

GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS

Simon Hjorth



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An increasing number of companies now market globally, and many of their employees work in virtual global teams across multiple geographic locations. The world has become much smaller as a result of globalization and technological development. Consumers have unlimited access to global media, travel more than ever before and are incessantly exposed to local, international and global messages from local and global brands.

Global brands are growing stronger¹, and the competition for the consumer's attention is becoming more intense. Therefore, it is more important for companies to create effective global campaigns. The question is, what is the most effective approach for a global campaign? Are the best campaigns the same all over the world or localized to some degree? The objective of this article is to analyze the strategic considerations and to give practical recommendations on how to execute global campaigns.

The number of possible communication channels has more than doubled during the last 10 to 15 years to more than 30. Globally, there are numerous media standards, such as print ad sizes, print formats and online banner sizes. Having these standards creates consistency and cohesion, making it easier to implement global campaigns; however, there are still many countries where there are no standard formats. For example, China has more than thirty different "standard" banner sizes, whereas the U.S. has only a few. Lack of standards makes logistics, efficient execution and distribution an additional challenge for successful global campaigns.

Consumers are Local

Twenty to 30 years ago, several thought-leaders suggested the world would become a global village, creating global consumers and standardized brands. In 1983², Theodore Levitt, writing in the Harvard Business Review, predicted that large companies that standardized both product and communication would reap the economic benefits. While some products have been standardized, communication cannot be standardized because consumer behavior is still very complex and diverse³.

Similarly, many people today advocate that “the earth is flat”; they believe there is a shorter distance between global resources, due in large part to the rise of digital technology. This was famously described in author Thomas Friedman’s 2005 international best-seller, *The World Is Flat*. On the other hand, Pankaj Ghemawat, from Harvard Business School, believes that the world is not as global due to physical distance and cultural differences. Therefore, companies have found that globalization of brands is not so simple. They assert that one must balance between cost benefits of a global brand and branding benefits of a local foundation. Ghemawat argues that only 10-25% of economic activity is international, and the majority of this activity is regional⁴.

Nigel Hollis, of Milward Brown, argues that the truly global consumer does not actually exist. Consumers make most of their purchases locally, as the majority of the population lives a local life with local values, norms, needs and dreams. Although they are affected by international news media and international brands, their frame of reference is distinctly local. These local conditions are dramatically different – culturally and economically – from one country to another. And in large, high-growth countries, such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC), there are also significant differences across regions and between residents of urban and rural areas⁵.

However, in many of the former developing countries – in cities such as Mumbai and Shanghai – Western culture

and behavior have been influential. In spite of this, the people in these countries retain their fundamental values, but there is a degree of polarization in terms of behavior between the more traditional countries and those influenced by Western culture. This will be interesting to follow.

Glocal

When a strong global brand plans to market locally, product and communication must adapt to the local conditions – and follow the conventional theories of branding. For a brand to be successful, it must involve consumers at a local level and understand the local culture. A good example of this schism is HSBC, whose payoff, “The world’s local bank,” hits the perfect dual requirement for international companies. To be a strong global player you must also be a strong local player. Or, to put it another way: the brand must have local power and identity, but also be consistent across regions⁶.

While most agree that global businesses need to develop global brands, it does not mean “one-size-fits-all.” It is important to work with universal and global insights, and then adapt them to local conditions. A global brand can achieve this by working with emotional and universal messages that create relevance, rather than product-specific and rational messages, which require more localization. When messages are too product-specific at the global level, it creates inconsistency when localized and detracts from brand equity.

How Consumers Are Different

While economic and demographic differences between markets have obvious implications for businesses, it is the culture that truly affects the way brands are developed, marketed and experienced. Culture (history), beliefs, customs, habits, values and social behavior in a group of people determines the way they will think, behave and react to the world around them. The culture has a massive affect on brand acceptance and appeal, as well

as communications from traditional above-the-line media to events and social media. The Dutch Professor Geert Hofstede has developed a model that identifies five primary dimensions that can be used to describe and differentiate the cultures. They are:

1. Power distance (the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the country’s society)
2. Individualism (the degree the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships)
3. Masculinity (the degree the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control and power)
4. Uncertainty avoidance (the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society - i.e. unstructured situations)
5. Long-term orientation (the degree the society embraces, or does not embrace, long-term devotion to traditional, forward thinking values).

The factors of importance vary significantly from country to country, and examples of the different positions are shown in Table 5.4.1. Hofstede found the countries’ differing values

through his extensive global research.

Various types of cultures respond to advertising and communication in different ways. In feminine cultures, such as Denmark, communication is understated and focuses on the intimate and soft values. Masculine cultures focus on being the greatest, best, fastest – for success in general. For example, adaptation of masculine-oriented advertisements from the United States may be accepted in some masculine markets such as the UK and Germany, but less accepted in the Nordic countries⁷.

Hofstede’s model is not entirely clear, because in the last few years, a form of standardization in relation to cultural dimensions has developed. In many places there is a big difference between young audiences and older audiences – and how they experience “cultural” values. Fifteen years ago, brands generalized based on geography. Today, geography isn’t necessarily the best indicator as consumers more frequently create common interest communities across cultures and geographies. It is difficult to predict how far this will go and how long it will take (if ever) before the behavior will be harmonized across regions and borders. Since there are no established alternate models that provide

Table 5.4.1. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Examples			
Dimension	Description	Low	High
Power Distance	Runs from collectivistic societies (low) to ones that accept that the power is distributed unevenly (high)	Nordic	Russia
Individualism	Runs from societies composed of tight-knit collectivistic groups (low) to individualistic (high)	Pakistan	USA
Masculinity	Runs from societies with very similar male/female values (low) to ones where male values differ strongly and are more competitive and assertive (high)	Nordic	Japan
Uncertainty Avoidance	Runs from societies comfortable with ambiguity (low) to those that find a need for clarity and rules of behavior (high)	Singapore	Greece
Long-Term Orientation	Low values are reflected in respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. Values associated with high long-term orientation are thrift and perseverance.	Pakistan	China

Source: Nigel Hollis and Marieke de Mooij

a clear definition of the cultural dimensions, Hofstede’s model will serve as an example.

Different Buying Motives

Hofstede’s model can be used to understand variations that exist between people around the world. It is an important example of brand positioning or marketing in different regions. The diagram below (5.4.2) shows the different influences that individualism and masculinity play in motivating a person to purchase luxury brands. In a collectivist culture (the two left quadrants), which also equals high power distance, people need to follow standards, and luxury brands provide social status. As an example, it is important for Asians (masculine cultures) not to lose face, and luxury brands can precisely meet this objective. And for feminine collectivist cultures, it is about harmony and social relations. The cultures in the right quadrant are individualistic, and when combined with high masculinity, the luxury brands help boost the unique self-assertion. In individualistic and less masculine cultures, people have low status needs. They want to be unique but do not need to stand out, and therefore they do not need luxury brands to show their individuality⁸.

Standardization or Localization of a Campaign?

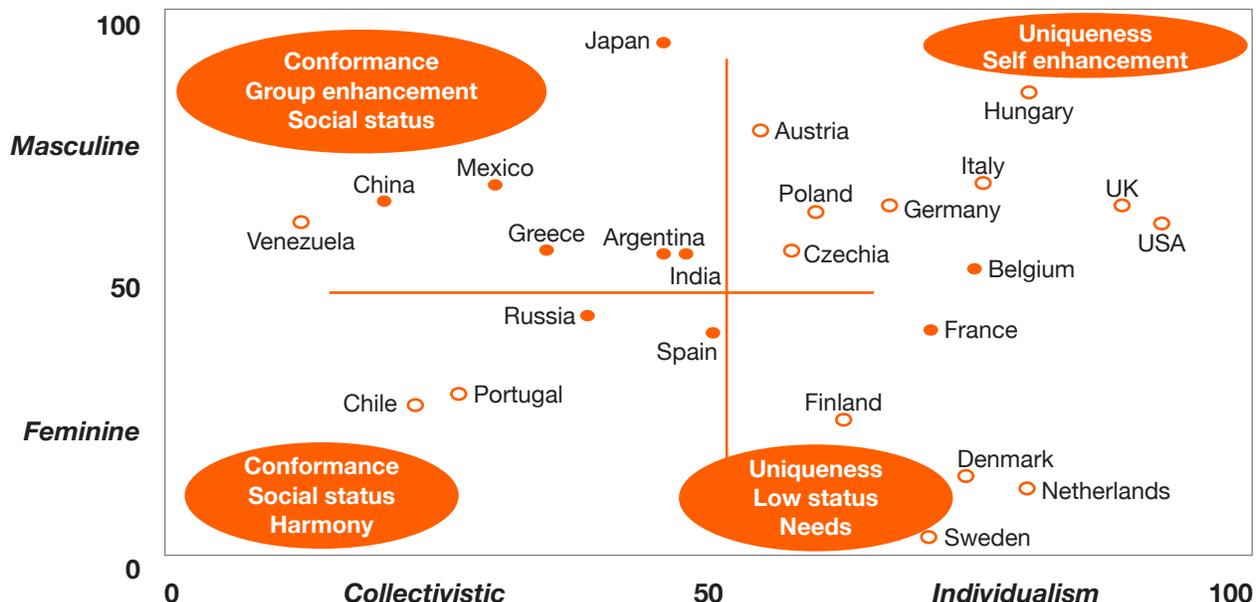
Many companies are trying to globalize and standardize, hoping that it enables them to sell more and lower costs. But the benefits of this approach must be balanced against the benefits of marketing locally and producing a locally adapted product. A brand that is completely tailored to meet local needs and requirements is often stronger than a one-size-fits-all global solution. The advantages of the global approach vary across products and services. In certain categories a globally standardized approach is necessary for a brand to remain competitive, while in other cases it will directly inhibit competitiveness.

Several Degrees of Localization

It is not an either/or decision. There are several⁹ who have tried to provide guidance on which product categories, cultures, brands, etc. can be localized through a standard approach. But there are many factors that come into play, and often one sees that the same company and brand use different models for different campaigns – depending on the situation. There are also several degrees of localization. Table 5.4.3 (on the next page) provides a simplified overview.

Chart 5.4.2. Motives for the Luxury Brands

Source: Marieke de Mooij with Hofstede 2001 Data



Strategic Starting Point

Basic business and strategic issues must be determined before choosing a direction. Increasingly, today’s consumers define the brand, so it’s critical to involve the audiences on their terms – when they’re ready – and on their preferred platforms. To handle this, it is important to be capable, efficient and flexible. The creative idea is still key and more relevant in the globalized world. A successful brand, whether local or global, comes from the value created in having a strong relationship with consumers. The strength of the relationship is determined by the associations between brand and consumer in the consumer’s mind.

Below are 10 factors in the local markets which help determine if a brand should centralize the communication or have a more localized approach. This information is according to Nigel Hollis, as well as my own agency experience¹⁰.

1. Political, legal and religious basis
2. Practical and logistical constraints
3. Socio-economic factors
4. Physical needs
5. Local tastes, preferences and customs – cultural differences
6. Competitiveness and competitors
7. Different styles and use of marketing and communications – including access to media, distribution, etc.
8. Category and brand development and status in the relevant market
9. Linguistic differences
10. Different patterns of consumption

Taking these points into consideration, it is important to think about how the audience responds to not only the campaign’s overall message, but to all branding elements (photos, messages, advertising, channels and other).

Furthermore, we must exploit the digital platforms so that consumers can interact with the brand on their terms. The increasing use of the Internet, applications and smartphones gives brands a very effective tool to engage consumers. Several developing countries have seen an explosive increase in the penetration of mobile phones in recent years. For example, in India, there are more people on the Internet via their phone than on their PCs, which provides a unique opportunity for interaction that did not previously exist.

It is important to analyze the above 10 points to help decide whether the campaign should be a locally created or globally centralized. Although you might end up streamlining communication, it is important to know the consequences of standardization.

Table 5.4.4 (on the next page) provides an overview of the benefits and drawbacks of standardized and localized communication.

Development of Global Campaigns

Two of the most important elements in creating a global brand or campaign are involving local markets for insights and establishing brand guidelines. It is critical to gather consumer insights for the countries involved by collaborating with all relevant partners (business, agency, research, etc.) at the right times. Having local markets

Table 5.4.3. Levels of Localization

Business Strategy	Globally Developed Campaign				Locally Developed Campaign	
	100% Global	Minimal	Medium	Maximum	Link to Global	100% Local
Corporate strategy, channels, products/formulas, name, pricing, etc.	Same campaign and language in all markets	Same campaign where only language is adapted to each market	Same campaign - but the message, visuals and products are adapted to each market	The same creative platform - but unique idea, layout, message, products, etc. for each market	Usage of global elements, but other creative platform and locally developed idea for one market	Locally developed campaign without the use of global campaign elements or platform

involved early in the process ensures that campaigns will be developed to successfully work in these markets.

Second, it is important to understand that “Brand Policies,” exclusive guidelines on how you can and cannot use the logo, are not the solution. Core guidelines must be established to support global, regional and local marketing, including the following¹¹:

- Brand management / campaign strategy
- Brand / visual identity standards / guidelines
- A clear process to manage the brand and campaign. How much flexibility is there?
- A clear description and guidelines for the use of the message and brand-promise
- A system to handle all creative elements and a stable but flexible approval process
- A system to measure brand equity / campaign performance
- A balanced scorecard to measure the key success parameters associated with the brand / campaign

How Do You Achieve Success?

Lack of success for global brands often lies in the execution and implementation - and not just the overall strategy. Getting people to work with shared global and local objectives in mind is essential. Below is a list of tips from Nigel Hollis¹²:

- Assemble the team around a common vision of what the brand/campaign stands for and what should be achieved
- Assign clear responsibilities for both global and local teams
- Develop a common language and make sure there is a defined process for development and implementation
- Collect detailed documentation of everything from strategy to execution
- Ensure sharing of knowledge and “best practices” between regions and markets
- Develop a global branding scorecard that will ensure you can measure success
- Reward good behavior

Ben Haxworth, who worked in both a global organization and as the local marketing director of Colgate-Palmolive, said, “Effective global brand management is a continuous

process of integration and customization. More examples of what makes sense on a local level are synthesized into a single plan, providing global strategic objectives. Either it becomes an endless conflict, or it is possible to improve global best practice.”¹³

Transcreation

When companies develop a global campaign, it must be executed in accordance to the direction given. Often it will need adjustment on one or more levels. See Table 5.4.3. An important step is the transcreation process, wherein you adapt the creative work into another language or culture. Transcreation involves more than merely translating text. It’s about accurately representing the culture with pictures, messages, style and tone. It’s about making sure

Table 5.4.4. Standardized Communication
Source: Hankinson & Cowking

Standardized Communication	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Economies of scale (time and money)	NIH (Not Invented Here) Syndrome
Consistent brand positioning	Language difficulties
Standardized communication (message and form)	Different media availability
Access to the best creative resources	Legal restrictions
Better control in implementation phase	Cultural dissimilarities
Easier control for media selection, timetables, budgets and resources	Local team engagement

Locally Adapted Communication	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Tailor connection to the local market	High cost of local adaptation
Brand position can vary to meet local market target 100%	Excessive creative development costs for local development
Local team engagement	Duplication of management and creative efforts
More flexible	Varying and diffuse brand positioning
	Loss of central control

that expressions, analogies and word puns are not lost when adapted to a new market. The campaign will need to fight for attention with campaigns that are created by the local market with local language and nuances. It’s important to reach the right consumer involvement. Table 5.4.5 highlights some of the elements that can be adapted by implementing global campaigns.

Transcreation can be divided into three levels.

1. Strategic Transcreation - input to the global campaign development

Strategic transcreation is utilized in the initial phase. It defines how the campaign should be developed and which brand promises to communicate in the relevant markets. This all begins with a dialogue pertaining to the product portfolio, positioning, message, etc. It also involves deciding how many regional or national versions of the campaign will be developed or if it will be a one-version-fits-all campaign.

2. Creative Transcreation

Based on the global campaign and pre-analysis, you adapt the global campaign for local markets. Table 5.4.4. indicates that under creative transcreation there will be medium and maximum adaptation. This can be done either centrally or in the local markets. Examples of creative transcreation are adapting the creative idea, message, face and other local adjustments.

3. Localization

The purpose of this phase is to adapt global campaigns with local language, local products, prices, call to action / URL, media format, etc. You’ll often use the term transcreation to indicate that you do not translate directly, but rather take all the cultural nuances into consideration when you translate.

Collaboration Between Marketer and Agency

There are as many opportunities for collaboration between companies and agencies as there are brands. Some companies want to work with an agency with offices around the world, while others choose specialist agencies or different agencies for each market. Generally, the more agencies that are involved, the more it requires the company to coordinate and manage all partners.

One of the newest trends in global marketing is “de-coupling,” which is the separation of execution and production from the creative development. At a high level it can be defined as “activities further down the supply chain, traditionally controlled and managed by agencies, which are moved and may be controlled and sometimes even managed directly by the client or by a third party designated by the client¹⁴.” As technology has made off-shoring possible, it is also an opportunity to gain more control and cost savings in production. This requires a more structured approach but has many obvious advantages.

Table 5.4.5. Three Levels of Transcreation

Three Levels of Transcreation		
Strategic Transcreation: Local market validation/input before global concept/campaign is released	Creative Transcreation: Input from or execution in the local market	Localization: Input from or execution in the local market
Strategy/Positioning	Message (key message/conceptual headlines)	Translation/transcreation of copy, product information, legal copy/mentioning, etc.
Concept/creative platform	Chose actual key visuals (Image, lifestyle, people, illustrations, etc.)	Local product information, content, etc.
Conceptual images/illustrations	“Translation” or adaptation of headline and sub headlines	Relevant product imagery
Message (key message/conceptual headlines)	“Translation” or adaptation of body copy or other relevant copy/graphical element	Adaptation of layout/format/size, pagination, etc.
Products and services Product names Product characteristics Marketing mix (incl. pricing, media, etc.)	Implement local messages, promotions, etc.	Other co-op/partner/market requirements

In a “de-coupling model,” you will often see that a dedicated and specialized agency is responsible for execution and production (Activation & Delivery – A & D) of all the campaigns launching in the market. The agency will frequently be tightly integrated with the advertiser. Typically, the agency will leverage the partnership, optimized processes, technology, off-shoring and knowledge of local markets to provide high quality creative in the shortest time, at the lowest cost. At the same time, advertisers can ensure real-time overview, brand consistency, etc. when selecting a global A & D partner. In this model, it is also easier to choose the agency that is best for developing strategy and concepts per campaign, and then leave Activation & Delivery to be locally transcreated and executed by each country. There are clear advantages but also some challenges in allowing multiple agencies to work cooperatively on the same campaign. To ensure consistent execution in all markets, the work should be structured in relation to the creative development and according to the development of templates for all campaign elements, hand-over guides and tool kits.

Logistics

Developing and implementing global campaigns requires coordination of numerous operational issues. First and foremost is setting up a successful team. Both global and local teams must have the necessary resources and guidelines. They also must have a clear and realistic timetable drawn up before the campaign launches. Often, people underestimate how long campaigns take to develop and execute (including testing, approval rounds, shoots, versioning and delivery in each market).

A global team will quickly fail if it is not aware of the language barriers within the team. When dealing with different primary languages, clear, concise communication is a must. Cultural differences in communication must be considered. For example, many cultures do not want to lose face by asking questions in open forums, so having a dialogue beyond the usual conference calls is necessary.

Agreement within the team is crucial for building a successful unit. Anyone who ultimately must approve a campaign must have seen and approved the brief. To launch a successful campaign, there must be 100% agreement on

strategy, objectives and success criteria. This is even more crucial for global campaigns because they are more complex and involve enormous amounts of resources.

Well-documented strategy, creative, elements and guidelines will enable all partners around the world to work in synch, ensuring a fully consistent brand experience in all markets.

In addition to setting up successful teams, it is important to involve local markets and local people. Engaging local markets from the start ensures that the campaign is being effectively developed, that it can be used and that it solves the challenges that exist in the local markets. Involving locals, or those who must implement the campaign locally, ensures that important details are not lost along the way.

Use your local expert to become aware of local conditions. For example, which fonts will you use, and how will you deliver your message to the local target? While one font may exist in one part of the world, it might not exist in another region. Likewise, while one delivery style might be impactful in one corner of the globe, it might not be successful in others.

The last logistical consideration is to look at the feasibility of adapting the campaign in all markets. If it is not possible, target the most important countries. Often the company’s top 10 markets have the opportunity for more customization than the rest of the markets.

In Summary

Developing and executing global campaigns is often complex. There are many people involved, and it requires hard work. Involving all of the relevant stakeholders at the right time enables you to leverage the collective synergies of experience and expertise. Ensuring that the team has a global approach and communicate as much as possible increases the chance for success. With many people involved in the global campaign development – sometimes with different interests – it is important not to allow compromise and internal politics to weaken good ideas and concepts. Global campaigns can help companies significantly increase their brand value.

CASE STUDY

DELL: "TAKE YOUR OWN PATH"

This is an example of a campaign where the overall strategy and idea were global, but the execution involved local adaptation.

Moving toward 2009, Dell faced the realities of a declining technology market due to global economic factors. For small and medium businesses (SMB) – value, reliability, solid services and a strong corporate brand were driving technology purchase decisions. Dell needed to regain a leadership position in the SMB technology space by expanding its value proposition and business approach to be more customer-centric and less about price and promotions.

Dell approached their agency to help raise its profile globally as a “trusted technology advisor” for this market segment. The challenge was targeting small and medium businesses with a brand campaign that specifically appealed to aspirational values while integrating relevant product messages.

The agency’s answer was Dell’s first global campaign focused on the SMB market: “Take Your Own Path.” The campaign focused on a series of inspirational films and bios based on “business heroes” who’d grown from small businesses to global successes – thanks to Dell and their own entrepreneurial spirit. The TYOP heroes chose to work with Dell because their technology and partnership enabled them to fulfill their aspirations.

The campaign execution varied by country, but deployed a full media mix including digital, mobile, print, DM and outdoor. The initial campaign launched in 2009 with a focus on nine countries that represented over 50% of the market opportunity for Dell. The overall visual identity was then rolled out globally, and the campaign continued to be localized to new markets around the world in 2010 and 2011.



Although the value proposition and messaging of the campaign was consistent, most markets chose to employ “local heroes” to provide

more impact. Through testing, we found that the combination of a compelling hero story, a relevant business or IT need, and an innovative product/solution would produce a successful and engaging execution no matter what the market. Overall, the campaign included more than 40 Dell global customers.

Coordinating casting, interviews, photo shoots and communications executions was extremely complicated due to the different countries cultures, and languages involved. Without the agency’s collaboration, it would have been virtually impossible to overcome the local, legal and cultural hurdles we encountered. Creative executions spanned all media, so we had to manage the unique specifications and regulations of multiple countries and markets. More than 200 global creative templates were developed for launch, with more than 3,000 local assets released throughout the initial phase.

By the end of the first phase, Dell deemed the campaign a resounding success. The primary communication goals of rapidly raising awareness and increasing consideration of Dell were achieved – with consideration rising sharply across all markets over the year before. Additionally, the campaign helped increase the engagement between the target and Dell’s products, services, and solutions – with 25-35% of site visitors delving into deeper campaign or technology content. This success led to “Take Your Own Path” continuing into mid-2011.





Simon Hjorth has more than 20 years of international marketing and advertising experience. He is SVP of Client Services at the advertising agency Archer Malmo, located in Austin, TX. Simon is the epitome of globalization and has studied, lived and worked in Denmark, United Kingdom, France, Singapore and the United States.

Original article written by Simon Hjorth and published as chapter 26 in the Danish text book 'Markedskommunikation i praksis', Samfundslitteratur, 2013.

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Footnotes

- ¹ 2010 BrandZ analysis
- ² Harvard Business Review paper "The Globalization of Markets"
- ³ Hollis 2010, 23
- ⁴ Shermer 2011
- ⁵ Hollis 2010: 81
- ⁶ Quelch & Jocz 2012: 173
- ⁷ Mooij, 2010: 289 -291
- ⁸ Mooij 2010: 106 -107
- ⁹ e.g., Baker et al 2003, Hollis 2010: 155
- ¹⁰ Hollis 2010: 157
- ¹¹ Gregory & Wiechman 2002: 15
- ¹² Hollis 2010: 204
- ¹³ Hollis 2010: 204
- ¹⁴ Burke, 2009