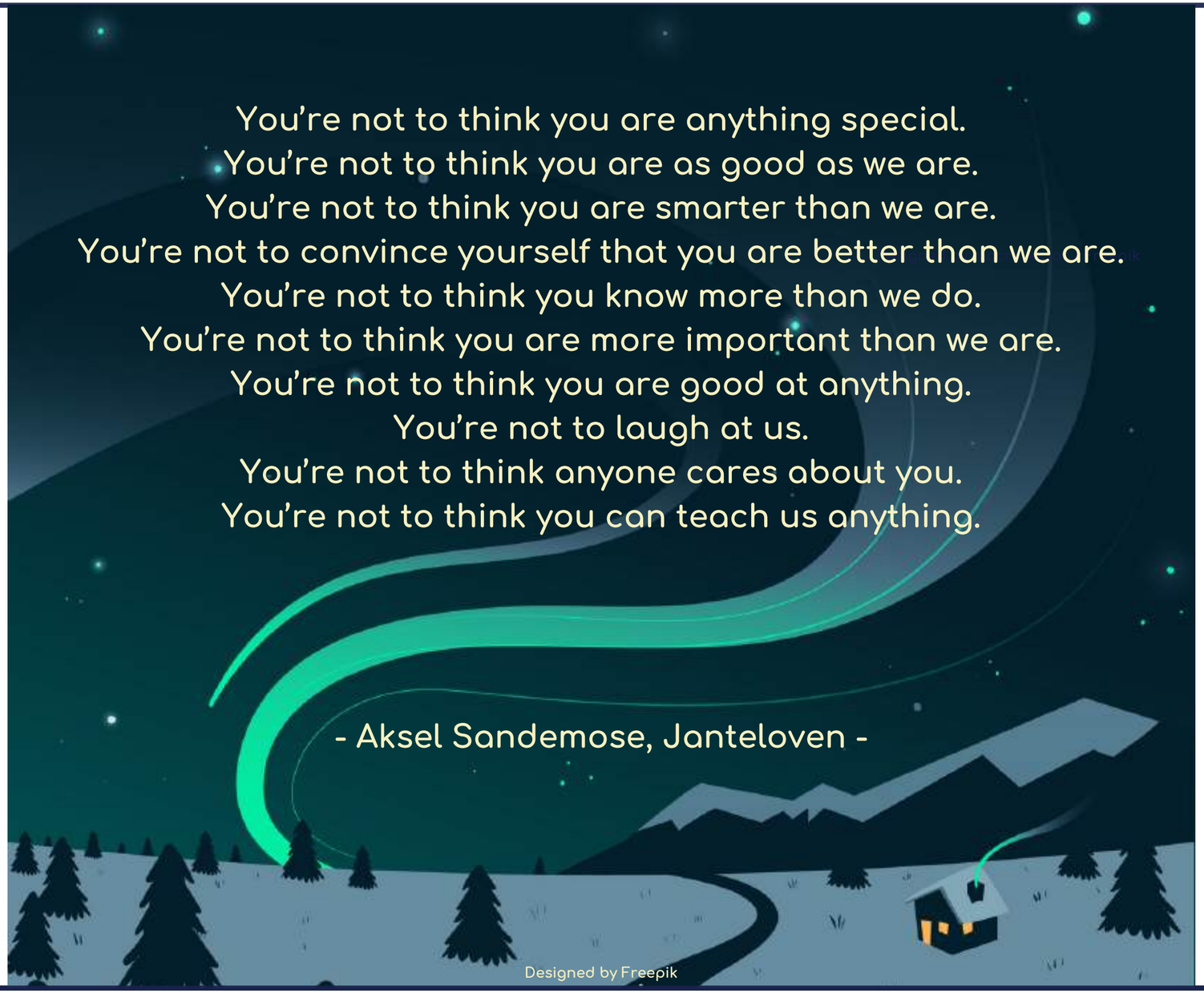
Culture Clusters: the Nordic Cluster



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The Nordic Cluster
includes the following countries:

Denmark
Finland
Sweden
(*Norway
*Iceland)

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LOW-CONTEXT cultures: communication is mostly verbal, direct, understandable by both in- and out-group members. Emphasis is placed on rules and procedures, decisions are made after evaluation of facts and data.

Since what is said is what is meant, written communication is common and relied on: contracts tend to be long and detailed, further interpretation and analysis of a message is not required.

MONOCHRONIC
cultures are future-oriented, they value orderliness, privacy, punctuality and have a low tolerance level for lateness and interruptions. Time is linear (one event follows the other) and it's associated with efficiency and careful planning.

People tend to be methodical and to engage in one activity at the time.
Task compartmentalization is the norm, schedules are important.
Task- and social-time don't often overlap.

GUILT
cultures:
Guilt, as a self-conscious emotion, is the main tool of social control in individualistic societies. While shame is linked to honor and requires an audience, guilt is a private, internalized feeling concerned with one's conscience and sense of morality.

"True guilt cultures rely on an internalized conviction of sin as the enforcer of good behaviour, not, as shame cultures do, on external sanctions.
Guilt cultures emphasize punishment and forgiveness as ways of restoring the moral order". (Paul Hiebert)

INDIVIDUALISTIC cultures (*low scores on In-Group Collectivism): Individual rights, freedom, personal achievements, self-fulfillment are the main priorities. Independence and self-sufficiency are highly valued, people are expected to achieve goals on their own.

Happiness is associated with positive feelings, free choice, self-indulgence, with the ability to enjoy life and to have a good time. It tends to be measured in terms of freedom and possibilities to follow personal desires and aspirations.

“The Swedish system is best understood not in terms of socialism, but in terms of Rousseau," he continued. "Rousseau was an extreme egalitarian and he really hated any kind of dependence -- depending on other people destroyed your integrity, your authenticity-- therefore the ideal situation was one where every citizen was an atom separated from all the other atoms..."

- Michael Booth, The Almost Nearly Perfect People: Behind the Myth of the Scandinavian Utopia -

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One peculiarity of this cluster is that Nordic societies score, simultaneously, low on In-Group Collectivism and high on Institutional Collectivism:

In-Group Collectivism is "the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families": in Nordic societies people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only.

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Institutional Collectivism is "the degree to which organizational and societal institutions encourage individuals to be integrated into groups and organizations": in Nordic societies equity, equality and fair distribution of resources are encouraged.

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Culture Clusters: the Nordic Cluster

"FEMININE"
cultures (*) in the Nordic cluster are equality- and values-driven and place great importance on a healthy good work-life balance. Conflict is resolved by compromise and negotiation rather than by confrontation, gender roles are not clearly defined.

While Nordic societies score extremely high on Gender Egalitarianism, according to Hofstede's framework (*) the main difference between "Feminine" (Tender) and "Masculine" (Tough) cultures is concerned with intrinsic motivation: striving to excel and to be the best (M) vs enjoying what you do (F).

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POWER DISTANCE:
societies in the Nordic cluster score low on the Power Distance Index. Privilege and social inequality are not tolerated, hierarchy is mostly a matter of convenience, managers and employees tend to cooperate, juniors are encouraged to express their views and to think critically. Great emphasis is placed on the importance of equal rights and opportunities.

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