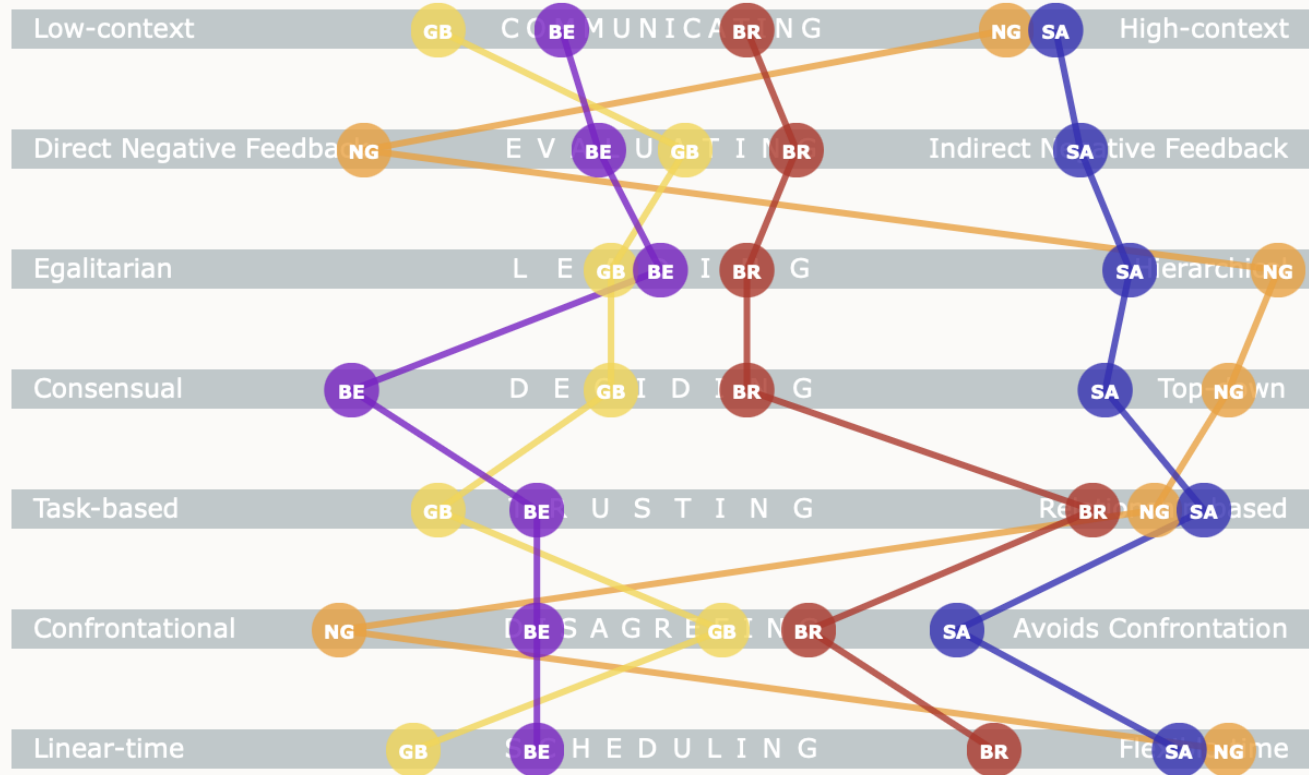# Cross-cultural Communications

- Communicating

- Evaluating

- Leading

- Deciding

- Trusting

- Disagreeing

- Scheduling

- Persuading

Legend: Nigeria, Brazil, UK, Saudi Arabia, Belgium

Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
Egalitarian	LEADING	Hierarchical
Consensual	DECIDING	Top-down
Task-based	TRUSTING	Relationship-based
Confrontational	DISAGREEING	Avoids Confrontation
Linear-time	SCHEDULING	Flexible-time

All charts curtesy of Erin Meyer's *The Culture Map*
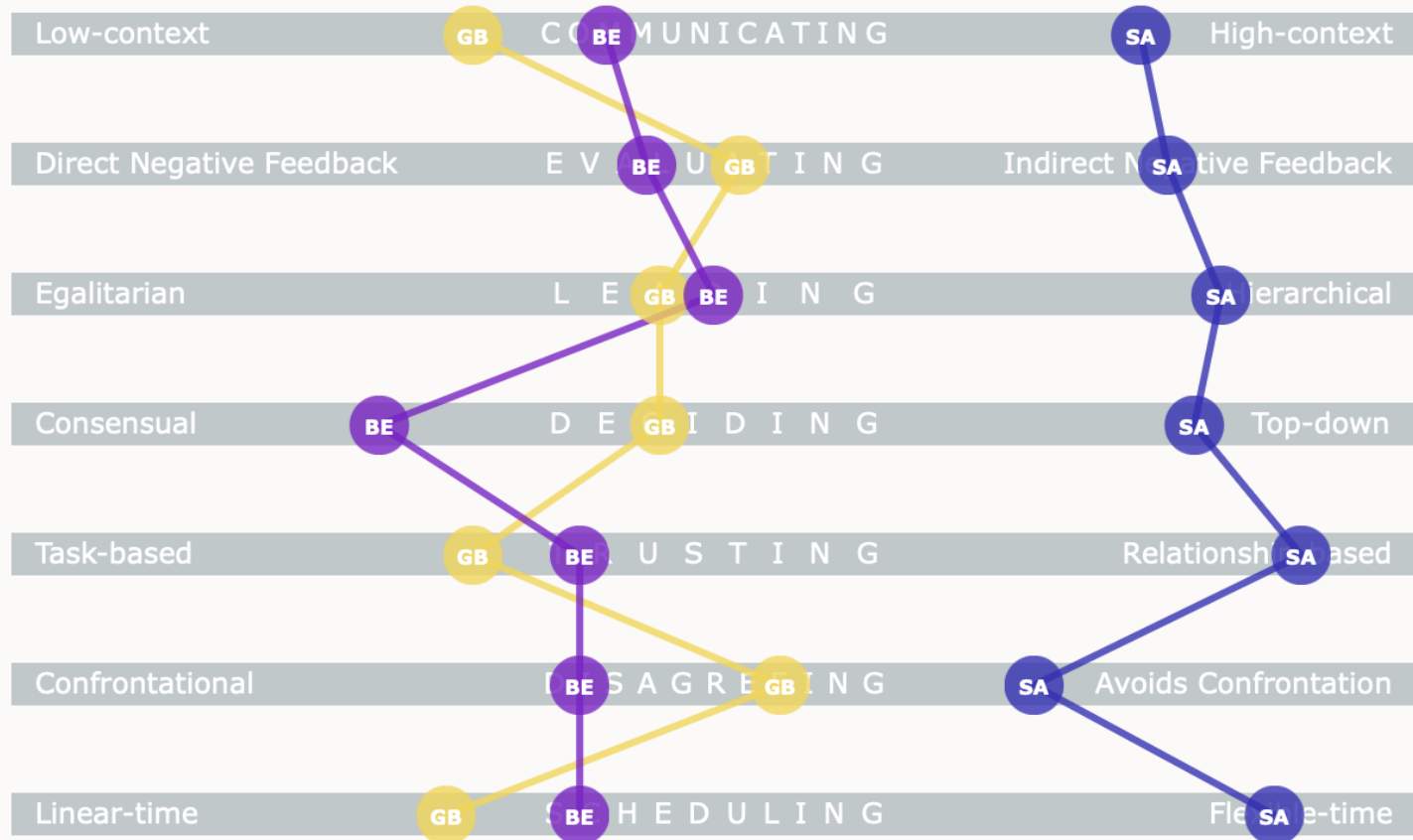
Communicating

Low-context

Good communication is precise, simple and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face value. Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.

High-context

Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.

	UK	Saudi Arabia	Belgium

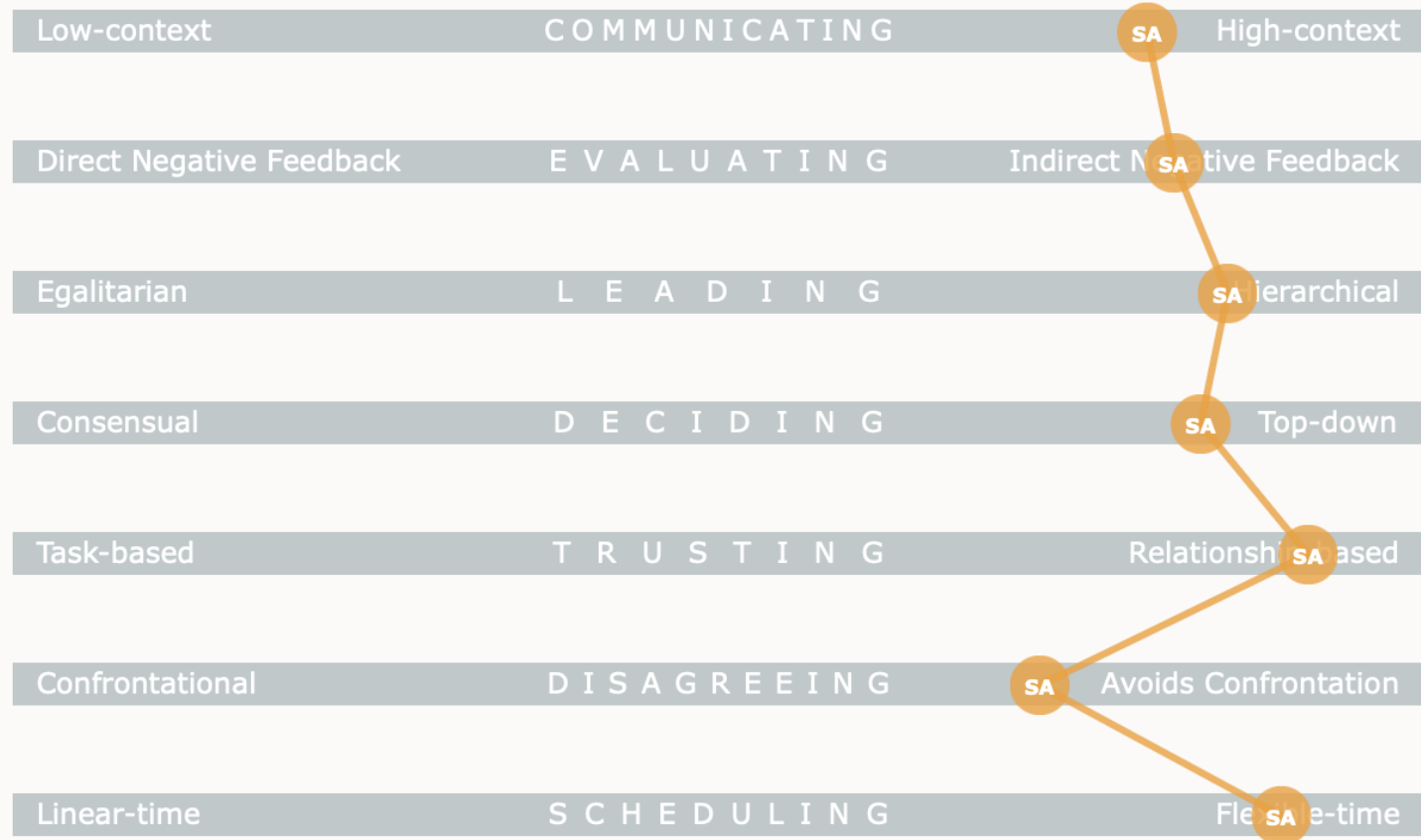| Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
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Linear-time	SCHEDULING	Flexible-time

Evaluating

Direct Negative Feedback

Negative feedback to a colleague is provided frankly, bluntly, honestly. Negative messages stand alone, not softened by positive ones. Absolute descriptions are often used when criticizing. Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.
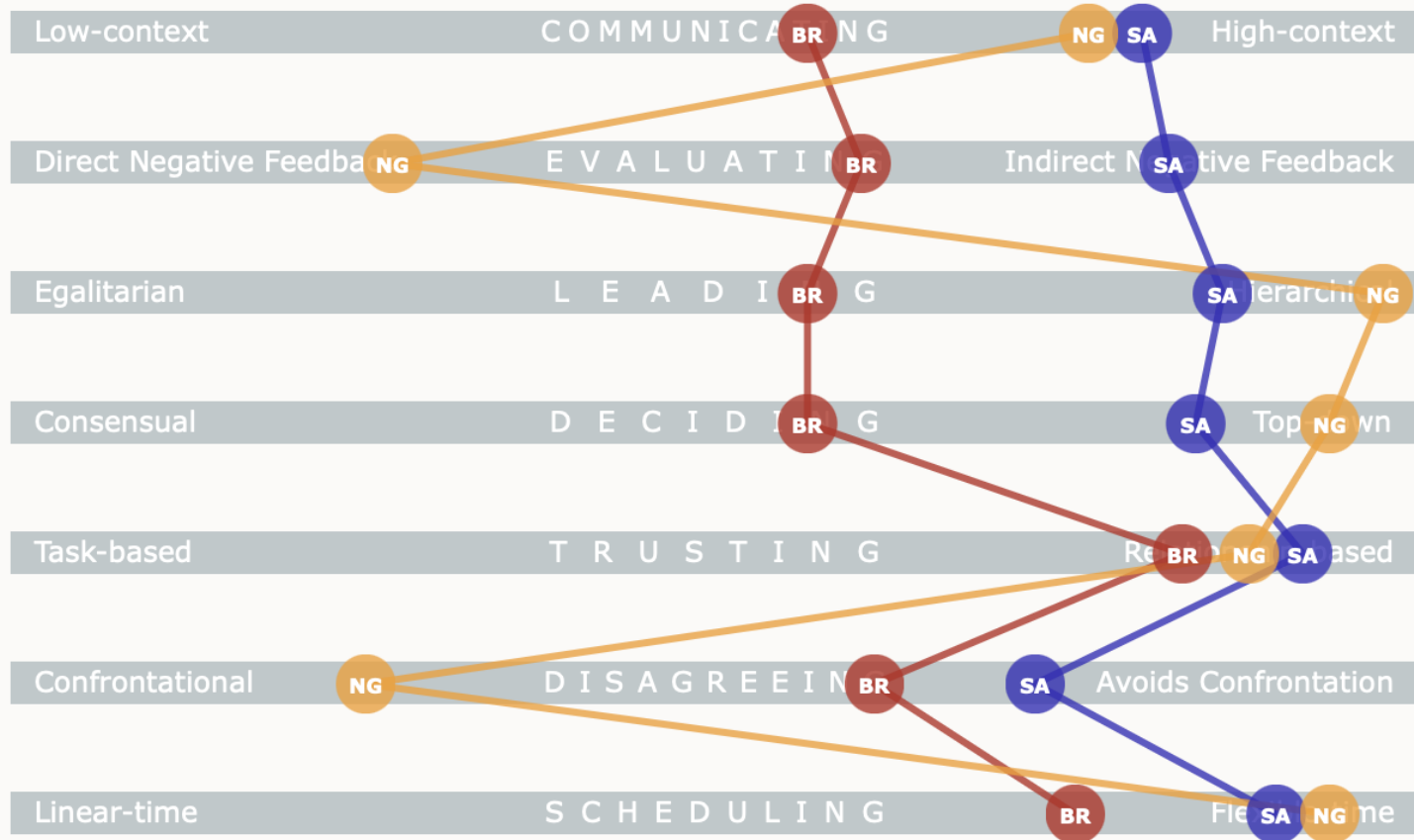
Indirect Negative Feedback

Negative feedback to a colleague is provided softly, subtly, diplomatically. Positive messages are used to wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are often used when criticizing. Criticism is given only in private.

Saudi Arabia

	COMMUNICATING	
Low-context		High-context

	EVALUATING	
Direct Negative Feedback		Indirect Negative Feedback

	LEADING	
Egalitarian		Hierarchical

	DECIDING	
Consensual		Top-down

	TRUSTING	
Task-based		Relationship-based

	DISAGREEING	
Confrontational		Avoids Confrontation

	SCHEDULING	
Linear-time		Flexible-time

Low-context — COMMUNICATING — High-context

Direct Negative Feedback — EVALUATING — Indirect Negative Feedback

Egalitarian — LEADING — Hierarchical

Consensual — DECIDING — Top-down

Task-based — TRUSTING — Relationship-based

Confrontational — DISAGREEING — Avoids Confrontation

Linear-time — SCHEDULING — Flexible-time

Legend: Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Nigeria

Leading

What does a leader look like to you?

- Does your ideal leader wear trainers and ride a bike to work? Do they sit at the same desk with everyone else?

- Does your ideal leader where an expensive Armani suit and drive a black Ferrari?

- Is your ideal boss 'one of the guys'?

- Is your leader giving orders from 'on high'?
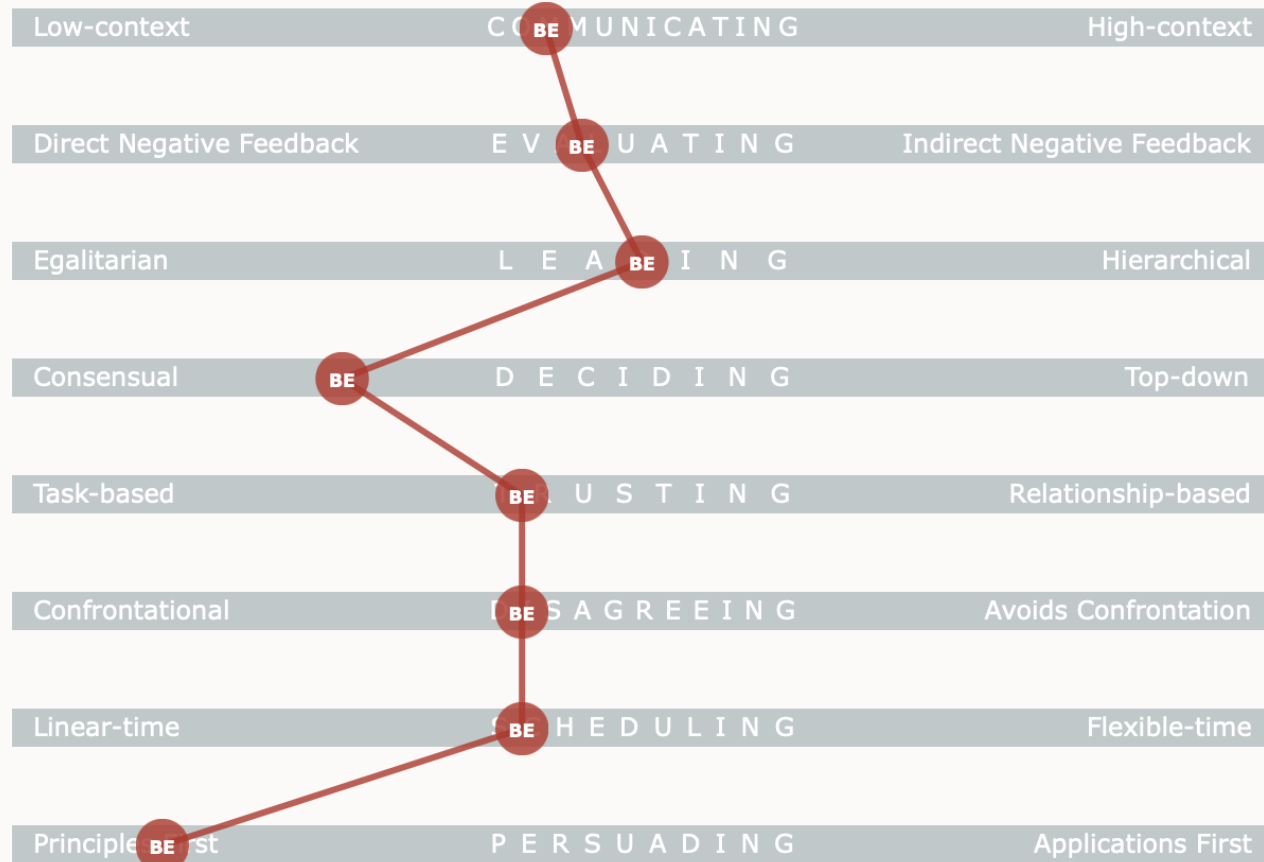
Leading

Egalitarian

The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low. The best boss is a facilitator among equals. Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines.
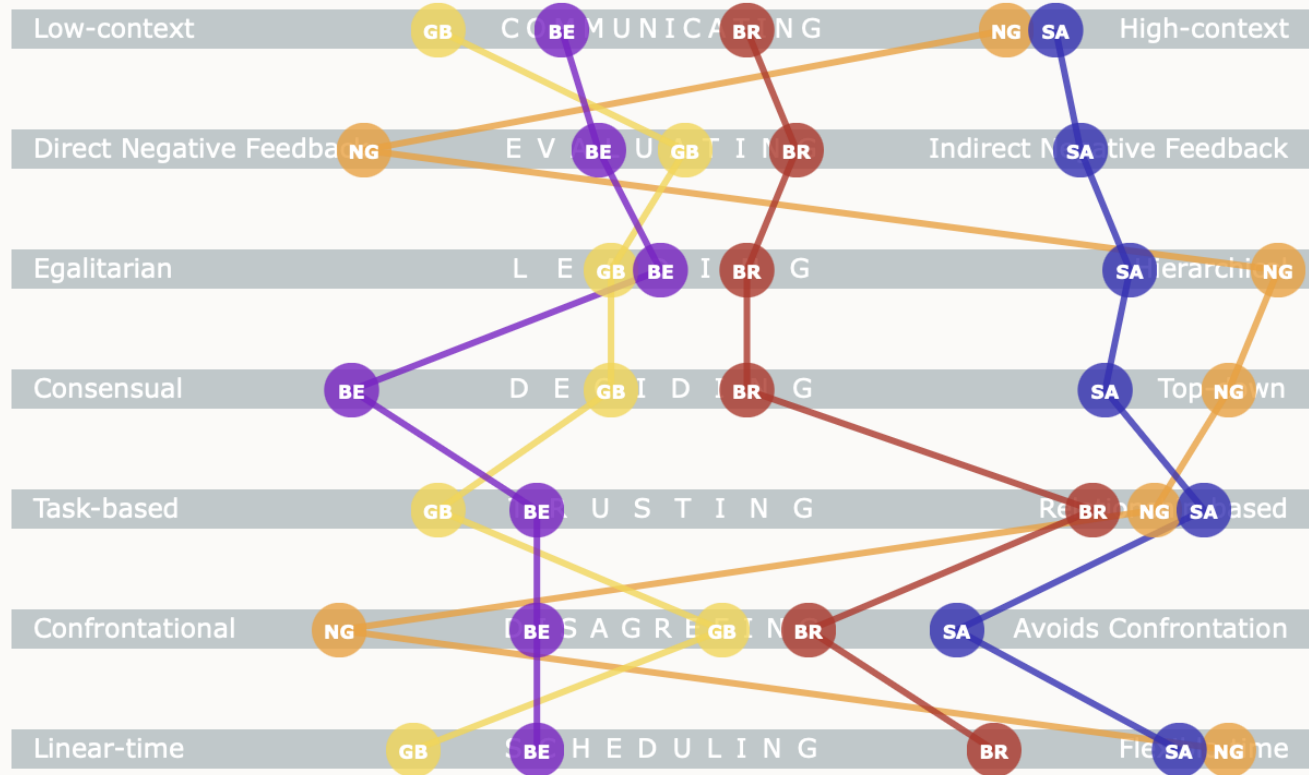
Hierarchical

The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is high. The best boss is a string director who leads from the front. Status is important. Organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed. Communication follows set hierarchical lines.

Legend: Nigeria, Brazil, UK, Saudi Arabia, Belgium

COMMUNICATING: Low-context — High-context
EVALUATING: Direct Negative Feedback — Indirect Negative Feedback
LEADING: Egalitarian — Hierarchical
DECIDING: Consensual — Top-down
TRUSTING: Task-based — Relationship-based
DISAGREEING: Confrontational — Avoids Confrontation
SCHEDULING: Linear-time — Flexible-time

Disagreeing

Which of these sounds like a successful meeting to you?

- In a good meeting, a decision is made.

- In a good meeting, various viewpoints are discussed and debated.

- In a good meeting, a formal stamp is put on a decision that has been made before the meeting.
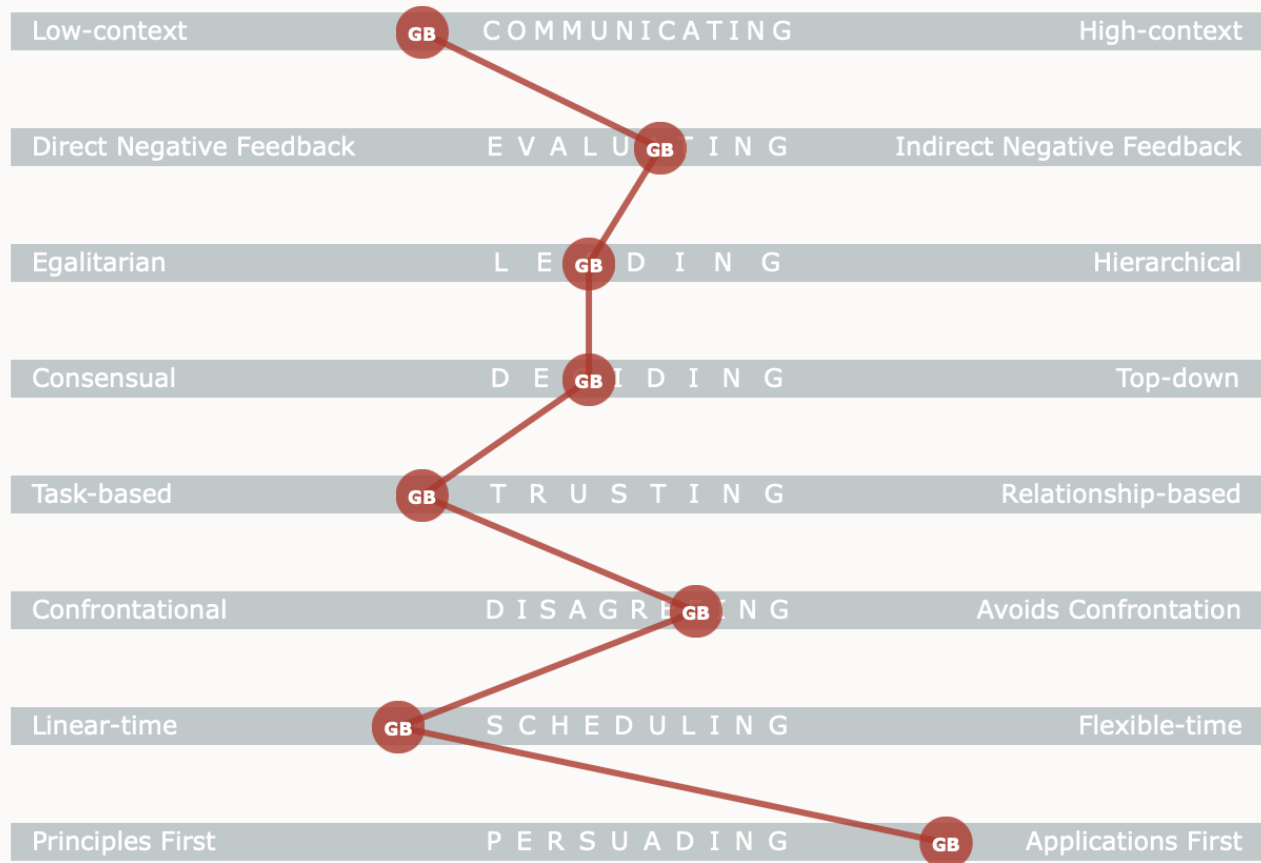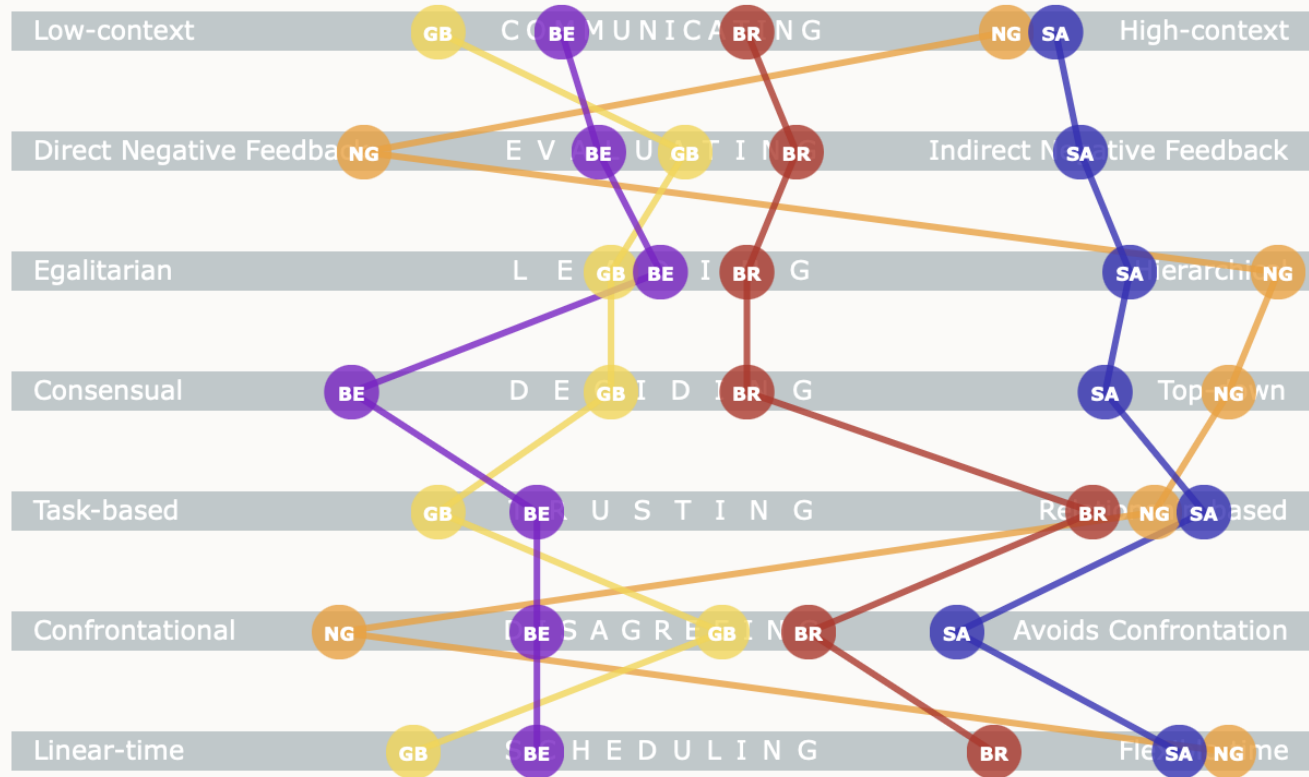
Disagreeing

Confrontational

Disagreement and debate are positive for the team or organization. Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.

Avoids Confrontation

Disagreement and debate are negative for the team or organization. Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.

UK

Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
Egalitarian	LEADING	Hierarchical
Consensual	DECIDING	Top-down
Task-based	TRUSTING	Relationship-based
Confrontational	DISAGREEING	Avoids Confrontation
Linear-time	SCHEDULING	Flexible-time
Principles First	PERSUADING	Applications First

Legend: Nigeria, Brazil, UK, Saudi Arabia, Belgium

Scale		
Low-context	COMMUNICATING	High-context
Direct Negative Feedback	EVALUATING	Indirect Negative Feedback
Egalitarian	LEADING	Hierarchical
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- Prioritize managing culture – this means you should check to see if there are any broad differences in the way people prefer to communicate, receive feedback or participate in meetings. This way you minimise the risk of making some individuals uncomfortable and maximise the time you spend in teams.

- Study the culture of your organisation – what is customary in the office in Brussels is unlikely to be the same as it is in Riyadh – even within the same company. Be sure to learn what the culture of the office and area is to be an effective part of it.

- Be open – transparency of information and communication is essential to trust building and making team members feel valued.

- Don't make assumptions about cultures – learn about them and be prepared to try out multiple communication styles in order to find the one that best fits.

Questions?