# Project Management

## International projects experiences

# Introduction

- Taking into account CULTURAL and GEOGRAPHICAL differences are key to international / multinational project success
- Feedback from real projects is provided :
  - Complex Product / System development for WorldWide market
  - Customer Projects in the Telecommunications Services / Industry

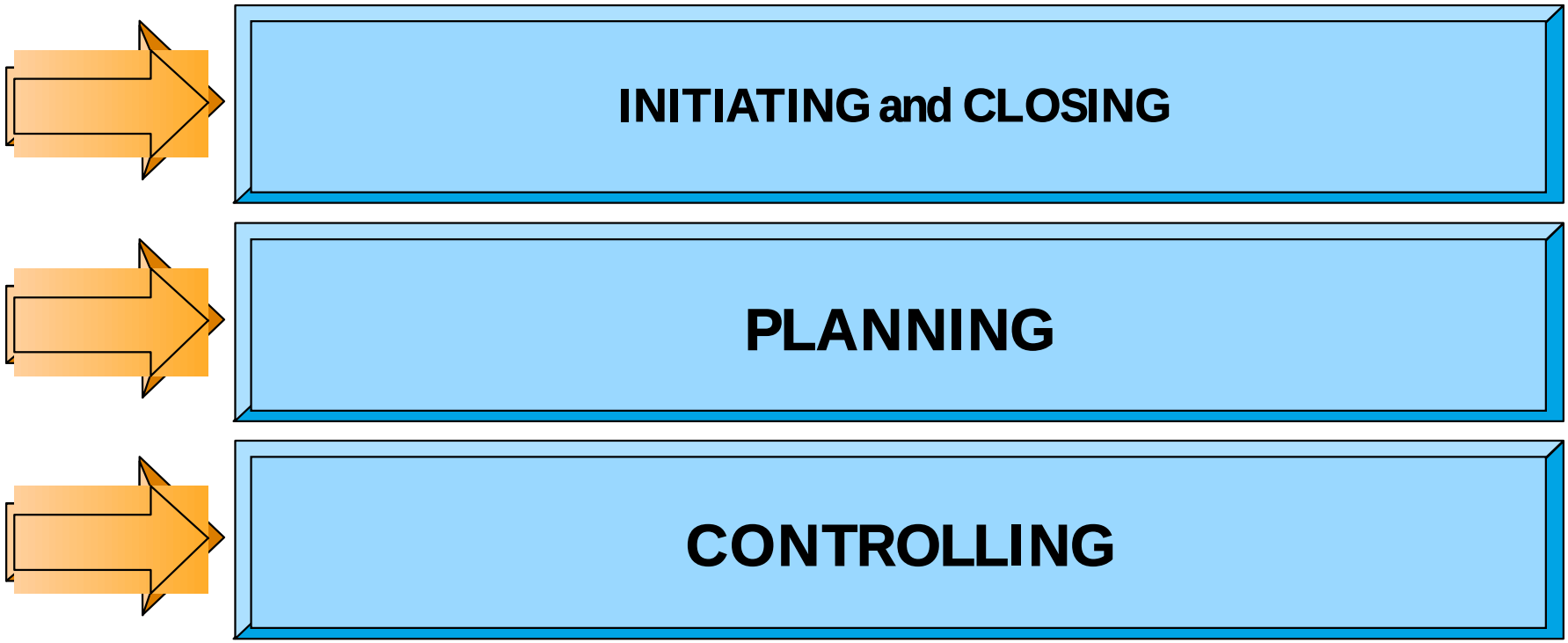
# QUIZ

- Working for an international company with strong culture you would assume :
  - A) All "corporate" PMs have the same understanding of project management no matter where they are located
  - B) Differences exists between countries to a minor extent, linkage exists through company culture
  - C) Differences exist within "sizeable" limits
  - D) Project managers (PMPs !) have the same understanding but execution might differ
  - E) National culture prevails on company/organizational culture

# Overview

- "mitigating" cultural differences is a KEY to success
- In this presentation each geographic location in the examples has one or several project managers in charge of the project piece(s) EXECUTED at their site (usual structure) and Human resource management is performed by each location

# Affected processes within phases




Note that execution is usually under the remote location responsability

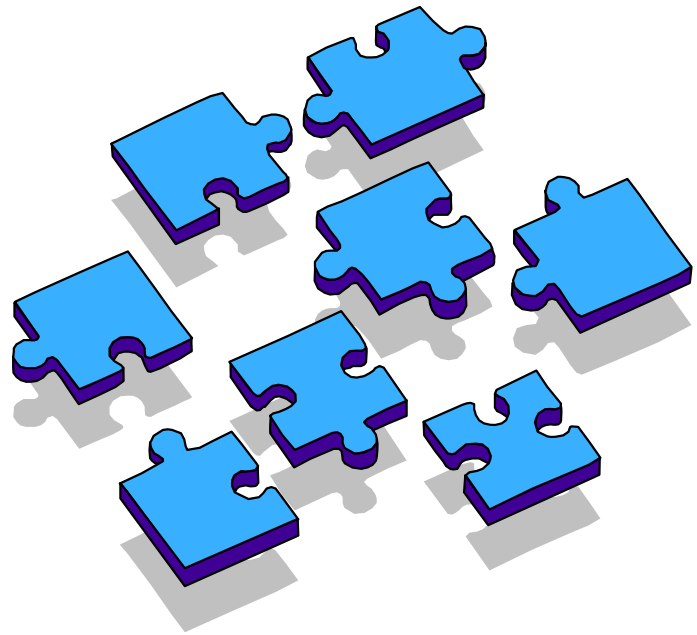
# Main Affected Management Areas

# Global Approach

- Estimate de "distance" factors from your own culture, for each participating location
  - Hofstede's "cultural dimensions"
  - validate/cross-check with others experiences
- Validate your estimations during the real project as early as possible
- Budget "geographic" mitigation actions

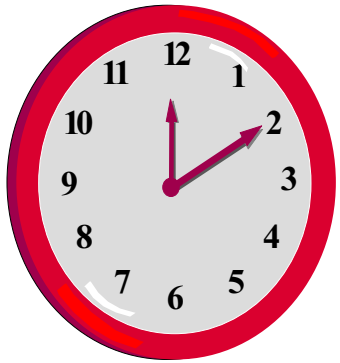
# Assembling the puzzle : key factors

- Autonomy versus Authority
- Decision making
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Values / Value scale, sense of commitment
- Unkown / uncertainty vs. formalism / exhaustivity

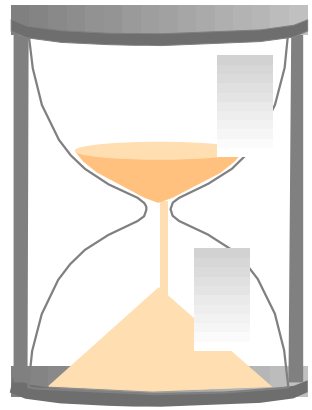


# Assembling the puzzle : key factors (continued)

- Sizing and estimating
- Perception of time, sense of urgency




?



# Example 1 (WW product development)

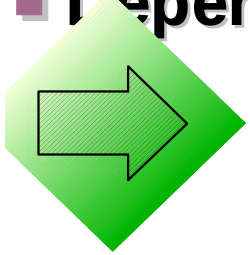
- La Gaude, France, master site : System, Hardware, Microcode, Software and Mechanical development, global project management and business planning
- Vimercate, Italy : card manufacturing, Milan, Italy : power subsystem (vendor) management (development and manufacturing in Hong-Kong)
- Raleigh, North Carolina : Box / System manufacturing and test, Software companion products; Boston, Massachussetts : certification and Box design; Burlington, NY : chip manufacturing

# Example 2 (Customer project)

- La Gaude, France, master site : Software development, global project management
- Iceland : customer and customer project manager (implementation)
- London and Hursley, England : Software development (with team leader) by Bielorussans…
- Wellington, New-Zealand : Software development and tests

# Project initiation

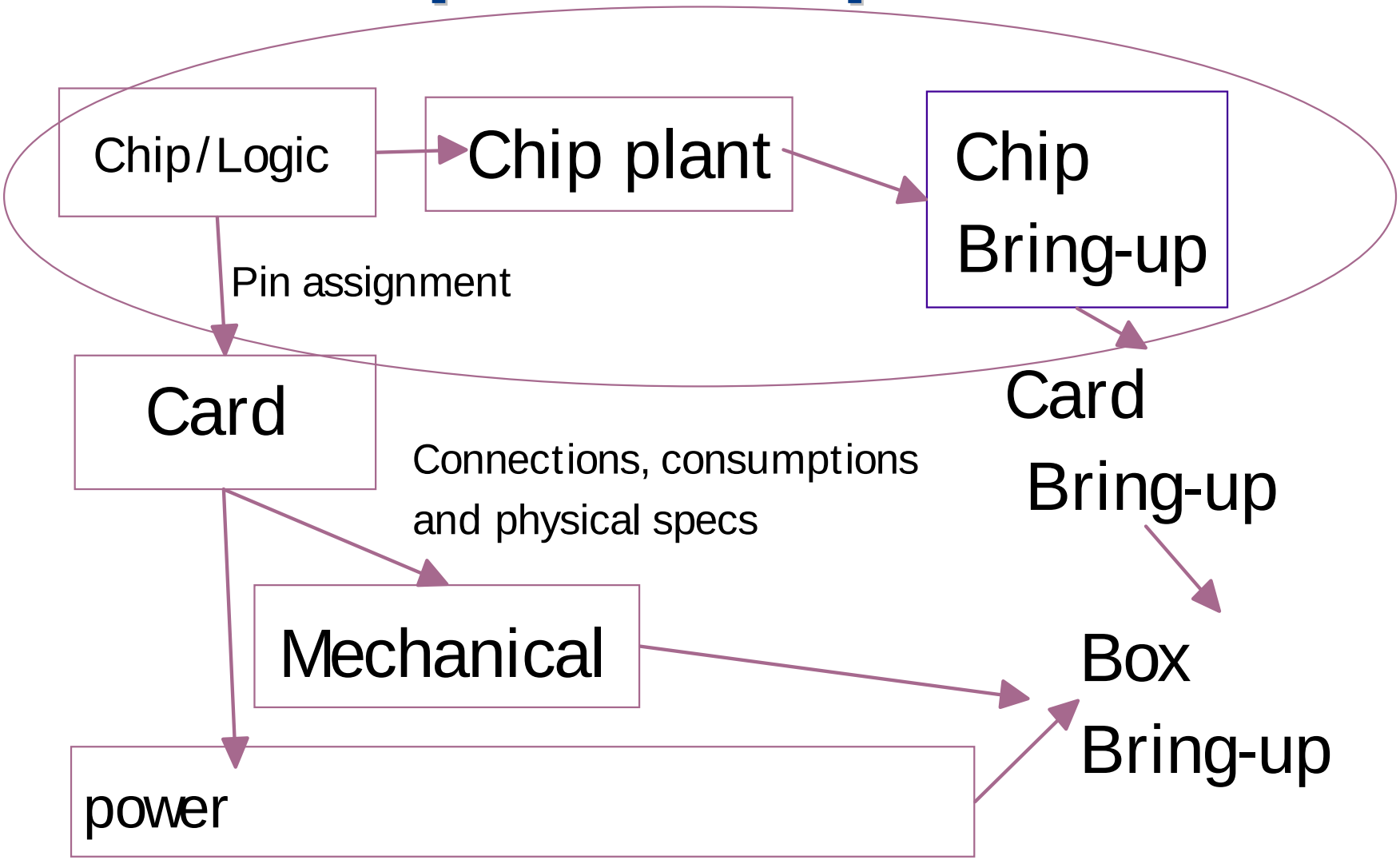
- **Clear SCOPE, responsibilities, ACTIVITIES and Deliverables per location (level of autonomy : what decisions can be made locally…)**
  - **Project scope statement : one statement per location**
  - **Project deliverables broken down by site**
- **Communications planning : timings, meetings…**
- **Dependencies and inputs for each location**



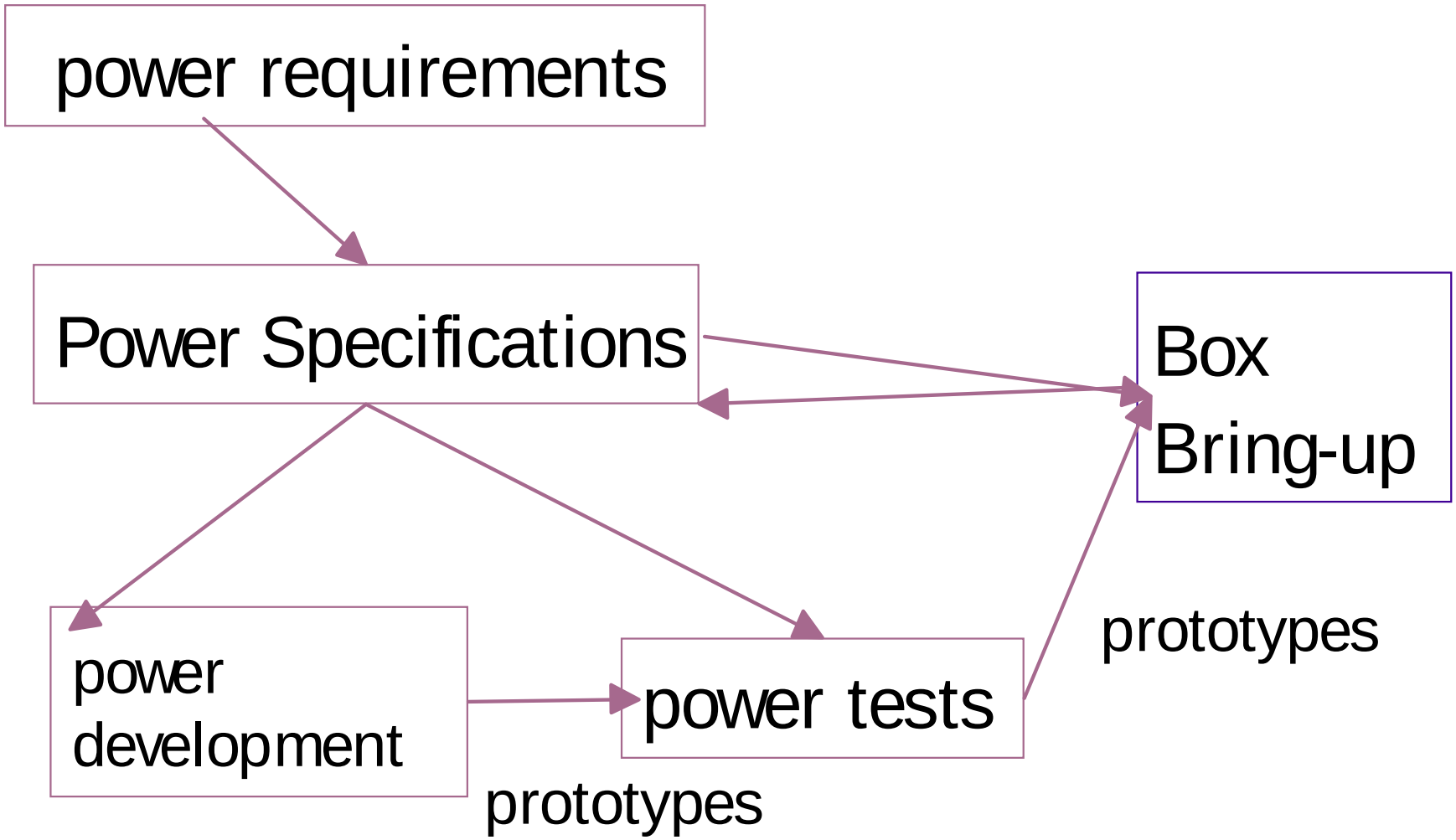
Hint : highlight sites in the WBS !

Rationale : the critical path analysis could be impacted by the cultures !!!

# Example 1 - simple "flow"



# "in-house" standard process



# Risks

- "Usual" critical path is logic/chips (by far)
- HIGH-RISK on power subsystem
  - Key competitive subsystem
  - Could not easily meet with plant team in Hong-Kong (physical distance)
  - Minor misunderstanding could be a big "hit"
- Hong-Kong has strong power distance, but execution could require medium power distance to ensure problems are "surfacing"

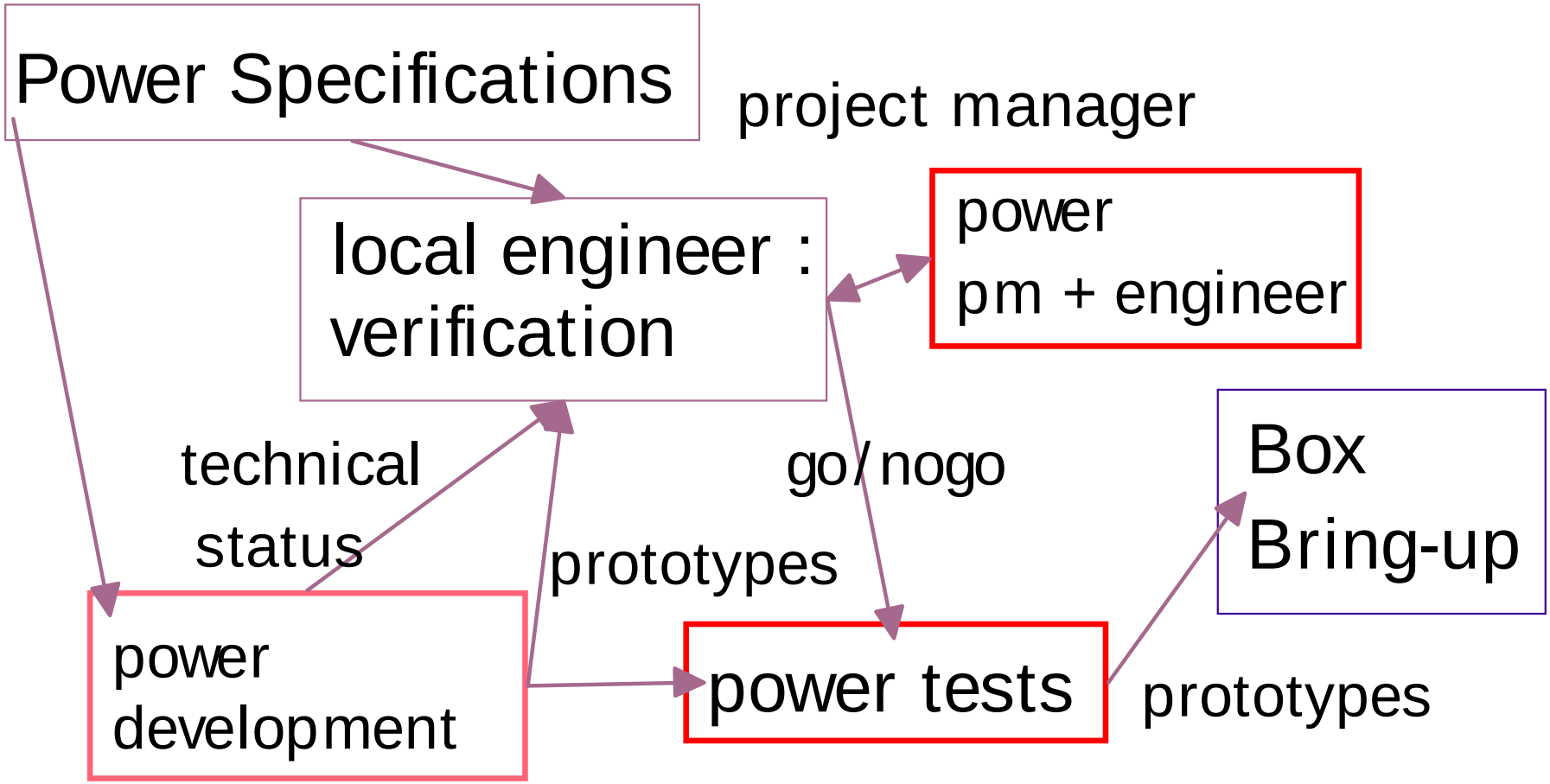
# Risk Mitigation

- Power plant "fully autonomous" and highly competent - could take the risk of making decisions based on local hierarchy
- Mitigation was to obtain a European interface (Milan PM and UK technical) from the same company to drive the global Power development project (Hong-Kong)

# Risk Mitigation (continued)

- Local technical staff assigned
  - regular in person meeting with Milan PM and UK engineer
  - Early involvement in verification (implementation of "concurrent engineering")
  - Early deliverables requested : non-functional prototypes to be checked on design/process

# "mitigated remote" process



# What happenned (continued)

- early "non functional" prototypes in the master site would be available 1 month before "regular" prototypes
- Early verification spotted design problems, fixed later on and final delivery happened on time and on spec despite distance (Hong-Kong) and cultures

# Factors

- The understanding of responsability changes with cultures
- Defining clear outputs is NOT sufficient : need to ensure conformance during the course of action
- The international project manager needs to define RESPONSIBILITIES according to the LOCAL culture (not to his culture) !!!

# Relation with Cultural Dimensions

- **Power distance and autonomy :**
  - **plant "team" could associate competence and autonomy**
  - **could reject directions from another company (minimized "direct" technical contacts to mitigate the risk of going to local hierarchy approval for every single point raised outside the company, in a culture where we assessed power distance is STRONG)**

# Example 2

- Geo-political factors (activity planned to be performed by Bielorussians partners) :
  - Minsk site with highly-qualified programmers, project manager assumed low reliability in productivity estimates... (due to geo-political background of former communists countries)
  - Risk analysis highlighted project plan major concern as remote activity was on critical path...

# Example 2 : mitigation

- Move a team of 10 Bielorussian programmers in London, under strong technical team leader
- Project manager could easily/frequently visit the team/make status with the team (direct contact) and the team leader (formal progress status, risk analysis...)

# What happenned

- **BUDGET: increased due to the "delocalization" of the team**
- **Budget Estimates were also increased to accomodate a longer (than initial plan - mitigation) stay in London**
- **Overall project ended-up under budget (no extra stay needed, delivery on time...)**
- **Same mitigation was used for next projects : Bielorussian team moved to France !**

# Conclusion

- Cultural differences make this world real fun !
- Understand and leverage them if you want to be successful !

# Rules of thumb

- **MEET the PEOPLE you work with is BEST !**
  - **At the early stages of the project (before kick-off)**
  - **Stay in key development sites long enough to get a feel... (Phillipines story...)**
  - **Buy a beer or a vodka...(if adequate !) to your peers (socialize outside)**
  - **try to minimize distance, favor proximity but use differences to maximize efficiency**