# CULTURAL DIVERSENESS AS A SHAPER OF GLOBAL MANAGERS: EVIDENCE FROM THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

Global managers have become a key element for MNCs to operate successfully because they support headquarters and subsidiary projects responding to global challenges and local demands to accomplish organizational goals. This requires a particular skill set at both levels. Much of the literature argues that global managers are global leaders who must consider their subordinates' cultural differences to lead, motivate, and make appropriate decisions. However, more research about the global manager's cultural diversity needs to be conducted. Global managers, apart from their particular skills, carry their cultural characteristics that we define as cultural diverseness, which includes international experience, type of experience, native language, spoken languages, working languages, and personal sphere, which involves elements such as a foreign spouse, nationality, or previous involvement with the country of work.

By conducting fifteen semi-structured interviews with managers of different nationalities affiliated with the automotive industry, this research seeks to understand better what characterizes global managers. Our findings show that the manager's cultural diverseness includes international experience, type of experience, native language, spoken languages, working languages, and personal sphere, which are essential characteristics of global managers in addition to their managerial skills and demonstrate the importance of the background of the individuals in understanding the day-to-day functioning of managers. It also shows an ability to rise above the problems associated with national cultures, as if this were a prerequisite for functioning correctly in this role. Finally, these findings enable us to recommend how to help the emergence of effective global managers.

**Keywords:** global managers; automotive companies; local culture; organizational culture; cultural diverseness; competencies

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past four decades, the car manufacturing sector has become significantly globalized. This transformation has led to a standardization of operational procedures and methods, fostering greater collaboration between individuals and organizations within the industry, irrespective of their geographic origin (Sturgeon et al., 2009). Beginning in the 1990s, automotive multinational companies (MNCs) started to operate in both emerging and established markets worldwide, driven by the opportunities presented by globalization and technological advancements (Warter & Warter, 2020). Moreover, these automotive corporations have often formed alliances with local businesses. Such collaborations have elevated the need for closer cooperation, including transferring technology, financial resources, and human skills between central offices and their affiliate branches, particularly in emerging economies (Lee & Tan, 2019).

The automotive sector is undoubtedly one of the most interesting to study internationally. Over the past thirty years, the sector has undergone a process of globalization that has led to the creation of an integrated, multi-regional system, often seen as one of the best examples of the global factory described by Buckley and Ghauri (2004), as the sector's size and solid internal competition force automotive companies to optimize their value chain worldwide. One of the possible optimization solutions is to multiply international partnerships, leading these companies to multiply their attempts at mergers, acquisitions, and other forms of strategic cooperation. Thus, automotive sector managers are confronted with complex, fast-changing, and challenging contexts. This makes them an ideal object of observation for us.

Consequently, automotive companies have deployed numerous specialists on global assignments to oversee projects, thereby cultivating a cadre of managers who work with teams that could be collocated or dispersed across the globe. Therefore, global managers have become key for automotive companies to succeed. Likewise, they have been increasingly asked to tackle multiple challenges by mediating corporate, regional, and local demands. Despite global managers' importance and input to organizations, research on global managers'

characteristics is still scarce. Thus, our research aims to identify the specific cultural characteristics of global managers. We call these personal cultural characteristics 'cultural diverseness,' and it includes international experience, type of experience, native language, spoken languages, working languages, and personal sphere involving elements such as foreign spouse, nationality, or previous involvement with the country of work.

Our study aims to clarify the unique setting in which international managers function, setting it apart from the environment in which their domestic colleagues operate, who are primarily concerned with national or regional matters. We seek to clarify the elements that impact the behavior of global managers, especially the individual cultural traits that might characterize what makes up a contemporary global manager. Since the study of global managers is usually too theoretical, the significant contribution of this research is to present a practical set of instrumental characteristics belonging to global managers. Our main research question is the following: What personal cultural characteristics may contribute to the concept of global managers?

By interviewing global managers working in the automotive industry and supervising teams worldwide, we propose a model of expanded general competencies of global managers. This model contributes to the understanding of what it means to be a global manager, depicts the contribution of the cultural diverseness dimension to the cultural characteristics of global managers, and helps future global managers to elucidate how their work environment will be and the type of training they can focus on to succeed in such role.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Past research has focused on global managers and their skills to respond to the company's needs and how they can perform better in international settings when considering culture. Some studies focus on the benefits of global managers for MNCs, such as Montenero and Carzozi (2021), who examined how global managers foster agility, creativity, and innovation in the firm, emphasizing the different views of these concepts according to the place of operation of the manager and the influence of organizational culture. Also, Pavlenchyk et al.

(2023) analyzed the influence of managers' creativity on decision-making and how managers' motivation and time spent on decision-making may impact the organization's performance. Similarly, Stanek (2000) argued that international management development is of primary importance for MNCs; hence, human resources should support global managers and allocate a budget for training from a domestic focus to multicultural and international marketplace issues. Barakat et al. (2015) analyzed the impact of cultural intelligence on job satisfaction and performance, whereby overall cultural intelligence positively relates to job satisfaction and job performance of global managers. Thus, global managers' cultural intelligence was reviewed by Barakat et al. (2015) as an essential consideration for job satisfaction and job performance.

Another field of research has focused on the career paths that global managers can follow, including different environment domains such as the individual, organizational, and global (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005, pp. 348–349). Other studies have focused on the global managers' development, including a model to train MBA students and executive programs of study (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2003). Also, Varela and Gatlin-Watts (2014) analyzed the need to develop global competencies in management education and how this should be included in business schools' curricula. Their results acknowledged that international sojourns are relevant for developing multicultural competence (CQ) because international exposure of management students can aid in increasing cultural differences' awareness and hold the fact that they are characteristic of local culture.

Another type of study signalled the difference between the career competencies of expatriate managers, which differ from global managers (Cappellen & Janssens, 2008). Similarly, Janssens and Cappellen (2010, p. 338) studied global managers empirically, examining global managers' experiences and international work as coordinators across different cultures and geographies. Additionally, Suutari and Makela (2007) analyzed how multiple international relocations may influence the career capital of a manager with a sample of Finnish business graduates assigned with expatriate work. Harvey et al. (2011) argued that MNCs focus more on the diversity of their staff as the key to success, along

with integrating foreigners into the organization's home country, a process called in-patriation. These authors also developed a framework of four stages of in-patriate manager's reintegration, giving recommendations to MNCs for each stage. Another study by Malý & Velinov (2016) analyzed senior management's diversity and the organizational life cycle effect on the company performance, including an analysis of the level of education of managers and the possible influence on the firm's efficiency.

## The emerging role of a global manager in organizations

The term global manager is still being expanded and is complex to define. Global managers are usually equated to global leaders, and conceptual confusion between these two terms persists (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 338). A global manager can be considered as an individual who has a position within an organization with cross-border responsibilities, usually confronted with contradictory demands between the global and the local environment, with the need to understand business from a worldwide view not limited to a country-specific approach, and is capable of working with people from different cultures at the same time (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005, pp. 348–349). Cappellen and Janssens (2010, p.1886) also identified three main characteristics of global managers: worldwide coordination and responsibilities; working with and learning from people from different cultures simultaneously and appreciating their culture; and having daily cross-cultural interactions with colleagues. Similarly, Deal et al. (2003) considered how a global manager involves two parts: a 'manager' holding a position with responsibilities and a 'global' with a scope of work that includes managing across cultures, distances, and countries.

In contrast, a global leader refers to a role played by a global manager (Deal et al., 2003, p. 151). Bartlett and Ghoshal (1992, p. 125)) argued that in the MNC environment, there is no universal global manager but specialists, including functional managers, country managers, and business managers, whereas, at the headquarters in top positions, there are top executives to manage complex interactions between the previous three types of managers.

Moreover, a global manager can be a traveler and someone who works from a distance. Earley and Peterson (2004) claimed that training global managers is more challenging now because it involves shorter periods in a single country, and managers need to adapt to multiple cultures and work with multinational teams quickly. Global managers are also not just expatriates but are simultaneously responsible for various activities performed in different countries that do not necessarily have the same culture, legalities, polity, or monetary system (Deal et al., 2003, p. 151). Thus, we consider a global manager as a top manager in an MNC with the authority to manage teams in different geographical areas of the world, which implies understanding different cultures and, at the same time, having the ability to translate corporate values into local context needs, and possessing an essential skill of global leadership. The competencies required to be a global manager are discussed below.

## Competencies of global managers

Research about competencies global managers need to have to succeed in their positions is still growing. Bücker and Poutsma (2010) analyzed global management competencies in terms of skills, abilities, knowledge, and personality factors, proposing a model of competencies, an examination of global management behavior, and the instruments to evaluate global management competencies. Similarly, Janssens and Cappellen (2010) identified the main characteristics of global managers, including coordinating worldwide to find a balance between global and local demands, interacting with foreign colleagues as equals, working simultaneously with people from different cultures, and overcoming ethnocentrism and being flexible toward varied cultures (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 338). Another essential characteristic of global managers is scheduling and time management because they have to coordinate work in different time zones. Hence, their work extends to 24 hours, and they constantly travel (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 344). Notably, global managers face varied career moves because, in their tasks, they are expected to travel regularly and fulfill various short-term assignments abroad (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005, p. 349).

Alternative methods have examined global managers' role in identifying essential skill sets.

For instance, Reynolds (2017) suggested that before engaging with a different culture, an expatriate should be well-versed in three key areas: Verbal and non-verbal communication, etiquette in the workplace, and comprehension of the organizational hierarchy within companies, which includes viewpoints on authority, sharing of opinions, degree of formality, gender roles, and the role of staff members. Furthermore, global managers rely on virtual and face-to-face communication to coordinate worldwide activities. They need to be able to use tools such as video-conferencing and email, along with dealing with the advantages and disadvantages of each tool (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 343).

There are two crucial competencies for global managers: First, developing a global mindset, which includes making employees consider more than their local interests and motivate them to accomplish results that do not have an impact on their local business; and second, coordinating at a distance, including implementing appropriate ways of control such as emailing or constantly calling to check on employees (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 341). Kedia and Mukherji (1999) emphasized the global mindset, which is comprised of technological and business environment knowledge and a set of skills, including being sensitive to cultural diversity, being able to manage cultural diversity, and leveraging the differences of cultural diversity. Cappellen and Janssens (2008) classified global managers' career competencies into three main categories: Knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom. Similarly, Caligiuri (2000) formulated a system that considers the complexity of the function and identifies five traits that define the optimal conduct for global managers: extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable, and open.

Most of the global managers' competencies revolve around culture, including understanding, adaptation, and interaction. To interact with international colleagues as equals, global managers need a wide appreciation of cultural diversity and an ability to work with people from different cultures (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005, p. 355). Furthermore, an effective global leader has cultural adaptability, which refers to adapting their behavior to a particular culture's predominant customs, beliefs, expectations,

values, and norms (Deal et al., 2003, p. 156). Concurrently, global managers do not have time for in-depth knowledge of the local culture, so they use the most important cultural artifacts with their cross-cultural colleagues to be culturally influential, i.e., eating the local food or following the same communication style (Janssens & Cappellen, 2010, p. 343). Moreover, global managers who are identified as high performers usually have higher scores on cultural adaptability (Deal et al., 2003, p. 161). Therefore, adapting to different cultural contexts is a key competence of the global managers' functions.

To run a business, global managers must adapt and behave according to different challenges and environments. One key feature of the cultural adaptability of global managers is roleplaying; that is to say, they play the same roles but differently, according to the culture they are working with (Deal et al., 2003, p. 163). Furthermore, current perspectives have emphasized that global managers possess multiple identities that they enact (Lahire, 2005, 2006, 2013). These identities emerge due to various life experiences, such as their birthplace, educational background, and professional interactions (Pierre, 2002, 2003). To create cultural awareness and understanding, it is an essential characteristic of global managers to live and work abroad, and the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) program was created to be an important source of data and support for global managers (Javidan & House, 2001).

Townsend and Cairns (2003) argued that global managers also need other education and development models, so they proposed a capability framework that emphasizes the need for the cognitive aspect to solve problems and continue with their learning. In other words, these authors consider capable global managers to be aware of their potential, have a set of values regarding global sensitivity, a high sense of self-efficacy, and specific education, including cross-cultural and intercultural training and cross-cultural learning with international education and exchange programs. Additionally, Jaeger et al. (2016) explored the micro-level influences affecting global managerial culture and diversity of values in global organizations. These authors discussed the convergence/divergence of values, proposing a 'groupvergence' or emergence of

global values and local values clusters, and suggested that managers' values are influenced parallelly by cultural exposure and organizational socialization. However, there is still the need to analyze other cultural characteristics that shape the work of a global manager. In this paper, we elucidate how global managers' cultural background (called cultural diverseness because they have a country of origin, country of residence, spouses' nationality, and spoken languages) influences their shifting roles between global and local. The cultural diversity or personal cultural characteristics of the global manager have been neglected in the literature.

## METHODOLOGY

In our study, we employed a qualitative approach and conducted interviews with managers affiliated with the automotive industry, either directly associated with an MNC (including Renault, Nissan, Skoda, Volkswagen, and Fiat) or involved with subcontracting firms such as Faurecia, BASF Coatings, Gefco, and Valeo. The interviewees can be categorized into two groups: 1) Managers stationed at the corporate headquarters or alternative locations who oversee a team dispersed across multiple nations; 2) Expatriates who have relocated from their home country to work under a local contract in a foreign country, often deployed by their employer, and who chose to remain abroad primarily due to family reasons. We utilized a convenience sampling technique to engage with managers in the automotive industry, interviewing a total of 25 global managers whose insights offer some level of generalizability within the automotive field. Similarly, Cappellen and Janssens (2008) applied qualitative research in order to examine the career paths of 45 global managers in three international companies and identified the main global managers' career competencies as explained by global managers rather than expatriate managers as identified in previous studies focused on expatriates. For our research, we interviewed 15 managers from three organizations with worldwide coordination responsibility and were asked about their careers, organization, and work.

Before each interview, our interviewees were informed about the objective of the interview and explained that the data would be treated anonymously and the transcripts would be used

only for the purposes of this research. Half of the interviews were conducted virtually, while the remainder were face-to-face encounters, with durations ranging from 50 to 90 minutes. These interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. All interviews were conducted anonymously. We respected the confidentiality rules when creating transcript identification codes. The transcripts were used only for the purposes of this paper.

Depending on the working language of the managers, interviews were conducted in either French, English, or Italian, while interactions with German and Czech managers were exclusively in English. This paper does not delve into issues related to translation; quotes initially made in languages other than English were translated into English for this research. The managers interviewed are fluent in English, so they were conscious of the questions asked and the meaning they wanted to express in their responses. We did a content analysis of the interview transcripts and reviewed the emerging patterns from the data. This methodology was limited to the groups interviewed in Europe. Even though the managers interviewed are global and have teams extended to other parts of the world, this study focused on managers located in the central and eastern European regions. In order to avoid bias, future research should include another round of interviews with a clear representation of each automotive group.

## FINDINGS

The analysis of the interviews shows a high level of cultural diverseness, implying a variety of national cultures of the global managers. For instance, within a Czech organization, we came across a manager with French and Saudi citizenship and married to a German individual (see Appendix 1). This raises the question: What prevailing national culture might influence this individual's behavior? Intriguingly, when several managers noticed traits that stood out from the country's dominant culture or the company's, they admitted that they changed and evolved in their way of operating to come closer to the culture of their immediate environment. These managers also occasionally conceded to strategically leveraging their cultural affiliations depending on the context. Moreover, additional evidence corroborates the cultural diverseness among managers, irrespective of their company's

country of origin. In the initial phases of global expansion, spanning from 1990 to 2010, conventional expatriation primarily involved individuals from the headquarters' home country who were sent for work abroad.

However, our data suggests a deviation from this traditional approach. Appendix 1 delineates the interplay between the manager's nationality and the parent company's country. It also outlines the international experience, native language, working language, and personal sphere of the global managers interviewed. While some firms, notably those of Italian and French origin, continue to favor appointing individuals of matching nationalities to strategic international positions, this trend is less consistent in North America, where dual national affiliations are more commonly observed. Additionally, multiple European respondents noted that the strategies of European MNCs are rapidly evolving, particularly in their willingness to position managers from emerging markets in critical positions. We have observed that the context, more than belonging to a national culture, determines the attitude of the global manager. It is difficult to reconstruct the influence of organizational culture when one is outside the company concerned. Referring to official documents, it is practically impossible because these are imprecise, incomplete, and contradictory. *"It is not the global setup [which is important], but how you apply it locally. In my case, my professional [culture] of origin should not play any role…"*. This quote shows the cultural adaptability that characterizes global managers.

Furthermore, cultural adaptability is directly correlated to the global managers' leadership skills, more precisely to their ability to adapt to particular situations and contexts (Deal et al., 2003, p. 151). Another manager insisted, *"You become a global manager when you don't understand the language of the teams. Often, you feel that the team does not understand you, and you need to align with it to be able to communicate [efficiently]"*. Additionally, a manager also declared: *"Corporate cultures are different. It is often impossible to oppose them in your action."* We can also see from these quotes that effective communication is an essential characteristic of global managers' assets. Our findings on the ways managers leverage their cultural affiliations to adapt their conduct to the

context corroborate Deal et al.'s (2003) results about managers adapting their roles to a particular context, whose studies indicate managers change their roles and adapt their behaviors to the cultural context.

We also found the complexity of managers' cultural reality in the same way within companies.

For instance, consider the specific case of Škoda, a Czech-origin company that is a subsidiary of the Volkswagen group. When interviewing Czech managers, their attitudes, etiquette, and the immediate environment of the interviews, all bore hallmarks of German corporate culture. Even if the Czech business culture strongly marks the intermediate and lower levels, we assume that progressing to higher positions requires some form of "Germanization." Going further in this reflection, we can question whether MNCs have a nationality and how long this situation will remain. Another illustrative case involves companies initially established under the Fiat umbrella, which have increasingly come under the management of a tri-national entity spanning the United States, the Netherlands, and Italy. Consequently, we have observed that global managers have expanded the competencies that they utilize in their globalized outreach. Global managers are not only defined by their skills, communication styles, global mindset, behavior, and cultural awareness, but they also are affected by their own cultural diverseness, which includes their experience, native language, spoken languages, working language, and personal sphere, as Figure 1 shows.

Similar to the cultural diverseness dimension of our model of extended competencies of global managers, the results of Deal et al. (2003) signalled the importance of the international experiences of the manager as primordial cultural adaptability. Furthermore, their study also emphasized that speaking diverse languages, living in different places, and working with different people aids in developing the cultural adaptability of the global manager. Our proposed model, which includes a personal sphere in the set of global managers' expanded competencies, goes beyond Deal et al.'s (2003) results, which considered the 'personality' of the global manager as a way to cope with stress and achieve difficult work, but they did not consider who the global manager is married to and how this may add to their cultural acumen. Thus, our

research addresses another cultural characteristic that has had little discussion in the literature. For example, Cappellen and Janssens (2008) reported in their research that an important motivation for global managers is international exposure because they want to experiment with other responsibilities and challenges. While such a study acknowledged the international character as a competence for global managers, our research has emphasized a more complex dimension of cultural diverseness as indicated in our model, with not only international experience but also type of experience.

Our research has uncovered managers who have overcome the need to decipher the national cultures they encounter. They do it automatically, and this is an essential characteristic of successful global managers. Several of them gave us examples of mistakes they have made during the first few months working in an international context, presenting this period as a kind of obligatory passage, an initiation to the rules of global management. This observation leads us to advise companies or educational institutions to ensure that this period of first contact is as effective as possible. This can be achieved by helping aspiring global managers to understand their new working environment better, utilizing the services of coaches or mentors who also may be experienced colleagues. We also have emphasized the importance of the individual's personal experience and history on how aspiring global managers will live their role. This aspect must be considered in any training or coaching. We need to help these individuals get to know themselves better, and to understand the impact of their personal background on their behavior.
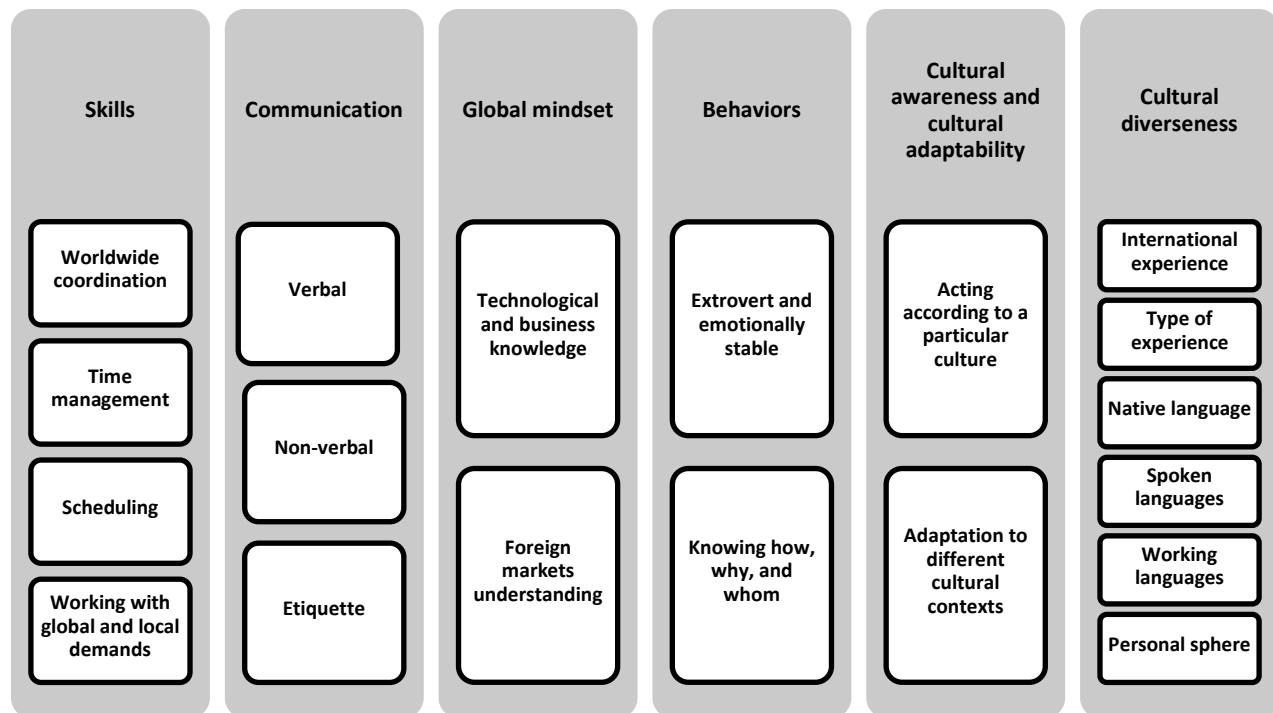
**Figure 1.** Proposed model of global managers' expanded competencies

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the literature review and findings of the research

This research is limited to global managers of the automotive industry working in central and eastern Europe. In order to expand this research, interviews with managers of other regions different from Europe would be an important contribution. Also, including global managers from other industries, such as pharmaceuticals, food, and telecommunications, would be significant for the research on global managers in international business. Furthermore, a study on the organizational culture and its influence on the way the manager addresses the global requirements and the local needs would be advisable.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to a better understanding of the concept, characteristics, and role of global managers. They can be expatriates originating from the parent company, or they can come from local establishments. While having different educational backgrounds, they have accumulated an important number of international experiences in several fields and markets, which makes them able to understand others and integrate certain specificities related to their cultures. Furthermore, global managers

have a cultural diverseness consisting of coming from different countries as the country of the MNC, living in a different country, speaking different languages, interacting with subordinates from different nationalities, and having a personal sphere that is also multicultural. This special context has barely been discussed in the literature. Thus, our proposed model of global managers' expanded competencies is relevant to the definition of global managers.

Our analysis has shown that approaches based on national cultures are not sufficient to understand the environment within which global managers work. It is not only about age and gender, but cultural diversity in terms of nationality, international experience, languages, and personal sphere is also relevant. Some managers have different cultural backgrounds, such as French and Saudi nationalities, for example, which gives them the important competency of cultural diversity. However, In practical terms, the organizational culture prevails. That is to say, the headquarters' country of origin will have an effect on the cultural outreach of the organization.

In the literature, we identified that research on global managers focused on a period of around

twenty years, which began in the early 1990s and suddenly lost interest. This approach corresponds to the phenomenon's emergence with the strong growth of corporate globalization. Researchers first sought to understand the phenomenon and then tried to support it by devising ways of assessing skills or training managers. In our view, it is essential to relaunch this research in our current time, which is marked by a radical change in working practices and a reshaping of international relations, and elucidate how it impacts global managers and how they react to it.

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**Appendix 1.** A cultural diversity of global managers interviewed

| Nationality | Job location country | Headquarters country location | Age | Gender | International experience (years) | Native language | Working language | Personal sphere |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French | France | France | 53 | Female | 25 | French | English | Has been strongly involved in Renault – Nissan cooperation. Speaks Spanish. |
| Russian | Russia | France | 48 | Male | 15 | Russian | English/ French | Chose to learn French to work in an international group. |
| Iranian | France | France | 38 | Male | 6 | Persian | English | Binational. Started learning French when I changed jobs. |
| French | Russia/ Japan | France | 58 | Male | 30 | French | English/ French | I was very much involved in the start of Renault – Nissan cooperation. Speaks some Japanese and some Russian |
| French | France | Japan | 40 | Male | 6 | French | English | Internal transfer from French to Japanese HQs. Learning Japanese. |
| Italian | Italy | Italy/NL/USA | 58 | Male | 3 | Italian | English / Italian | Came very late to the International Responsibility |
| Italian / Argentinian | Italy / Argentina | Italy/NL/USA | 48 | Male | 15 | Spanish | English | Binational. Speaks Italian Never lived in Italy before |
| Italian / American | Italy/USA | Italy/NL/USA | 40 | Male | 15 | English | English | Binational. Never lived in Italy before. Speaks Italian. |
| Italian | Italy | Italy/NL/USA | 34 | Male | 9 | Italian | English / Italian | I was an international consultant before. |
| Italian | China | Germany | 44 | Male | 15 | Italian | English | Speaks Chinese. Learning German. |
| German | Czech Republic | Germany/ Czech Republic | 42 | Male | 12 | German | German/ English | Speaks some Russian. |
| French | Czech Republic | Germany/ Czech Republic | 52 | Female | 25 | Arabic / French | English / Czech | Binational Married to a German man. Tries to use Czech as much as possible at work. |

| Czech / German | Czech Republic | Germany / Czech Republic | 42 | Male | 15 | German / Czech | Czech / German / English | Binational.<br>Married to a German woman. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Czech | Czech Republic | Germany / Czech Republic | 44 | Male | 20 | Czech | Czech / German / English | Started his professional life in Germany. |
| French | France | France | 54 | Male | 25 | French | English / French | Former military.<br>Speaks some Japanese.<br>Opened subsidiaries in several countries. |
| French / Portugal | Poland | Russia | 45 | Male | 15 | Portuguese | English / French / Polish | Binational.<br>Married to a Polish woman. |
| French | France | Russia | 50 | Male | 20 | French | English / French | Speaks Swedish.<br>Lives partly in Sweden. |
| Spanish | France | Russia | 55 | Male | 20 | Spanish | English / French | Lives in Germany.<br>Speaks German. |
| German | Italy | Germany | 58 | Male | 20 | German | Italian / German / English | Started learning Italian when I moved to Italy. |
| French / Italian | Germany | Germany | 48 | Male | 18 | French | French / German / English | Binational.<br>Started learning German when I joined the group. |
| Tunisian / German | Morocco | Germany | 38 | Male | 15 | Arabic | Arabic / French / German | Binational.<br>He studied in Germany (engineering) and had his first work experience there. |
| German | Germany | Germany | 45 | Male | 20 | German | German / English | I was an expatriate in France.<br>Speaks French. |
| French | Russia | French | 40 | Male | 15 | French | Russian / French / English | Started career with expatriation in Ukraine.<br>Married to a Ukrainian woman. |
| Polish / French | Czech Republic | French | 45 | Male | 20 | Polish | Polish / Czech / French / English | Binational.<br>Studied in France (engineering) and started his career in that country. |
| French | Czech Republic | French | 63 | Male | 25 | French | French / English | Understands Czech but does not work in Czech. |

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research