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LEIZ CASE STUDY #5

# FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: An Opportunity for Transcultural Learning?

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LEIZ CASE STUDY SERIES

## **Relational Economics in Practice. An Introduction and User Guide**

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The research program of relational economics constitutes the core of the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin | LEIZ. Building on the publications of the Springer series "Relational Economics and Organization Governance" and the annual conferences of the emerging relational economic community, a theory is developing and establishing itself that represents a paradigm shift in the field of economics: the unit of analysis is no longer the actor or the market, but the relational transaction in its complex, polyvalent, uncertain, context- and time-dependent constitution. The aim behind this is to come closer to an understanding of the real conditions and consequences of economic action. For this reason, and in view of the fact that the corresponding conceptual description tools are now available, it seems highly plausible and expedient to focus even more on examples of application. If relational economics has the declared aim of depicting economic realities as precisely as possible, then such an undertaking of practical application should not only be productive in terms of concrete recommendations for decisions, but should also, in turn, further confirm the relevance of the theoretical concept.

The series of case studies presented here aims to offer nothing more and nothing less: We invite students, practitioners and colleagues to join us in trying out what relational economics has to offer in its application to real case studies. The analytical tools available for this purpose are briefly presented below in order to provide our readers with a kind of instruction manual without implying that real-world complexity can be dealt with in a one-size-fits-all manner. Rather, the analytical steps proposed here are intended to help describe a relational transaction as a basis for then working out more context-

and time-specific options for action. This is carried out using the stakeholder model as the basic analytical structure, which is complemented in the respective cases by further case-specific methods derived from the toolbox of relational economics.

The attitude of a thorough and competent detective is required if one really wants to capture and describe a relational transaction appropriately: identifying and analysing the stakeholders involved, their resources and interests, and above all their mutual interaction, which, in turn, changes them, play a central role before further theoretical building blocks of relational economics can be applied. Accordingly, this analysis step also forms the common denominator with which the analysis of all the case studies collected here finds its starting point. For this reason, the stakeholder model is placed in the foreground in this user guide and is now briefly explained - other models are then introduced in the individual case studies and discussed in the application of these cases.

## Stakeholder Model of Relational Decision Making

The theory of relational economics defines a firm as a nexus of stakeholder interests and invested stakeholder resources and corporate action via relational transactions that combine, in a cooperative and productive manner, the interests and resources of the stakeholders involved. The fact that, in particular, this takes place across cultural and sectoral boundaries is emphasised here and is related to the claim to take the real complexity and uncertainty of economic activity into account – thinking, for example, of global value creation networks or of the requirements from the ESG discussion.

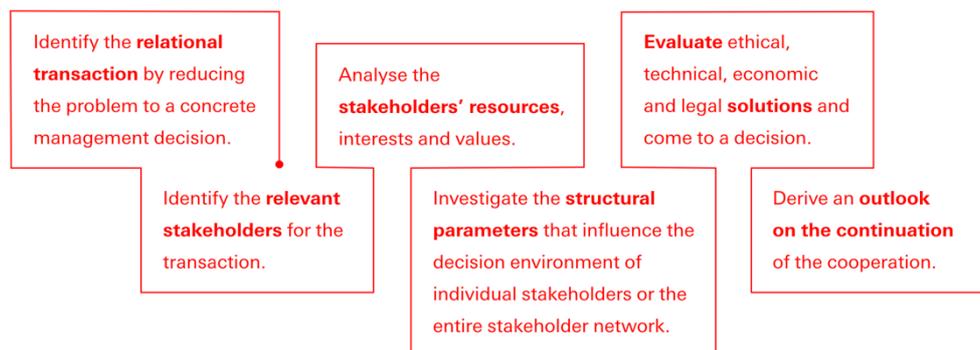
In order to derive a management decision in a specific constellation – for example, in the situations depicted in the LEIZ case studies – the stakeholder model provides the basic framework (Wieland 2020: 97ff.) and is presented here in a condensed form for the given purpose. The application of this model reveals the time- and context-specific microstructures of the relational processes and structures. It comprises six steps:

1. **Reducing the problem to a concrete management decision.** This concrete management decision ideally is a clearly narrowed down yes/no/alternative decision. This decision is the relational transaction that is to be analysed in the subsequent steps.
2. **Identifying the relevant stakeholders with reference to the transaction.** This includes the identification and prioritisation of the involved individual or collective stakeholders. Depending on the transaction, the stakeholders can be, for example, employees, management, customers, suppliers, investors, competitors, NGOs, political institutions or the public.
3. **Analysing the respective stakeholder resources, interests and values.** This entails a thorough look at the polyvalent constitution and motivation of each stakeholder. Such resources and interests could be, for example, economic, political, moral or professional, and the values can be, for example, performance values, communication values, cooperation values or moral values, that need to be combined and balanced.
4. **Investigating the problem along the structure of the decision environment.** This requires checking the relational transaction in-depth via the following eight structural parameters (Wieland 2020: 99):
  - I. Decision-making stress (for example, due to political or media pressure)
  - II. Intrapersonal values conflicts (for example, conflicting values arising from role-based expectations)
  - III. Inter-organisational values conflicts (for example, ideals held by the collective actors that are non-negotiable for them)
  - IV. Intercultural values conflicts (for example, differences in the moral doctrines of different groups)
  - V. Information deficits (for example, regarding the scope and consequences of an assigned task)
  - VI. Communication deficits (for example, resulting from the type of communication between the network partners)
  - VII. Responsibility diffusion (for example, who is responsible for creating and solving a given problem and on what grounds)
  - VIII. Rules deficits (for example, resulting from the lack of private or state regulation, or from its unenforceability).

5. **Evaluating ethical, technical, economic and legal solutions and reaching a decision.** In most cases, this decision combines ethical, technical, economic and legal approaches by evaluating the transaction-specific advantages and disadvantages of the available decision logics and considering their interdependency.
6. **Deriving an outlook concerning the continuation of the cooperation.** The question here is what new commonalities have been formed and to what extent the stakeholders involved have changed as a result of the transaction (Baumann Montecinos 2022).

FIGURE 0

### An outline of what such an analysis could look like in general terms



Source: own illustration.

Thus, the foundations have been laid for working on the LEIZ case studies. We will be delighted if this material is used to promote learning and exploration of relational economics, particularly in its strength of practical application. Feedback from and exchanges between lecturers would be more than welcome.

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## FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022: An Opportunity for Transcultural Learning?

Tobias Grünfelder

### Introduction

There was a mixed reaction when Qatar was announced as the host nation for the FIFA World Cup 2022 on December 2010. On one hand, there was celebration on the Qatari side, though it was followed by much controversy. Many groups and media expressed their concern regarding the interpretation of human rights, particularly working conditions, climactic conditions, the rights of LGBTQ+ fans and the opportunities for women's empowerment. Qatar was described by some as the most controversial host of the World Cup tournament, with criticism ranging from alleged corruption in the bidding process to a callous disregard for human rights. Some even described this World Cup as a cultural conflict or "Clash of Cultures" between authoritarian Islamic regimes and secular liberal democracies.

### Case Description

Qatar needed hundreds of thousands of migrant workers to construct mega structures, roads, hotels, and many more facilities for the FIFA 2022 World Cup. Workers' rights and safeguarding basic human rights were a deep concern among the international community. Qatar faced international criticism for its treatment of low-paid migrant workers who built more than \$200 billion worth of stadiums, metro lines, and other infrastructure for the World Cup. Qatar said that this criticism ignored the labour reforms enacted in recent years.

There is a great amount of contract labour between Asia and the Middle East, and the flow of remittances helps to pull the families of migrant workers out of poverty, helps them to fund building their homes, get a good education and healthcare, and contribute

to the economy of the host country. On the contrary, there is a risk of loss of life, and workers may be victims of forced labour or trafficking. Many different issues can be identified concerning migrant workers in Qatar:

## Challenges

*Kafala system:* The kafala, or sponsorship, system gives private citizens and companies in Jordan, Lebanon, and most Arab Gulf countries almost total control over migrant workers' employment and immigration status. The system arose from growing demand in Gulf economies for cheap labour and the desperation of many migrants in search of work and the opportunity to send money home to their families. Calls for reform have grown since preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar drew international scrutiny.

*Freedom of movement:* The freedom of movement for migrant workers is limited by the Kafala system, which automatically keeps them under the supervision of the employer or sponsor.

*Fraudulent contracts and substitution:* Reports published by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International point out that migrant workers are completely ignorant of the actual terms and conditions of their contracts.

*Recruitment agents, recruitment fees, wages, and accommodation:* False promises and misleading information were often made by agents to the migrant workers in their home country and recruitment fees are often levied illegally by the agents. Furthermore, a report by Human Rights Watch states that almost 33.9% of the workers surveyed in Qatar were not paid on a regular basis. In addition, a report published by the Guardian found out that the workers live in squalid, overcrowded accommodations with no air conditioning and overflowing sewage. This accommodation is a major cause of disease and death.

*Very poor enforcement of laws protecting migrant workers:* Although labour laws in Qatar provide strict guidelines to protect workers from various types of abuse, these guidelines are often ignored. Most workers are unaware of their rights and remain silent victims of abuse.

Qatar's treatment of its two million-strong migrant workforce, and the Kafala system in particular, has attracted widespread criticism. In 2017, the government entered into a partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to begin reforming its labour system. Guy Ryder, the director general of the ILO, said: "By introducing these significant changes, Qatar has delivered on a commitment, one that will give workers more freedom and protection, and employers more choice." The 2022 World Cup in Qatar was hosted in eight stadiums built or refurbished for the event and designed by renowned firms of architects. The stadiums were largely built by migrant workers, with the country widely criticised for the conditions experienced by these workers, including by Amnesty International, which accused Qatar of using forced labour on World Cup sites in 2016. In 2021, the Guardian reported that 6,500 migrant workers had died in the country since 2010. According to football's governing body FIFA there were 37 deaths connected to the construction of the World Cup stadiums.

The football of the tournament was captivating, and the atmosphere over those four weeks exhilarating, but for some, this tournament came at a cost, and that must not be forgotten. Additionally, FIFA's decision to threaten sanctions for any player wearing a "OneLove" armband, which features a heart containing different colours to promote inclusion, created a rift between the sport's governing body and the seven European nations whose captains had planned to wear it.

### Case 1: Sponsoring Company

Migrant workers and their families are demanding compensation from FIFA and the Qatari authorities for abuses, including unexplained deaths, suffered by workers preparing for the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup. Human Rights Watch released a five-minute video in the run-up to the tournament, which started on 20 November 2022, in which the workers and their families as well as football fans from Nepal have their say. Qatar has rejected calls for a compensation fund for migrant workers killed or injured during World Cup preparations, with the country's labour minister describing it as a "publicity stunt".

For the first time, an Arab country is hosting the FIFA World Cup and Qatar has promised fans an unforgettable four-week, 64-match football tournament. Your

company is one of the largest sportswear manufacturers in the world and has been an official partner of FIFA since 1970. This year, your company has launched a promotional film to promote the upcoming football tournament and highlight the benefits it will offer. The tournament is a once-in-a-lifetime marketing opportunity, but host nation Qatar is facing accusations of mistreating migrant workers and LGBTQ+ citizens. Brands have largely kept a low profile.

You sit on the board of directors. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and FairSquare have contacted you to support the Qatar Migrant Workers Compensation Fund. Your board is divided into two camps. One side is in favour of silence, and the other side is convinced that the board ought to speak out. They have a decision to make and a statement to make on the Qatar Migrant Workers Compensation Fund in the next few days.

### Questions:

1. How can the stakeholder model be applied to the case? Who are the relevant stakeholders? What are their positions, interests, and resources? How can their contexts, decision logics and language games be described?
2. Prepare a statement for your company that can be published on your official website. The statement should include a position on the Compensation Fund for Migrant Workers in Qatar.
3. Which opportunities for transcultural learning can be described? Apply the 3 steps model of transcultural learning.

### Case 2: Architectural Firm

You have been on the management board of an architectural firm for 10 years and the Qatar government has contacted you to design a stadium for the World Cup 2022. Your firm is one of the largest architectural firms in Europe with over 2,500 employees in 15 studios worldwide. Your company has established a holistic approach to sustainability and is committed to supporting diversity and inclusivity. Your company has long-lasting relationships with the Middle East and the Qatari government. The Qatari

government has made an excellent offer for designing a World Cup stadium and the cost of constructing a stadium is around \$6.5 billion dollars.

A meeting has been arranged with representatives of the Qatari government to start the negotiation process about the contract. The offer would guarantee your company financial stability for the foreseeable future. A few weeks before this meeting a heated debate about the World Cup in Qatar started in your management board. Some board members refer to the reports published by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch about the poor working conditions of the migrant workers. The discussion ends with several top executives and a board member proposing that your company should withdraw from the negotiation and offer; others are against it: your board is divided into two camps.

### Questions:

It is important to emphasize that there are no clear and correct answers to this case study. It is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and show how shared learning processes can be identified and developed across cultures. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that many details and background information about the FIFA World Cup 2022 are omitted and are also not available to the public.

1. How can the stakeholder model be applied to the case? Who are the relevant stakeholders? What are their positions, interests, and resources? How can their contexts, decision logics and language games be described?
2. Try to map the arguments for and against the project from the perspective of your company.
3. Prepare a negotiation planning document for your company that the whole board could accept. Try to map the Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) and include the framing and anchoring for the negotiation.
4. Which opportunities for transcultural learning can be described? Apply the three steps model of transcultural learning.

## Discussion

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 highlighted differences in the ways in which the world is perceived. The Qatari tournament is widely regarded as one of the most controversial FIFA World Cups in history. Some have called it a “Clash of Cultures” and it is true that the cultural complexity of this project was unique. Defenders of Qatar pointed out that the inconsistency of media coverage, especially from the West, has reinforced stereotypes and longstanding biases against the people of the Gulf region. Qatari officials insist the spotlight cast on its nation during the run-up to the World Cup acted as a catalyst to push through much-needed reforms. In 2017, Qatar, working with the International Labour Organisation, began abolishing its Kafala sponsorship programme, passed laws to protect the rights of domestic workers better, implemented a non-discriminatory minimum wage (the first of its kind in the region), and enhanced health and safety measures including protection for workers from Qatar’s extreme summer heat. Issues with the enforcement of these regulations remain; nevertheless, government officials have claimed that the reforms are the greatest social legacy of the World Cup.

Looking at the various controversies, the mutual blaming and also reinforcement of cultural differences (us vs. them), it seems that an opportunity for transcultural learning across cultures has been missed. Beyond the immediate debate about Qatar lies a deeper clash between “universalists” and “cultural relativists”. Many ethical theories are based on moral universalism, the idea that some system of ethics is universally applicable to everyone (Williams & Richardson 2008). However, critics suggest that ethical rules are relative to culture. Advocates of this cultural relativism conclude that people should not impose their ethical standards on others (Lane & Maznevski 2019).

On the one hand, there are those who insist that there are certain universal norms, such as equality, democracy, tolerance, and human rights, to which all societies should adhere and on the other, those who argue that every culture has its own set of values and traditions that should be respected in its own terms, and who view universalism as an ethnocentrically European outlook. Human rights are an example of moral universalism. These are moral principles that are universal and apply to everyone and everywhere. The value of moral universalism lies in creating both guidance and accountability. Having a set of ethical standards and universally applying them across

cultures provides a compass for decision making and prevents actors from a careless focus on self-interest. In terms of cultural relativism, its value lies in promoting acceptance, tolerance and appreciation for different cultural beliefs and practices. It protects actors from a hasty rejection of dissimilarity and helps them remain viable and effective despite moral differences. Overall, both perspectives are required and must be integrated into a dynamic, ongoing process to ensure that value creation can continue with diverse stakeholders and new shared meanings and actions (including ethical conversations) can emerge.

According to Milton Bennett, the shift from a “more relativist to a more constructivist paradigm is (1) the shift from assuming that facts exist in context to recognising our role in creating those contexts; (2) the recognition that differing narratives are not different versions of truth, but more like different versions of reality; (3) and that therefore argument is neither about the truth of a matter or about whose version of truth will prevail, but it is about what version of reality we wish to live in” (Bennett 2016: 7).

The distinction between cultural relativism, universalism and transcultural learning might be very helpful for further discussion:

FIGURE 1

### Comparison of Cultural Relativism, Universalism and Transcultural Learning

Cultural Relativism	Universalism	Transcultural Learning
Moral truths exist only in context.	Moral truths exist objectively.	Moral truths can be constructed from shared experiences, mutual learning processes and agreed upon goals.
Moral truth is not the same for all people, at all times, at all places. Moral truth is relative either to individual persons or to particular cultures. Moral or ethical propositions are not universal. Like etiquette, they depend on social, cultural, and historical circumstance.	Moral truth is the same for all people, at all times, at all places. A universal system of moral law applies to everyone, regardless of culture, race, religion, or nationality. Universal truths should be defended regardless of cultural differences.	Moral universalisms like the human rights can be a starting point for moral discussions and transcultural learning. Moral truths need to be constructed and negotiated in a continuous and collaborative process. Moral truths are usually very abstract and therefore require a concrete application in specific situations.

Source: own illustration.

Against this backdrop, the aim of transcultural learning is to go beyond recognising and tolerating cultural differences and to develop new commonalities (shared meanings and practices) across cultures in a mutual learning process. Furthermore, a transcultural learning process also strengthens transcultural competence. Transcultural competence can be described as the willingness and ability of individuals and organisations to develop commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity while simultaneously allowing cultural differences to continue to exist (Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos 2023). Transcultural learning is in line with a constructivist paradigm shift in cross-cultural management. Overall, the World Cup can be seen and analysed as a network of transactions on the part of individual and collective actors from different cultures and various areas of society, especially from the economy (e.g., sports industry), politics and civil society (Wieland 2020). All these actors follow different decision logics and are shaped by different cultural backgrounds (e.g., national cultures, regional cultures, industry cultures, organisational cultures, etc.). This is why the situation becomes so complex and requires a deeper analysis. By focusing on the specific transactions (events), complexity can be addressed, and oversimplification avoided. The specific transaction of the sponsoring firm is to address the call for a Compensation Fund for Migrant Workers with an official statement or not. The specific transaction of the architectural firm is whether to start negotiations with the Qatari government or not. In the following, the transcultural learning process is applied to the case. Transcultural learning can be described with the 3 steps model (Baumann Montecinos 2022).

FIGURE 2

### Transcultural Learning Model



Source: Adapted from Baumann Montecinos 2022 and Wieland 2016.

The first step in the transcultural learning model is the recognition of cultural diversity. This means that the management board of the sponsoring company and the architectural firm should try to adopt a non-normative attitude and try to listen carefully to all the different stakeholders involved. This requires empathy, the ability to take different perspectives, see underlying interests and concerns, and postpone judgments and hasty opinions. Important stakeholders for the sponsoring company might be governments and NGOs (e.g., the Qatari government, Human Rights Watch, Nepali civil society groups, etc.), FIFA, UN's International Labor Organization, contractors, customers, employees, other sponsors, the public, partners, and many more. Stakeholders to be prioritised in an official statement could include the Qatari Ministry of Labor, FIFA, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FairSquare, UN's International Labor Organization and the public. Important stakeholders for the architects might be the Qatari government, FIFA, NGOs, migrant workers, employees, contractors in the construction industry, football fans, and many more. Stakeholders to be prioritised in the negotiations could be the Qatari government, migrant workers, employees, contractors in the construction industry and NGOs.

As a second step, the sponsoring company and the architectural firm should try to identify the most important stakeholders and what they have in common. An existing commonality for the sponsoring company might be to open and continue a dialogue with an international stakeholder community to build on the (positive) efforts already undertaken to improve migrant worker rights and strengthen enforcement and compensatory systems for workers. The sponsoring company should support the Qatar Migrant Workers Compensation Fund and a very diplomatic statement is required. The statement could also offer to participate actively in this dialogue and process. It is important to recognise that not supporting the fund could have negative consequences for the company's reputation. An existing commonality for the architects with the Qatari government might be the focus on sustainability, and this might require comprehensive ESG management with all partners. ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance, and ESG management refers to the integration of these factors into the strategic decision-making and operational processes of an organisation. The architectural firm might ask the Qatari government to be involved in specific decisions and to work together to ensure certain ESG standards are met. Initiating negotiations with a focus on sustainability seems promising and could lead to dialogue, exchange

and shared experiences. The negotiation process could already include different phases of meetings with different stakeholders (contractors, NGOs, etc.).

In the third step, new commonalities can be developed out of shared experiences. The sponsoring company and architectural firm should actively engage in dialogues, meetings, and exchange platforms with the different stakeholders. They can even initiate Communities of Practice (CoPs) for specific topics (e.g., sustainability, Migrant Worker's Compensation Fund, etc.). CoPs are groups of people who share a common interest, profession, or passion and come together to learn from one another, share experiences, and develop a collective understanding in a particular domain. CoPs are characterised by a shared field of interest and a shared practice (Wenger, 1998). CoPs are a valuable mechanism for sharing knowledge, collaborative problem-solving, and fostering a sense of belonging. They contribute to the development of both individual expertise and collective knowledge within a particular field. The new commonalities will be concrete shared understandings, meanings, and practices between a group of actors. In our case, new commonalities might be new understandings, practices, and standards for worker rights or sustainability practices for football stadiums. There could also be new ways of organising and holding such mega-events that can promote a sense of belonging across cultures. If we look at FIFA's current procedures, we might all agree that there is still a lot of room for improvement and transcultural learning. By applying the transcultural learning steps, a wide range of insights can be gained. In addition, the Transcultural Value Management System (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos 2018) could be applied to identify the local and global prioritisation of the sponsoring company and architectural firm.

Overall, the sponsoring company and architects should try to actively engage in transcultural learning processes with the involved stakeholders. The outcomes might be new and better standards for such mega-events and strengthening individual and organisational transcultural competence to develop commonalities. The role of commonalities and common grounds was also emphasised by the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah in his work on cosmopolitanism (2006). According to him, dialogue and conversations do not have to lead to consensus about anything, especially not values; it is enough that it helps people get used to one another.

To conclude, mega-events like a football World Cup will always be an opportunity to learn from and with each other that can promote a sense of belonging across many cultures.

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## Keywords

Transcultural learning, transcultural competence, transcultural management, network governance, cultural relativism, universalism, international negotiations

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