Note that no one culture – or even one individual – is totally universalist or particularist in approach (see the exercise on Tolerance zones in Session 4). Both aspects need to be addressed by groups – how to universalise common standards and rules, on the one hand, and how to deal with particular people and

circumstances on the other. In addition, the degree of preference for focusing more on one than another can be dependent on the context. What this polarised set of preferences does show is that if professionals have been brought up in a predominantly universalist or particularist oriented culture they will believe that this is the ‘right’ basis for approaching a range of issues. The research of Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner have revealed that Anglo-Saxon and Northern European countries are broadly more universalist in their approach compared to countries in Southern Europe, South America, the Middle East and Asia.

How would you compare the preferences of yourself, your own national culture, your ‘target culture’ and any specific individuals from that target culture, in terms of this universalist – particularist cultural divide? Are there any other cultural issues (organisational, functional etc) that might explain these preferences?

With this in mind, consider for a moment the possible negative perceptions/impressions more universalist cultures could have of more particularist cultures during a project, and vice-versa. In doing this you will be in a better position to predict the potential causes of tension when these beliefs are in conflict.

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| --- | --- |
| **Universalist perceptions of particularist** | **Particularist perceptions of universalist** |
|  |  |

*Please see page 64 for suggested answers*