the non-profit industry acknowledge their organizations, have expressed that diversity is an essential value to the management. Even though only 25% of the study participants agreed, diversity and inclusion practices are actively implemented by their organization. Most employees feel as if diversity has been placed as a low priority financially, and that the promotion of diversity as a value has replaced tangible action and increased staff diversity.

This research is carried out in order to identify that how cultural diversity can effectively be utilized to achieve the mission of the case organization and to find out whether the operations as well as human resource live up to the values that are set by the apex management. With the help of the literature previously written in relevant fields, a framework will be designed to perform a qualitative research of the case organizations' HR model and practices. The analysis of the findings will help determine the efficacy of current system and propose suggestions for further improvements as well.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Not much work has been done regarding cultural diversity in non-profit sector and that will be the core of this research. The author will attempt to find out that how cultural diversity can effectively be managed in case organization's HR in order to achieve excellence, so Moniheli can progress towards its vision by keeping the core values intact. The research question will explain the primary quest and further be broken down to three investigative questions.

**Research question:** How to develop the cultural diversity in Moniheli's HR structure, in order to achieve optimal results and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?

**IQ 1:** What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses regarding cultural diversity of HR of case company?

**IQ 2:** What is the current level of understanding of organization's vision and acknowledgment of cultural diversity, amongst the employees/volunteers?

**IQ 3:** What strategic measures are taken by Moniheli to ensure full compliance in order to achieve common goals?

**IQ 4:** What recommendations can be made to Moniheli in order to achieve optimal results and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?

The flow of overall research is explained through the overlay matrix, given as table 1 in the next page with the sources that would deliver the required information. Furthermore, another detailed version of this overlay matrix is given in the end of this document as attachment 3, that also explains which investigative question is answered through which question of the qualitative research and with the references of the sub-chapters containing the outcomes.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Research Question		Investigative Questions	Theoretical Framework	Sources	Anticipated Outcomes
How to develop Moniheli's HR structure's cultural diversity in order to achieve excellence and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?	1	What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses regarding cultural diversity of HR of case company?	Diversity Management Cultural Diversity in HR Non-profit Volunteer	Qualitative Research	Clarity about the Overall Case Advantages VS. Disadvantages Non-profits & cultural diversity
	2	What is the current level of understanding of organization's vision and acknowledgment of cultural diversity, amongst the employees/volunteers?	Diversity Management Cross Cultural Management	Qualitative Research	Identification of Current Implementations Diagnosis of Key Problems
	3	What strategic measures are taken by Moniheli to ensure full compliance in order to achieve common goals?	Diversity Management Non-profit Volunteer Cultural Diversity in HR	Qualitative Research	Identification of Current Implementations Diagnosis of Key Problems Suggestions for Further Developments
	4	What recommendations can be made to Moniheli in order to achieve optimal results and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?	Diversity Management Cultural Diversity in HR Non-profit Volunteer	Qualitative Research	Identification of current issues and possible improvements in the future operations



### 1.3 Demarcation

The final desired outcome of Moniheli's performance greatly depends on how efficiently the internal organs are functioning. In case of excellent implementations, successful integration of immigrants into Finnish society leads to positive contribution in the human capital of the State of Finland. It will sound achievable only if such model or strategy is developed that carries cultural diversity as an effective strength throughout its HR operations. Consequently this study and research limitations will focus solely on current HR practices of the case organization and, especially on how do they deal with their cultural diversity. Figure 1, given below, shows the main idea of demarcation:



Figure 1. Demarcation plan

In addition to the employees and volunteers active in the organization, there are almost 70 cultural representative organizations affiliated with Moniheli. This research will focus on the cultural diversity of HR within the case organization, the full time paid employees, volunteers, trainees, and board of directors, but not the affiliated organizations.

Moreover, diversity management is a broad area of study, which includes all kinds of diversities such as age, gender, ethnic origins, beliefs, nationalities and languages etc. This research though, will solely focus on management of cultural diversity that prevails in the case organization.

## 1.4 Key definitions

The most important technical terms used in the document and their definitions are given below:

*Diversity management.* Diversity management is the recognition and valorisation of individual differences. The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect, which means understanding that every individual is unique, and then recognition of our individual differences. These differences can be in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. (Roosevelt 1990, 107.)

*Cultural diversity.* Cultural diversity is the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society. (Oxford Dictionaries 2014.)

*Cross cultural management.* Cross cultural management explains the behaviour of people in organizations around the world and shows people how to work in organizations with employees and client populations from many different cultures (Adler 2008, 13).

Based on the definitions of diversity management, cultural diversity and cross cultural management from different researchers and authors, and keeping this research thesis in mind, the definition for cultural diversity management can arguably be, *cultural diversity management* is the attempt to plan, design and implement a strategy to gain optimal results by identifying, acknowledging, and valorising of individual cultural differences, bridging the conflicting gaps and integrating them in one unit.

*Non-profit organization.* An organization not making or conducted primarily to make a profit (Oxford Dictionaries 2013).

*Volunteer*. A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task (Oxford Dictionaries 2013).

## **1.5 Thesis report structure**

After briefly introducing the case company and opening the case, chapter 2 will consist of theoretical framework designed by the help of existing literature produced in the relevant fields. The quest will strictly be demarcated to the core issues within the boundaries of human resource management, cultural diversity, and non-profit organizations. However, discussing the cultural diversity itself pushes the research a little to expand the overall spectrum slightly onto the social paradigms. In chapter 3, the research methodologies will be discussed. It will mainly consist of the research design, the overall procedure, methods and tools used for data collection. Chapter 4 will mainly be discussing the outcomes and their assessment. Discussion, conclusion, and recommendations to the case organization will be given in chapter 5.

## **1.6 Case company introduction**

The thesis has been commissioned by Moniheli Ry. Moniheli was founded in 2010. The efforts for its foundations however date back to 2007 when a multicultural organization named “Multicultural Association Familia Club Ry” started a discussion about creation of a network organization. In May 2007, with the help of the Finnish Council’s Organization incubator, a funding application was submitted to Slot Machine Association Ray and the funds were granted in 2008. (Moniheli 2013.)

Moniheli is a service and interest network that promotes and facilitates collaborative leadership and activities in the Helsinki metropolitan area and throughout Finland. It creates awareness and contributes to further physical, mental, social, and economical well-being and improvement of all members in its member organizations and waving the impact deep down on all the members of Finnish society. Moniheli aims to activate the immigrant communities for better integration and also encourages them to make their political contributions in the transparent and democratic system of Finland. (Moniheli 2013.)

With the aim of strengthening the social capital of Finland by bridging the gap between Finnish culture and immigrants' culture through better integration, Moniheli operates plainly in the domain of consultancy services and mainly through information sharing, training programs and event management with zero objectives of any monetary profitability. Having different cultural representative organizations under its boundaries, tremendous amount of information and experiences exchange take place. (Moniheli 2013.) During this process, different challenges concerning better integration are identified and a collective and mutual potential solution is found, which is acceptable to each stakeholder. The solutions can be introduced and implemented through different events and programs. A better idea of the service flow has been explained in figure 2 as given below.

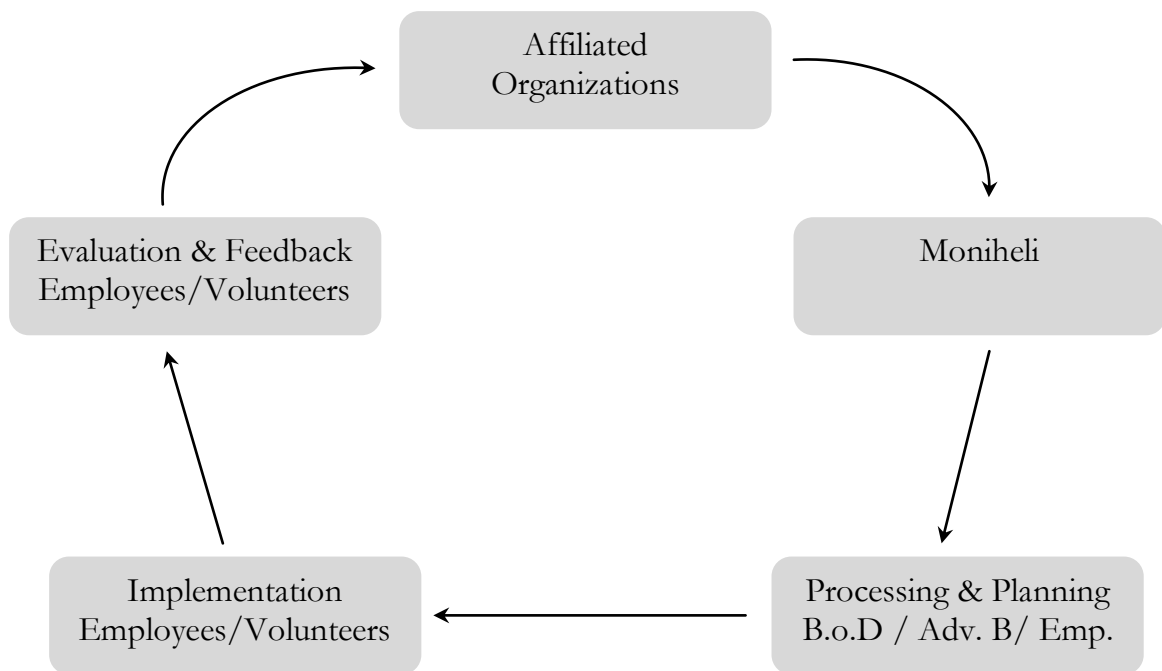


Figure 2. Case company's operational spectrum

Affiliated organizations often consult Moniheli for assistance, guidance, and other solutions to the challenges that their respective community might possibly be coming across. Moniheli receives the information, studies and analyzes it through board of directors with the help from advisory board. Employees are also engaged to discuss the administrative issues in detail because sometimes an event or seminar is needed to be

arranged. After processing the information and having something planned, volunteers are invited and inform so the required service is delivered back to the affiliate organization. Last but not the least, evaluation of the whole process is done and feedback is received and given so the next activity can be error free as possible.

Presently, Moniheli continues its efforts with the help of the contribution from several sources. For example in year 2012, following parties contributed financially;

- Slot Machine Association RAY
- European Union
- Helsinki City Culture Board
- Helsinki Immigration Division

The amount of staff with their designation and statuses are as follows in table 2.

Table 2. HR volume of case organization

Designation	Paid	Full-time
Executive Director	yes	yes
Association Coordinator	yes	yes
Project Worker 1	yes	yes
Project Worker 2	yes	yes
3 Volunteer	no	yes
13 Members, B.o.D	no	yes
6 Members, Advisory Board	no	no
* 50 Volunteers	no	no
* <i>Number of part-time volunteers varies, depending on different events and projects.</i>		

Addition to these figures given in table 2, Moniheli also inducts trainees, typically students that are in need of performing their work placement for academic purposes. The amount of tasks and duties are defined separately depending on the needs of both parties.

There are currently almost 70 different affiliated organizations, joining hands in the network of Moniheli. These organizations are facilitated by Moniheli in order to make their operations smoother. For example, the required consultancy and assistance are provided in the areas of event or seminar management, researches about multiculturalism and integration, international culture exchange, and other efforts that help the entire network moving towards the common goal, which is improving interaction between immigrants and the Finnish society. List of affiliated cultural organizations can be found as attachment 1 in the attachments section.

## 2 Managing cultural diversity

This chapter of the document is divided into further subchapters to illustrate the variety of the concepts that affect the topic. Each subchapter provides information about its specifics and all of them combined together shape into the theoretical picture, building on each other.

### 2.1 The occurrence of cultural diversity

Cultural diversity means differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, and sexual orientation are represented within a community (Amadeo 2013). The reasons for occurrence and significance of the cultural diversity can be different. Some may argue that it's because of massive increase in the rate of immigration taking place from one country to another while others would say that the economical imbalance also has a great impact when a capital dependant country attracts, invites, and integrates the workforce from a labour dependant country. Mor Barak (2014, 84) describes how the changing in global demographic trends have made an impact on workforce diversity. Due to trends in working-age population and migration trends have internationally boosted the transfer and sharing of manpower especially from developing countries to developed countries. Figure 3, given below makes it easy to understand the rotation of these trends in a global perspective.

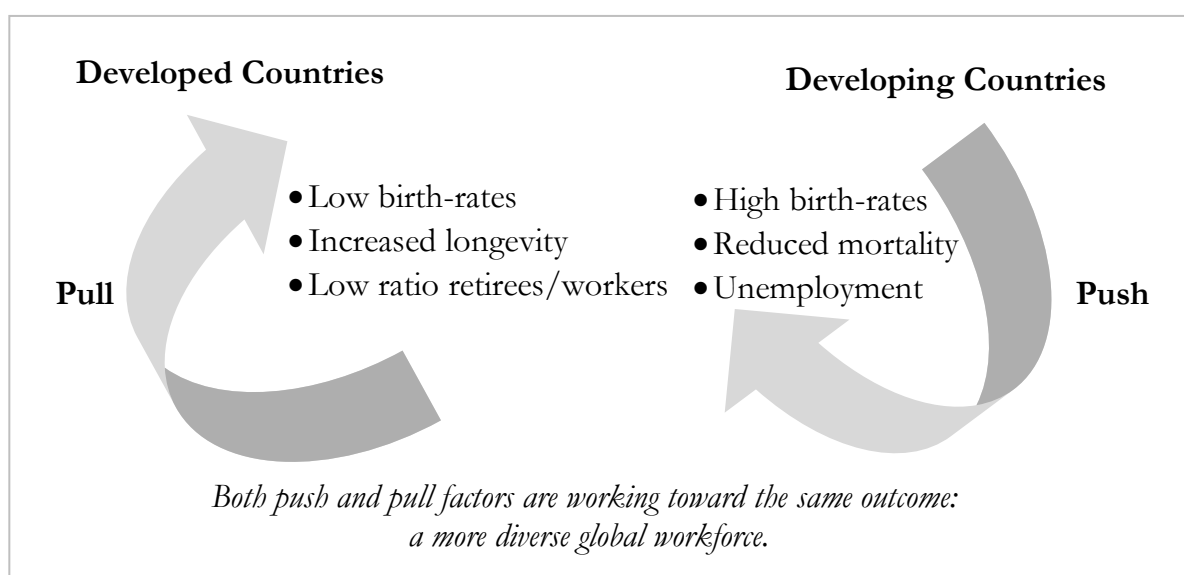


Figure 3. International Demographic Trends (Mor Barak 2014, 86).

Immigration taking place from developing countries to developed countries is not the only main cause for ignition to the cultural diversity of workforce. Massive global competition also leads the companies to outsourcing. However, outsourcing also brings significant cultural challenges. There are usually uncertain differences in corporate methods and practices due to varied ways of perceiving and relating to events and people in varied cultures. (Kharytonov & Sorokhan 2010.)

The advantages of outsourcing are different and they greatly depend on type and the situation of an organization. The key factors that drive a business towards outsourcing are as follows;

- Lower costs and to achieve economies of scale
- Gaining ability to focus on core functions
- Higher quality services available in time
- Gaining access to the business opportunities through suppliers
- Turning fixed costs into variable costs

(The Outsourcing Management Zone 2003.)

Similarly, brain drain is also another important reason behind manpower becoming more and more globally diverse. The term brain drain refers to a situation where a country loses the best of its manpower. Skilled workers, for example from countries like India or Pakistan, are attracted by better salaries and working conditions in developed countries. In case of brain drain, the developing countries actually struggle to develop further simply because they start lacking the skilled labour and developed countries become recipient of talent, which eventually brings them not only skilled manpower but also cross cultural knowledge. (Pettinger 2014.)

## **2.2 Cultural diversity as a benefit**

The trend of welcoming and promoting an atmosphere of multicultural diverse background has been very visible lately in most of the global companies. Why should it be important to have a culturally diverse human resource? There is no right or wrong an-



swer to this question. However, what is widely proven and believed is that, diversity brings a lot variety.

Different cultural backgrounds offer different ways of looking at certain things. Consequently, new scenarios emerge and new solutions are found for old problems. In the last two decades, when innovation has gained a tremendous significance and time has proven that the companies, which do not keep up with the active trends often find themselves on slippery slope down the hill, out of competition. Cultural diversity has played a noteworthy role in creativity, hence the innovation is ignited.

In a highly competitive economy where talent is crucial in improving the bottom line, pooling from the largest and most diverse set of candidates is increasingly necessary to succeed in the market (Kerby & Burns 2012). According to “Centre for American Progress”, a diverse workforce is integral to a strong economy. Their paper explains 10 major economic benefits of having diversity at workplace.

1. A diverse workforce drives economic growth.
2. A diverse workforce can capture a greater share of the consumer market.
3. Recruiting from a diverse pool of candidates means a more qualified workforce.
4. A diverse and inclusive workforce helps businesses avoid employee turnover costs.
5. Diversity fosters a more creative and innovative workforce.
6. Businesses need to adapt to our changing nation to be competitive in the economic market.
7. Diversity is a key aspect of entrepreneurialism.
8. Diversity in business ownership, particularly amongst women of colour, is the key to moving our economy forward.
9. Diversity in the workplace is necessary to create a competitive economy in a globalized world.
10. Diversity in the boardroom is needed to leverage a company’s full potential.

(Centre for American Progress 2012.)

Business leaders are wise to be concerned about business schools not producing graduates with expertise in managing cultural diversity because the research is clear that organizations that effectively manage diverse human resources gain several competitive advantages over those that do not (Caproni 2012, 262). As per current trends, organizations often tend to publicize their internal culturally diverse working environment to portray an image of a fair and equal opportunity employer.

One of the very noticeable trends in today's public organizations is the diversity of the workplace. This trend is expanded by appearance of an international society in which the ability for cross cultural communication is greater than ever (Denhardt, Denhardt & Aristigueta 2002, 424). Once the organizations have developed a strong employer brand image of a multicultural staff base, it becomes possible and encouraging for the best talent of the fresh pool to get attracted and join in. Eventually, a win-win situation is created amongst the staff members through a harmonious and coherent team building, which enables them to establish unique ways of solving problems and decision making.

Cox & Blake (1991, 47) argue for six competitive advantages that cultural diversity brings for the organizations, which are briefly explained in table 3 given in the next page.

Table 3. Six competitive advantages of cultural diversity (Cox & Blake 1991, 47)

1. Cost Argument	As organization becomes more diverse, the cost of a poor job in integrating workers will increase. The companies that handle it well will create cost advantage.
2. Resource-Acquisition Argument	Companies develop reputations on favourability as perspective employers for women and ethnic minorities. Companies with best reputation of managing diversity will win the competition.
3. Marketing Argument	The insight to cultural sensitivity that diverse employees bring to the multinational organizations with root in other countries, improve their marketing efforts in many ways.
4. Creativity Argument	Diversity of perspective and less emphasis on conformity to traditions of the past improve the level of creativity.
5. Problem-Solving Argument	Heterogeneous groups perform better in decision making and problem solving.
6. System Flexibility Argument	An implication of the multicultural model for managing diversity is that the system will become less determinant, less standardized, and therefore more fluid. Increase in fluidity may create more flexibility to react to environmental changes.

### 2.3 Non-profits and diversity

Across the non-profit industry, majority of employers believe that ethnic diversity is a key component for organizational health, performance, and outcomes. But according to current talent of non-profit, fewer organizations are actually doing enough to attract and retain professionals of different ethnic or cultural origins. There is a perceived slit between the purpose and achievements of non-profit organizations when it comes to encouraging employees' diversity. (Commongood Careers 2011.)

In theory, the management actually considers and acknowledges diversity as one of their key values but does not ensure proper conduct to promote culturally diversified staff to higher for vacancies. Rather most of the reports that diversity is an important feature to the preservation of employees, state that many non-profit organizations will

begin to lose what diversity they have if they do not change their organizational atmosphere. As stated by Schwartz (2011), “Rather, what we find is that organizations blame a lack of ‘cultural fit’ which further codifies a homogeneous staff by creating insiders and outsiders. The outsiders will usually leave.”

In a survey conducted in 2008, by a Canadian based non-profit organization, “HR Council”, it was revealed that 89% of respondents were White or Caucasian and only 6% were identified as members of other communities. Being one of the most culturally diversified countries, there is enough evidence to prove that in Canada, members of immigrant communities contain substantial pool of talent in human resource that yet remains unutilized. (HR Council 2014.)

The case company, Moniheli, is a unique study in a way that the organization aims to deliver a message of harmony amongst the diverse cultures on a national level. Hence, this would be very interesting to see that how cultural diversity has been effectively used within the organization itself.

## **2.4 Managing the cultural diversity of workforce**

Cox (1993, 16) defines cultural diversity as the representation, in one social system of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance. As explained earlier and witnessed in the recent global corporate horizons, the factors that drive the organizations towards having a culturally diverse workforce are simply unstoppable. Either it is the immigration, outsourcing, brain drain or any other forces that cause cultural diversity but it seems very clear that this trend is practically impossible to be undone, which gives no option for the HR managers but to find effective solutions and integrating systems. In order to provide vision and inspire their organizations, effective leaders need to understand the multiplicity of values, perspectives, and worldviews that individuals and groups may hold dear and use their cultural intelligence in different settings to create an inclusive and effective work environment (Mor Barak 2014, 232). From a business perspective, having a diverse workforce in work places is no longer a question. The world is so well interconnected that people easily move and work overseas. (Welinder, Araujo & Lynn 2012.)

According to DiversityInc, an independent and privately owned consultancy and publishing firm, diversity management is the proactive management of race, culture, gender, orientation, disability and age to ensure equal outcome in relationship with employees, customers, investors, and suppliers. DiversityInc believes that first two factors (cultural and gender) are the most important because of their impact over the treatment of other three factors. (DiversityInc 2014.)

Mor Barak (2005, 218) defines diversity management as voluntary organizational actions that are designed to create greater inclusion of employees from various backgrounds into the formal and informal organizational structures through deliberate policies and programs. Companies that do not refresh themselves with the present trends and needs eventually suffer a great deal of loss. Deckop (2006, 7) explains Swanson's (1999) model of value neglect, which is based on understanding the significance of the role that values and their adaptation play in the life of an organization and how value dynamics eventually affect a company's attitude towards the society. According to Swanson's approach, when executive managers portray normative myopia by neglecting or suppressing the importance of values in their decisions, the organizations finally loses the connection that they have with their stakeholder expectations of social responsibility. On the contrary, when executive managers use formal and informal mechanisms to signal that employees should attend to values, the possibility of value attunement exists.

Given the theoretic possibility of attunement, specifically in HRM, the managers must focus on what are the key effects of cultural diversity and how can they be effectively managed? Organizational culture is formed not just by technologies and markets but also by the cultural preferences of managers and employees (Trompenaars 2012, 193). Increasing number of employees from different cultural backgrounds results into a vibrant organizational culture that brings unique ideas, and internationalization. Very often the approach of having a diverse human resource is motivated by compliance to laws and public expectations of political rightness rather than a deep understanding of the business need for diversity. (Mor Barak 2014, 223.)

Kossek & Lobel (1996, 3-4) present three existing HR approaches to diversity management and offer an original approach of their own, described in table 4. These three approaches are **Diversity enlargement**, which focuses on increasing the representation of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the organization in order to change the organizational culture. **Diversity sensitivity** identifies the potential challenges presented by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and cultures in one workplace and it also makes an attempt to find solutions for these problems. A **Cultural audit** aims to discover the obstacles that stop the progress of employees from diverse background and block collaboration amongst the groups. The audit should usually be performed by outside and independent consultants. (Hasenfeld 2010, 344-345.)

Table 4. The HR approaches to diversity management (Kossek & Lobel 1996, 220)

Human Resource Approach	Goal	Strategy	Assumptions
Diversity Enlargement	Change organizational culture through changing the composition of workforce	Recruit employees from diverse backgrounds	New hires will change the culture by their mere presence, no need for additional intervention
Diversity Sensitivity	Overcome adversity and promote productive communication and collaboration	Train to increase sensitivity and improve communication	Increased sensitivity to differences will affect performance
Cultural Audit	Identify obstacles faced by employees of diverse backgrounds and modify company practices accordingly	Audit current practices through surveys and focus groups and generate changes to address these deficiencies	Problems are caused by the dominant cultural group in the organization and need to be addressed by that group
Strategy for Achieving Organizational Outcomes	Achieve organizational goals through diversity management	Integrate diversity management with HR policy areas and other company strategic choices	Diversity management practices have to be linked to desired individual and organizational outcomes

The drivers for motivation for employees and volunteers are usually different. The employees are rewarded with clearly tangible monetary benefits. The volunteers are mostly purpose driven with the genuine desire of being a positive contributor to the society. Even though, there are some rewards like acknowledgment and certificates in non-monetary form but the assumption is, the employees and volunteers come across the same challenges regardless of what is the level of their motivation in the culturally diverse teams. The opportunities and potential threats of cultural diversity equally affect the both.

## 2.5 The MBI Model

In spite of their true potential, most of the diverse teams do not perform as well as homogeneous teams do. Team members from different cultures come to the group with very different predefined notions about how a group should proceed further. Furthermore, cultural values and norms are strongly held, and almost always implicit and taken for granted. (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 46.)

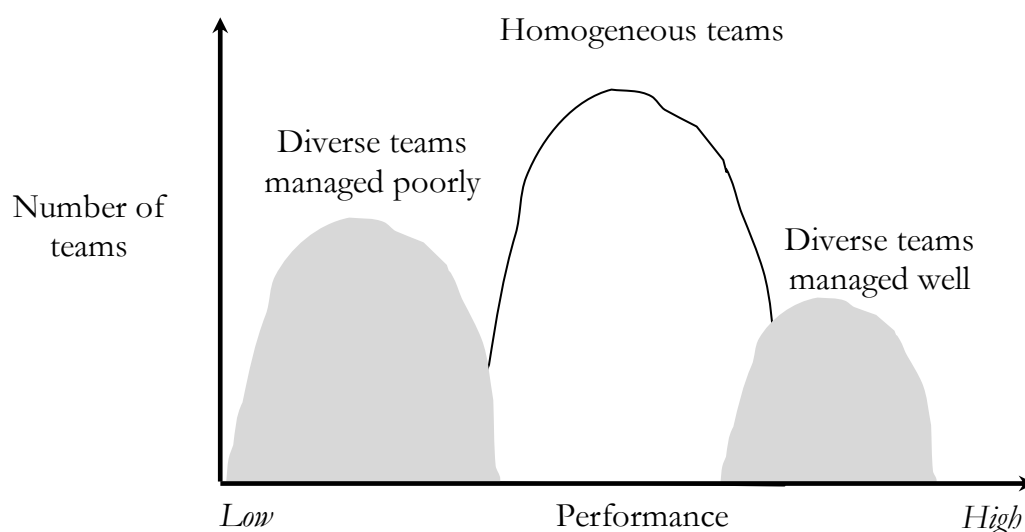


Figure 4. Diverse teams can outperform homogeneous ones (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 46)

As shown in figure 4, diverse teams if managed poorly underperform but if they are managed well, can surpass the performance level of homogeneous teams. The number of diverse teams underperforming is even though greater than those, who achieve excellence.

Based on previous arguments, given in this document, about the inevitability of cultural diversity, the opportunities and challenges that are faced while dealing with a culturally diverse workforce, it becomes highly crucial that in what way the managers plan to identify the key areas for improvements and bridge the gaps step by step. Resulting from their research, DiStefano and Maznevski (2000) developed the mapping, bridging, and integrating (MBI) model, which is shown in figure 5. In their research they observed that “creator teams” actively:

- Mapped and tried to understand their differences
- Bridged their communication and took differences into account
- Integrated team-level ideas by carefully monitoring participation patterns, solving disagreements and creating new perspectives

(Hogan 20007, 118.)

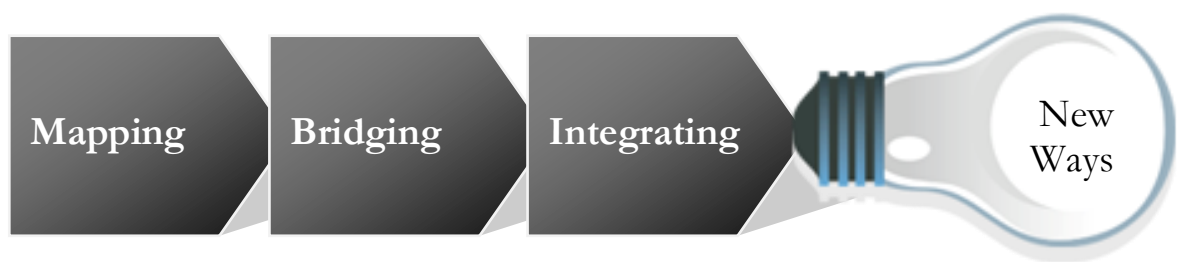


Figure 5. The mapping, bridging, integrating (MBI) model (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 49)

MBI model is used for managing cultural diversity through these three steps. What is interesting in this process is that one be explicit about one’s own culture; that the knowledge about other culture is gained and key differences in the dominant values are noticed and compared. These differences are the areas most likely to generate managerial problems. (McNett 2014.)

MBI model consists of the process of identification of three preliminary stages that eventually lead a culturally diverse organization to create new ways of thinking. First part contains the mapping, understanding and acknowledging the cultural differences. The metaphor of “mapping a culture” may need careful explanation first. Most multicultural teams do not take the time to map cultural differences openly; they just rely on



board generalizations or stereotypes. (Hogan 2007, 119.) After mapping and identifying the differences, it becomes possible to bridge them up and that can be done through collaboration and communication. The process of collaboration eventually helps integrating and understanding each other. In the next subchapters, all three phases of MBI model, and the sub-phases are briefly explained.

### 2.5.1 Mapping

The first step of the model, mapping, refers to basic understanding of difference on a general level. Just like before a building is constructed, a map is drawn in order to find out the optimal usage of a specific area. In culturally diverse teams, it may seem obvious that all members have different perspectives, but intentionally mapping these differences establishes an admiration of how they make an impact on teamwork. (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 48.) The mapping principle further consists of three steps.

**Define the territory:** The basic idea in this segment is to determine, which differences make the difference or which ones will most likely raise the barriers to interactions. Members must fully understand these differences to prevent their negative impacts and identify their positive potential.

**Draw the map:** When trying to understand the kind and extent of differences amongst team members, there is nothing as compelling as having your own information in comparison to others. Perhaps the members, who think they are very similar, are the most shocked ones after finding out the outcomes. In this stage, the results of each participant are compared.

**Assess the terrain:** In this step, the comparison is studied to understand the past, current and future potential of team members. Ideally, the team maps its characteristics early and then anticipates both challenges and potential, incorporating mechanisms to alleviate the former and leverage the latter into their ongoing processes. The mapping is used to understand the problems that have already faced, and then set the parameters for future expectations.

(DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 49-50.)

### 2.5.2 Bridging

Bridging refers to effective communication across the differences to bring people and their ideas together. By effective communication, “sending and receiving meaning as it was intended”, is meant and the key to bridging is to prevent miscommunication. (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 51.) There are three further stages to build a solid bridge in diverse teams.

**Prepare the ground:** In order to build a solid bridge, the team members must encourage the importance of motivation to communication, integrate effectively, and confidence to overcome the challenges. Often we desire if people would understand us but on the contrary, we probably do not make much effort to understand others.

**Decentre to other shore:** It is the second step of bridging in diverse teams. In this step, team members consider what they know about each other's differences from mapping and adopt different styles. The conversation and working styles are changed. However, decentring must not be confused with empathy. In the decentring process, teams also learn not to judge each other simply on the basis of good, bad, right, or wrong.

**Recentre to span:** In this step, the group is harmoniously recentred. For example, common meanings and definitions are found. Teammates agree to interact with each other.

(DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 52-53.)

### 2.5.3 Integrating

Even after having a successful bridge built between each other, successful and mutual decision making is not guaranteed. Teams need to integrate with each other. Integration takes place through mapping (understanding) and bridging (communicating). (DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 54.) Integration also occurs in three stages.

**Manage participation:** In order to build great performance, ideas must be contributed by all the team members and this is not achievable if the members do not actively participate. People with different cultural backgrounds tend to contribute to different norms for participating. Each team should develop its own tactics to ensure equal participation.

**Resolve disagreements:** Display of ideas also brings disagreements and conflicts. Sharing of ideas in diverse teams is much more complicated process so the conflict resolution. There is no magic formula to make conflicts go away. Different researches have concluded that cognitive conflict or task-based conflicts are actually very helpful. Avoiding personal conflicts and keep the main task always in mind, is crucially important in diverse teams.

**Build on ideas:** Anybody who has participated in some team building training knows what does it mean to build on ideas and this skill is very beneficial in diverse teams. Individual ideas should only be seen as the starting points of discussions. In the end, the team should have a common ideal face build on each other.

(DiStefano & Maznevski 2000, 57-58.)

MBI model is considered to be the guiding tool for this particular project. The next chapter will briefly explain the research design and steps through which this research took place.

### **3 Method**

In this chapter, different phases for the collection of the data will be discussed. The objective was to get as much information as possible from the case company to fulfil the research objective. The questions were carefully thought and designed to strictly remain in the boundaries of research limitations, yet aimed to cover every niche of the main topic.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The research data was collected through in-depth qualitative interviews. In-depth interviewing is a technique of qualitative research that contains conducting intensive and detailed individual interviews with comparatively small number of respondents in order to know their point of view regarding a specific idea, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale 2006, 3). Keeping in mind the MBI model, explained in previous chapter, a set of 12 qualitative questions was designed (Attachment 2). Each focus area of MBI model had been designated 3-4 questions from the question list in order to obtain sufficient data. These questions were to be asked from 5 different people associated with the case organization. Given below is the list of the interviewed personnel;

1. Executive Director
2. Chairman (Board of Directors)
3. Association Coordinator
4. Board Member
5. Full time volunteer

All the participants, except the full time volunteer, have had sound experience of working for Moniheli. The full time volunteer's work tenure was supposed to be from November 2013 to May 2014. Since aim of the research had been to figure out the complexities involved in having a culturally diverse human resource, studying and analyzing them, and propose suggestions for further improvement, there was no other alternative method of research that could provide such detailed results and observations. The

overall attitude, atmosphere and flow of the participants and the organization were also carefully observed in addition to the direct questions asked from the participants.

Main advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods. Additionally, they also provide a more relaxed and comfortable environment, in which the data is collected. In-depth interviews are very useful when brief information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or wants is also required in order to explore complex issues in detail. (Boyce & Neale 2006, 3.)

### **3.2 Procedure**

Each interview was recorded and lasted for almost 40-45 minutes. The interviewed personnel carry different positions and responsibilities in the organization. Therefore, it was perceived that they would have diverse perspective of looking at various things. Out of these five, four interviews took place on 27.03.2014 and one on 28.03.2014, in the premises of the case organization. These dates were mutually agreed between the case organization and the researcher two weeks in advanced. A separate meeting room was provided by the case company and a professional recording device was arranged by the researcher. There was a positive spirit and strong willingness shown by all the participants and refreshment such as coffee and tea were offered. This friendly attitude really eased the atmosphere and made both parties enable to have this activity conducted in a very sophisticated manner. Prior the interviews, all the interviewees were informed that their identifications will be kept confidential and all the information provided by them, will be used purely for academic purposes.

The question battery consisted of a set of 12 main open end questions. However, it occurred during the interviews that some of the responses lead the need of some other relevant questions to be asked that were not initially intended. The overall flow of these questions was designed to lead the research through the pitfalls of the process of mapping, bridging, and integrating the culturally diverse human resource of the case organization.

Office premises have work stations, meeting room, kitchen, bath room, air conditioning, and other necessary resources, kept in tidy conditions, used and taken care of by everybody. Author spent more than 5 hours in total at the premises and made direct observations of how a normal working day would actually look like. Working in a highly multicultural environment has truly made the staff members very welcoming, open, and social.

Most of the relevant data from the audio recordings was fetched to make important notes. The selected information from the collected data was then allocated to the IQs and the MBI model accordingly. In addition to the lingual responses, the facial expressions and body language of the participants were also carefully observed in order to get the true meaning of the message.

## **4 Results**

All the participants provided very useful information and this chapter is to describe the outcome of the interviews. Chapter 5 contains the discussion and suggestions for further improvement by highlighting the key research areas.

### **4.1 Background of the interviews**

As explained in the previous chapter, all the participants were informed well in advanced. That gave us enough time to adjust and re-adjust the schedule according to the schedules of all the participants. Interestingly, all the participants were from different cultural backgrounds. Not only the views or experiences but also the expressions were very rich. All the participants carried different responsibilities in the organizations and have had solid grip over what the organization is actually aiming for. Although, in some stages very little explanation was needed to make questions sound clearer but overall most of the times the respondents and the author remained on the same page.

Because of the diversity in their age, experience, education, expertise, responsibilities, and culture, different perspectives were explored. In a non-profit organization that is mostly run by volunteering and where most of the involvement has to be self-motivated, not much effort is needed to be done in order to get the respondents vocal. Rather several times it occurred that lot of extra information was excitedly provided by some of the participants, which is always good to have.

### **4.2 Moniheli in-depth**

All the responses unfolded that the hierarchal structure of Moniheli is very democratic, friendly, and even family oriented. Staff marches towards the common goal with a clear conscious and confidence shown in each other. All the personnel are easily approachable without any corporate barriers or layers. Most of the staff is capable of communicating in Finnish but main work language has been English. Having limited number of paid employees, Moniheli has to greatly depend on volunteerism. Volunteers or trainees are not given tasks sheet, deadlines and relevant training like traditional volunteer-

ing methods, they are rather given due freedom to bring their own unique ideas to rest of the team. If the idea is worth investing time in, the whole mechanism helps it build further. Thus, true utilization of young potential and the feeling of being utilized to its full extent are two things combined, make the overall experience excellent. The focus is on “us” instead of “me” and this positive spirit can visibly be seen by spending some time in the office premises. When asked about the hierarchical structure, one of the interviewees abruptly answered, “We are a family”.

A new comer quickly gets acquainted with the people and the environment, which are the signs of an international organization. The team also plans activities on regular basis for cultural socialization, such as;

- Multicultural Independence Day
- Multicultural Food Evenings
- Training and Guidance Sessions for Language and Job Finding
- Seminars and Workshops on different topics
- Panel Discussions
- Promotional Tours
- Free Dance Group for Immigrant Women
- Multicultural Hockey Nights
- World Village Festival (25.05.2013 – 26.05.2013)

In order to execute these activities better, Moniheli also collaborate with different organizations like Luckan and Caisa. Having planned, organized and participated in such vibrant activities, not only enable the staff to gain cultural competence but also enhances their zone of acquaintanceship and links.

All the participants clearly seemed acknowledging the complexities of cultural diversity and that really prove that how culturally intelligent they all are. If we take a look at the basic Moniheli’s structure, we come to know that this network is formed by almost 70 different cultural organizations, representing more than 30 completely different ethnic backgrounds. These affiliate or member organizations then jointly elect a board of directors through general elections every year. This board consists of 12 members and 1



chairman. Just like elected by the member organizations, the board is also answerable to them. Current board of directors has members from 9 different ethnic origins. With the passage of time, Moniheli's network has remarkably grown and is still growing. In the beginning, other cultural organizations were asked to join this network and currently, those kinds of organizations are themselves showing a great deal of interest. During a response from a participant, while discussing about motivation of the employees and volunteers and how is it given the boost, the quick response was, "take a look around, do you see any barriers or obstacles? The openness and acceptance is for everyone, why wouldn't anyone get motivated by this?"

### **4.3 Cultural diversity as a strength, as a weakness**

As stated in the beginning, that Moniheli was created with a vision of an open, cohesive, and multicultural Finnish society where culture, linguistic and religious diversities are understood. Therefore it would not be wrong to say that cultural diversity itself is the main reason of existence behind this network. Before we go into the debate of considering it as a strength or weakness, we must be clear that it is a must. There will be no Moniheli without cultural diversity. However, there are areas where this phenomenon becomes an immense asset and there are areas as well, where it becomes an unhelpful agent. The perceived strengths and weaknesses of cultural diversity are separately explained among the staff and the affiliate organizations in following subchapters. The scale of negativity or positivity or cultural diversity did not seem to be affected by the stereotypes associated with the people of any specific ethnic origin. According to one of the interviewees, "sometimes it occurs that people from a culture where punctuality is not very much acknowledged are exactly in time while on the contrary the people from the cultures having punctuality as their key symbol are late."

#### **4.3.1 Affiliated organizations**

Since Moniheli is a network organization and that is why leaving the impact and influence of member organizations completely out of the research will not serve the purpose as it should. Results from most of the responses concluded that the member organizations joined in a network, not solely for pursuing a common joint goal, but also

to keep their own initial vision intact. This is why it is sometimes bound to happen that the scale of focus and energy does not stay balanced. There may come the phases, when there is an open slit between bigger goal of the network and own initially set local goals. This glitch may also be perceived as set of damaged intentions to be really effective on social phenomenon for personal, political or financial benefits or it might be considered a gap in communication. However, on the contrary, this cultural joint venture also brings innovation, efficient problem solving, and flexibility as described in subchapter 1.1. The dilemma of creating limitless complexities also provides a complicated algorithm of solving them. Little proceedings take longer times and eventually it becomes extremely difficult to keep every stakeholder on the same page. Therefore, sometimes it does seem, it would have been better to have a board that is completely monocultural so the proceedings ran quick and smooth, as one of the interviewees commented.

All the interviewees shared the same opinion that yes having a lot of cultural diversity is a challenge but this is the only way as well. While joining the network, all the parties agree upon certain rules and regulations, and a code of conduct. The focus is on to be as fact oriented as possible and these differences are bound to happen, this is the way it is supposed to be.

#### **4.3.2 The staff**

By the staff, here is meant, the employees, board of directors, and volunteers. Not only having cultural diversity is essential for the organization's existence, progress, and expansion, but also to attract and retain the human resource that is truly self-driven, loyal, and motivated. The respondents considered the environment very comforting yet active, relaxed yet focused, and well organized yet non-hierarchical. The satisfaction of being part of greater good is much bigger than thirst of financial or personal benefits. All these positive spirit building factors combined are provided by an organization that is truly rich in cultural diversity and this image attracts not only potential employees but also volunteers. All the interviewed personnel were from completely different cultural backgrounds yet they have had same visible zeal. Great deal of confidence and belief is shown by the organization to support fresh ideas and this

really drive people to be more open. Based on the fact that the company is working non-profit so the mission, vision and values are much more important than in other companies. They are more like a guideline for all work done by Moniheli. The amount of volunteers also maps the high intrinsic motivation and commitment.

#### **4.4 Communication of vision, mission, goals and values**

While trying to know that if this great enthusiasm and clear conscious that understands the organization's vision, mission, goals, and values have effectively been delivered to the member organization. Nearly all the respondents acknowledged that deliverance of the message has been excellent. Nevertheless there have been challenges on the recipients' sides. As explained earlier in subchapter 4.3.1 that the member organizations may not be fully willing or able to comprehend the overall concept and direction for some certain reasons. All the interviewees though firmly believed and expressed that this is work in progress and will take time. One of the participant added, "I am not even sure if all the affiliates have read the necessary material in order to have a solid understanding of why we are and what we aim for." This passiveness can also be described as inability to see the bigger picture. The factors affecting the process of releasing the receiving the information are explained one by one in further subchapters.

##### **4.4.1 Expansion**

All the respondents agreed that without the member organizations there will be no network, no Moniheli and this is why coping with these challenges is inevitable. However, recognition of the fact was visible that as more affiliates pour in and organization further expands, there might be the threat of distracting from the core foundations. Hence effective and efficient management of cultural diversity will hold enormous importance. According to one respondent, "It is difficult to choose from efficiency and democracy but we must make sure that we do not detach from our core values." Equality, transparency, and fairness were emphasized very much.

#### 4.4.2 Organizational communication

The communication holds crucial place in such kind of an organization. The Moniheli staff utilizes all the available modern tools to ensure a smooth and fluent mechanism of communication. Word is spread through social media and the pages are regularly updated. The staff keeps in touch with each other through cell phones, text messages, emails, and meetings. There are newsletters and reminders for activity update. Some communication requires being in written form, so postage is also a common method. It depends upon the urgency, importance, and type of the matter but appropriate method of communication is used. Even though there can be difference in meaning of the expression but language barrier is not much of an issue. One participant gave a very thoughtful comment, “Although, English has become a much spoken language in so many countries but the meaning of the phrases as well as the facial expression might greatly differ from each other so one must be careful while concluding the meaning of a message in cross cultural communication”. Staff speaks fluent English and affiliate organizations are also capable enough to communicate in English, however majority of the people can also communicate in Finnish. There are some affiliate organizations that somehow reflect more ease while communicating in Finnish even though their language skills might not be sufficient and then some language barrier might appear. Communication levels with outside and inside networks are explained through Figure 6, the communication sphere of Moniheli;

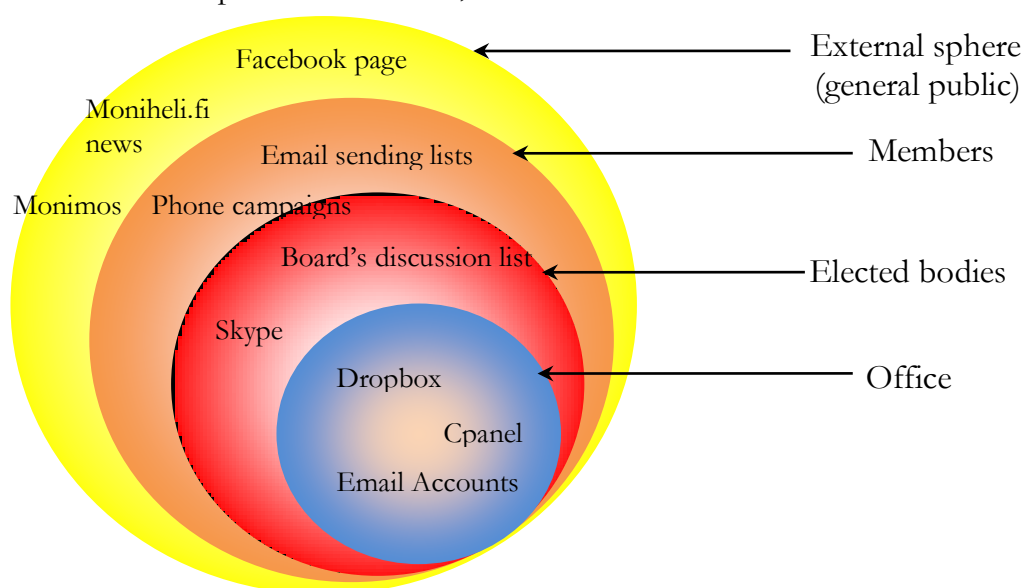


Figure 6: Moniheli's communication tools and spheres (Moniheli activity report 2011, 21)

#### **4.4.3 Conflicts and conflict management**

Some interviewees mentioned the severity of the conflicts that had occurred in the past, which were of very serious nature. But those of the interviewees that are comparatively new to the organization, did notice some conflicts but did not consider them something out of control. Having learned lessons from the past, the staff does understand that there should be due room given for the initial mistakes, miscommunication, cultural barriers, and cultural shocks. Organizational conflicts that occur between the staff did not appear to be a challenge, according to the respondents. The multicultural board of directors has had suffered the most from the minor or major conflicts or disagreements that take place from time to time. But the pace and effectiveness of the resolution process have remarkably polished with the passage of time. One participant commented that “conflicts mostly happen when people do not completely understand, what is going on hence fluency of communication must be made sure of”.

Regarding conflict resolution, main emphasize was given on fact based process, transparency, democratic approach and communication. While trying to resolve a conflict, the code of conduct and statutes of the organization is consulted to ensure that the values are not jeopardized. There are no secret power zones. The entire process is transparent and democratic and each party is given equal right of say. The culture of “let’s talk about it” is very much in power. “Of course there are always some people that are disappointed or displeased” one of the participants stated, “but we always try our best to reach an optimal solution that is fair and fruitful for the organization”. Respondents believed that if and once, the greater vision and goal is truly realized and understood, the overall thinking is broadened, the synergy can lead them to be able to make a social impact.

#### **4.5 The strategy of full compliance**

Every individual as a human being is absolutely somehow influenced by the environment that his/her brought up took place. Therefore in the very first collaborating experience, it is not possible to obtain and display full flexibility and understanding towards a different cultural working style or norm. The real challenge is faced when a

conflict of a normal nature, no matter minor or major, starts to convert into a reason of permanent grudge.

There has been situations of severe conflicts in the past but having remained strongly attached to its foundations, code of conduct, rules and regulations, and the most important, strictly fact based proceedings, Moniheli has been successful to reach an optimal and democratic solution. It is important to observe that which key HR areas the organization mainly focuses to strengthen and how effective have they been so far. The tool of “overall analysis of HR strategic goals” (Armstrong 2008, 219) has been used in table 5, to determine that how much emphasize is given to the key motions taking place regarding the HR case organization and how effective have they been, followed by detailed explanation regarding each action.

Table 5. Overall analysis of HR strategic goals

Possible HR Strategic Goals	Importance*	Effectiveness*
Recruit and retain talented people	7	6
Create a powerful employee value proposition	8	10
Reward people according to their contribution	8	10
Develop a high-performance culture	10	9
Support the achievement of the organization's goals	10	7
Ensuring that the organization is seen as a 'great place to work'	10	10
Increase engagement	10	10
Provide employee with a voice	10	8
Improve communications	10	7
Provide a good working environment	10	10

\* Scale: 10 – high; 0 – low

(Armstrong 2008, 219)

**Recruit and retain talented people:** Importance is 7. Non-profit nature of the company does not allow the mechanism to be very hard while screening and recruiting. Turnover of trainees is high because having secured a permanent paid position is not always possible.

**Create a powerful employee value proposition:** lesser stress on this point is given by the organization but the effectiveness is excellent because the sense of belonging with the phenomenon of social contribution provides them an equal value proposition.

**Reward people according to their contribution:** Again, there are not so many monetary rewards but the organization does its best for recognition, appreciation, and acknowledgment. But the sense of self-appreciation coming from inner self of employees, volunteers, and trainees compensates the absence of tangible financial rewards.

**Develop a high performance culture:** organization definitely stresses the importance of it and the human resource complies brilliantly, even through incomplete resources.

**Support the achievement of the organization's goals:** is given maximum importance and being relatively a younger organization and being in the process of development. The effectiveness is on its way to meet the level of importance.

**Ensuring that the organization is seen as a 'great place to work':** Moniheli with its pleasant working atmosphere is paid attention and is seen as a great place to work.

**Increase engagement:** operations and tasks are originated with noble goals and for social growth and that is why involvement and intentions to involve are always at their maximum.

**Provide employee with a voice:** That is why Moniheli thrives for, to get different unique ideas and feedback. But the organization somehow is in the process of developing a comprehensive communication system for better effectiveness.

**Improve communications:** Mainly emphasizes as “work in progress” this action, worth giving full importance, is yet not completely achieving its full effectiveness.

**Provide a good working environment:** All the stakeholders, administration, employees, volunteers, and trainees agree to that.



## 5 Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze that how and what role the cultural diversity of Moniheli's human resource can play to achieve excellence and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision. As explained in the subchapter 2.5, MBI model was considered the tool, through which the mapping, bridging, and integrating phases of the organization were to be analyzed. The results are explained in the previous chapter. In this chapter the analysis of the results, keeping in mind MBI model, will be made.

### 5.1 Mapping

The important feature of mapping is to identify which differences will affect interactions and decision making: for example, cultural values, way of thinking, and ways of achieving goals. Most of the culturally diverse teams do not take the time to map cultural differences openly; they just depend on oversimplification (stereotypes). (Hogan 2007, 119.) However, there had not been any prominent elements in the responses, based on which it could be concluded that cultural integration is not done very well but most of the answers reflected that having a common goal is perceived to be enough strength not to acknowledge the significance of cultural diversity. As mentioned earlier in subchapter 4.3.1 and followed that an appropriate understanding about the organization's long term goals has not been developed as it should, amongst the affiliate organizations. The board of directors is formed through general elections and the candidates come from the affiliate organizations. Keeping in mind that after getting elected, the members of the board accept a responsible position in the domain of Moniheli but at the same time, they had been a part of their own representative organization. Arguably the main objective might be the same, cultural integration. But differences are most likely to be observed in the methods and modes of operating.

The main cause of Moniheli's being is undoubtedly for the betterment of the entire network and initially it does attract a lot of enthusiasm, passion and devotion. But it appears that it solely is not sufficient to ensure a long term and sustainable position of the organization, especially when expansion is believed to be occurred. Mapping cultural differences allows people to escape the silos and gain an overview of relationships

that irritated the organization and constitute informal networks. But it can also be a very long and demanding process in need of financial resources, time allocations, and human resources and Moniheli, as explained in subchapter 4.2 operates in very limited resources like a traditional non-profit organization.

Rest of the staff, excluding the board of directors, however has inclusive and practical cultural atlas in their head. It is probably because they have coherence in their age structure and gender. As one of the interviewees spontaneously commented with a casual laugh, “We are all women in the office so probably that’s what bridges the gap a lot.” The staff works long hours, very dedicated and alarmed of the fact that the organizational pillars of vision, mission, and values are not appropriately gaining strength as they should in all the areas.

## **5.2 Bridging**

Frequently, people interpret messages of other people by using their own frames of references, which are usually shaped by one’s own ethnic background and professional affiliation and bridging is an attempt to minimize these differences by understanding the frames of reference of others (DiStefano, Imon & Lee 2004, 2-3). Moniheli organizes several activities for its employees and affiliates for cultural socialization and the friendly working environment makes it possible to somehow bridge the communicational gaps amongst the staff. As explained in subchapter 2.5.2 that one of the key objectives in the phase of bridging is to avoid miscommunication and that is why communication plays a very important role while it comes to bridging.

Moniheli does not seem to have much of a language barrier. Most of the people are capable of speaking Finnish and nobody is shy of speaking English as well. Among the affiliate organizations, there are some groups where Finnish becomes a better choice than English but language barrier is not considered to be a weakness or threat as a whole. Furthermore, all the means of modern communication are also being used. All the information that is needed to be delivered is delivered through several ways and follow ups are also made. All the interviewees shared the common notion that it is the affiliate organizations that do not properly follow, receive, or some of them do not

even try to understand what this entire network is about. Considering these hurdles and expecting more and more new cultural representative organizations joining in as affiliates, does not really draw a beautiful picture. Nonetheless, this is the assessment from the researcher's point of view even though the interviewees were supremely confident that this is just work in progress and we are aware of the rectifications that we must make along the way.

### **5.3 Integrating**

Michel de Montaigne, one of the most influential writers of French Renaissance said that "The most universal quality is diversity". In the long run, Moniheli probably cannot be seen as an entity having one common unit and organizational culture that surpasses rest of the differences. But it seems more like a rainbow with different cultural colours having their own identities intact and making synergy. There will be disagreements and conflicts but consistent improvement of organizational HR functions will also keep polishing and fixing the bugs. As long as the main focus of the driving forces is towards right direction, the solutions to the potential problems will also be found.

The process of understanding each other is a journey never finished because the process itself and the end point change constantly. This journey is bound up with communication gaps and conflicts. (LeBaron 2003.) It was unfolded during the interviews that some of the cultural representative organizations, which tended to keep isolated and did not really care about cultural integration, have recently joined Moniheli. According to the Moniheli staff, it is a great achievement to have them realized and understood the importance of integrating with other cultures. The first barrier to manage cultural diversity is the resistance to communicate. The road to synergy is a bumpy one but once the communication is developed, things start rolling forward.

A successful integration is followed by successful mapping and bridging. As it was discussed in subchapter 2.5.3, it is not guaranteed that successful integration will be achieved once having sufficient mapping and bridging done. All three main stages and further sub-phases of MBI model greatly depends and build on each other. MBI is a process that should keep taking its series of actions in order to achieve a specific end.

#### 5.4 SWOT of cultural diversity at Moniheli

It is impossible to define right, wrong, good, or bad in cultural differences, they are just differences. As illogical or bizarre they may sound but those developments have had been taking place for centuries and it is practically impossible to completely divert, modify, alter, change, or even grasp the mindset of a person from a different culture. Therefore this fact leaves us with no choice but to have the never ending process of learning about each other keep going. Cultural diversity has its own strengths and weaknesses. Having considered the outcomes from this research, table 6 given below describes the SWOT of cultural diversity at Moniheli;

Table 6: SWOT of cultural diversity at Moniheli

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different approaches/perspectives</li> <li>• High cultural awareness through employees</li> <li>• Cultural knowledge &amp; Internationalization</li> <li>• Overall purpose (intern &amp; extern)</li> <li>• Dignity amongst employees</li> <li>• Low hierarchy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miscommunication</li> <li>• Misunderstandings</li> <li>• Weak group performances</li> <li>• Slow decision making</li> <li>• Situations of conflicts</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reason to exist</li> <li>• Innovation/creative solutions</li> <li>• Cultural learning environment</li> <li>• Understanding of needs</li> <li>• Fast decision-making</li> <li>• Pro-activeness/ autonomy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long processes</li> <li>• Misunderstanding regarding goals (mainly external)</li> <li>• Distraction from the foundations</li> <li>• Allegations of discrimination</li> </ul>

Table 6 enables us to identify the areas that need most of the attention. In the first glance the apparent strengths and weaknesses strike out but detailed analysis unfolds much more attention needing areas. Having cultural diversity in the human resource of

the organization brings a vast variety in approaches and perspectives. For Moniheli, the cultural diversity does not only serve the overall purpose but also leads to high self-esteem among the human resource because of the sensation of being part of something better in longer run. Low hierarchy in diverse manpower may also facilitate them to learn about different cultures. These advantages come with some weaknesses as well. There are high chances of gaps in communications and misunderstandings that might sometimes slow down the process of important decisions making. Eventually the overall team performances might deteriorate and situations of different kinds of conflicts might also appear.

Some issues may not be threats at this stage but with the passage of time as the organization grows, they might become unmanageable. Delays in operational proceedings due to miscommunications or misunderstandings can also lead towards a slower grip over the comprehension of overall organizational vision, especially among the affiliate organizations. Destructive culture of blame game can also take birth once even a little interruption is encountered in smooth operations. On the opportunities side, cultural diversity is definitely a must for Moniheli because this is what they aim to promote. In order to solve the complex challenges, innovative solutions will be needed, which would not be possible without a strong cultural insight. The decision making processes can become much smoother and faster once all the parties truly understand the organizational vision.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

First of all, a solid emphasize has to be given on the cultural integration of the multi-cultural board of directors as well as volunteers and the paid employees, if needed. One significant fact here is that among the staff, it is particularly the board of directors that carries most of the cultural diversity in it and also holds crucial importance in decision making. That is why most of the challenges are also faced by the board. As told by some of the participants, that there had been severe conflicts in the past but it appear that lessons have been learnt and the mutual mechanism of rectifying the mistakes and preventing them, is working fine. There is no such as a pre-defined, structured mechanism of understanding each other's cultural differences. Strong motivation, initial pure

intentions, and a solid determination to be an active part of something greater good, are strong triggers to give a blasting start but in order to prevail the same zeal it is very important to map, bridge, and integrate each other's cultural differences.

Once the board is formed through general elections, they should be given due introduction about each others' cultural backgrounds. No matter how culturally intelligent or aware one considers himself or herself, there is always something new to learn. Not talking about each others' cultural practices, taboos, acceptances, history, and traditions does not only prevent the knowledge transfer but also causes the communicational gaps. Although in the end everybody wants to make an impact on the social structure of Finland through better integration but it would not be possible to have it done without keeping their own original cultural values integral and enlightening others with it. The research opened up the current scenario, which reveals that emotional intelligence is the phenomenon given more attention and relied on, with little attention on cultural intelligence.

Organizations have their own culture and often they are very distinctive; anybody who joins a new company spends some time in deciphering its cultural codes and within the organizations there are sparring subcultures as well. Cultural intelligence is related to emotional intelligence; however it picks up where emotional intelligence leaves off. (Earley & Mosakowski 2004.) The profile of an immigrant in Finland and then being a part of an organization such as Moniheli is definitely very rich in terms of cultural knowledge. While having been through so many different experiences there is a slight possibility that one might lose the thirst to acknowledge and gain further competence. This dilemma can also be perceived as a saturation point that one comes across after consecutive stages of struggling activities. The key to open this dead lock is to trigger motivation, to have something acquired that provides even stronger inspiration to keep going for more. Working in a group with the people of similar quests, objectives, and somehow backgrounds, is something that can really spark the motivation level. But having a same cause might not be enough forever. Concrete know how of each others' historical perspective, future objectives, and way of doing things and having each party

convinced that their individual targets are dependent upon the overall success of the entire network, is a must acquired asset to ensure the long term success.

Relatively greater development in shorter time of its existence and excellent building of internal working atmosphere, definitely indicate a great deal of success but the fact should not be forgotten that Moniheli's network and scope are yet growing. The question is, will it be possible to ensure the sustainability of existing practices and structure as the boundaries expands? The answer is in strict compliance and chasing excellence and trying to eliminate any part, no matter how small or ineffective at this stage, that could potentially harm the structure. Non-profit organizations are traditionally supposed to maintain higher level of transparency while coping with financial challenges and that is why the deficit in annual report of 2012 should have been at least explained. If not a separate HR department, there should at least be a pre-defined HR policy that is based on theories and facts instead of assumptions that anybody automatically understands greater values of Moniheli.

## **5.6 Personal learning and further research possibilities**

The author has been somehow indirectly associated with Moniheli for quite some time now. Being from an immigrant background, it becomes very likely that one tries to find people that face similar kind of issues and situations. Moniheli, without a doubt, has been an ideal platform. Coming across through websites, social networks, seminars, and interactions with individuals regularly active with Moniheli definitely brings out a very vibrant and attractive image and it was not expected that there would be areas needing appropriate concentration that this research uncovered. As explained in subchapter 5.4 that sometimes tremendous experiences and exposures might also drive individuals towards the diffusion point when their desire to listen to more probably becomes feeble. This dilemma also emerges from the fact that as a whole, the societies start following one track trends.

For example, every other politician, activist, celebrity, journalist or any other kind of public figure in Finland usually emphasizes the importance of cultural integration. There are plenty of chances for immigrants to learn more and more about Finnish lan-

guage, Finnish lifestyles, and Finnish ways of doing things. At the same time everybody also agrees, it is not completely possible that one detaches himself from his own original ethnic origin mentally. So should not the trend also flow vice versa? How about having sufficient cultural knowledge for Finns about the immigrants that are coming to settle in their country? What if the kids are taught a little more about the culture of other immigrants' communities in Finland as it gets more and more internationalized? Would not that fill the integration purpose comprehensively from so many different dimensions?

Just like that, what I actually learned through this research is that there can never be sustainable pursuit towards excellence until the traffic is running both ways. As an individual, if I keep making noise that people should understand me more, listen to me more and do not open up my ears for anything; nothing will work, or it might actually work but not for a long time.

For further research possibilities, there can be a comprehensive quantitative research planned and executed to listen to the affiliate organizations. Until now, it is concluded that the flow of communication has been fluent at least from the side of the party that delivers it but the receiving part has been the question mark. It would be really interesting to see that how the affiliate organizations respond do that, where do they actually see the problem? It can be a good research topic for somebody with organizational communication studies. Then for some students who are typically studying cultural diversity, they can also build further to analyze the impact of Moniheli's network on the social horizons of Finland.



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## Attachments

### Attachment 1. List of the affiliated organizations

1. African Civil Society in Finland ry (ACSF)
2. Africans and African-Europeans Association (AFAES)
3. Afromulticulture presents African culture, history and tales to the Finns.  
Amucorf
4. Association of Angola Residence in Finland (A.A.R.Fi)
5. Berde ry
6. Cambodia Friendship Association in Finland (KAMYS)
7. Cameroon Cultural and Development Association in Finland (CAMCUDAF)
8. Chinese Friendship Association
9. EMPOWERMENT OF AFRICAN WOMEN (TAMPERE)
10. FC Afro-Euro Giants ry
11. Finnish-Pakistani Friendship Organization ry
12. Fin Tennis & Pentathlon
13. Finnish Thai Association
14. Fintiko Romano Forum ry
15. Fokus ry
16. Golis Women's Association
17. Grasslanders' Association in Finland ry (Asograf)
18. International English Speakers' Association of Finland
19. Itä-Vantaan Somalikulttuuriyhdistys
20. Kassandra ry
21. Kehitysapuyhdistys Terveys- ja Koulutusapua Somalilandiin ry (SAMAFALKA)
22. KEFISO ry
23. Kulttuuriyhdistys Tambor Vivo
24. Kumba Union Finland (KUF)
25. Kurdistanin Rauhan ja Kehityksen Seura (KDPA)
26. Länsi-Saharan Ystävät Suomessa ry
27. Liikkukaa! sy - Sports for all association
28. LOM-NAVA (Seuraa minua ystäväni)

29. Monikansallisten naisten liikunta ja kultturi ry (MonaLiikku ry)
30. Multicultural association Familia Club
31. Multicultural Finland
32. Non-Resident Nepali Association Finland
33. Our International Finland (Kansainvälinen Suomemme ry / KanSu)
34. Palace and Cultural Network (PACUNET)
35. Peer Support for Integration in Finland (PESIFI)
36. Powwer ry- Proud of Who We Are
37. Senegal-Suomi Ystävät ry
38. Scandinavian development aid for Africa (SCADAA) ry
39. Social empowerment organisation (SEMO)
40. Somali diaspora vuoropuhelua ry
41. Somalian Community Finland
42. Somali Taakulo
43. Southern African Association in Finland (SAAF)
44. Suomi-Liberia Seura (SULIS/FILIFA)
45. Suomen Kiinalaisten Allianssi ry (SKA)
46. Suomi Afrikkaseurojen Liitto (SAFRA)
47. Suomi-Arabikansojen ystävyys, kulttuuri ja urheiluseura ry (SAYKYS)
48. Suomi-Marokko ystävyys ja kumppanuusyhdistys ry
49. Suomi-Nepal Friendship Association
50. Suomi-Sierra Leone association
51. Suomi-Syyria Friendship Association
52. Suomi-Tansania Seura – Föreningen Finland-Tanzania ry
53. Suomi Uutena Kotimaana ry
54. Suomi-Zambia ry
55. The Finnish-Nepalese Society
56. Union Youth Development ry
57. Vasoma ry

## Attachment 2. Interview Questions

1. How does the hierarchy function? (Who is answerable to whom?)
2. How many different cultural backgrounds may be active currently in Moniheli?
3. How does Moniheli realize, identify, and map the cultural differences amongst its stakeholders?
4. What challenges has the organization faced or still faces, while trying to keep its values intact?
5. Have there been activities to plan and promote the cultural socialization within the organization?
6. How many percent of the employees and volunteers are bilingual? (Finnish, English)
7. Has Moniheli delivered its vision, mission and values effectively to its affiliates and have those been understood?
8. What are the tools of communication being used more often and how frequently meeting are held?
9. What kinds of well-being activities are implemented to increase the motivational level?
10. What practical steps have been taken to minimize cultural conflicts and promote integration within the organization?
11. Does Moniheli consider its cultural diversity as a competitive advantage? If yes, how has it been utilized? If no, why?
12. Has Moniheli's corporate culture been built into one common culture? If yes, how was it achieved? If no, what is being planned to make it so?

### Attachment 3. Overlay matrix

Research Question	Investigative Questions	Theoretical Framework	Sources	Outcomes
How to develop Moniheli's HR structure's cultural diversity in order to achieve excellence and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?	1 What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses regarding cultural diversity of HR of case company?	Diversity Management Cultural Diversity in HR Non-profit Volunteer	Question 3, 5, 10, 11	Subchapter 4.3
	2 What is the current level of understanding of organization's vision and acknowledgment of cultural diversity, amongst the employees/volunteers?	Diversity Management Cross Cultural Management	Question 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10	Subchapter 4.4
	3 What strategic measures are taken by Moniheli to ensure full compliance in order to achieve common goals?	Diversity Management Non-profit Volunteer Cultural Diversity in HR	Question 1, 3, 3, 7, 8	Subchapter 4.5
	4 What recommendations can be made to Moniheli in order to achieve optimal results and ensure compatibility with the organization's vision?	Diversity Management Cultural Diversity in HR Non-profit Volunteer		Subchapter 5.5