

FOCUS:  
JORDAN –  
BUSINESS CULTURE

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# AGENDA

- INTRODUCTION AND GOAL FOR THE SESSION
- ARABIC COUNTRIES N= 22 - DEFINITIONS
- DIFFERENCIES AND SIMILARITIES OF ARABIC COUNTRIES
- CULTURAL FEATURES
- ISLAM; BASIC TERMS AND INFLUENCE TO BUSINESS
- COMMUNICATION/NEGOTIATIONS STYLES
- QUESTIONS– SESSION’S WRAP UP

# IMM ALI'S BACKGROUND YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ARABIC CULTURE?

- Arabic culture – Arabs – familiar to You?
- Some stereotypes?
- Have you ever been to an Arabic country?
- Your contact with Jordan

(Picture from Abu Dhabi 2017)

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# PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION:

- To understand individuals cultural differences, not to concentrate on misunderstandings
- To work together harmonious way, co-understanding sometimes impossible
- To be aware of your own self, culture, values and behavior
- When conflicts and misunderstanding occur, to remember that we are results of our own culture and values systems (subconscious!)

# THE 22 ARABIC COUNTRIES

- Arabic countries:  
Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, Palestine ([www.arab.net](http://www.arab.net))
- Islamic countries
- MENA = Middle East and North Africa
- GCC Gulf Co-operation Council → 1981
- 6 countries: Saudi-Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain



# GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

- Arabic countries – all countries where Arabic is spoken as one of the official languages including Sudan and Mauritania
  - Over 300 mil. inhabitants
  - Excluding Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Malesia, Pakistan
- Arabs?
  - Can be a non-Muslim
  - Can be blue-eyed
  - Shares the Arabic heritage
  - Speaks Arabic as a mother tongue



# ARABIC COUNTRIES, MENA, GCC



# JORDAN 2018

- Neighbours; Saudi-Arabia, Syria, Irak and Israel
- British colony – reflection to management and other things
- King Abdullah II, (Father King Hussein), is 41st generation direct descendant of Muhammad, belongs to the Hashemite family
- 6,4-8 mil people, Amman capital (1,3 mil)
- Education is free
- Private vs public education (16 private unis/10 public)
- Capital more western and liberal, countryside more conservative



# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARABIC COUNTRIES

Many forces:

- Politics, relationships to western countries
- Economics, some very rich/poor
- Religion, how Islam is interpreted: Position of woman, meaning of veil
- Education
- Culture, colonialism influencing
- Wealth, oil, technological development
- Refugee intake (Jordan about 2-2,5 mil)



# SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ARABIC COUNTRIES

- Language
- Islam and the habits
- Friendliness
- Generosity
- Warm weather & sunshine
- Rhetoric
- Food culture – important
- Being collectivistic culture
- People more important than task
- Hierarchical culture; older people, tribe, Hajj, roles: mother-father, male-female
- Democracy understood different way than in the west
- Time culture

# ARAB CULTURE (Hofstede, Trompenaars)

Arab societies are tribal and

- Follow a hierarchical system that does not allow significant upward mobility of its citizens
- Expect and accept (as a cultural heritage) that leaders separate themselves from the group and issue complete & specific directives.
- Are strongly collectivist. An Arab saying: eat what you like, but dress up like others (conformism). Religion has an influence.
- Are male dominated – what does this mean?
- Be patient!



# ARAB CULTURE & GENDER ISSUES

## CONSERVATISM & MODESTY

- Strong family orientation, meaning of family, Family pride & honor
- Islam and its influence to life
- Education does not eliminate religious inequality
- Single/ Married status, and the processes of getting married
- The purpose of Marriage and +/- social factors
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- Divorce and Polygamy (Religious & social angles)
- Do not underestimate women
- Sees matters of life through Forbidden/ Unforbidden dilemmas
- Illnesses often seen as punishments, disabled, family present in hospitals
- Superstitious



# FIVE BASIC PILLARDS OF ISLAM

BELIEVERS, NON BELIEVERS

INFLUENCES TO EVERYTHING IN LIFE: LAWS,  
EDUCATION, FOOD, CLOTHES, DAILY ROUTINES

1. Believing that there are no other gods but the only One, and believing in Muhammed who was his last messenger to human kind
2. Pilgrimage to Mecca, once in a lifetime
3. Fasting the holy month of Ramadan
4. Praying the daily prayer ( at 5 different times)
5. Paying/ giving due alms (tax on profit)





# INFLUENCE OF ISLAM TO WORKLIFE

- Prayers give a rhythm to the work
- Work as itself is the same as in the west
- Try to have a break during the prayers
- Ramadan is a change to the working life; worktimes change. In public sectors worktime will get shorter and in private sector more work is done in the evenings
- Friday is a holiday, different weekends
- There are not too many restrictions, you just should respect (not to accept all of them!)
- Food restrictions: pork, alcohol
- Hajj
- Security



# COMMUNICATION

- Language & writing style
- High context/ Low context culture: Physical gesture, show emotions, talking around. Much of the burden of meaning appears to fall on the listener. Repetition. Read between the lines
- Indirect/ Direct: Ambiguous style that would omit factual & technical aspects of a message.
- A Being/ Doing Culture: Arabs salute each others by asking “what is your condition”, the response with physical/ emotional state. It is a traditional vertical society (Ascribed).
- For Arab culture Time Orientation is less important than people and events, and time is not segmented.

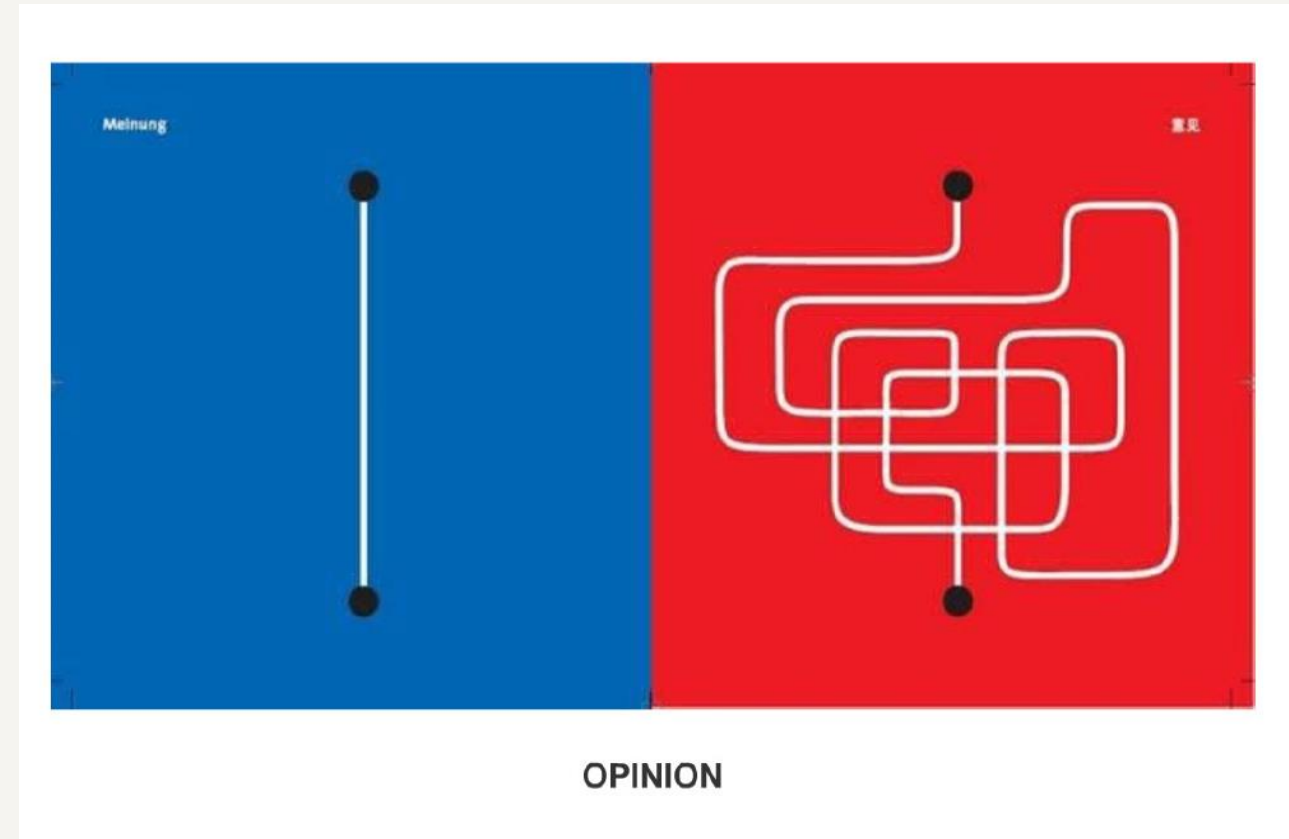
# COMMUNICATION

## JORDAN

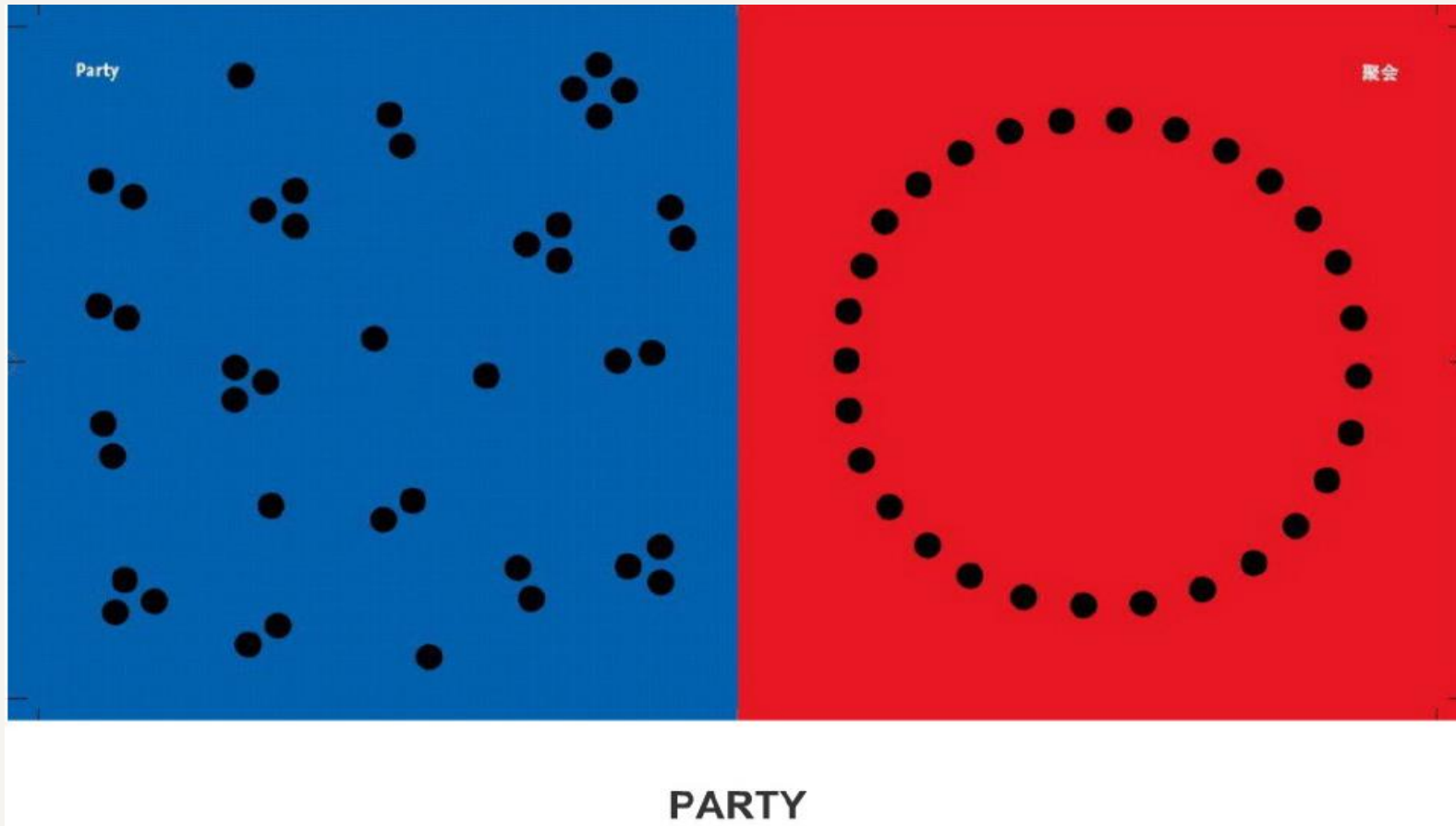
- What they do not say
- What they do not quite say

## West

- Say what you mean
- Mean what you say

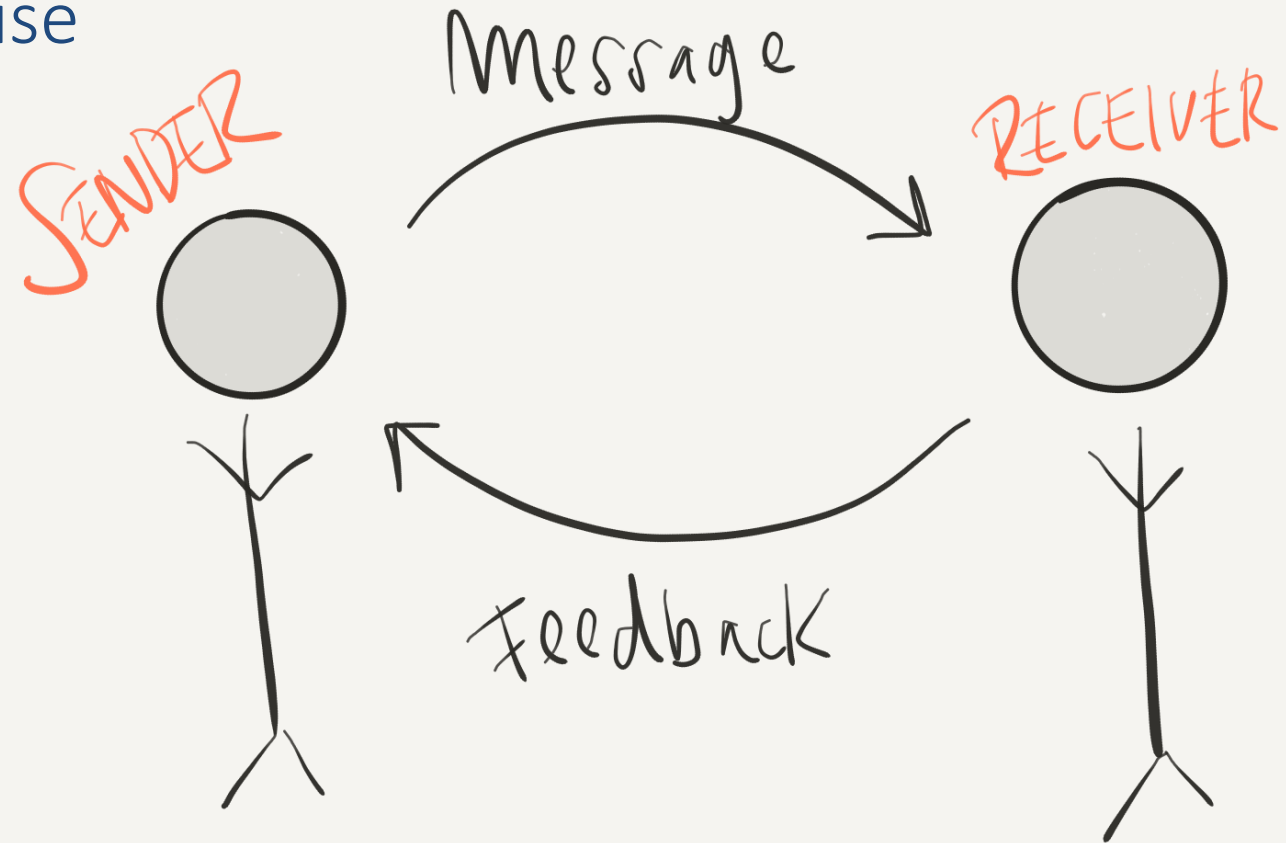


# COLLECTIVISM IN GROUPS



# SOLVING CONFLICTS

- Several reasons why conflicts arise
  - Hard to read "between the lines"
- Avoiding saying directly
- Deep understanding of culture
- Being one's true self
- Middlemen
- Authorities, age
- Honor, loosing face





# POSITION OF WOMAN

- Protected in a family, Saudi-Arabia extreme, Lebanon most liberal
- Men to support and take care of women
- Reputation and behavior are important
- Roles in the family
- Dressing up important
- Marriage, age and motherhood bring status



# MAIDS AND GUEST WORKERS not so common in Jordan, but

- Hierarchical culture
- Not treated equally
- Strong "position" thinking; cleaning woman, construction worker
- Nursing; living conditions & salary & other benefits
- For Finnish equal culture people a little bit difficult
- Education makes the difference and opens doors to better position



# ARABS AS NEGOTIATORS, "My friend"

- Be patient and pragmatic; By allocating time in case of thinking to create contacts or networks as many as you can through a trusty known middleman
- Contacts and meeting there, should be done and organized by your middleman before your trip to the region
- No emailing regarding important decisions
- Every business sector has its own powerful people, also FIN commercial secretary can facilitate your tasks
- Agreeing before going about the cost of service in case of +/- networking results.
- Buy your ticket with flexible changes of the return date
- Face to face situation: curious about You and your family
- Pricing – giving discounts - bribery
- Take time to really get to know you
- Trust is important. Nothing works without networks

# CODES OF BEHAVIOR

- Dark suite/ conservative dressing up (cover shoulders, not too short nor open) = official dressing up
- Liberal on your free time
- Depends if you are selling or buying!
- Be flexible with changes in plans, all will be arranged anyhow
- Pictures
- Safety
- Greetings – as a woman, do not offer your hand first
- Gifts, no alcohol, no porkmeat
- Rhetoric – small talk and learn some language, be curious!