Relational Economics and Organization Governance

Julika Baumann Montecinos
Tobias Grünfelder
Josef Wieland *Editors*

A Relational View on Cultural Complexity

Implications for Theory and Practice

Relational Economics and Organization Governance

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ISSN 2662-9852 ISSN 2662-9860 (electronic)
Relational Economics and Organization Governance
ISBN 978-3-031-27453-4 ISBN 978-3-031-27454-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1

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Preface

This book is a manifestation of a learning journey that has been underway for a couple of years now, gathering people from different backgrounds around discussions on the implications of a relational view on cultural complexity. This started with the idea of conducting a Delphi study to look at concepts and determinants of transcultural competence. This project was made possible by Zeppelin University's Leadership Excellence Institute, where a theory of Relational Economics is being developed under the lead of Josef Wieland. In this context, the research group on transcultural competence with Josef Wieland as well as Julika Baumann Montecinos working as a research associate and Tobias Grünfelder and Jessica Geraldo Schwengber as doctoral students was established in 2019 to conduct various projects, one of them being the Delphi study.

With 50 experts participating in the Delphi study, the results have since driven our work and exciting academic and practical debates, including in this book, showing us that we asked relevant questions at the time. Based on the initial findings of the study, published in 2022 under the title "What if we focus on developing commonalities? Results of an international and interdisciplinary Delphi study on transcultural competence" in the International Journal of Intercultural Relations, we have now invited the members of the Delphi group to link the common findings back to their own work.

As we did in the Delphi study, we consider it promising if the focus is not only on consensus building, but also on aggregating ideas and connecting different perspectives in processes of exchange and discussion. We thus aim to drive the spirit of sharing, learning from and with each other, and co-creating meaning across cultures and disciplines—as lies at the core of our transcultural approach—and we could not be more grateful that so many experts have accepted this invitation and developed high-level contributions to this book. Taking the time to conduct an intragroup peer review process was again in line with our transcultural approach and has given us further shared insights which we appreciate a lot.

And so, this book represents an important next step on our learning journey, which we are already very excited and curious to continue. We welcome everyone to join us in this project and contribute to an ever better understanding of the potentials of a relational view of cultural complexity.

Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany — Julika Baumann Montecinos
Friedrichshafen, Germany — Tobias Grünfelder
Friedrichshafen, Germany — Josef Wieland

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Shifting Towards a Relational View

Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence: Summary and Reflections on a Call for a Relational Approach

Tobias Grünfelder and Julika Baumann Montecinos

Abstract In a world shaped by cultural complexity, knowledge about, and tolerance of, cultural differences seem to be insufficient to successfully cooperate and create value across borders. In this spirit, an international and interdisciplinary Delphi study on transcultural competence was conducted with a panel of around 50 experts. This article summarizes the main findings of this Delphi study that lays the foundations for the contributions collected in this book. As a main insight and common denominator of the study, a relational view on cultural complexity could be identified as a promising step for further debate and research. Such a relational perspective includes considering individuals and organizations in their relational context and invites cross-cultural scholarship to address cultural complexity (differences, commonalities, similarities, etc.) in its relational nature. The study findings thereby highlight that while striving for similarities would end up in homogenization, a pursuit of commonalities involves connecting and building relations that allow differences to co-exist. Against this backdrop, transcultural competence could be particularly associated with the connotation of "beyond" and thus be defined as referring to a general competence of individuals or organizations to intentionally develop new commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity. It refers to the ability and willingness to engage in context-specific processes of constructing new shared meaning and action beyond existing practices by shared experience and mutual learning as a means and result of being in relation. Accordingly, the process that the Delphi group has undergone together, including the preparation of this edited book, represents a transcultural approach in the sense of shared learning stemming from shared experience, the development of new commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity as well as the formation of a community of practice.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_1

1 Why a Relational View on Cultural Complexity?

"A Relational View on Cultural Complexity"—the title of this book builds on the findings of an international and interdisciplinary Delphi study conducted in 2020 with a group of around 50 experts, and is meant as an invitation to our field. This invitation refers to the theoretical and practical implications of a relational approach, whose possible relevance was highlighted in the results of the Delphi project. The study, which was launched as a contribution to the conceptual work on "transcultural competence", had the stated goal of exploring the determinants of developing commonalities in contexts of diversity and of engaging in transcultural cooperation and learning.

The starting point and motivation for the Delphi study arose from previous research carried out at the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin (LEIZ) on transculturality and transcultural leadership. The term "trans" was used precisely to go beyond comparative analyses of cultures and to look closer at the processes of how opportunities for cooperation can be identified and newly established. Against this background, exploring what a shift in focus to commonalities rather than differences can bring forth to pursuing such aspirations has been the research group's agenda for several years. Thus, the Delphi study built on previous works (cf. Wieland, 2016; Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2019, etc.) that shaped its conception and design, and that now allow the framing of the research questions at that time to be understood. Likewise, these conceptual origins elucidate the circumstances from which the need was derived to ask rather new, commonalities-focused questions and embark on corresponding research directions.

The substantial interest in understanding the cultural composition of cooperation constellations and in deriving corresponding implications for the productive use and expansion of cooperation corridors can thus be placed on the epistemological agenda of a theory of relational economics, which has always seen itself as an interdisciplinary project (Baumann Montecinos, 2022; Biggiero et al., 2022; Wieland, 2020, 2022). The rationale for this interest seems obvious, given the observation of complex global networks of economic and social value creation that literally cross borders, involving not only manifold challenges but possibly also opportunities for individual and organizational cooperation and learning. It is against this background that the Delphi study questions were formulated, and the extent and quality of participation in the study allow the interpretation that these are relevant questions to our field.

Over many decades, researchers from different disciplines (social psychology, organizational theory, communication studies, anthropology, and many others), as well as practitioners, have produced a wealth of knowledge helping to understand cultural differences and their effects on various aspects of business, management, and communication in general. Accordingly, intercultural management and intercultural training for organizations have, for a long time, very often been concerned with the identification of and appropriate, effective handling of cultural differences. Pioneers and advocates of the recognition of the factor "culture" in management literature, such as Geert Hofstede (1991), Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner

(2012), Richard Lewis (1996), the authors of the Globe study (2012), and others, have provided cultural dimensions with comparative concepts for national cultures. These are undoubtedly seminal concepts, and the result of decades of thoughtful and thorough work that are now increasingly facing the desire for approaches that move beyond comparative concepts and take into account the complexity and fuzziness of cultural belonging and co-creation (e.g., Bolten, 2020; Bennett, 2017, 2020; Philipps & Sackmann, 2015). In this context, the call for "more positive cross-cultural scholarship" (Barmeyer & Franklin, 2016; Stahl & Tung, 2015) or "reconciliation of cultural dilemmas" (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012) that strengthens the productive potentials of diversity, e.g., in terms of innovation and creativity and of leveraging the benefits of cultural diversity, is receiving increasing attention, including current debates on corresponding concepts of competence and learning (Bennett, 2020; Bolten, 2020; Deardorff, 2020; Henze, 2020; Nazarkiewicz, 2020; Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 43).

The Delphi study findings point in this direction and indicate that taking a relational view of cultural complexity could be a promising step for further debate and research. Such a relational perspective includes considering individuals and organizations in their relational context and invites cross-cultural scholarship to address cultural complexity (differences, commonalities, similarities, etc.) in its relational nature. Following the work of Kenneth J. Gergen, "the relational view offers an alternative to the individualist tradition (methodological individualism)" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 43) and is "grounded in a constructionist epistemology which holds that meaning (i.e., how people make sense of themselves and the world) is generated and sustained in the context of ongoing relationships" (Gergen, 1994). Accordingly, in relational theory, individuals are not merely independent entities who enter into relationships, but rather relational constructions themselves that are made and remade in unfolding relational processes (Crevani & Endrissat, 2016; McCauley & Palus, 2021). Such an approach does not consider "individuals as being detached from context and as possessing a fixed set of competences, and thus ties in with an ongoing discussion in the field of intercultural relations (Chi & Suthers, 2015; Martin, 2015; Szkudlarek et al., 2020) and the social sciences in general (for examples in relational sociology see Emirbayer, 1997; Donati, 2011; Donati & Archer, 2015; Stegbauer, 2002, 2008; in relational psychology see Gergen, 2009; in relational cultural studies see Bolten, 2014; in linguistics see Spencer-Oatey, 2011; in relational leadership see Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012; in relational economics see Biggiero et al., 2022; Wieland, 2020; in sustainability studies see Walsh et al., 2020)" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 43). It is against this backdrop that a relational approach, as it similarly resulted throughout the Delphi project and thus confirmed the aforementioned trends in the field, could be considered "as a method used to understand, analyze and productively deal with cultural complexity" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 43).

Culture is then in itself a complex relational process, which can be described after Jürgen Bolten (2014) as a network of multiple dynamics of reciprocity between polyrelational collectives and multi-relational individual actors. The concept of cultural complexity, as Sonja Sackmann puts it, "encompasses both ideas: simultaneously

existing multiple cultures that may contribute to a homogenous, differentiated, and/or fragmented cultural context" (Sackmann, 1997, p. 2). In a nutshell, the use of the term cultural complexity is intended to be a call to rethink static categories and boundaries that often simplify and do not adequately reflect the conditions of real life. This call rather aims to consider aspects such as contextuality, the role of practical experience, as well as dynamic processes of relationing and belonging, which might already be indicated here as some central insights from the Delphi project. This includes the assumption of a co-existence and interdependence of differences and commonalities which may lead to the creation of new commonalities beyond existing cooperative realities.

It is against this backdrop that this book aims to take the results of the Delphi study further and offers the authors the opportunity to elaborate on those findings from their particular perspectives. All contributions to this book involve experts from the Delphi study group and take the findings as a common reference point. This represents our intention, as editors and initiators of the Delphi project, to provide a space for further theoretical and practical reflection and interpretation of its results. In addition, the authors were invited to formulate a few "Questions to ponder" at the end of each chapter to trigger further thoughts and research and maintain this shared explorative spirit.

In order to pave the way for this endeavor, this introductory chapter will summarize the main Delphi findings and provide an overview of the book's content. In doing so, we will combine the overall results, which have already been published elsewhere,[1] with some aspects that we would like to highlight from the qualitative data from Delphi Round 3 and which, especially with regard to individual in-depth chapters in this book, provide what we consider to be a helpful introduction to the content of this volume.

2 Structure and Composition of the Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence

In order to contextualize the Delphi results, some background information about the methodological approach, the composition of the expert group, and the content structure of the study will be provided.

As for the method, a Delphi study is a multi-stage written process for structuring anonymous communication within a larger group of experts, which can be used

[1] The following elaborations are based in part on a journal article published in the International Journal of Intercultural Relations (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). There, the first results of the Delphi study are presented, including access to the questionnaires of all rounds. Permission to reuse parts of this article was granted to us by the journal editor. In this introductory chapter to the book at hand, we summarize those findings and cite this article as a reference and for further analysis.

for different reasons and purposes, such as idea aggregation, prediction of facts, determination of expert views, and consensus finding (Häder, 2014, p. 30). For the Transcultural Competence Delphi process, a combination of idea aggregation, determination of expert views, and consensus finding types was used, and it followed the appropriate methods as introduced by Michael Häder (2014, p. 31ff): The idea aggregation type uses only qualitative questions and evaluations, aiming to produce as many ideas as possible. In the case of the determination of the expert views type, various expert opinions are subjected to quantifiable evaluation and subsequently tested to ascertain whether or not they are accepted by a majority. The consensus finding type triggers the group process through feedback and aims to achieve the highest possible degree of consensus among the participants. Delphi studies have been used in several disciplines (e.g., Hunter, 2005; Kozak & Iefremova, 2014; etc.). In the field of intercultural communication, the Delphi study of Darla Deardorff (2006) on intercultural competence and how it is measured is well known and has inspired further research and debate (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 43).

The present study was conducted in three rounds in 2020,[2] and an internal conference was subsequently held to discuss the interim results within the group of experts. In the first round, four open-ended questions were asked to generate input and ideas from the experts, and the responses were analyzed using qualitative methods. In the second round, the items and some comments derived from the first round were presented to the experts for quantitative rating and further qualitative input. Building on that, the third round compiled the highest ranked items and selected comments from round two for bundled assessment. In all rounds, the experts were free to comment. Thus, in addition to the goal of reaching consensus, the aim was always to aggregate further input and ideas.

2.1 Composition of the Group of Experts

The understanding and choice of the Delphi method goes hand in hand with the recognition that the experts' input has a central role, from the combination and moderation of which the results emerge collaboratively across the study rounds. Accordingly, Theodore J. Gordon describes the expertise of the Delphi participants as being key to the success of such studies (Gordon, 2009).

The composition of the group of experts for this Delphi study is summarized in the following overview:

[2] For a detailed description of the three rounds and the respective questionnaires, see Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 44 and appendix).

Composition of the expert group of the Delphi study on Transcultural Competence

Delphi group size and country of origin:
47 experts (23 female and 24 male) from 14 different countries (Austria, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Slovakia, South Africa, Sudan, UK, USA, and Zambia).

Different disciplinary backgrounds:
- Anthropology (9 experts),
- Cultural sciences (11),
- Economics (10),
- Psychology (13),
- Sociology (11)
- Others (e.g., philosophy, communication theory, and linguistics).

Practitioners with extensive experience:
Over 30 experts have experience in practice as a cross-cultural trainer or consultant.

Selection criteria (following Adler & Ziglio, 1996; Gordon, 2009):
To participate, at least two out of these three criteria had to be fulfilled:

(a) high level of relevant education and experience
(b) expertise recognized by a third party and/or
(c) academic contributions to the field of interculturality or transculturality

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, pp. 44–45).

2.2 *Delphi Study Questions*

The Delphi study on transcultural competence explored four questions that built on each other.

Questions of the Delphi study on Transcultural Competence
Question 1: "Cultures and their diversity impact social interactions between people. In your opinion, why do people perceive and/or evaluate this cultural diversity as being negative or positive?"

Question 2: "In social interactions, culture is characterized by both differences and commonalities. In your view, what are the defining characteristics of cultural commonalities? What can be new cultural commonalities developed in social interactions?"

Question 3: "In your opinion, which competences are required to identify existing cultural commonalities, and which competences are required to develop new cultural commonalities, on an individual level and on an organizational level?"

Question 4: "What differences do you see between (the terms) intercultural competence and transcultural competence?"

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 44).

All Delphi study questions were pre-tested, and the whole process was accompanied by a monitoring team composed of four academics with expertise in qualitative and quantitative analysis (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 44). The qualitative analysis was guided by the works of Mayring (2008, 2015) and Gläser and Laudel (2010). In the following, the qualitative and quantitative results of the Delphi study are presented, and some notable observations added.

3 Findings of the Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence

In the following, the main findings of the Delphi study are presented and will be linked to the chapters of this book. As mentioned, the book aims to take the common findings of the Delphi study further and invites the authors to elaborate on those from their particular perspectives.

3.1 Question 1: Determinants of the Perception and/or Evaluation of Cultural Diversity

The first question was intended to aggregate ideas on the multiple causes that shape a negative or positive perception and/or evaluation of cultural diversity. The answers of the experts were categorized, and a distinction between individual and collective factors was made. At the individual level, the following factors were considered to be most important (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 45):

Answers to Delphi question 1: Individual-level determinants of the perception and/or evaluation of cultural diversity[3]

- "Feeling threatened (negative) or affirmed (positive) e.g., concerning one's own identity or group identity, stability, belief and value system, etc. [4.34 | 0.62]
- Socialization and the social environment, especially in early stages [4.32 | 0.82]
- The worldview (an ethnocentric worldview leading to a more negative and an ethno-relative worldview leading to a more positive evaluation and/or perception of cultural diversity) [4.26 | 0.78]
- Negative or positive experiences [4.19 | 0.78]

- Personality traits such as curiosity and openness (towards diversity, uncertainty, novelty, ambiguity) [4.11 | 0.77]
- Self-image and self-assurance [4.02 | 0.83]
- The frequency of exposure to cultural diversity [4 | 0.89]
- The qualitative level of exposure to cultural diversity [3.96 | 0.93]
- Ability to bond with others and get along in situations that are 'outside one's comfort zone' [3.96 | 0.79]"

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 45).

At the collective level, the following factors were considered to be most important (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 45):

Answers to Delphi question 1: Collective-level determinants of the perception and/or evaluation of cultural diversity

- "Media portrayals [4.13 | 0.93]
- History/collective memory [4.06 | 0.77]
- Public discourse/public debate [4.04 | 0.73].
- The level of inequality (e.g., distribution of wealth, political and economic power) [4 | 0.79]"

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 45).

In Round 3, 78% of the experts agreed with this aggregation and evaluation of factors considered important in Rounds 1 and 2, while 2% disagreed and 20% were undecided.

Based on these findings, selected observations, statements, and further insights from all three Delphi rounds regarding Question 1 are briefly introduced (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, pp. 45–46). This includes specific aspects that were highlighted by members of the expert group in their comments throughout the study, as well as perspectives that some authors of this book will elaborate on further in their respective chapters.

To begin with the individual determinants, it seems pertinent to emphasize the contextual nature of the perception and evaluation of cultural diversity. As the group of experts continued to point out in the course of the study, the specific situation and context play an important role here—an aspect that is consistent with the basic assumptions of a relational view and thereby confirms existing literature and long-standing discussions in our field (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Harush et al., 2018; Martin & Nakayama, 2015; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021).

[3] The results of the quantitative analysis for Round 2 are presented in square brackets: [mean | standard deviation], the mean referring back to the Likert scale used in Round 2 (1 = Not important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Moderately important, 4 = Important, 5 = Very important).

This context-dependency is considered to be especially relevant with regard to the role attributed to individual personality, to which the following 'strongly agreed-on' statements refer when they remark that "[o]ne and the same person may perceive and evaluate cultural diversity as being positive or negative, depending on the situation and context" [4.06 | 0.90], and that "even within the same culture, members' perceptions of, and attitudes towards specific cultures and cultural diversity, in general, can fundamentally differ" [4.51 | 0.54]. As far as contextuality is concerned, one aspect to be mentioned is that experts pointed to the relevance of determinants that are not mainly connected to cultural differences, but that goal or interest compatibility may also impact the perception and evaluation of diversity. Accordingly, one expert stated that "[w]hen the goals and interests of different cultural groups are not sufficiently compatible or aligned, differences tend to be seen as negative." In addition, another expert emphasized that "some elements might be tagged with 'different culture' that are rather based on 'different interests'".

At the same time, the experts specifically stressed that the experiences that individuals have then matter for their perception and evaluation of cultural diversity. However, one expert pointed out that "it doesn't have to exclusively be a positive experience; what is more important is that people have reflected on the experience and been able to find meaning in it" [4.43 | 0.57] (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 45).

The contributions of Sabine Aydt as well as Nadine Binder and Jana Hollá in this book, which address the central role of experiences and experience-based learning for the thematic fields of the Delphi study, should already be referred to at this point. In her chapter, Sabine Aydt argues that if we intentionally use "felt meaning" in the process of creation of meaning, we can also create a sense of belonging. She thereby answers what is meant by experiencing and "felt meaning" building on Eugene Gendlin's theory (1962). Nadine Binder and Jana Hollá show in their chapter, from a practitioner's perspective and informed by their combined experiences of designing and facilitating learning interventions, how experiential learning methodology can contribute to the development of relational competences and how it should be favoured when seeking to design effective intercultural learning events.

Furthermore, aspects related to selected collective determinants were also pointed out during the study, especially concerning the role of history, collective memory, and inequality. One expert's comment highlights "the role of historical and biographical experiences (individual and collective) and projections following from these. In my view, the differentiation between positive co-construction of commonalities in the here and now and any evaluation (either negative or positive) is a question reacting to a present challenge or to a historical/biographical established and formative pattern." This statement seems to hint at a discussion on the impact of power relations and power distribution, which has also accompanied the debate on the other Delphi questions and will be taken up further later in this chapter.

In addition to the important role of context and historical backgrounds, a process perspective that moves beyond binary concepts is given high relevance when it comes to the perception and/or evaluation of cultural diversity. To briefly address some

responses to Question 1, including rather critical voices, this quote from an expert may trigger further thoughts: “Focusing on evaluations of diversity along the positive/negative binary does not seem to be a productive way to engage in it, since it forecloses insights into the complexity of experiencing, evaluating and living diversity.” In this spirit, the idea of considering “diversity as a process - neither negative nor positive - to build something else, a negotiated cultural heterogeneity, depending on context and resources of the actors” was positively pointed out.

Based on this brief account of selected discussions within the Delphi study, a number of follow-up questions can be formulated which, in turn, are intended to underline the character of the project, namely, to offer starting points for further, more far-reaching research.

Questions to ponder

- How are the individual and collective perception and evaluation connected?
- How do perception and evaluation relate to each other?
- Are attitudes fixed in the individual? What is the role of context?
- What implications can be made from these findings for specific areas such as politics, education, business, economics, etc.?

3.2 Question 2: Cultural Commonalities and New Cultural Commonalities

The second question of the Delphi study “focused on the defining characteristics of cultural commonalities, as well as new commonalities developed in social interactions. … [I]ts intended purpose was to shift the focus to the potential and role of commonalities in culturally diverse settings. As an overall observation on this question, the ambiguity but also the potential of the term ‘cultural commonality’ became apparent in all three rounds. There seems to be both a universal and a constructive understanding of the term. Although the group of experts agreed on certain aspects that are shared by all humans, and thus referred to a universal understanding of commonalities for these attributions, it should be noted that the group mainly adopted a constructive perspective in the sense that cultural commonalities were assumed to be developed in social interactions. Consequently, the following results largely reflect such an understanding” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 46).

In terms of the characteristics of cultural commonalities, 74% of the experts agreed with the following definition, 11% disagreed, and 15% were undecided (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47):

Answers to Delphi question 2: Characteristics of cultural commonalities

> "Cultural commonalities can be shared, acquired, disseminated, integrated, negotiated or changed, and involve a means of coordinating meaning. They can be shared ways of thinking, feeling and/or acting. Cultural commonalities can consist of affective, cognitive and/or behavioral components: there can be a feeling of similarity, familiarity or belonging (affective); a shared understanding of a concept, value, norm or belief (cognitive); and/or somewhat similar expressions - routines, practices, ways of solving problems - of that shared understanding (behavioral). In particular, cultural commonalities manifest themselves in shared experiences, practices and ways of solving problems; shared values and assumptions; shared belief systems; shared behaviors, rituals and habits; and shared norms."

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 47).

In terms of this proposal for a compiled definition of new commonalities developed in social interaction, 78% of the experts agreed with this definition, 4% disagreed, and 18% were undecided (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47):

Answers to Delphi question 2: Characteristics of new commonalities

> "New cultural commonalities developed in social interaction require a willingness to continue learning from each other. They can emerge (unconsciously) and/or be developed (consciously) and can be described as a process of co-creation. New cultural commonalities can be a result of learning processes (learning together, learning from each other), dialogue, as well as shared experiences, especially emotionally rich ones, that pave the way for new shared experiences. However, developing new cultural commonalities should not imply homogenization. There are many different ways in which people can learn from each other and beneficially grow through social interactions, resulting in new commonalities that are not merely destructive of the old ways."

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 47).

As an important remark to start with, during the group process of elaborating on these definitions over the three Delphi rounds, it was pointed out that the terms "commonalities" and "culture" overlap somewhat and that this might be a promising field for future conceptual work.

In the overall view of the results for Question 2, the following aspects should be particularly emphasized: Firstly, it was pointed out that similarities are not the same as commonalities. As was highlighted throughout the rounds, there is a distinction between being similar and sharing a commonality. Accordingly, while striving for similarities would end up in homogenization, a pursuit of commonalities involves connecting and building relations that allow differences to co-exist.

This concept of coexistence is taken further in the following expert quote: “[I]t’s like deciding to focus on left rather than right. Similarity and difference are complementary definitions, which is why it only makes sense to ask how we construct similarity/difference dialectics.” This call to move beyond binary concepts is also reflected in the following ‘strongly agreed-on’ statement: “In the present era of interconnectedness and interdependence, and with the trends of migration, globalization and internet-based dissemination of common frames of reference, concepts of third culture building are needed rather than a binary opposition of ‘either/or’ [4.04 | 0.92]”.

The question of how to deal appropriately with the coexistence of, and particularly with the relationship between differences and commonalities were intensively discussed throughout the study. One statement that met with high approval in the expert group referred to the observation that “[a]s regards the relationship between differences and commonalities, there is a tendency to over-emphasize the importance of cultural differences, which makes people ignore or be ‘blind’ to commonalities. Self-awareness and reflection are needed to understand the real differences and commonalities to/with others [4.13 | 0.64]”, as well as to the call that “[w]e need to understand differences AND commonalities, including the fluid and situation-dependent co-creation of cultural commonalities, which the actors discover together in order to build new cultural commonalities [4.09 | 0.99]” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47).

Importantly, one expert noted that “[t]he idea of ‘commonality’ as transcendent as opposed to integrative of cultural differences is marginal in the responses. For example, the respondents mostly agreed on the importance of maintaining the idea of cultural difference, but complexifying it and adding an interactive dimension”. Given all of the different aspects, it was further pointed out “that, depending on the situation and context, developing new cultural commonalities may not always be an appropriate objective” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). This is clearly connected to the observations that commonalities are not similarities, not an end per se and the relation between differences and commonalities needs to be considered.

For all the strong agreement with these quotes on the role of commonalities, there were also voices observing that this focus should not prevent us from recognizing and further exploring the importance of cultural differences, and the question was raised as to how feasible it is to focus on new commonalities without missing the opportunity for a deeper understanding and identification of cultural differences (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47). Accordingly, one expert emphasized that “[m]ost of these statements seem to include the idea that ‘new commonalities’ are co-constructions that serve an interactive purpose beyond simple identification, while they do not seek to supplant (complex) cultural identification.” In this context, one expert referred to Laray M. Barna (1994) who described the “‘assumption of similarities’ as one of the most important stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. If we focus on new commonalities without respecting differences, e.g., in communication style or understanding of leadership etc., we might not understand

the cultural reasons for (future) conflicts created by existing differences and thus attribute these conflicts to 'personality traits', 'human nature', … I believe the challenge is in making constructive use of the differences as a tool for understanding others' value systems without fostering deterministic or static views of these differences serving as an excuse for failure in cross-cultural cooperation. This is where finding and addressing commonalities can help. So the best approach will be to balance between commonalities and differences."

On the other hand, the experience was shared that "it is possible for a leader to create new commonalities without necessarily having an in-depth understanding of the nature of the differences. The new commonalities are born out of shared experiences."

In an attempt to summarize this discussion raised by the Delphi group concerning the role of cultural differences, their relevance should not be neglected, while on the other hand, they should not be considered as preventing possible cooperation and learning opportunities. The briefly outlined considerations on the coexistence of differences and commonalities and the corresponding aspect of balancing, mentioned by several Delphi experts, are taken further by Yih-Teen Lee and Shawn Quinn in their chapter in this book. The authors apply the principles of dynamic balancing to "seeking commonality while preserving difference (求同存異)" in intercultural interaction, and discuss how this approach can enable managers to foster collaboration more effectively when leading across cultures.

With all this, however, the risk was described that "commonalities may reflect assumptions and power identities more than they reflect truly shared understanding. In short, it is about verbs (e.g., appreciating cultural differences and recognizing commonalities) rather than nouns (differences and commonalities) [4.07 | 0.81]" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47). The issue of whether a call for a focus on commonalities can sometimes be seen critically, a question associated with the power relations addressed several times in the study, is reminiscent of the concerns of an intersectional approach and accompanied by the interpretation of the Delphi results throughout the process. It remains a crucial question of how to handle the balancing between differences and commonalities when unequal partners cooperate. The contributions of various authors to this volume take up this question and discuss it more intensively, including insights from post-colonial approaches.

These are Valerie V. V. Gruber, Gilbert Shang Ndi and Rigoberto Banguero Velasco, who argue in their chapter that transcultural interactions should strengthen diverse identities and enable a mutually respectful (re)invention of cultural practices to which different social groups can contribute on an equal footing. In this way, they emphasize that transculturality must come with conditions regarding historical awareness and inclusion in order to be considered attractive and beneficial by all participants. In their chapter, Werner Zips and Angelica V. Marte identify and analyze the fact that "tempocentrism" can be described as a key impediment for triggering cultural competence for substantial participatory co-creation. Finally, their departure from anthropocentrism and tempocentrism can be translated into implications for inclusive leadership transformation and transcultural organizational change.

Michelle J. Cummings-Koether and Oscar Blanco address the topic of "gatekeeping" in the scientific world and provide an analysis of the discussions that took place during the Delphi expert group conference. They conclude that more awareness and further examination into how gatekeeping manifests itself would be necessary in order to make the community more inclusive and thus pave the way to finding solutions.

Based on the presented observations on the Delphi study findings and outlooks on chapters of this book, some questions for further research can also be suggested following question 2:

Questions to ponder

- What are the implications of assuming the coexistence of commonalities and differences as being mutually related?
- What could further conceptual sharpening not only of the understanding of "cultural commonality" and "cultural difference", but particularly of their interrelation look like?
- What role can commonalities play as vehicles to build connections and relationships among members from different cultures?

3.3 Question 3: Competences for Identifying and Developing Commonalities

Delphi Question 3 "aims at creating a list of competences that are required for the identification of existing cultural commonalities and the development of new ones. In this regard, both the individual level and the organizational level are investigated. As for the background to this question, the distinction between 'identification of existing commonalities' and 'development of new commonalities' can be traced back to previous conceptual work on transcultural leadership (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2019). Naturally, and this was confirmed by the group's feedback, the two are closely interconnected. The same is stated for the listed items, which the experts considered to be interrelated" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 48).

In Round 3, the following lists of individual-level competences for identifying existing commonalities and developing new ones were reflected back to the group of experts (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, pp. 48–49).[4]

[4] The square brackets represent the sum of all assessments in Round 2, in which the experts were asked to select and rank the items that resulted from Round 1.

Answers to Delphi question 3: Individual-level competences: Identifying commonalities

- **“Cultural self-awareness and self-reflective consciousness [240]**

Being aware of yourself and your own culture, and assuming agency

- **Empathy and perspective-taking abilities [207]**

Demonstrating empathy and appreciation for other people(s) and seeking to understand how they feel and what informs their perspective

- **Open-mindedness [123]**

Being open-minded and curious about others and the world

- **Active listening [116]**

Listening actively, carefully and with maximum receptivity

- **Critical self-reflection [111]**

Demonstrating critical self-reflection

- **Meta-level thinking [101]**

Being able to think in overarching contexts, to see beneath the surface and explore underlying intentions

- **Recognizing differences and commonalities [98]**

Recognizing the coexistence of differences and commonalities

- **Context sensitivity [85]**

Being sensitive of the specific situation and context

- **Being non-judgmental [79]**

Being able to withhold and postpone judgment

- **Respect [77]**

Articulating your understanding and behaving in a way that shows respect for others.”

Source: Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder (2022, pp. 48–49).

Answers to Delphi question 3: Individual-level competences: Developing commonalities

- **“Ambiguity tolerance [203]**

Tolerating and embracing ambiguity, uncertainty and complexity

- **Learning and growth mindset [184]**

Cultivating a learning mindset and remaining ready and willing to learn and grow

- **Flexibility and adaptability [169]**

Remaining flexible and adaptive in your interactions with others

- **Creativity [127]**
Being creative and using creative thinking to develop new solutions, strategies and alternatives

- **Meta-communication [101]**
Being willing and able to engage in meta-communication to review the development process of new cultural commonalities, e.g., by using metaphors to bridge gaps

- **Openness towards change [97]**
Being convinced that changing the status quo is possible

- **Creating a "third culture" [91]**
Intentionally working toward the creation of a "third culture" that is neither "yours" nor "mine"

- **Shared practical experience [83]**
Doing something together and creating shared meaning and memory out of this shared practical experience

- **Facilitating relational processes [77]**
Being able to motivate others to take part in the process of relationship building and being able to facilitate such a process

- **Meta-cognitive ability [72]**
Being able to see interactions from the outside and demonstrating higher-order thinking skills"

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, pp. 48–49).

"In Round 3, 81% of the experts agreed with the list of competences required for identifying existing commonalities, whereas 4% disagreed and 15% were undecided. In addition, 83% of the experts agreed with the list of competences required for developing new commonalities, while 6% disagreed and 11% were undecided" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 48).

Also, for "the organizational level, the competences determined by the experts in Rounds 1 and 2 to be particularly important were bundled into one list and reflected back to the experts in Round 3" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 48).

Answers to Delphi question 3: Organizational-level competences: Identifying and developing commonalities

- **"Inclusive atmosphere [219]**
Creating an inclusive and sharing atmosphere and environment that emphasizes positive learning towards cultural diversity

- **Organizational learning [134]**
Strengthening organizational learning, e.g., with a diversity management program and other provisions integrated into business processes

- **Openness [133]**
Being open to developing a (partly) new corporate culture and new ideas on working together

- **Diversity-leveraging structures [132]**
Changing the structures, processes and rules to safeguard and leverage diversity

- **Leadership skills [126]**
Conducting active and trustworthy leadership capable of accommodating group dynamics, managing conflict and building consensus

- **Shared corporate culture [121]**
Involving people with different backgrounds in shaping the organization's culture

- **Collective self-reflection [109]**
Establishing critical structural and cultural self-introspection within the organization

- **Collective self-awareness [105]**
Establishing a collective self-awareness of the organizational culture and brand

- **Awareness and acceptance of power distribution [97]**
Strengthening awareness of issues concerning power and privilege

- **Awareness and acceptance of power distribution [97]**
Consciously making decisions and taking actions to develop new commonalities

- **Focus on commonalities [86]**
Focusing on common goals, objectives and values to promote the organization's effectiveness and wellbeing"

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 48)

"In Round 3, 70% of the experts agreed with this bundled list, while 6% disagreed and 24% were undecided. The relatively high proportion of undecided responses here is remarkable, and may indicate that the experts found it difficult to attribute competences to organizations" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 49).

In the following, selected observations and statements from all three Delphi rounds, as well as connections to book chapters can be made on these results. First and foremost, the limited suitability and explanatory power of competence lists need to be addressed. As highlighted during the group process, every competence list carries the risk of incompleteness, oversimplification and incoherence (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 50). Sometimes causal links between different components are erroneously drawn (e.g., certain knowledge leads to certain attitudes). Furthermore, competence lists may lack the consideration of specific contexts, all reasons to recommend interpreting the presented competence lists carefully. Keeping this rather limited claim of explanation in mind, a few selected aspects concerning competences as addressed in this Delphi study will be highlighted and discussed.

Regarding the important question of how the described competences relate to the aspect of contextuality, one expert suggested "thinking in terms of higher-order competencies, i.e., what enables us to have better relations, communication, and

collaboration in contexts characterized by varying degrees of perceived familiarity, complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty. (…) it might help us to identify what we should teach and foster from a young age as general competencies that help individuals to manage all sorts of diversity, complexity, ambiguity, etc." Such a view can be related to the "cultural self-awareness and self-reflective consciousness", "learning and growth mindset", "meta-communication" and "meta-cognitive ability" and other items that resulted as part of the competence list. In this regard, the listed competences could be seen as a collection aiming at the description of a general competence to deal with cultural complexity and to develop new shared meanings and actions. One expert critically adds here that "[s]eeing competencies as individual characteristics, such as a mix of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, is very Western individualistic. What about notions like harmony of psychology notions such as 'extended mind'?" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 50).

Against the backdrop of viewing competences as a mix of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, it was noted that the expert group had placed considerable emphasis on behavioral aspects. Furthermore, one expert also took the discussion further by stating that "[i]n the next step, this perspective could be combined with a call to move away from competences fixed in a person (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge) and instead use relations as the unit of analysis, which would then lead to viewing competences as a more general 'condition'" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 50).

As already mentioned, one expert pointed out that the combination of different competence components is crucial: "ambiguity tolerance needs to be combined with knowing where there is certainty" and "flexibility needs to be combined with stability". Moreover, the influence of a concrete context on the required competences (e.g., listening skills or specific language skills) is also reflected in the list with the call for "Context sensitivity - Being sensitive of the specific situation and context".

The importance of shared experiences, which had already been emphasized in response to Question 1, was also echoed in the responses to Question 3, and one expert commented that "from today's perspective, I would rank shared practical experience much higher. Doing something together is the basic framework in which it is important to find common ground. On the other hand, the question arises as to whether this is a competence or a framework condition".

As far as controversial discussions on particular aspects are concerned, it can be emphasized for Question 3 that the listed competence "Being non-judgmental - Being able to withhold and postpone judgment" was highly debated in the expert group. It was mentioned by the experts that being judgmental is not always negative, should be seen as a temporary state in a process (otherwise, it could lead to cultural relativism), is to some extent part of human nature and not being judgmental does not mean that a person has no judgmental opinions at all. Awareness of judgments and how they could hinder cooperation seems to be crucial here. One expert shared that he or she was "uncomfortable thinking we have solved the problems that inure to cultural relativism so as to be able to avoid it, or that we should assert that being judgmental is inherent to human nature, as some people develop being non-judgmental as a spiritual practice."

Another competence that was discussed intensively on the organizational level was “the awareness and acceptance of power distribution - strengthening awareness of issues concerning power and privilege”, a debate that had already been raised concerning the first two Delphi questions and continued at this point. One expert concluded that “it has always been important to critically reflect upon who defines differences and commonalities, but especially when we talk about commonalities we need to include a critical view on who has how much power and if it is a true co-creation between members of social groups who might have different perceived power and authority, this once more reinforces my feeling that we need a truly interdisciplinary view, which also includes insights and ideas from areas such as post-colonial studies”. In this regard, we perceive the interdisciplinary Delphi study as one initial step in an ongoing discussion and that the term commonality could also foster fruitful discussion around power distribution, tying into ongoing debates about intersectionality. In addition, it was made clear that also the wider social context, which allows organizations to exist and function, has not been sufficiently addressed. Judith N. Martin (2015) concluded in a similar way that we need to “acknowledge that power relations are part of every intercultural encounter and that all encounters (and notions of competence) are impacted (and constrained) by larger societal, historical, political forces”.

On a further note, we would like to particularly emphasize the listed competence “Creating a third culture - intentionally working toward the creation of a ‘third culture’ that is neither yours nor mine”, as it refers to the understanding that the openness and willingness to go beyond simple recognition and tolerance and develop new shared meanings and understanding was evident throughout the Delphi study. The listed item “Openness towards change. Being convinced that changing the status quo is possible” can be interpreted accordingly and hints at the potential offer of a transcultural approach that highlights the intentional creation of new commonalities beyond existing realities.

On the organizational level, the item “Leadership skills - conducting active and trustworthy leadership capable of accommodating group dynamics, managing conflict and building consensus” was perceived as highly relevant by the Delphi group. As an outlook, it can be indicated here that Sonja Sackmann elaborates in her contribution to this book on the observation that a certain kind of leadership and leadership behavior is needed to benefit from cultural complexity and to overcome its associated challenges. In her chapter, the multiple cultural contexts of an organization are addressed with a relational understanding of leadership—a “mutual dance” is needed to achieve results when leading in a culturally complex work setting. In another contribution to this book, Nikola Hale provides an approach for collaborative spaces, named multilogue, to enable transcultural learning through collaboration in diversity. A “collaborative multilogue space” needs to be carefully created and can foster psychological safety for inclusive collaboration, building on the attributes of quality, intention, composition, context, and purpose that she identifies in her chapter. And finally, Eithne Knappitsch shows how leaders and workers in remote work environments are being unmade, made, and remade through dynamic relational processes mediated by technology and embedded wholly or partly in new virtual contexts.

Understanding leadership in global virtual teams is critical as more and more organizations are using culturally diverse, dispersed teams to remain flexible and agile while reducing costs, to share knowledge and information efficiently, and to acquire talent.

The observation that the formulation of a corresponding list of competences raises the follow-up question of how this can be reflected in practical implementations is of concern to many experts in our group, and also to authors in this book. In her chapter, Darla K. Deardorff introduces the tool UNESCO Story Circles, as a way to deepen connections and relationships among humans through practicing intercultural competencies. Uwe Ulrich, Hartmut Stiffel and Blerina Buzhala use the example of the German Armed Forces to show how the topic of culture and cultural exchange is addressed in their education programs. The authors give an overview of their experiences with cultural didactics and conclude that certain didactics must be consolidated and further developed through the lens of a relational approach. In another chapter that follows the Delphi results introduced here, Fons Trompenaars and Peter Woolliams take a relational perspective on the recruitment process of organizations and propose a new conceptual framework centred around Dyer and Singh's approach to achieve relational rents.

The presented synopsis of selected results for Question 3 should also be further opened with a collection of possible follow-up questions:

Questions to ponder

- How are the competences and their components interrelated and interdependent, both within the lists and between the individual and the organizational level?
- If the unit of analysis is not the individual, but the relationship, what are the consequences in terms of competences?
- To what extent are competences fixed in a person (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge), and how far do they reside "between" and even "beyond" people in a context?
- What are the implications of the discussed aspects for training and practice?

3.4 Question 4: Observations and Reflections on the Term "Transcultural Competence"

Finally, the fourth question addresses possible terminological and conceptual differences between "intercultural competence" and "transcultural competence" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). This question was

discussed among a subset of the Delphi group (20 experts) without the goal of arriving at a final distinction or definition, but rather of mapping the current state of discussion. Concerning conceptual considerations on the terms transculturality and transcultural competence, previous works (Ortiz, 1947/1995; Welsch, 1999; Benessaieh, 2010; Glover & Friedman, 2015; etc.) have provided starting points for our debate.

In the following section, only a brief overview of certain tendencies that emerged from Question 4 is provided. A deeper analysis of the data on this question is beyond the scope and goal of this introductory chapter, so as to appropriately present the entire conceptual discussion and its implications. This is left to further chapters of this book and to future publications that may take these topics further. Accordingly, our aim for this introductory chapter is to provide aggregated insights concerning the use of the two terms in order to inform the debate and pave the way for possible new definitions and understandings in the future. This short overview should therefore be considered as an invitation to take the discussion further and not to arrive at a terminological consensus.

When looking at the findings on Question 4, some overall observations will be made. First of all, it needs to be highlighted that "some experts saw a clear distinction between the terms and concepts of intercultural and transcultural competence, while others considered them to be interchangeable" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 51). To some experts, the distinction is etymologically simple: "trans = beyond" refers to creating a third way (common or not), while "inter = between" often refers to knowledge, acceptance and tolerance.

Furthermore, some experts argued that intercultural competence refers more to culture-specific knowledge, and transcultural competence refers more to culture-general knowledge. In this sense, intercultural competence would focus on the specific attributes of cultures, while transcultural competence rather involves being able to adapt to any culturally complex situation, regardless of the specifics. In this regard, however, one expert asked: "In a multicultural group (diversity) there is the question to whom you adapt? We have to go further than adaptation". Another expert highlighted that "the term transcultural competence is not a necessary alternative if the meaning is still 'the successful pursuit of intercultural relations', where such relations necessarily recognize both cultural commonalities and cultural uniqueness. (…) A use of the term transcultural competence that I find interesting is to refer to the quality of 'transaction' rather than 'interaction' across cultures. In this use, the outcome of a transaction is some form of mutual adaptation or third culture, while the outcome of interaction is simply acceptance of the difference". It seems that this nuance of the "trans" ties in with the idea of co-creating new commonalities beyond simply accepting existing realities.

Finally, another expert suggested that "both interculturality and transculturality are possible perspectives for observing and interpreting human interaction. Neither interculturality nor transculturality are phenomena that precede interaction but are

produced jointly by the participants in the course of human interaction. The observational perspective of interculturality focuses on cultural differences that are introduced, enacted (on) or also modified by the participants. The observation perspective of transculturality asks how and with what consequence cross-cultural commonality is interactively produced by the participants" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 53).

After this short overview of some interpretations of the two terms, we would like to share the observation that transculturality and transcultural competence might be seen as an offer to sharpen the discussions in our field by emphasizing a relational understanding. This includes a process and constructive concept that focuses on the development of new shared actions and meanings in contexts of cultural complexity. In this regard, one expert concluded that "transculturality and transcultural competence [...] could fulfill a need in the intercultural mainstream, but still await a distinguishing conceptualisation and, in particular, entry into the research into, and the exercise of, intercultural competence and its development". As Heinz Antor puts it in his latest article, the relation between intercultural competence and transcultural competence is not oppositional, but the difference is just a gradual one (Antor, 2020).

Some of the presented thoughts are also discussed further in contributions to this volume. Rafael Mollenhauer, in his chapter "Transcultural Competence: Present-at-hand and Ready-to-hand", offers a communication-theory-based starting point for a concept of transcultural competence, while Milton Bennett's text offers to correct some misapprehensions of intercultural communication theory that have arisen as various ideas of "intercultural relations" or "intercultural competence" have percolated into academic and practitioner fields outside communication studies. In addition, Yolande Steenkamp and Willem Fourie explain very clearly in their chapter that the relational turn in the social sciences finds a dialogue partner in the relational ontologies of some more collectivistic cultures by viewing the traditional African concept of Ubuntu as a relational ontology with a resulting ethic. Gert Jan Hofstede, in his contribution "A Relational View on Culture and Transculturality" brings a bottom-up relational perspective, based on Theodore Kemper and Alan Fiske, in line with a comparative society-level framework. Josef Wieland argues in his chapter that transcultural competence as the willingness and ability to engage in cooperation under conditions of cultural complexity can only be understood as a relational competence aiming at the continuation of cooperation. Building on Gabriel Tarde's considerations on the co-evolution of the free exchange of cultural ideas and economic goods, he describes cooperation upon the successful relationalisation of diversity and commonality. Furthermore, Kirsten Nazarkiewicz offers a culturally reflexive view of transculturality and argues that transculturality requires three approaches to create common ground in concrete groups: an interpretative, a deconstructive, and a constructivist approach. She uses the example of listening to illustrate how to make use of these resources and offers a meta-perspective of power-reflexive practices. This meta-perspective anticipates the power constellations and cultures of dominance embedded in knowledge structures and discourses as well as identity-creating diversity aspects. Also to Question 4, some follow-up questions can be raised:

Questions to ponder

- What might "trans" and the nuance of the "beyond" offer to our field?
- How can the transcultural concept based on a relational understanding be elaborated further?
- How can a relational understanding of differences and commonalities be fostered in practice?
- What are the conceptual and practical implications if we look at the individual in relations or at the relations themselves?

4 Overall Findings and a Preliminary Definition of Transcultural Competence

Overall, the Delphi findings confirm many trends in our field and may be interpreted as a starting point for further theory building and debate, putting additional emphasis on a relational understanding of our social world.

In a nutshell, the following overall Delphi study results are presented (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 52):

Summarized findings of the Delphi study on Transcultural Competence
"Relational focus: The assumption that all being is relational puts the focus on the quality and implications of socio-cultural encounters as context-dependent relational constellations.

Process perspective: These encounters are events in an ongoing, unfolding process of relationing, rather than static ties among entities.

Constructivist understanding: These processes refer to the construction of shared meaning and action.

The nuance of "trans" as meaning "beyond": A transcultural understanding puts emphasis on the creation of new commonalities beyond existing cultures."

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 52).

Following on from the described observations and our current perspective, transcultural competence could be defined as referring to a general competence of individuals or organizations to intentionally develop new commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity. It refers to the ability and willingness to engage in context-specific processes of constructing new shared meaning and action beyond existing practices by shared experience and mutual learning as a means and result of being

in relation. These new commonalities are based on a sense of belonging to a heterogeneous community of experience rather than on overcoming one's own identity in a process of homogenization. New forms of cooperation and the expansion of existing cooperation corridors may be the goals and results of applying transcultural competence.

5 Limitations

As previously mentioned, the modified Delphi method had multiple objectives (gathering ideas, gathering expert opinions, defining key questions, proposing further solutions and research, and finding consensus) and therefore has different limitations. The following list presents an overview of the main limitations (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, pp. 53–54):

Main limitations of the Delphi study on Transcultural Competence

- The Delphi study results can only reflect the current discussion, opinions and thoughts within the established group of experts and are limited to the data they contributed.
- The study cannot be expected to deliver an objective and complete consensus; rather, it captures a "snapshot" group opinion.
- The quality of data may vary depending on the time and priority that the participants invested in responding to the questions.
- The Delphi group consisted of 47 experts from different countries and disciplines; nevertheless, there were still key voices missing for a variety of reasons. As already indicated, the different regions of the world were not equally represented. It must be emphasized that most of the experts in the group work and live in the Northern Hemisphere.

Source: Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, pp. 53–54).

"In terms of the analysis of data on the part of the authors, it must be recognized that despite their using the 'four-eyes principle' (cross-checking) and the monitoring team, which presumably improved the results' validity, research bias and initial assumptions have to be acknowledged in the preparation of the study and in the formulation of the questions. The study was also influenced by the conceptual framework outlined above, which may have introduced further bias. Other limitations were the use of English as the language of moderation for the entire process and the clash of different discipline-specific languages. Having mentioned some of the main limitations, the findings presented in this paper need to be viewed with them in mind (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 54)".

6 Conclusion and Outlook

In conclusion, we may recall what this book is supposed to be about: It is the continuation of the Delphi process, the results of which have been briefly described in this introductory chapter. This brings us back to what we consider to be the essential strength of the Delphi method, which Theodore Gordon (2009) already noted when he described the expertise of the participants in a Delphi study as being central. Accordingly, the potential of exposing an interdisciplinary and international group of experts to such a process of joint conceptual work is shown not only by the Delphi results, but also by this book.

However, against the background of our topic, we would even go one step further in interpreting the Delphi method and its strengths. If the transcultural approach is about shared learning processes stemming from shared experience, about the development of new commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity and about the formation of a community of practice, then this corresponds exactly to what this Delphi group has undergone together. The Delphi method then seems to be a highly suitable approach especially given the claim of implementing transculturality not only in terms of content but also in terms of method, and so this book can itself be seen as the attempt to prove these multi-layered potentials. The book is thus an intermediate result of such an ongoing learning process, and it remains to be seen how the community of practice of those involved in it and those interested in joining may further develop. Everyone is invited to be part of this ongoing cooperative journey.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence", by Tobias Grünfelder and Julika Baumann Montecinos

Determinants of the perception and/or evaluation of cultural diversity:

- How are the individual and collective perception and evaluation connected?
- How do perception and evaluation relate to each other?
- Are attitudes fixed in the individual? What is the role of context?
- What implications can be made from these findings for specific areas such as politics, education, business, economics, etc.?

Cultural commonalities and new cultural commonalities:

- What are the implications of assuming the co-existence of commonalities and differences as being mutually related?
- What could further conceptual sharpening not only of the understanding of "cultural commonality" and "cultural difference", but particularly of their interrelation look like?
- Considering commonalities as a vehicle, what role can they play to build connections and relationships among members from different cultures?

Competences for identifying and developing commonalities:

- How are the competences and their components inter-related and inter-dependent, both within the lists and between the individual and the organizational level?
- If the unit of analysis is the relationship and not the individual, what are the implications for the development of competences?
- To what extent are competences fixed in a person (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge), and how far do they reside "between" and even "beyond" people in a context?
- What are the implications of the discussed aspects for training and practice?

Observations and reflections on the term "transcultural competence":

- What might the "trans" and the nuance of the "beyond" offer to our field?
- How can we develop a transcultural concept based on a relational understanding?
- In practice, how can a relational understanding of differences and commonalities be fostered?
- What are the conceptual and practical implications if we look at the individual in relations or at the relations themselves?

Source: Some questions are cited from Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022, p. 54).

Acknowledgements The Delphi study and its follow-up projects would not have been possible without the participating experts who contributed a lot of time and effort over the three rounds of the study. We are therefore deeply grateful to the members of the Delphi expert group. These are, in alphabetical order: Sabine Aydt, Milton J. Bennett, Nadine Binder, Jürgen Bolten, Olga Coetzee, Michelle Cummings-Koether, Eric Davoine, Darla K. Deardorff, Susanne Dranaz, Peter Franklin, Harris L. Friedman, Catherine Isabel Froehling, Gerald Glover, Valerie V. V. Gruber, Nikola Hale, Paul Hanges, Katharina von Helmolt, Jürgen Henze, Stephan Hild, Gert Jan Hofstede, Jana Holla, Christiena Kirchhoff, Eithne Knappitsch, Hannah Lambeck, Yih-Teen Lee, Richard Lowe, Angelica V. Marte, Ulrike Mayrhofer, Rafael Mollenhauer, Kirsten Nazarkiewicz, Laurence Romani, Sonja A. Sackmann, Stefan Schmid, Olebogeng Selebi, Christian Seufert, Jan Söffner, Yolande Steenkamp, Gary Thomas, Fons Trompenaars, Uwe Ulrich, Iris Wangermann, Josef Wieland, Helmut Willke, Yeliz Yildirim-Krannig, Ulrich Zeutschel. Our thanks are also due to two further experts whose names are not disclosed and who were part of the study, as well as to three experts who participated in the first two Delphi rounds. In addition, we would like to thank our colleague Jessica Geraldo Schwengber as well as the members of our monitoring team, Andreas E. H. Heck, Martin R. Herbers, Christopher Köhler, and Diana Stimmler-Caesmann, for their valuable advice and support throughout the Delphi study.

Finally, our thanks go to our supervisor and long-time mentor Josef Wieland, who made this project possible in the first place and whose research and advice formed the starting point for the Delphi study. To collaborate with him on his research program on Relational Economics and to build up the Transcultural Caravan as a corresponding project platform was and is a great journey for us, for which we are very grateful and for which we very much look forward to continuing together with the whole team.

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The Relational Roots of Intercultural Communication

Milton J. Bennett

Abstract This article reflects on the criticism of intercultural communication as being more interactive than relational—a criticism justified, it argues, only for some of the conceptual diaspora of intercultural communication found in business schools and commercial intercultural training. In its original academic home of communication theory, intercultural communication reflects the largely relational focus of other human communication studies foci (interpersonal, group, and organizational). The underlying relational concepts include Pearce's *coordinated management of meaning*, Watzlawick's *axioms of human communication*, Barnlund's *transactional model of communication;* and contributions from anthropology such as Bateson's *cybernetics of cybernetics*, and from sociology such as Goffman's *dramaturgical model of communication.* Intercultural communication used these and related ideas in theorizing about Hall's original idea that engagement with other cultures was a kind of adaptation to different ways of coordinating meaning and action. The idea of cultural comparison per se, particularly of national cultures, was largely a wartime effort by anthropologists to understand combatants' "psychology"—an effort continued by business people, served by commercial trainers, to understand the world views of their global partners and competitors. These efforts tended to stress interaction rather than relationship, contrary to the original formulation of intercultural communication.

The purpose of this short article is to correct the misapprehension that intercultural communication is fundamentally "interactional, but not relational." I will argue that the assumptive base of intercultural communication—human communication theory—is already a relational explanation of how human beings coordinate themselves. Additions to communication theory from anthropology, linguistics, and cross-cultural psychology supported the existing relational base of the field and extended it into the original form of intercultural communication theory.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_2

However, as various ideas of "intercultural relations" or "intercultural competence" have percolated into academic and practitioner fields outside communication studies, the original assumptive base of intercultural communication has become distorted by the theoretical assumptions of host academic fields, or, in the case of practitioner fields, by marketing hype. This, in turn, has led to criticisms of intercultural communication that are unrelated to its original formulation. The purpose of the article is not to defend these excursions and simplifications, many of which can be justifiably criticized as "interactive, not relational." In fact, I will join in those criticisms later in the article. Rather, my purpose is to show that the original form of intercultural communication is itself a relational view of cultural complexity.

To that end, the article will initially outline the constructivist strain of communication theory that originally informed intercultural communication (Bennett, 2022), then identify some representative relational concepts that underpin early intercultural communication theory (Wiseman, 1995; Gudykunst, 2005; Kim & Gudykunst, 1998; Kim,2017; Littlejohn et al., 2021). Some of the migrations of intercultural theory out of academic communication studies programs (for instance, into business economics) will be examined for their contribution to eventual misunderstanding of the theory, including a look at criticisms that are actually about the practice of intercultural training rather than the theory of intercultural communication. I will conclude with a suggestion for avoiding such errant criticism in favor of addressing justified criticism of the theory and building new applications of intercultural communication on its already well-developed relational base.

1 The Relational Nature of Communication Theory

The term "communication" is used broadly to refer to the transmission of information and coordination of meaning. In general, the pluralization "communications" or its modification with "mediated" refers to how those processes operate through mass media (printed, broadcast, computer, etc.). The singular form "communication" or its modification with "human" refers to how processes of meaning-making operate in contexts where humans are directly relating with one another.

A major distinction between human communication (singular) and mediated communications (plural) is the difference in how feedback operates. Feedback is important in both forms, but in mediated contexts such as broadcasting or social media presentation, so-called feedforward is generally separated from feedback by time and method of perception. For instance, a news broadcast might present a narrative one evening and, through direct mechanisms such as email and social media commentary, public reaction can be observed subsequently. Additionally, indirect data such as viewership data and advertising revenue can be collected later to provide more feedback that could guide whether and how the narrative is incorporated into the following night's show. Of course, this mediated feedback process is

speeding up dramatically in interactive social media, but it retains its essentially linear character—the feedback effect still follows the causal stimulus. As such, the prevailing view of mediated communications is an outgrowth of Shannon & Weaver's SMCR (sender-message-channel-receiver) model of information transfer (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

In synchronous face-to-face or virtual contacts such as a conversation, feedforward and feedback happen more or less simultaneously. In beginning an utterance in a communication event, I am already anticipating your response—an action that you have probably already begun making in anticipation of what my utterance is likely to be. Then as we compare anticipation and actuality in real time, we both adjust our behavior towards negotiating relevant meaning and action. In communication theory, this process is well-known as the "coordinated management of meaning" (Pearce, 2005), and it is central to most other forms of human communication theory as well. In other words, communication is itself the relationship of two or more people engaged in the negotiation of meaning and action. Human communication as a social science usually refers to this kind of relationship building at three levels of analysis: interpersonal, group, and organizational (Craig, 1999; Littlejohn et al., 2021).

One scholar who brought a constructivist, relational perspective to all three levels of analysis was Dean Barnlund. In his seminal "transactional model of communication," Barnlund (1970) defined communication as a non-linear activity, where people could be both "sender" and "receiver" simultaneously. Barnlund saw clearly that communication was not mainly a process of exchanging messages, but rather a condition of relationship. He was using "communication" in its original (Latin) sense of sharing or communing. During my graduate work with Barnlund at San Francisco State University, I had ample opportunity to see him apply this idea to understanding interpersonal relations (1968), group relations (Jones et al., 1980), and intercultural relations (1975, 1989, 2013). The theme running through all these contexts was that people are actively engaged in the process of constructing relationships. People are not using communication to create relationship; communication is, by this definition, already the creating of a relationship.

The field of human communication itself is an interdisciplinary endeavor of applied linguistics, sociology, and psychology. Amongst those constituents, probably the primary driver of a relationship focus is symbolic interactionism (Goffman, 1974; Mead, 1934). Building on Mead's seminal idea of "social self"—individual identity only exists in relation to other people—Goffman (1959) uses a "dramaturgical model" to portray how people interact with other actors "back-stage" to present impressions of self and team "front-stage." Through such interactions, people agree on a definition of the situation wherein they can maintain, save, or lose "face." The theory of coordinated management of meaning (Pearce, 2005) is an obvious extension of symbolic interactionism into communication, as is Ting-Toomey's (1988) idea of face-management as an approach to conflict and multicultural relations.

Psychology, and especially social psychology, is another major relational influence. *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (Watzlawick et al., 1967) introduces the use of systems

theory to model interpersonal communication. The five axioms in this seminal book all deal with the relational aspect of communication:

1. One cannot communicate—if I perceive you, everything I observe about you is potentially meaningful, including your silence.
2. The content of a communication is always contexted by the relationship of the communicators—if we are both members of the same group, a joke about that group means something different than if one of us is an outsider to the group.
3. All meaning depends on the punctuation of the sequence of events—I may think I am impatient with your bad mood, but you may think that your bad mood is a response to my impatience.
4. All communication is both digital (symbolic) and analogic (representational)—a watch that symbolizes time with digital numbers is like language, while a watch that represents time with two hands is like non-verbal behavior.
5. Communicators are always either more complementary or more symmetric—we are either specialized in different roles and thus complement one another (perhaps to the point of rigidity), or we have interchangeable roles and thus are symmetric with one another (perhaps to the point of competitiveness).

The application of these axioms yields an inherently relational understanding of communication. If I perceive you, it means that we already are in a relationship, albeit potentially one-way. If you perceive that I perceive you, and even more if I perceive that you do, our every action is potentially relevant to the mutual coordination of meaning; if you buy this book and don't comment on it, I may think that you found it uninteresting, while you may think that my privilege in having the opportunity to be published should not be further promoted. And we cannot avoid the context in which our coordination is occurring; the fact that I am an American White male of a certain age writing this article for a book published by a German university is likely to be attributed meaning, whether or not I or the publisher think it is relevant.

An extension of interactive systems theory is cybernetics. The anthropologists Gregory Bateson (1972) and Margaret Mead (1968) pioneered the idea that communication was a kind of coordination of elements that enabled systems to self-organize. Essentially, this meant that communication was the essential ingredient of life itself—the process whereby living systems maintained their functional integrity. Like Barnlund and Watzlawick, Bateson took a distinctly non-linear approach to communication. Messages were not things that could be exchanged; they were simply articulations of various conditions of relationship. In the current language of quantum epistemology, messages are "manifestations of the relationship of observers" (Rovelli, 2014). And insofar as the messages act as interpretations or explanations of the relationship of the observer, the messages themselves become observations (Maturana, 1988):

> The praxis of living, the experience of the observer as such, just happens…. Because of this, explanations are essentially superfluous; we as observers do not need them to happen; but when it happens to us that we explain, it turns out that between language and bodyhood the praxis of living of the observer changes as he or she generates explanations of his or her

> praxis of living. This is why everything that we say or think has consequences in the way we live. (p. 46)

The failure to recognize messages as manifestations of relationship is a form of "reification," in Whitehead's (1925) sense of the *fallacy of misplaced concreteness.* This occurs when abstractions (which necessarily includes all messages) are treated as if they have objective existence. For instance, if the idea that Harry Potter can cause physical events to occur with magical incantations were to be taken seriously, it would be a case of misplaced concreteness. The General Semantics movement originated by Alfred Korzibski (1933/1994) and continued by S. I. Hayakawa (1964) popularized this idea of reification with the phrase "the map is not the territory." Instead, they argued, the map is an abstraction of the territory, and as such, it is actually a kind of commentary on (or message about) the territory. If we add the more modern idea that the "territory" itself is a relationship of events, then reification occurs whenever we forget our own authorship of those events (Berger & Luckmann, 1967):

> Reification is the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms… Reification implies that men (*human beings*) are capable of forgetting their own authorship of the human world, and further, that the dialectic between man, the producer, and his products is lost to consciousness… Man, the producer of a world, is apprehended as its product, and human activity as an epiphenomenon of non-human processes… That is, man is capable paradoxically of producing a reality that denies him. (p. 89, italics added)

2 The Origins of Intercultural Communication as an Academic Specialty

The conceptualization of relations between people from different societies as "intercultural communication" is generally attributed to Edward T. Hall, even though he was not the first to have used the term (Kulich et al., 2020). But Hall and his colleague George Trager were largely responsible for locating intercultural relations in a relational communication context (Hall, 1959). By defining "culture" as communication, they formalized the idea that cultural members were actively engaged in coordinating meaning and action amongst themselves, and further, that participating in another culture demanded that visitors master some aspects of the host culture's coordinating process. Other approaches to intercultural relations at the time were the more ethnographic ones favored by anthropologists preparing for fieldwork, or they were the various renditions of area studies still used in international relations programs (Hall, 1996). The participants in training programs conducted by Hall and Trager at the Foreign Service Institute were largely practical business and diplomat people, and they wanted training that would help them do their jobs more effectively in different cultural contexts. Hall and Trager responded to this by focusing only on those aspects of culture and cultural differences that made an immediate difference to communication. In other words, they focused on relationships rather than on content.

The cross-over from anthropology to communication theory began in the 1960s as intercultural relations became both more popular and more necessary in a globalizing world. Intercultural training was recognized as useful for the increasing number of foreign students arriving at US universities, and a robust body of literature in that area began to accumulate (Bennett, 2010). That literature gave the specialty more academic credibility, and courses in the subject started appearing in applied linguistics programs. One of the first of these was started in the early 1970s by LaRay Barna, a professor in the Communication Studies program at Portland State University, for their TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language). Concurrently, Fred Casmir (1976) and Edward Stewart (1972) were supporting the inclusion of intercultural and international communication into the major Communication Studies academic society of the time. Dean Barnlund, the professor of transactional communication at San Francisco State University, used a sabbatical year in Japan with his student John Condon (Condon & Yousef, 1975) to organize an international conference of academics on the subject of intercultural communication. One outcome of that 1972 conference was the first Ph.D. program in intercultural communication, initiated at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis by William Howell, a participant in the conference and a full professor in the Minnesota department of communication studies. The author is a graduate of that program, and subsequently joined LaRay Barna at Portland State University to create a Master of Intercultural Communication program there.

The purpose of this short history is to show the early marriage of intercultural relations as it was originally conceived in communication terms and the already established relational roots of communication theory. New intercultural communication theory that emerged from those early programs reflected that marriage. As I observed it at the time, the new theories had three major themes: group identity, adaptation, and face negotiation (e.g., Kim, 1988; Ting-Toomey, 1988); the construction of "third culture" (e.g., Casmir, 1976; Prosser, 1978); and perceptual constructivism and intercultural empathy (e.g., Bennett, 1979; Singer, 1975; Delia et al., 1982). Many of these theories and others were summarized by Gudykunst (2005) in *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*, where he explicitly suggests that intercultural relations and communication theory are combined in at least two major ways: (1) understanding "culture" in communication terms; (2) understanding how processes of communication vary among cultures. Subsequent theorizing in intercultural communication continued those themes, exploring how culture and communication interact in the construction of human relationships. Contemporary examples include a strong emphasis on intersectionality and power relationships in intercultural contexts (e.g., Martin & Nakayama, 2018); the embodiment of culture and neuroscience of intercultural relations (e.g., Castiglioni, 2013; Mai, 2017), and constructivist approaches to otherness (Bennett, 2013; Evanoff, 2016).

3 The Migration and Commercialization of Intercultural Communication

Academic departments of human communication studies are mostly a US American phenomenon. Outside the USA, and increasingly, inside the USA as well, intercultural communication theory and research have migrated into other disciplines. Part of the reason for the shift inside the USA may be the change in emphasis in communication studies from a constructivist "coordination of meaning" to a more critical postmodern approach. Critical studies are typically more rooted in a relativist rather than a constructivist paradigm (Bennett, 2013), and as such they tend to emphasize deconstructing the cultural contexts of meaning rather than constructing meta-coordination of meaning among different contexts. In the USA, anyway, deconstruction of cultural context is usually associated with an emphasis on personal prejudice and/or structural bias (Martin & Nakayama, 2000).

To address the growing interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, many interculturalists are attempting to incorporate a critical cultural studies perspective into their work, despite the fact that intercultural communication already included applications to relations among groups defined in terms of race, class, gender, and other forms of "diversity." In neglecting or rejecting this history of application to equity issues, critical interculturalism modifies or abandons the original constructivist foundation of intercultural communication in favor of a relativist approach that is actually less relational (Bennett, 2018).

Another refuge for intercultural work has been cross-cultural psychology. While most work in that field emphasizes quantitative studies of cultural influences on individuals, there is a strong subset of studies on cross-cultural contact (e.g., Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Berry, 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000) and some application to competence in intercultural relations (e.g., Brislin et al., 1986). Because the mainstream of cross-cultural psychology research is dedicated to establishing statistical causality, the prevailing paradigm is positivist (Bennett, 2020). That epistemological foundation drives a search for the underlying cause of particular behavior in personality traits or other personal characteristics. Thus, the majority of instruments that purport to assess intercultural competence are measuring various compendia of traits that have been shown (or that simply are assumed) to correlate with effective behavior in cross-cultural contexts. In other words, cross-cultural psychology research tends to focus on the individual as the unit of analysis. In contrast, and based on a more constructivist paradigm, intercultural communication has traditionally taken "relationship" as the unit of analysis (Bennett, 2020).

In Europe, intercultural communication is an academic orphan. With no history of communication studies departments, universities have tended to incorporate intercultural relations into more traditional departments. So, in addition to cross-cultural psychology, intercultural foci inhabit the sociology of cultural processes, human geography, and applied anthropology, among other foster homes. Of course, each academic field can make a legitimate claim for applying its perspective to the general human phenomenon of cross-cultural contact. But in so doing, each application takes

on the academic perspective of its host. Just as cross-cultural psychology tends to shift focus from relationships to individual traits, so sociology may shift the focus to demographic patterns, human geography may stress development in certain physical circumstances, and applied anthropology may examine the ethnographic roots of otherness. These are all interesting perspectives on culture and cross-cultural contact, but they do not represent a specialized focus on communicative relationships.

The migration of intercultural communication into the academic area of applied linguistics and into commercial language acquisition programs was a promising but ultimately disappointing development. On the surface, this is an obvious marriage, since applied linguistics usually includes an emphasis on interaction or discourse analysis, often in cultural terms, such as the American Deborah Tannen's work on conversational style (2005) and gender relations (1990). And many of the original applications of intercultural communication occurred as part of foreign student and international study abroad orientation programs (Bennett, 2010). There was some initial interest among both applied linguists and interculturalists about the possibility that the acquisition of intercultural communication competence might parallel other language acquisition processes (e.g., Lange & Paige, 2003). However, that parallel proved elusive, and since most applied linguistic theory is more descriptive or comparative than relational, intercultural communication became a kind of behavioral adjunct to language acquisition.

The diaspora of intercultural communication is particularly notable in business schools. As mentioned earlier, the origins of the field were in business and diplomacy applications, so it is not surprising that business schools might continue the specialization. What is more surprising is that schools of diplomacy, including most international relations programs, do not usually include the topic. Intercultural communication programs in business schools reflect the prevailing organizational theory, which these days is usually systems theory based in a relativist paradigm (Bennett, 2013). This is not a bad match for much of applied intercultural communication, which is at least partially located in cultural relativity. However, the relational aspects of intercultural communication are easily lost in that comparativeness.

Following the original forms of cultural relativity found in the work of Boas (1896), Mead (1928), Benedict (1934), and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), the current representation of cultural relativity in business contexts is heavily influenced by the work of Geert Hofstede and, more recently, by his son Gert (2005). Geert Hofstede did not have a background in communication theory, and in fact, he was initially interested in finding correlations between national culture and economic performance (Hofstede, 2010). The comparative cultural categories of "power distance" and other dimensions that are now used to make intercultural comparisons were originally derived from a study of assimilation to corporate culture at IBM. While the Hofstede dimensions continue to be useful in alerting business people and others to important cultural differences, they do not in themselves provide a template for bridging or meta-coordinating those differences. Here, rather than communicative relationship, the unit of analysis is "culture"—specifically, national cultures as they are ranked along the dimensions.

Intercultural training that derives from the Hofstede categories or other taxonomies of culture and cultural difference tends to focus on the "gaps" between national cultures in terms of the measured dimensions. Promoters of this view contend that encountering these gaps while sailing the cross-border seas of global business is fraught, since within them lie the dangerous shoals of intercultural misunderstanding. And as a tactical exercise in avoiding the worst of miscommunication, this kind of cross-cultural awareness is necessary. But insofar as business schools want to teach their students how to manage a multicultural workforce or to coordinate a cross-border operation, this approach is woefully inadequate.

The main practical application of intercultural communication theory continues to be intercultural training in various forms, including coaching. Although it began as and still is claimed to be "theory into practice," intercultural training has become increasingly divorced from its theoretical roots. Emblematic of that shift is the evolution of the curriculum at the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communication (SIIC), the largest and longest-lived professional development program for intercultural trainers in the world.[1] From 1976 (during its first ten years as the Stanford Institute for Intercultural Communication) and then through 2018 under the auspices of the Intercultural Communication Institute (ICI) in Portland, Oregon, SIIC produced thousands of intercultural trainers. During its initial incarnation at Stanford University, SIIC offered just a few week-long workshops on various global and domestic intercultural topics, each conducted by faculty with doctorates or other professional credentials in the field. The courses appealed to other professionals in education, business, and government who wanted to add an intercultural focus to their work. This goal was maintained by ICI for the next few years, with the additional stipulation that participants without prior experience in intercultural communication were required to complete a three-day introductory course on the topic before they could enroll in intercultural training design and methodology courses.

The popularity of intercultural training as an "industry" put increasing pressure on ICI to offer more and more specialized workshops that equipped trainers with simplified concepts and activities that would appeal to a broad public. The profile of many SIIC participants changed from practicing professionals to that of aspiring neophytes looking for an entrée into the industry. Catering to that profile, ICI dropped the introductory course requirement and added "practical" courses taught by practitioners without a formal background in the academic specialty. While many substantive courses, responsibly professional faculty and sophisticated participants remained connected to SIIC, a very large number of underprepared and overconfident trainers also emerged from the program. This cadre of practitioners largely lacking in any theoretical foundation was joined by the many graduates of other minimal "train the trainer" programs and, notably, by graduates of the plethora of certification seminars associated with proprietary measurement instruments. The measuring instrument

[1] The author was a member of the Stanford Institute for Intercultural Communication faculty and was co-founder of the Intercultural Communication Institute in Portland, Oregon, where he designed curriculum and taught until 2013.

cadre can be exemplified by the "qualifying seminars" of the Intercultural Development Inventory™ (IDI).[2] Like SIIC, the IDI qualifying seminar aspired to be an addition to the repertoire of practicing intercultural professionals. In actuality, like SIIC, the seminars became in many cases the entrée into intercultural communication training for aspirants without any background at all in intercultural communication theory. In sum, the commercialization of intercultural training has allowed under-qualified practitioners to represent the field of intercultural communication in ways that do not include or reflect its complex relational roots.

4 Criticisms of Migrated Intercultural Communication Concepts

While there are some critiques of intercultural communication in its constructivist, relational form that deserve discussion, that is not the focus of this paper. This section will suggest that most of the criticism of intercultural communication is not about its original theoretical form, but rather about its various mutations that have occurred as it has been transplanted and commercialized.

For instance, the criticism that intercultural communication is unduly concerned with national culture is not about the original theory. As described earlier, the original form of intercultural communication theory was about the coordination of meaning within and across cultural boundaries. Those boundaries are not exclusively or even primarily related to national context; equally or more importantly, the boundaries define contexts of ethnicity, race, gender, class, and other forms of group identity. The primary focus on national culture is an artifact of the form that intercultural communication has taken in business schools and in the hands of theoretically unsophisticated trainers—a form that is heavily influenced by Hofstede's national culture dimensions and other nationality-based taxonomies. The criticism of too much focus on national cultural contexts is justified. But it is a criticism of business uses of intercultural communication, not of intercultural communication itself.

A parallel situation exists in regard to the criticism that intercultural communication stereotypes cultures and individuals in cultural terms. Unfortunately, this criticism is often justified, but it is a criticism of unsophisticated training and not of errant intercultural theory. In fact, intercultural theory suggests that generalizations be stated in probabilistic terms and be restricted to describing behavior in groups, not individuals. However, in the hands of trainers who may unknowingly conflate those levels of analysis, the group-level generalizations are applied at an individual level, yielding stereotypes.

The major criticism of intercultural communication of concern in this paper is that it is interactional, not relational. This is, in fact, a very good criticism of cultural relativity. When cultural contexts are treated as alternative constructions of reality, it

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[2] The author co-developed the IDI based on his theoretical work and designed its qualifying seminar, but he is no longer officially associated with the instrument or the seminars.

raises the question of how people who are identified by those contexts communicate with one another. And the answer in the same relativist paradigm is, they "interact." They interact through the behavior and perspectives of their own cultures—something that can be described through interaction analysis, allowing the identification of misunderstandings attributable to cultural differences. Identifying those cultural differences that make a difference to communication is indeed one of the primary activities of applied intercultural communication. However, it is only one of three central activities of theoretically driven intercultural work. Intercultural trainers who are operating without theoretical sophistication in communication theory may not realize or incorporate the other aspects and, as a result, they restrict themselves to an interactional, not relational, framework.

Adding in the other two aspects of applied intercultural communication theory changes the focus into a more relational one (Castiglioni & Bennett, 2018). The first aspect is that of active *cultural identify formation.* In a constructivist rather than relativist paradigm, identity is not defined by membership in a context, but by the action of associating boundary conditions. For instance, people might hold self-boundaries that individuate them in one group context but that allows more collective experience in another group context. And they may define the groups they associate themself within more or less inclusive or exclusive ways; for instance, a person might define themself as participative in a national culture, but restricted to some regional group, while at the same time feeling identified with a larger regional grouping like "Asian" or "European." The exercise of agency in defining cultural identity means that one relates rather than interacts with other cultural contexts, since those contexts do not have a priori existence—they are themselves the epiphenomena of relational association.

The third aspect of applied intercultural theory (after cultural identity formation and interaction analysis) is intercultural development. All forms of personal development are necessarily constructivist, since they are built on the assumption that the reality of self is mutable. In the case of developing intercultural competence, the claim is that people can change their relation to otherness as a result of changing the complexity of their perception of cultural differences. The goal of intercultural competence development is inherently relational, but the means to that end may be "paradigmatically confused" (Bennett, 2013, p. 23). In terms of the topics discussed so far in this paper, paradigmatic confusion occurs when purely relativist and interactional approaches to intercultural relations such as those common in business contexts are pursued with the goal of making people more capable of relating to otherness. The end goal is constructivist, but the means to that end are only relativist. That condition of paradigmatic confusion makes the development effort at least less effective, and often it makes it worthless—a hoop to be jumped through by managers of multicultural teams or global sojourners, but nothing that actually helps them do the job better.

5 Directions for Action and Questions for Reflection

Below are five ways that development of intercultural competence could be approached more effectively, followed by questions about implementation (Questions to ponder).

1. Pay more attention to the epistemology of intercultural concepts and techniques. Intercultural communication employs a mix of relativist and constructivist paradigmatic assumptions that need to be understood and integrated properly. If the epistemological assumptions are neglected, they can easily begin interfering with each other in cases of "paradigmatic confusion."
2. Approach intercultural communication competence in a developmental rather than transformative way. The latter approach tends to focus on acquiring knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable a transformative shift in intercultural relations competence. A developmental approach, on the other hand, focuses on the elaboration of perceptual categories necessary to create a more complex experience of something—in this case, "otherness."
3. Focus on relationship as both the end and the means of intercultural communication. If we think that the desired end of intercultural development is an improved ability to relate to otherness, then the means to that end need to focus on relationship, not knowledge acquisition, attitude change, or skills development. Building relationships is primarily a matter of mutual respect and adaptation, typically accompanied by empathy. The traditional knowledge, attitude, and skill (KAS) categories of education are, at best, only secondarily connected to empathic ability.
4. Treat cultural differences not as knowledge per se, but as windows and doorways into alternative experiences of the world. The relational goal is to perceive alternative experiences and eventually to be able to enter it without surrendering one's own world view—in other words, to empathize.
5. Always remain conscious of the larger goal of intercultural communication, which is to develop our nascent potential for relating to cultural otherness. The tactical benefits of improved intercultural communication, while useful, should not obscure the more important strategic benefits of learning how to survive and thrive in multicultural societies and organizations.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "The Relational Roots of Intercultural Communication", by Milton J. Bennett

- Are you aware of the epistemological paradigm(s) you are using as you approach intercultural issues? Are they matched with the goals you have in engaging with those issues?

- Do you believe that, with enough information, people will change in important ways, such as becoming less prejudiced? If so, how might your assuming a transformative rather than developmental approach be affecting your work?
- How can you maintain a more laser-like focus on relationship in your approach to intercultural issues? Do you find yourself retreating to KAS whenever you think of any practical application?
- Do you think that if you only know enough about another culture, you will therefore be able to experience it more fully? If so, how could you move more towards using empathy—the construction of an "as if" experience—to achieve your goal?
- How are you applying your concern with intercultural relations to the larger issue of developing the consciousness necessary for multicultural cooperation?

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In Search of Commonalities: Ubuntu and the Transcultural Approach

Yolande Steenkamp and Willem Fourie

Abstract This chapter develops the view that the relational turn in the social sciences finds a dialogue partner in the relational ontologies of some more collectivistic cultures. Ubuntu, as such a relational ontology from some regions and traditions in Africa, considers human beings to be relationally constituted, rather than seeing relations as a secondary result of individual agency or societal systems. While cautioning against uncritical readings of Ubuntu, the chapter explores the relational approach to cultural commonalities in relation to the African value of Ubuntu. Specifically, the desire to explore and create cultural commonalities for the purpose of enhancing cooperation in contexts of diversity is discussed from a collective perspective on commonalities, viewing Ubuntu as a relational ontology with a resulting ethic.

1 Introduction: A Relational Turn

> There is an invisible world generated by human beings, but that human beings do not see or come to see very rarely. This is the world of social relations. They 'act' this world, they live in it, but they do so with very little awareness. They take if (*sic*) for granted, as they do the air they breathe. They become aware of its existence only when they feel that it is lacking in some way or when it becomes so distorted as to make them feel very bad towards themselves.
>
> Donati (2011, n.p.)

The motivation for taking a relational view on cultural diversity is best understood as part of a larger dialogue concerning relationality in the broader social sciences. This "relational turn" in the social sciences ranges from economics (Biggiero et al., 2022; Stoltz, 2017; Wieland, 2020), sociology (Dépelteau, 2018; Donati, 2011; Powell & Dépelteau, 2013), leadership studies (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Eacott, 2018a; Uhl-Bien, 2006, pp. 654–676; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012), organizational studies (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000, pp. 551–564), psychotherapy (Beebe & Lachmann, 2013;

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_3

Fowlie & Sills, 2011; Mann, 2020; Steed, 2019) and theology (Montgomery et al., 2012). Yet it is not limited to the social sciences, for the relational approach transcends any one disciplinary background, including even law, biology, and physics where, as Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000, p. 552) noted, the study of quantum reality has yielded a picture of an interdependent and interrelated world where "atomic particles appeared more as relations than as discrete objects," with even the impact of human consciousness on our understanding of reality becoming clear (Eacott, 2018b, p. 26).

The use of concepts relating to relationality across such a wide range of disciplines begs the question of whether this commonality refers to anything more than simply the word "relational" (Dépelteau, 2013, p. 163), yet as a minimum it must describe an appreciation for the complexity of existence as this is co-determined by various interplaying contexts. For the Delphi Project (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022), the relational approach means to consider individuals and organizations in their relational context, and from the perspective of cultural complexity, to approach cultural differences, similarities and commonalities from such a relational perspective as well.

Given the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic societies[1] and the dominance of individualist approaches in Western social science, the shift of relational sociology has been nothing short of radical and, as this chapter will argue, finds a dialogue partner in the relational ontologies of Africa (and other collectivist cultures). Donati (2011, n.p.) aptly points out that, where western science traditionally viewed social relations as either a projection of individuals, thus deriving as a secondary effect from the activity of a primary subject (Weberians), or negatively as a product of conditioning by social structures and systems (Marxists, Durkheimians),

> (r)elational sociology aims at disclosing the fact that every human being is relationally constituted as a person, and the same holds true for any social institution. According to this paradigm, a social formation is human insofar as the social relations constituting it are produced by subjects who orient themselves reciprocally towards one another on the basis of a meaning that surpasses functional requirements. (Donati, 2011, n.p.)

As such, the breakthrough of the relational turn lies, according to Prandini (2015, p. 13) in the accurate descriptions of "the ontology of society and social relation" through specified and newly developed research methods. This approach of seeing relation as primary in the constitution of both individuals and society opens up a surprising opportunity for dialogue between cultures traditionally described as occupying the polar opposite ends of the collectivistic and individualistic spectrum. Specifically, one of the best-known descriptions of Ubuntu as 'I am a human being through relations with other human beings' (cf. Sect. 2), finds a direct parallel here.

That being the case, this chapter explores the relational approach to cultural commonalities in relation to the African value of Ubuntu. Specifically, the desire to explore and create cultural commonalities for the purpose of enhancing cooperation

[1] According to Torelli et al. (2020), individualism and collectivism are the "most widely studied cultural syndromes"—a syndrome being patterns of variation across shared knowledge structures such as beliefs, norms and values. Cf. the seminal work by Triandis (1995), and Voronov & Singer (2002) for a critical view.

in contexts of diversity is discussed from a collective perspective on commonalities, viewing Ubuntu as a relational ontology with a resulting ethic.

2 Ubuntu Contested: A Relational Ontology, a Type of Moral Resource, an Ethic in the Making

> A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1988)

Numerous moral resources across Africa influence the ways in which people relate to one another. One of the better known examples of such a moral resource is Ubuntu, which is found in Southern Africa with nuance and interpretation depending on local contexts. Ubuntu is often defined in terms of an equally well-known Nguni proverb: '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*', freely translated as 'a person is a person through other persons'.[2] Most simplistically, Ubuntu can be understood as 'human-ness', or an understanding of personhood that has "'humanity towards others,' 'a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity,' 'human existing with other humans,'" at its core (Oyowe & Etieyibo, 2018, p. 345). As Ngcoya (2015, p. 253) puts it, "Living is ultimately the discovery and realization of *–ntu* (person) and this is only accomplished through other *–ntu* (persons)".

The ease with which the Nguni proverb is used to define Ubuntu hides much of the controversy on the meaning and appropriate use of the concept, both within and outside academia.[3] In his article on the historical development of, especially, the written discourse on Ubuntu, Christian Gade (2011) shows that the current popular definition is a relatively recent development. According to Gade (2011, p. 303), the origin of this definition should be sought in the period of the South African political transition, particularly between 1993 and 1995. This is at least partly the result of the definition proposed by Augustine Shutte in his now seminal text on Ubuntu, *Philosophy for Africa* (South African edition: 1993; American edition: 1995).

Gade argues that numerous usages of the concept of Ubuntu continue to co-exist, of which this popular definition is but one. Since the 1960s, for example, Ubuntu has also been used to refer to a philosophy or ethic. According to Gade (2011, p. 316), this is the way in which Mogobe Ramose, a pre-eminent scholar, uses Ubuntu. His contention that Ubuntu is "the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology" and can be regarded as "the basis of African philosophy" should be understood in this light (Ramose, 2002, p. 271). In the 1970s a further use of

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[2] Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is a prominent proponent of this definition of Ubuntu, as the quote above demonstrates. The rest of this section will illustrate that multiple and at times contested meanings of Ubuntu demands a critical reading.

[3] Even the meaning of the concept 'Africa' remains controversial. Cf. Fourie (2015).

Ubuntu emerged, namely Ubuntu as African humanism. Such a usage of Ubuntu can be found, at least partly, in the first book on Ubuntu (Samkange & Samkange, 1980, pp. 306ff.).

According to Gade, Ubuntu as the philosophy of African humanism and as a worldview expressed by the Nguni proverb cited above, should be contrasted with another use of the concept (Gade, 2011, pp. 306ff.). The earliest recorded use of the word Ubuntu can be found in a text from 1846 (Hare, 1846). In this text, and many others written in the subsequent century, Ubuntu is used to refer exclusively to a human quality, a collection of human qualities, or 'humanness' as such (Gade, 2011, p. 307).

Employing analytical methodologies, Thaddeus Metz (2007a) similarly connects a plurality of meanings to the concept of Ubuntu. In what has become a controversial article,[4] he identifies "six competing theoretical interpretations of Ubuntu to be found in the literature" (Metz, 2007a, p. 328). He identifies two groups of 'theoretical interpretations'. The first grounds the morality implied by Ubuntu in "something internal to the individual" (Metz 2007a, p. 333). Ubuntu can accordingly be defined in terms of life, well-being, rights or self-realization. The second group consists of "communitarian renditions of Ubuntu", as the implied morality is grounded not in the individual but in the relationship between persons. Metz (2007a, 2007b) developed an African moral theory based on Ubuntu, ironically in the very same year that Nkondo (2007) pointed out the need for such an analytic approach.

Ubuntu clearly includes—some might say demands—a large number of meanings. Its geographical or socio-linguistic coverage, in the sense that it is an 'African' moral resource, is less expansive. The word Ubuntu is essentially a product of the Bantu languages, and in particular the Nguni languages of Southern Africa. Designating Ubuntu an 'African' moral resource should therefore not be equated with the idea that Ubuntu is representative of all moral resources on the continent, and most likely not even with the idea that Ubuntu represents something of the essence of morality in Africa.[5] In his socio-linguistic analysis of Ubuntu, Nkonko Kamwangamalu uses Alexis Kagame's seminal work to point towards some limitations of the concept. According to Kamwangamalu, it is possible to find equivalents to Ubuntu in some, but by no means all, of Africa's languages. Drawing on Kagame he mentions *umundu* in Kikuyu, *umuntu* in Kimeru (Kenya), *bumuntu* in kiSukuma and kiHaya (Tanzania), *vumuntu* in shiTsonga and shiTswa (Mozambique), *bomoto* in Bobangi and *gimuntu* in kiKongo (Democratic Republic of Congo), and *gimuntu* in giKwese (Angola).[6]

From the discussion above it should be clear that it is not possible to identify a singular stable definition of and approach to this concept. Numerous definitions and approaches co-exist. It should also be clear that the concept cannot be thought of

[4] In subsequent articles Metz engaged the criticism of especially four theorists, namely Allen Wood, Mogobe Ramose, Douglas Farland and Jason van Niekerk. See, e.g., Metz (2007b).

[5] Some authors do argue that the latter is indeed the case. However, within the descriptive and inductive approach followed in this project such contentions raise epistemological questions that are difficult to address adequately.

[6] See Kamwangamalu (1999, pp. 25–26). He is of the view, despite these limitations, that Ubuntu represents "the core values of African ontologies".

as representative of essentially African moral resources. However, the complexity of the Ubuntu concept need not lead to the conclusion that it has no real meaning. Ubuntu's characteristics—including its multidimensional nature—make it a useful concept, as its dynamics are typical also of other moral resources in Africa. In this sense, Ubuntu functions as an example, or even paradigm, of a type of local African moral resource. Ubuntu is one of many African moral resources that influence the ways in which people relate to one another, produce meaning, and interpret their environment. More specifically, one can say that Ubuntu is one of the many African moral resources in terms of which people define and limit the value of individual lives, and in terms of which people create and implement accountability mechanisms for what is perceived as the illegitimate taking of a life.

We therefore do not consider the multi-dimensional meanings and functions of Ubuntu (how can it be different for a concept that evolved over such a long period in various geographical sub-regions?) to negate the usefulness of Ubuntu as a moral resource. As such, we proceed in this chapter to explore how Ubuntu might enrich the transcultural conversation with its relational foundation. It remains merely to define our use of the concept for our purposes here, and in this regard, we point out three dimensions. Firstly, we join Pérezts et al. (2020) in appreciating Ubuntu as a relational ontology that describes relation as fundamental to human existence, i.e., human beings are constituted in and through their relations. Secondly, with Oyowe and Etieyibo (2018, p. 349) we regard the "idea of establishing humane relations" as "engendering the norms and obligations that define the Ubuntu normative system." That is to say, from the relational ontology that understands humans as relationally constituted flows the normative obligation to behave in such a way to others that the humanity of all parties is restored, maintained, or enhanced. Finally, we conceive of the first two dimensions not as primarily conceptual or abstract, but rather as describing the lived practices of the people indigenous to certain regions in sub-Saharan Africa. In short, it is about *doing* Ubuntu.

3 Ubuntu in the Literature: Multicultural and Intercultural Approaches

Ubuntu has received considerable attention in a number of fields from inter- and multicultural approaches. These include management studies, peace studies, cultural heritage studies, and pedagogy. This section provides a brief review of these approaches before moving on in the next section to consider Ubuntu in relation to transcultural competence.

Many theorists have explored Ubuntu in relation to the field of intercultural learning—whether for teaching/learning, for a business environment, or to enhance social cohesion. One of the first of these, Louw (2001), explored Ubuntu as a response to multiculturalism in post-Apartheid South Africa. Defining Ubuntu as "an African or African inspired version of an effective decolonizing assessment of the other",

Louw (2001, p. 16) proposed that Ubuntu transcends the absolutism that often characterizes our response to multicultural contexts without resorting to relativism. He demonstrated in a threefold movement how Ubuntu responds (i) to the religious other, (ii) through agreement (consensus) on criteria for weighing beliefs and practices for multiple cultures, and (iii) through the necessity of dialogue that respects the particularity, individuality and historicity of these beliefs (Louw, 2001, p. 17).

Staying with the theme of social cohesion, Tarisayi Andrea Chimuka's much more recent study stands at the other end of the spectrum. After a thorough investigation of the tragic incidences of xenophobia in South Africa in the last decade and more, Chimuka mentions Ubuntu only in passing (2018, p. 114). She considers it too much to expect the desperately poor to reach for the ideals of Ubuntu in response to multiculturalism in the region, and pessimistically suggests stricter border control as a more realistic intervention (Chimuka, 2018, p. 114). In the same volume, however, Oswell Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru (2018) displays greater optimism for Ubuntu when he argues for *Vumunhu* (Ubuntu in the Zimbabwean vernacular) as the foundation of multicultural education in order to mitigate cultural diversity and especially the negative consequences of class interests in Zimbabwe. For him (2018, pp. 137–138), this is so because

> *vumunhu* emphasizes the importance of tolerance of diversity of perceptions, perspectives and practices. In other words, when we deny the humanity of others and focus on our sectional interests we also deny our own humanity. Because the individual's identity is a product of social processes, we can describe *vumunhu* as a unifying philosophy which serves as the spiritual foundation of African communities.

Staying with more recent publications, Hlongwane et al. (2018) investigated the social promotion resources of Ubuntu against the backdrop of the disappointing progress of the Ubuntu ethic in curbing violence and enhancing social cohesion in the South African population, despite considerable effort by government, civil society and even the private sector to promote the idea. The findings affirmed that Ubuntu promotes social coherence in several ways, e.g., through peaceful co-existence, and through "facilitating oneness and interconnectedness with God, ancestors, family, society and community" (Hlongwane et al., 2018, p. 57). Ubuntu was found to inspire selfless service to others (2018, p. 58) and strengthening of the community through the sharing of stories and/or material resources (2018, p. 59). Ubuntu further promoted social coherence by promoting reciprocal living in a way that implied constant communication in the community, resulting in values like "life, dignity, compassion, humaneness, harmony and reconciliation" (Hlongwane et al., 2018, p. 59). While valuable for reflecting the perspectives of African psychologists on Ubuntu (Hlongwane et al., 2018, p. 63) and for its Afrocentric approach, the study sidesteps the problem of the apparent failure of Ubuntu to achieve the desired results of social cohesion by those who advocate for it. Similar to many engagements with Ubuntu from intercultural or multicultural perspectives, the optimism of this article in the face of severe ongoing social problems in sub-Saharan Africa is its biggest weakness.

Fairly recently, Lisang Moyo (2019) conducted an empirical study to determine the views of school management teams as a strategy for addressing the challenges they

face due to South Africa's multicultural school environment. Five themes emerged from his study, all of them highly positive about how Ubuntu might contribute to creating multiculturalism in contexts often plagued by the challenges accompanying multiple cultures in the classroom. Participants believed that the Ubuntu program would work in their schools; however, they pointed to the need for structural integration of Ubuntu in education policy at central government level. Moyo's study is valuable for being one of the few empirical studies on Ubuntu; however, its engagement with Ubuntu literature continues the overly optimistic trend that we encountered above and lacks critical depth, thus detracting from a potentially meaningful contribution.

Joy Christine Lwanga-Lumu (2020) also considered Ubuntu in the context of multiculturalism in education. Her article sought to identify some of the pedagogic strategies needed by educators for the purpose of enhancing students' plurilingual and intercultural competence, and highlighted certain cultural aspects that are necessary to teach at university level in order to increase intercultural competence. Alongside the intercultural communicative language teaching and language learning framework to integrate intercultural perspectives, decolonize the English 2nd language curricula and promote multilingualism for higher education transformation, her study encouraged eclectic incorporation of intercultural perspectives and the philosophy of Ubuntu for "effective development of students' plurilingual and intercultural competence" (Lwanga-Lumu, 2020, p. 285).

It is interesting to note that, while many of the studies exploring Ubuntu in relation to multi- or intercultural approaches were motivated by a desire to improve relations between different cultural groups, none of them had the emphasis on cooperation that is characteristic of the transcultural approach. It is to this question that we now turn.

4 In Search of Commonalities: Ubuntu and the Transcultural Approach

The *trans*cultural commitment to move beyond comparative analyses of cultures, with its descriptive emphasis on cultural differences, towards a search for commonalities for the purpose of enhancing cooperation, forms the contextual background of this chapter. Specifically, this section explores the transcultural commitment to finding and creating commonalities for cooperation in contexts of diversity from the perspective of the Ubuntu ethic. The question shaping our exploration is twofold and relates to the stated goal of the Delphi study (cf. Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022 and the Introduction to this volume by Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos):

1. How might Ubuntu contribute to developing commonalities in contexts of diversity?
2. How might the Ubuntu ethic enable or enhance transcultural cooperation and learning?

The Delphi study (through its third question, cf. introduction to this volume) inquired into the kind of competencies that are required to identify existing cultural commonalities or develop new cultural commonalities. The question referred both to the individual and the organizational level. While the findings were discussed in greater detail in the introduction to this volume, by way of summary a few relevant points can be addressed here.

The Delphi study findings prioritized a paradigm shift toward a relational approach above a concern for specific terminology in the field of cultural studies. Rather than argue for a given term, such as trans-, inter-, or cross-culturality, the importance of describing the intended meaning of proposing *trans*culturality is preferred. As such, transculturality invites a focus on commonalities and on the productive potentials of cultural diversity. A constructive understanding underlies this focus, in that transculturality recognizes the processes of constructing shared meaning through a specific approach to engagement between cultures, and emphasizes this aspect. As such, then, *trans*- points to the beyond, to the new realities of shared experience, belonging and creation that can forge a third way: a new reality that transcends existing cultures.

The main starting point for dialogue between Ubuntu and a relational approach to cultural complexity aimed at cooperation is that both approaches prioritize relationality as being fundamental to existence and, to be specific, as being fundamental to personal human existence. This is why one apt description of Ubuntu is that it is a relational ontology or an understanding of what makes a person human. Another way to say this is that the human person is a perpetually unfolding nexus of living relations impacted by, and impacting on, the contexts where these relationships exist. The understanding that relations are primary and constitutive to our being human is aptly described in the words of Donati (2011, n.p.), which have become influential in relational approaches to sociology,

> Relational sociology aims at disclosing the fact that every human being is relationally constituted as a person, and the same holds true for any social institution. According to this paradigm, a social formation is human insofar as the social relations constituting it are produced by subjects who orient themselves reciprocally towards one another on the basis of a meaning that surpasses functional requirements. Even when we talk to our Self in solitude or isolation, social relations are at stake. We can forget them, we can ignore them and we can banish them. But they are still there. Modernity has tried to immunize human individuals against social relations, and continues to do so. It is precisely for that reason that modernity is now at its end. We are what we care about, and if we do not relate to significant others, we are nothing, we become nothing. We are our 'relational concerns', as individuals as well as social agents/actors, since we necessarily live in many different contexts that are social circles (like a family, a network of friends, maybe a civil association, up to a nation) which imply collective identity.

It is fitting that, as the modernist individualistic detour circles back to understanding relations as fundamental to human existence, both from an individual and a social perspective, a dialogue should emerge between western intellectual traditions and those cultures who never undertook the same detour. Of these, Ubuntu is one, but not the only, example. Characteristic to this dialogue will be many of the insights that emerged from the Delphi project, namely how cultural commonalities are shaped

through dynamic processes of relationing and belonging in practical contexts, rather than through concepts, categories, and boundaries.

4.1 *Finding, Exploring, and Creating Cultural Commonalities*

In response to the questions above, this section offers a few preliminary points to consider as Ubuntu is explored in relation to the transcultural approach. *Trans*cultural competence describes the commitment (and the needed skills) to cooperate in contexts of cultural complexity from a deliberately relational perspective. This raises the question of whether Ubuntu, itself a relational ontology, may serve to enhance transcultural competence. The points below do not in themselves constitute answers to the two questions above, but are more appropriately seen as demarcations of a research area that might the topic of specifically focused studies, ultimately including the interpretation of empirical research results.

4.1.1 An Ethic of Relation

Ubuntu both describes that which makes a person human, as well as prescribes that certain obligations follow based on this understanding (Oyowe & Etieyibo, 2018, p. 343). Individuals and groups are expected to behave and act in such ways that human relations follow (Oyowe & Etieyibo, 2018, p. 355).

When it comes to cooperation, it is important to point out that collaboration and solidarity in the framework of Ubuntu are not fundamentally motivated by the desire for mutual benefit as in typically individualistic understandings of personhood and community. In the Ubuntu framework, as Oyowe and Etieyibo (2018, p. 361) point out, harmony and collaboration are considered fundamentally good, as opposed to merely instrumentally. However, the fact that Ubuntu is centered on the community and considers individual benefit against this standard, or in view of the relations that constitute the individual, unifies the two normative frameworks Oyowe and Etieyibo (2018, p. 361):

> Put differently, our view is that although the Ubuntu framework is amenable to the idea that there are other motivations besides mutual advantage for social cooperation, including considerations of solidarity and care, and it envisages a wider range of relationships, including those with dependents that often cannot be made sense of in terms of mutual advantage (e.g., between caregiver and a person with disability), it is nevertheless the case that within the Ubuntu system mutual advantage for the parties involved is a key motivation insofar as there are expectations of reciprocity between agents and that agents ought not to take advantage of others.

Similarly, the “spirit of willing participation, unquestioning cooperation, warmth” and “openness” (Hatendi, 2018, p. 146) that characterize the way of Ubuntu is espoused not on the basis of the benefit that may result, but rather because these

ethical principles like sharing and mutual social responsibility give expression to the nature of human existence itself. At the same time, in a communally oriented world, such actions cannot but produce mutual benefit, and are therefore not removed from the relational dynamic.

This principle clearly emerged from a recent reading of organizational change management through the Ubuntu lens (Mangaliso et al., 2021; cf. also Sulamoyo, 2010). Whereas improvements in the traditional metrics of organizational performance form the usual motivation for change, such as "Western conceptions of organizational productivity and efficiency are inappropriate measures in an African worldview," where "traditional values of solidarity, group well-being, social harmony transcend the former" (Mangaliso et al., 2021, p. 16). The authors caution that consultation and inclusive decision-making processes are vital to ensure smooth implementation of change (Mangaliso et al., 2021, pp. 16–17):

> This is ontologically different from the western change management approaches where overall corporate performance is the primary determinant of success. Using those criteria as the metrics for success in African management would be tantamount to forced acculturation, a phenomenon whereby the values derived from an external culture are imposed on the practices of another culture. The consequences are usually a degree of cultural confusion that plays itself out in poor organizational outcomes.

Ubuntu urges more than just acting in a certain way towards others, however. Because the humanity of the other is seen as the ability of that person to exist in and through relation, Ubuntu calls upon one to act in such a way as to enable, enhance, or restore the other's relational standing in the community. Further studies will have to expand and develop this notion, interrogating how the lived experience might lead to commonality that accomplishes ways of cooperating which enables a third way between cultural groups that may have varying ideas of the ultimate value of cooperation, with one prioritizing production and the other human relation, for example.

4.1.2 Art and Act: A Performative Commitment (or: Doing Ubuntu, Doing Transculturality)

While Ubuntu can indeed be described conceptually, and, as we have seen, has even been utilized in the formation of a moral theory (cf. Metz, 2007a, 2007b), it is a lived philosophy of certain cultural groups indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa (Oyowe & Etieyibo, 2018, pp. 344–345). As Nkondo (2007, p. 93) states,

> Ubuntu is not a system of general or abstract principles nor a code of rules but the way of life of men and women in a particular place and time, drawn from the collective wisdom of generations. What has to be learned in ubuntu is not a doctrine such as 'the wages of sin are death' nor is it a rule such as 'the truth will free you', but how to live humanely with others in a given space and time.

In a 2010 article, Musa Xulu explores cultural expressions, symbolism and performance in order to shape the outline of an Ubuntu pedagogy that would ensure the

continued positive impact of this sub-Saharan African “intangible cultural heritage” (Xulu, 2010, p. 82). We have already referred to how language expressions and idioms verbalize or refer to Ubuntu values in specific contexts. To this, Xulu adds the performance culture and structure of performance in Southern Africa (2010, p. 83):

> The call-and-response structure of African song makes every song-maker dependent on others. This includes the knowledge systems and skills required for successful rituality, division of roles in a performance context and known, but unexpressed, ideas that inform the content of a ‘heritagized’ (Jacinto, 2009) performance, aimed at expressing *Ubuntu* in a symbolic world.

Xulu argues for an African way for imparting knowledge of Ubuntu. These symbols of continuity “perform” Ubuntu as an artistic expression of what is acted in daily life in the community. Transcultural cooperation calls for a similar vitality, movement, rhythm and situatedness, creating belonging through shared experiences rather than subscribing to an agreed-upon theory.

4.1.3 A Third Way

In a 2014 essay, Thaddeus Metz described the hopes he harboured in the early nineties that, as opposed to the stale alternatives of the East and West, South Africa would produce a promising third way “that would foster more cooperative, participatory and communal relationships and organizations, ones that would produce more cultured, egalitarian and meaningful ways of life”—or, to “see more ubuntu in South Africa’s institutions than had been present in the two dominant socio-politico-economic models across the world in the twentieth century” (Metz, 2014, p. 205). While he relates how these hopes have, for the most part, not come to fruition, Metz notes a number of recommendations of how such a ‘third possibility” might be consciously developed in South Africa. His recommendations consist of ways to express the moral logic of Ubuntu in contemporary South African society, and may in a sense be interpreted as transcultural—for being relationally based, focused on creating commonalities and belonging, and committed to practice.

One example is that of *letsema*, or cooperative farming, where it would be common in traditional African societies to help with the harvesting of one another’s fields, with harvesters moving collectively from field to field to help one another (and delight in the joy of shared labor). He explains how this might take practical shape by using education as an example, concluding that such cooperation would strengthen social cohesion while accomplishing the urgent goal of improving public education in the country (Metz, 2014, p. 212).

A second example would see the state encourage sharing space and childrearing responsibilities by designing housing to cluster a small number of units together in a collective compound reserved for parents or those who wish to offer them support. This modern reinterpretation of traditional communal living would relieve a huge amount of pressure for parents who are often away at work. Some compound

members might take care of younger children during the day while tending vegetable gardens and being financially supported by those compound members who are employed (Metz, 2014, pp. 213–214).

An exploration of Ubuntu in relation to the transcultural approach would be incomplete without also considering possible hurdles that may frustrate the creation of commonalities. Future studies will have to pay special attention to how the cultural differences underlying these tensions may be maintained, safeguarding cultural particularity, yet at the same time being transcended by dialogical hermeneutics producing a third way.

4.1.4 Harmony at All Cost and Resistance to Change

An interesting paper by Hatendi (2018) examines the use of modern contraceptives among the Shona people in Zimbabwe from a multicultural perspective, asking whether Ubuntu can allow the use of contraceptives. Whereas other theorists (cf. Sect. 3) have argued for Ubuntu's ability to foster inclusion of difference and otherness, Hatendi's answer is that Ubuntu must resist modern contraceptives on the basis that harmony must be preserved in the community, which includes the family spirit elders (*vadzimu*). The traditional view is that women must bear as many children as God allows them, since children are a blessing and abundance from *Musikavanhu* (the Creator) (Hatendi, 2018, p. 155). It therefore emerges that protecting harmony at all cost, even to the point of resisting plurality and denying different views, is one way in which Ubuntu might pose a challenge to the transcultural commitment to creating commonalities in order to foster cooperation in the context of cultural complexity. In certain contexts, taking risks and challenging the status quo such as cultural habits, is seen as challenging tradition (Sulamoyo, 2010, p. 46), which is imbued with authority by virtue of respect for the elders and ancestors from which it has been received.

4.1.5 Ubuntu, Patriarchy, and Power Distance

The loyalty which African people afford their leaders (what Sulamoyo, 2010, p. 46 calls the Ubuntu paradox with the dimension of power distance) may open the door for inequity between leaders and followers. Proverbs from the Chewa tribe of Malawi, as quoted from James (2002, p. 11) in Sulamoyo (2010, p. 46) capture this succinctly:

> *Atambala awiri salira mkhola limodzi*—two cocks do not crow in one kraal (there can only be one leader, so if others are talking they are competing with the leader). *Mutu ukakula sulewa mkhonya*—a big head will not dodge the fists (the leader is responsible for sorting out all our problems).

Chalaka bakha nkhuku singatole—if a duck with a long beak cannot pick it up then a chicken certainly cannot (if a leader cannot solve something, then the followers certainly cannot).

Wamkulu sawuzidwa—he is old… therefore he is right (a leader's decision is not open for discussion).

Similarly, several Ubuntu scholars have pointed to patriarchy as allegedly inherent to Ubuntu. As Duvenage (2022) points out, literature on Ubuntu has for the most part not inquired into ideas of what it means to be a man or woman within the Ubuntu ethic. Her analysis of literary texts shows that literary representations essentialize traditional gender stereotypes, with female characters lacking in agency (Duvenage, 2022, p. 684) and being represented as women in the community, thus embodying the Ubuntu ideal. Male literary characters, on the other hand, are entitled to "moral arrival" and, as opposed to women, occupy positions of authority (2020, p. 675).

Interestingly, there are also those who argue, like Loyiso Mennon Luvalo (2019), that Ubuntu should be applied as a way of addressing patriarchy in sub-Saharan African societies and curbing gender-based violence. While Luvalo's study is helpful in that it gathers and interprets empirical data from community elders who hold cultural memories vital to determining the nature of Ubuntu, a critical reading of the data provided by these village elders is lacking. Similar to Luvalo, however, Chisale (2018) deconstructed the gendering of caregiving, with her empirical study showing that men also display caring tendencies in traditional African communities. She concludes (2018, p. 7),

> Ubuntu as conceptualized by the elderly from KZN, can be used to progressively address and correct the gendering of pastoral care in African contexts. The proper order of society is when men and women work in partnership in extending caregiving.

Manyonganise (2015) offers a more balanced assessment through her description of the ambivalence of Ubuntu in relation to the lived experience of women. Through the cultural traditions of the Shona of Zimbabwe, she explores both the liberative and oppressive nature of Ubuntu, and concludes that those customs, traditions, and cultural practices that dehumanize and oppress women in the name of Ubuntu must be deconstructed in order to ensure that Ubuntu is "liberating and life-giving to women. As such, there is a need to interrogate and challenge those customs, traditions and cultural practices that dehumanize women in the name of *ubuntu* or *hunhu*" (Manyonganise, 2015, p. 6).

4.1.6 Refusing Interpretation

As performative wisdom, the cultural potential of proverbs lies in their openness to the situational context which they address in any given moment. Such lively agility is vital in allowing Ubuntu as a moral resource to speak to times that are as

challenging as they are radically changing. Objectifying Ubuntu in a way that denies its own socio-historical development and differences across geographical regions, is to hollow out its potency as a moral resource. Guarding against such objectification would require a hermeneutically sensitive reading of Ubuntu, including through the lens of decolonization. Some readings have already hinted in this direction by pointing out the popularization of Ubuntu following the end of Apartheid, but there is much room for elaborating this. Such interpretive readings of Ubuntu would provide it with the depth without which it would turn into an ideology, a one-size-fits-all objectified solution to imagined contemporary needs that will mean little more than returning Africa to an imagined, but now completely inaccessible, past. Instead, a cultural resource of historically and contextually accumulated depth is able to engage current contexts of unprecedented complexity. This would provide a double reading of Ubuntu, where as much as Ubuntu is read and interpreted, it also interprets the context and societies to which it speaks.

5 Conclusion

While further research is required to flesh out the initial steps taken in this chapter, it has at least become clear that there is more than ample ground to continue the dialogue between Ubuntu and the transcultural approach. The relational ontology that underlies both approaches forms the most basic foundation for such a dialogue. In considering how research should proceed to explore the relationship, however, we would urge performative approaches that study Ubuntu and transculturality in living contexts as they unfold in the co-creation of commonalities.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "In Search of Commonalities: Ubuntu and the Transcultural Approach", by Yolande Steenkamp and Willem Fourie

- How can the relational turn in the social sciences be said to relate to Ubuntu as relational ontology?
- Given the tension between the western preference for abstract thought and analysis and the Southern African preference for doing relation, doing Ubuntu and doing transculturality, how might a dialogue between transculturality and Ubuntu unfold in a way that would appeal to both traditions?
- How might the transcultural approach create commonalities to enable cooperation between companies that prioritize organizational performance and profit as their goal, and African communities that understand the mutual benefit to be fundamentally intertwined with a commitment to the humanity of the other?

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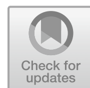
A Relational View on Culture and Transculturality



Gert Jan Hofstede

Abstract The concept of "Transculturality", used often in this volume, seems to carry a promise of bridging cultural differences in groups. In order to investigate whether this could be so, I want to add my thoughts on the causation of culture to the debate. I will argue in this piece that everyday interactions between people have shaped human cultures over time and are still doing so. I will also indicate briefly how this happens, by presenting basic relational drivers of individuals, elementary models of sociality across individuals and groups, and emergent patterns in groups and society. Then, I will consider the concept of transculturality from this theoretical perspective. We are cultural social animals; can we also be transcultural, what would that mean, and what would that require?

1 Introduction

My father Geert, in his 1980 *Culture's Consequences*, opens with the sentence "The survival of mankind will depend to a large extent on the ability of people who think differently to act together" (Hofstede, 1980). Since then, the advent of the internet and globalization, as well as the accelerating deterioration of the world's climate and biodiversity, have increased the urgency of this statement.

The concept of "Transculturality", used often in this volume, seems to carry a promise of bridging cultural differences in groups. In order to investigate whether this could be so, I want to add my thoughts on the causation of culture to the debate. Axioms:

- Over millions of years, Homo sapiens has evolved to be a eusocial mammal, to whom relations are crucial for survival.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_4

- Our societies self-organize. This includes such seemingly top-down instances as norms, laws, institutions, countries, and deities. In so doing, they also create and reproduce culture.
- Young Homo sapiens are born with hugely flexible brains and acquire the details of their sociality during infancy and childhood: “It takes a village to raise a child”.
- As a result of path dependencies that differ between societies, persistent (but not immutable) cultural differences develop between them.

I will argue in this piece that everyday interactions between people have shaped human cultures over time and are still doing so. I will also indicate briefly how this happens, by presenting

- basic relational drivers of individuals,
- elementary models of sociality across individuals and groups, and
- emergent patterns in groups and society.

Then, I will consider the concept of transculturality from this theoretical perspective. We are cultural social animals; can we also be transcultural, what would that mean, and what would that require?

2 A Eusocial Mammal

In agreement with Wilson & Holldöbler (Wilson & Hölldobler, 2005), Wikipedia defines eusociality in a biological way: “Sociality is the degree to which individuals in an animal population tend to associate in social groups (gregariousness) and form cooperative societies”. The Wikipedia site continues: “The highest degree of sociality recognized by sociobiologists is *eusociality*. A eusocial taxon is one that exhibits overlapping adult generations, reproductive division of labor, cooperative care of young, and—in the most refined cases—a biological caste system”.

So eusociality does not imply that we are all the same, but quite the contrary: that we have a division of labour. Obviously, this definition holds for humans, if we take the term “caste” with a pinch of salt. We have in our societies an intricate division of labour, including reproduction and cooperative care of the young, but also including just about everything else. Most of us would be utterly unable to produce or create any of the objects we use every day such as coffee beans, cars, and computers; yet we all somehow get them.

Wilson and Holldöbler (ibid.) also assert “group selection is the strong binding force in eusocial evolution; individual selection, the strong dissolutive force”. In recent centuries, by far the deadliest confrontations have occurred between groups. Just as ant colonies can wage wars against one another, so can our societies, or groups within them. However, humans can also in-fight within groups. Indeed, we humans

are subject to strong forces of selection both between societies and between individuals, and fission or fusion of groups is common (Hofstede et al., 2010, Chapter 12). We are thus subject to both between-group and within-group selection pressures. The balance between these two differs across cultures. We can therefore expect our sociality to be multifarious and linked to culture. This will prove to be important for the concept of transculturality.

2.1 Fission–Fusion and Moral Circles

Among humans, blood is thicker than water. Disparaging attributions about outsiders are everywhere. They range from mother-in-law jokes to deadly family feuds, from petty racism to dehumanization and genocide. We do not even require biological differences; a different shirt colour could provoke a fight. To give you one anecdote: once, visiting a football match between the Dutch and French national teams, I overheard German. I looked, and saw a group of people wearing orange (Dutch) shirts; the Germans had wisely chosen to go unnoticed among all the French and Dutch. They were still Germans inside, but they could pass for Dutch on the outside.

To express this flexibility of group affiliation, I have used the term “moral circle” (Hofstede, 2009). The idea is that, although some groups are solid and we may stay in them for our entire lives, we can also form ad hoc groups of people very quickly, such as “all of the match-goers”, and we are conscious of the symbolic value of things to groups, even such an instantaneous, transient group. In the example of the football match, football supporters’ shirt colour symbolizes allegiance with one of the teams. The German group were perhaps aware that they’d be giving offence if they wore German colours, or they wanted to show support to the Dutch team.

The above confirms the point that our species has fission–fusion dynamics: The boundaries between our groups are sometimes very flexible. The motor of fission–fusion is relational: we tend to leave groups that we do not think well of, and exchange them for groups that we value more, or that value us more.

2.2 Culture is Not Group Identity

The example of the football supporters can prove yet another point. By donning Dutch colours, the Germans ostensibly turned into supporters of the Dutch team. So, for the duration of the match, their publicly announced identity was “Dutch”. But their language had told me that they were German, and so we can assume that their culture-from-birth was German (I did not check, so I could be wrong, but that’s not the point here). The point is that one’s social identity at any point in time and operating in a certain moral circle, need not coincide with one’s culture.

This could be an important point if we talk about transculturality. If transculturality pertains to culture, then it would have to involve socialization in the tender years, which is, by definition, a relational process. If it involves social identity, then it could be a set of skills learned by individual adults, perhaps only by those that happen to have the required personality and socialization prerequisites. Let's come back to this issue later.

3 Bottom-up Dynamics

The next question is to unravel the details of our sociality and group behaviour. What makes us tick? It is probably safe to assume that, despite the huge variation, almost all of us

- want to be good to those who matter to us
- want to look good to those who matter to us
- want to be nice to those who are nice to us
- cannot help loving some people
- want to avoid being coerced into things, except by recognized powers
- sometimes get angry.

If these points apply to you, then your sociality fits with what Theodore Kemper (2017) termed "Elementary forms of social relations: status, power and reference groups". They certainly apply to me. The point here is that this is all we do. If we want to become rich, it is not for the sake of the money, but because the money will allow us to "be good" or "look good" to those that matter to us. If we commit a crime, it could be because its victims mean nothing to us; because it is not a crime according to people that matter to us; or to take revenge.

3.1 Status and Power

Let us look at these bullet points through a "Kemperian" lens. They cover two relational dimensions. When people divide roles, they can do so in two ways: either A does what B wants voluntarily, or A is coerced by B. The first is what Kemper calls a status conferral by A, and the second is a power move by B. This two-factor relational world is based on empirical studies. Kemper developed, in 1978, his "Social interactional theory of emotions" (Kemper, 1978). He covers a wide territory in this book that was ahead of its time. In fact, his theory boils down to a "socio-psycho-physiology" of emotions. Let me come back to the five points and paraphrase them in Kemper's terms.

- *Want to be good to those who matter to us.* Someone that "matters to us" is someone we consider **worthy of status**. The reason for this could be any combination of a thousand: they might be powerful, or beautiful, or well-reputed, or well-dressed (like having an orange shirt), or famous. These attributes make us feel impressed and privileged. These involuntary feelings motivate us to "be good to", or to confer status on, such a person. This could be by being polite, warm, respectful, pleasing, dutiful…
- *Want to look good to those who matter to us.* In contrast to the previous point, we also want those status-worthy others to think well of us. Feelings of assertiveness, or eagerness to impress, will provide involuntary motivation. We will **claim status** in order to achieve this. We can claim status by being "good" in any of the ways in the previous point: often a conferral of status can also act as a claim to status. In addition, we might overdo it, show prowess, tell jokes, boast, or dress up.
- *Want to be nice to those who are nice to us.* When someone is nice to us, they are **conferring status**. Involuntarily, this leads us to feel grateful or pleased, motivating us to reciprocate. We reciprocate smiles, greetings, services, gestures of friendship. Our lives are filled with ritualized status conferrals: handshakes, hugs, politeness, courteousness, gift-giving, and diplomacy.
- *Cannot help loving some people.* Some people seem so worthy of status that we cannot help loving them, whether they are nice to us or not. This could take the form of adulation, such as for a pop or film star. It could be tenderness, such as for a child. It could be admiration, such as for a teacher, parent, or leader. One of the secrets of socialization that happens mostly in our tender years is how we **acquire standards for status worthiness**. Once in place, these standards are very hard to change.
- *Want to avoid being coerced into things, except by recognized powers.* This last point brings us to Kemper's second relational dimension: power. **Power** involves such acts as physical coercion, legal action, but also faking feelings, and deceit. When someone forces us to do things against our will, we will hold that against them, and be motivated to retaliate. The exception is if we accept the **authority** of the person; in that case, we voluntarily comply. In reality, it is of course quite difficult to establish where the boundary lies between status and power. Some relational behaviours are explicitly ambiguous, e.g., rough-and-tumble fighting, or telling disparaging jokes, telling "white lies", or the giving and taking involved in romantic relations and sex. In fact, we are experts in disguising power use as status conferral.
- *Sometimes get angry.* If someone fails to give us the status accord we expect—say, blocks our way in traffic—then we could feel stupid, frustrated, or angry. If stupid, we blame ourselves for not having properly anticipated the event ("introjection"). If frustrated, we do not assign blame. If angry, it means we blame the other for blocking our way ("extrojection"), which, in Kemper terms, implies the other made a power move on us. Any perceived power move made on us could motivate us to **use power** in return, or pre-emptively.

This is a simple model, but there is endless ambiguity in how it plays out. Allow me to give just one example. Suppose that you are a head of state that lost an election. This constitutes a great status affront. If you introject, you may feel shame; you say “I must have done something wrong”. The neutral position would be to say “shit happens” and get on with your life. Extrojection would lead you to feel anger, blame the opponents, and perhaps accuse them of fraud (Hofstede, 2020).

3.2 Reference Groups

I should add one important concept. Kemper’s later books (Kemper, 2011, 2017) develop the 1978 theory in the direction of the concept of “reference groups”. Reference groups are individuals or groups, imagined or real, that take the place of that which other theories call “the self”. This idea links individuals to eusociality. To “become oneself”, for Kemper, means to be certain about one’s reference groups. Reference groups thus include family members, peers, government leaders, teachers, but also deities or ancestors, writers, pets, or fictitious characters. A special reference group is one’s own organism. Reference groups provide one’s social identity.

I like the concept of reference groups in particular because of Kemper’s suggestion that a person is a locus of “reference group meetings”. Whenever one has to decide on a course of action—even in the simple case of whether to say hello to someone—, one’s reference groups meet and decide, based on status–power considerations. For instance, when I choose what shirt to wear to the match, will my fellow countrymen despise me for not wearing German colours? What about the rest of the crowd? My reference groups and the point of view I believe them to hold, weighted by their relative salience to me in terms of status worthiness and power, will decide what I do.

3.3 Relational and Technical Activity

Kemper’s theory allows us to focus on the relational aspect of human day-to-day lives. Whatever we do in a technical sense—building houses, watching football games, or schooling children, we are always also playing the status–power game, claiming status, conferring it, showing our worthiness, avoiding the power of others, and using power ourselves.

My hope with this paragraph is to have given the reader a glimpse of the impressive explanatory power of the status–power model of relations, without using up an inordinate amount of space. It is my conviction that Kemper’s work has so far not attracted the attention—or should I say the status—that it merits.

3.4 *Elementary Forms of Sociality*

I argued above that we are a eusocial species with an infinitely elaborate division of labour. I added that our sociality consists of two dimensions: voluntary versus non-voluntary compliance with the perceived wishes of others, or “status” and “power”. So far, these are the basic rules of the social game; this says nothing as yet about the patterns that our sociality forms.

Before moving on to the level of society, we can look at how mutual status conferrals and claims are calibrated. A useful and original model for this was presented by Alan Fiske (Fiske, 1992). Fiske distinguishes four “psychological models” that occur between people, whatever the commodity that is being exchanged. They serve to seek, sustain, and sanction relationships between individuals or groups. They are:

- Communal sharing. Here, every member of the in-group is deemed equally worthy of status; it is really the group that is status-worthy.
- Authority ranking. Here, there is a publicly recognized linear order of status–power standing.
- Equality matching. Here, all people are deemed equally worthy of status, regardless of group membership.
- Market pricing. Here, proportionality according to a single metric (usually financial) determines exchange rates.

All four of these models can serve to determine the appropriate level of status conferral or power use in a certain social situation. They usually operate together, depending on context. However, they require very different relational information in order to work:

- *Communal sharing*. “Are you in my group?” For communal sharing, signifiers of group affiliation will be vital in social relationships. This model will hold for sharing beers among football supporters. The group is very much an exclusive moral circle, with a categorical boundary.
- *Authority ranking*. “What is your rank relative to mine?” Signals of rank will be important, and status claiming will be frequent. New groups, or groups with new members, frequently have “storming” phases with a lot of status claiming. Adolescents are busy climbing the status–power ladder. Leaders get to decide many things that affect their followers.
- *Equality matching*. “How much do you get relative to me?” Egalitarian distributive justice according to an interval scale is the prime concern. For instance: You did the dishes yesterday; I’ll do them today.
- *Market pricing*. “What is the relative value of what you and I got?” Distributive justice according to a ratio scale is the concern. I’ll pay you a fair price if you do the dishes.

As a reader, you probably have moral feelings about the examples: is it a good idea to pay one’s family members for doing the dishes, for instance (market pricing), or is it a better model that they just do it when you ask/tell them to (authority ranking)?

Or perhaps, whoever has time washes the dishes (communal sharing), or you take turns (equality matching)?

Note that, in Kemperian terms, communal sharing and equality matching are "status-conferring" models, while authority ranking is a "power wielding" model, and market pricing hardly requires a relationship. This is relevant for our lives. Voluntary institutions and ideologies tend to adopt the former two models, at least in name, while involuntary ones tend to adopt the latter two.

4 Cultural Differences

Anyone who has spent time immersed in more than one part of the world will have found that all kinds of people can be found in any place: some status-worthy, some lovable, and some better avoided. Kemper's status–power theory of relations applies to all of us. At the same time, such a well-travelled person will have noticed that things are not organized in the same way everywhere. The small print of status–power dynamics differs across places. This includes such institutions as marriage, funerals, births, and elections; but also mundane things such as greetings, dress codes, the role of the police, and traffic codes.

Consider young people adopting societal roles. What roles should they fulfil, and of what groups are they supposed to be a member? In individualistic societies such as the Netherlands, this comes down to "finding out who they are" as an individual, as if we were free atoms in a gas. For instance, the Dutch schooling systems try to match children's education with their capacities as individuals, unhampered by any family or class-based connections. In a more traditional society, young persons have a more predictable path ahead of them, determined by family elders and relations, more like an atom in a crystal. In Kemper's terms, individualism implies the freedom to choose one's reference groups.

4.1 Culture and Sociality

Hofstede (Hofstede et al., 2010) found systemic differences in social organization between societies—often erroneously interpreted as psychological factors—that he termed dimensions of culture. He worked with mainly national data for convenience. To avoid the controversy between "nation" and "society", I'll sometimes refer to "deep culture" as the culture acquired from birth. We'll present the dimensions in terms of Kemper's and Fiske's theories.

4.1.1 Individualism–Collectivism

This is the degree to which individuals, or groups, count as the unit of the status–power game. The more a society is collectivistic, the more it will have inhibitions against ever leaving or creating a group. A group could be national, religious, ethnic, political, or other. Communal sharing will tend to be a preferred model. Between groups, other models could operate, e.g., hierarchy ranking.

In individualistic societies, the other three models (authority ranking, equality matching, and market pricing) will be used more frequently. The dominant model may differ across groups. In voluntary groups, communal sharing is likely to be an ideal.

4.1.2 Power Distance

This is the degree to which people at the bottom of hierarchies accept this position as a natural state of affairs. The larger the power distance, the more elements of the society will operate based on authority ranking, where the hierarchy is based on ascription rather than achievement. For instance, in hierarchical societies, elder people have prerogatives over younger ones.

It turns out that these two dimensions are the most important ones to determine which of Fiske's four models will occur most frequently in a society. This stands to reason, since the dimensions are about horizontal versus vertical relations between people in a society. The other four can allow all four of Fiske's models.

4.1.3 Masculinity–Femininity

This is, in Kemper's terminology, the degree to which a society accords status to the wielding of power. The more masculine the society, the more it will tend to favour the use of force. Friendliness could be interpreted as weakness. Looking strong and powerful is status-worthy. That force could be used to enforce adherence to any of Fiske's four models. In a feminine society, status conferrals are a better way of obtaining what one wants. People in feminine societies tend to accept being vulnerable to the power of others; such vulnerability is actually a definition of trust. Within societies, education level has been shown to be associated with more feminine values (Hofstede et al., 2010).

4.1.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension is proportional to anxiety in a society. In Kemper's model it signifies a fear of unknown powers. In an uncertainty avoiding society, there is a need for ritual that sanctions actions and exchanges, whatever the Fiske model used. Out-groups

and diseases, as well as deviant behaviours, are likely to be feared. Rules make people feel safer, although they are not necessarily adhered to.

4.1.5 Short-Term vs Long-Term Orientation

This dimension is about change and life perspective. A long-term-oriented society is one in which zooming out is the norm. This brings into view changes that have happened in the past and are to be expected in the future. It makes the transient organism relatively unimportant compared with other reference groups and puts into focus future generations. It makes introjection of blame and guilt more likely. A short-term-oriented society is one in which zooming in is the norm. This highlights status–power dynamics here and now. Claiming status by directly visible attributes, such as dressing up, is important. The world tends to be seen as immutable and positioned as absolutist. Extrojection of emotions is likely.

4.1.6 Indulgence vs Restraint

This dimension is about the joys, versus the trials, of life. In Kemper's terms it is about how important the organism is as a reference group. In an indulgent society, the organism has a loud voice in the reference group committee, so that celebrating life and having fun and friends will be important. In a restrained society, letting oneself go is considered unworthy of status.

I believe the Hofstede six-dimensional model of culture to be, *grosso modo*, 360 degrees, meaning that it encompasses the lion's share of the differences between societies. The fact that it is so well amenable to interpretation in terms of other generic frameworks from other theoretical schools, such as those of Fiske and especially Kemper, encourages me in this conviction.

4.2 Gestalt of a Society

A society is, in a sense, an organic whole. It originates through migration or fission, it feeds itself, it interacts with its environment, it renews itself, and it may cease to exist. Like a waterfall, it derives its Gestalt from flux. For it to live, innumerable daily interactions are needed, all of which are governed by sociality. Many of these interactions are supported by institutions: marriage, nuclear family, extended family, church, organization, school—norms, laws, countries, and deities. These institutions have more or less predictable ways of conducting their business. They will prefer, for the most part, one of Fiske's four models of sociality across all kinds of relationships. As argued above, the cultural dimensions of Individualism and power distance

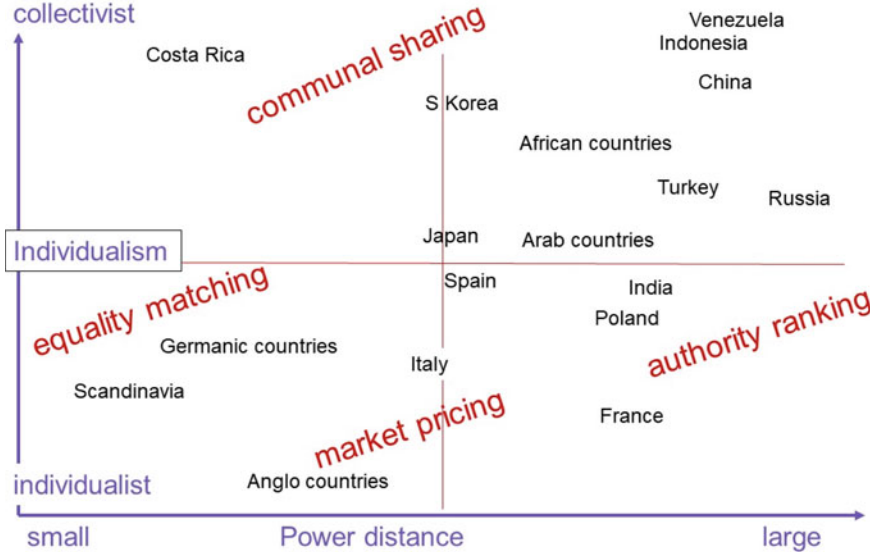

Fig. 1 Some countries and regions in a matrix of Hofstede's culture dimension Power distance x Individualism (Hofstede et al., 2010). Diagonally in red, preferred forms of sociality according to Fiske (1992) are indicated

moderate which model of sociality is likely to become institutionalized or popular. Figure 1 shows how this could look across some countries and regions.

Not all exchanges in a society need to be made according to the same model. This is one of the reasons that the personal experiences of travellers may seem to contradict models of national culture. For instance, in "Gemeinschaft" (Tönnies, 1887/2019), that is peer groups or voluntary communities, a measure of communal sharing and equality matching is likely, even in hierarchical societies. When chores have to be allocated, equality matching may be the model, e.g., in turn-taking. Kemper would say that these are ways to organize the group according to status accord, in order to stay away from the power usage that is always part of authority ranking. Power usage, after all, tends to lead to resentment in personal relationships.

In "Gesellschaft", that is formal relations in larger segments of society, a way of avoiding power usage is to adhere to agreed standards for market pricing, for instance of labour. When conflicts arise, power usage is unavoidable. This is done through authority ranking by legal institutions, as well as people executing them. In individualistic cultures, separation of powers is usually the formal norm. In hierarchical societies, however, "might makes right", and powerful groups (in collectivistic societies) or individuals (in individualistic societies) can overturn formal rules, twisting hierarchy ranking to their advantage.

These processes lead to a certain Gestalt per society, as shown in Fig. 2.

This time, Power distance is plotted against Uncertainty avoidance, reproducing a diagram about the structure of organizations first created by Mintzberg (Mintzberg,

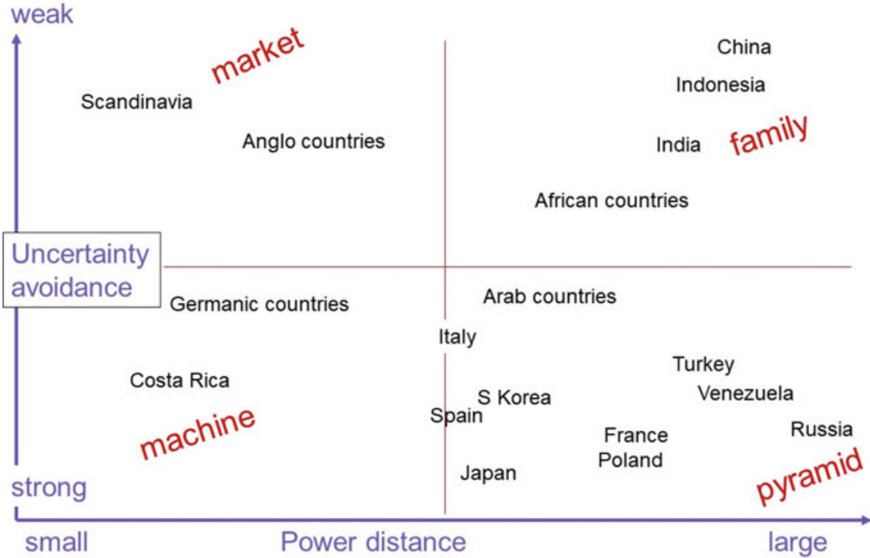

Fig. 2 Some countries and regions in a matrix of Hofstede's culture dimension Power distance × Uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede et al., 2010). Diagonally in red, resulting implicit models of organization are indicated

1983). The point of Fig. 2 is that, through the cumulative effect of all the exchanges shown in Fig. 1, every institution in a certain culture has a tendency to resemble the metaphors printed diagonally: the nuclear family, the school, the church, the workplace, society as a whole. Recognizable patterns are:

- Market: negotiation; self-advertisement; easy entrance and exit.
- Machine: predictability, conservatism, stability or systemic, planned change.
- Pyramid: predictability until times of crisis, specialization, hierarchy.
- Family: improvisation, relations, freedom until limits imposed by hierarchy.

Time does not permit a full treatment, but anyone following the international development across time will recognize these patterns, and also appreciate the problems involved in international relations, where implicit patterns may vary between the participating countries, or people raised in them.

It is particularly interesting to notice that the "market" is the only model that permits easy entrance and exit; this will be important in discussing transculturality.

4.3 Evolution of Culture

So far, we have not considered the historically obvious fact that cultures change over time. They change slowly, and often in parallel, so that international differences are

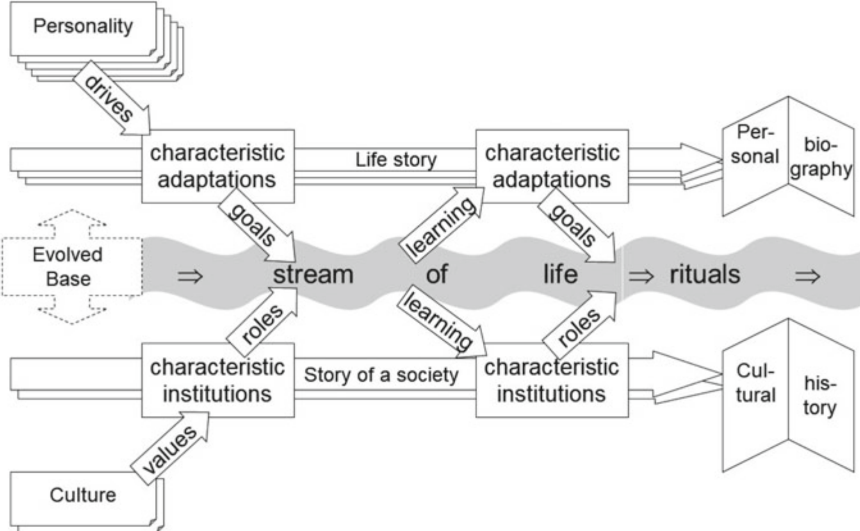

Fig. 3 Mutual homeostasis system of individual and society levels (*Source* Hofstede [2015], adapted from Hofstede et al. [2010, p. 467]. Time runs from left to right)

quite stable over time (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018; Hofstede, 2019a). Yet they do change, and will perhaps change faster in the future, in response to severe pressures exerted by current worldwide developments in health, geopolitics, and climates. Figure 3 shows how this could be conceptualized.

Figure 3 shows three perspectives and their interaction.

- Centre: evolved base. This includes our existence as a eusocial, status–power-driven species. The flow of life depicted is made up of innumerable status–power interactions, organized in rituals. Most of these involve confirmation of existing status–power relations and are minute and mundane (e.g., a greeting). Some involve changes in status–power configurations, and are elaborate (e.g., a peace treaty, a funeral).
- Top: personality. Individuals enter the fray, are socialized and learn, adapt, and thus contribute to the stream of life. Perhaps their collective actions can effect some changes to the institutions in which they operate. Individually, they may reproduce their genes and their influence on the stream of life (as a reference group).
- Bottom: culture. Countries, ethnic groups, religious communities, and other entities that are together for life, have deep cultures that survive their individual participants. These cultures are vested in formal and informal institutions. They enter the fray, being populated by numerous individuals in the course of time. Through their formal and informal rules and norms, they constrain the behavioural options of those individuals. Every now and then they appear, change, or disappear, subject to cultural selection.

The merit of Figure 3 is that it reads like a story that could be populated with actual institutions and people. Thus, it shows in a nutshell how our Kemperian eusocial nature can give rise to sociality in action, which, in turn, can sustain or alter institutions and cultures.

5 Looking at Real Life

Can the theoretical package introduced here, a cross-level synthesis using Fiske, Hofstede, and Kemper, meaningfully explain the events of life around us? Yes, it can, is my assertion.

5.1 Modelling

To be fair to the reader I should explain that my main professional occupation is "Artificial Sociality" (Hofstede et al., 2021). This means that I attempt to build generic models of human sociality in order to create simulation models. In these models I can conveniently leave out all kinds of complicating context factors, and create a simplified world based on principle. This can be very useful for better understanding social systems in a general sense, for instance, in support of policy-making (Hofstede, 2019b; Hofstede & Liu, 2019, 2020).

5.2 Case Studies?

Social scientists might be sceptical of how realistic these models are. Any real case study involves such a lot of historical coincidences and context that it defies a precise formulation in such a generic model as the one I presented above. Even if we accept that the people involved are doing nothing else than play Kemper's status–power game in fission–fusion groups, using Fiske's models for calibrating their actions, and being subject to Hofstede's dimensions of culture for determining the status worthiness of actions, the importance of reference groups, and the balance of status versus power use—even then, we'll be baffled by the first real-world case.

5.3 Probability vs Actual Occurrence

The solution to this conundrum is to limit our ambition for the usage of the ideas presented here to establish the *probability* that certain courses of events will produce themselves in certain configurations. Whether they *actually* do so in an individual

case will depend to a large degree on the particulars that cannot possibly all be theorized. I developed this argument in another article (Hofstede, 2015). In it, I discuss the case of a Korean-Swedish merger. In a longitudinal study (Lee et al., 2014), the researchers found that national cultural differences predicted the kind of problems that could occur, whereas social identity issues at group level, having to do with status gain or loss of individuals, predicted whether those issues occurred in a particular case. I end my 2015 article with a plea for complementarity, rather than opposition, of theories at different level of aggregation. I suggest that research techniques that make social life happen, such as simulation gaming and agent-based modelling, are quite useful for studying the causation of culture.

6 Transculturality

6.1 What Is It?

6.1.1 Transcultural Groups

Here is a description of the concept of transculturality as it is used by this book's editors.

"Following the perspective of Relational Economics introduced by Josef Wieland, a relational understanding of diversity refers to *belonging* more than to *identity*, because identity is inherently a demarcative and static concept, often referring to an individual. Rather, we are concerned with questions of belonging, since belonging is inherently relational: one belongs to something or to someone, temporarily. The transcultural approach adopts a perspective of belonging based on specific transactions in the sense of temporary "mini-societies" and communities of practice. In such interactions, *cultural identity* may be fuzzy and distant from any culture of origin" (Wieland, 2020).

We can conclude that Wieland uses transculturality as a group-level construct for temporary moral circles. It has to do with a sense of belonging at the level of the group. This is a conscious construct. It is certainly "distant from any culture of origin", or rather, different in kind: it is about belonging ("who we think we are"), not what I call culture ("how we unconsciously think the social world works").

Kemper would say that the focal group assumes great salience as a reference group for its members, silencing the possibly disparate voices of other reference groups that the various group members might have. The focal group does so, presumably, by concentrating on status conferrals and avoiding both identity-related status claims and power moves. This enhances the group's status worthiness in the eyes of its members. Of course, if the values of the "culture of origin" consider cross-identity tolerance to be desirable, that helps, since this "culture of origin" constitutes another important reference group.

Fiske would likely find quite a bit of communal sharing in the focal group, with which its members signify status conferrals across cultural identity boundaries. Communal sharing obliterates the need for precise status–power bookkeeping. Sharing is caring.

6.1.2 Transcultural Individuals?

The concept is not intended as an individual-level one, as in "I have achieved transculturality". I consider this fortunate, since such a claim would be outrageous. People form their culture, in terms of unwritten rules for how to play the relational status–power game, during their tender years (Hofstede, 2015). It is possible for them to acquire more than one rule set, for instance, if they have culturally different sides of their family, or if they migrate during childhood. That would make them interculturally competent. Likewise, people can be socially skilled. I certainly accept that some people have such subtle skills of perception that they can get along with a wide variety of people from widely different cultural backgrounds. This would imply that they rarely commit status affronts, being very good at sensing what people appreciate, and being willing to give it to them.

6.1.3 Societies are Transcultural

On the other hand, at societal level, transculturality is a reality. After all, any society is made up of "mini-societies" that change all the time through things such as birth, marriage and death, migration, hiring and firing, and so on. Yet, it manages to remain a single society most of the time.

The biological axiom that we acquire from our culture in infancy and childhood implies that "true" transculturality is an unattainable ideal at individual or at group level. If people are together from birth, they will form a common culture; if they come together in adulthood, they will have existing deep cultures in place. However, we might be able to go part of the way. Our deep culture could prepare ourselves for working with people of diverse cultures, and certainly, of diverse identities. In fact this means creating an inclusive, "open" organizational culture in our groups according to Hofstede's definition of it (Hofstede et al., 2010); transculturality then becomes an attribute of the organizational culture of such groups.

6.2 Is "National Culture" Still a Useful Concept?

Does transculturality make the use of concepts such as "societal culture" useless? No, it does not. Firstly, cultures turn out to be less different between in-country regions than between countries (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012, 2014). Secondly, truth emerges more readily from error than from confusion. Let me give an analogy. Although we

cannot precisely define the climate, we know full well that it is changing and that we should do something about that. Similarly, although cultures are changing and their boundaries are unclear, there are very clear cultural patterns in the events happening in multinationals, in the histories of countries, and in geopolitics. Reasoning back from those empirical inputs to their causation, using the theories of Kemper, Fiske, and Hofstede presented here, can be quite useful.

6.3 Limits to Transculturality

There certainly are groups that function like "social laboratories" that have, as one of their core values, the norm of according status to tolerance for deviations. These are safe environments that can be very useful for learning as long as there is enough love to go around. But when it comes to dividing scarce resources across groups, the status game may not suffice and power comes into the game. Transculturality in international supply chains is a case in point. Transculturality in political situations where scarcity of status, prestige, and power are involved, is a major and important challenge.

6.4 Transculturality Across Cultures

Let me, in this paragraph, offer some personal speculation based on my experience with the Hofstede model. The cultures of Germanic societies are long-term oriented and egalitarian. This goes well with the notion of avoiding lock-in under a leader or in a hierarchy. For most of history, Germanic peoples have been organized in democracies, or federated empires across ethnic subgroups. Communal sharing and equality matching have been prominent models. The long-term-oriented aspect of culture usually leads to an unwillingness to adopt absolutist identities. So, it does not surprise me to see the notion of transcultural teams advocated by Zeppelin University. Minds from the market quadrant might form transcultural groups matter-of-factly with little relational investment without giving it so much thought. Minds from the machine quadrant want to have tighter-knit groups. They will think about it, try to avoid xenophobic impulses, and develop adequate concepts. It is quite likely that the practice of transculturality would be more difficult in societies from the pyramid or family quadrant of Fig. 1.

7 Concluding Remarks

I hope to have shown in the above that a bottom-up relational perspective on the everyday events of social life can very well be brought in line with a comparative

society-level framework. Such a connection helps us understand how the Gestalt of a society's culture is built and sustained by millions of interactions each day.

This multi-level perspective of causation of culture can help people in cross-cultural situations:

- Using Kemper, it can help them choose courses of action that people will understand.
- Using Fiske, it can help them choose forms of organization that will align with people's deep culture.
- Hofstede's work can help them anticipate the fine print of Kemper's and Fiske's work, i.e., what status–power dynamics and models of sociality to expect.

As for transculturality, in brief I conclude the following.

- As a label for the phenomenon of ubiquitous, permanent cultural change happening in groups and societies, transculturality is a fact of life. There is a sort of quantum property about culture: when you measure it, you change it. When you do not measure it, it changes anyway. Approximating or conceptualizing culture, without the pretence of saying the definitive word, is the best we can do.
- As a property of social entities (polities, countries, communities, teams...), transculturality, depending on one's culture, can range from a desirable ideal to an abhorrent perversion. An egalitarian, "market" type of culture (Fig. 2) would provide the most chances for a degree of transculturality to survive. It would be better if the group also happened to have a lot of status accord and little power usage in ordinary life; this is called a "feminine" culture in Hofstede's terms. Unfortunately, this is a contradiction, since ideally, transculturality would bridge all possible cultures.

This brings us back to this chapter's opening quote. There is work to do. I consider education for the ability to function in transcultural group mode a very important goal for today's societies.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "A Relational View on Culture and Transculturality", by Gert Jan Hofstede

- Can you describe yourself in terms of the theories introduced in this chapter?
  - Kemper: To whom (people or reference groups) do you confer status, with whom do you claim status, and how? Have you ever left groups that you felt gave you too little status, or used too much power on you?
  - Fiske: What models of sociality do you adopt in what situations?
  - Hofstede: In what kind of deep culture did you grow up?

- Can you give examples of within-group and between-group selection in humans? Can you relate them to the three theories?
- What is the difference between a transcultural person and a transcultural group?

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N.B. The reader may find this list to be full of self-references. This is because this is an essay-type chapter, building on my reflections over recent years. My references below contain links to all kinds of literature that inspired me.

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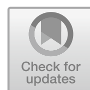
Transcultural Competence and Relational Costs



Josef Wieland

Abstract Simple, discrete and dyadic exchange transactions cannot survive in societal interactions and their corresponding networks, and it is only their docking on cultural events of all types, that is, their transformation into relational transactions, that paves the way for economic processes of value creation. In this regard, culture is not to be understood as a superstructure or negative consequence of economic development. The relationalisation of economic codings is intertwined with that of societal and cultural codings and they spur one another on; it is a perpetual, self-unfolding process, the constantly growing complexity of which, stemming from commonality and difference, can be found today in the interactions between regional and global economic value creation and the connections between the regional and global worlds of cultural events. It is the respective system and organisation-specific codings that lend these events a cultural meaning, and which constitute the network of "signifying" (Hall in *Representation: Cultural representation and signifying practices*. Sage, 1997) events for a given transaction. And it is the successful structural couplings within this diversity of codings that determine the number of practical opportunities for either the discovery of existent commonalities or the emergence of new ones, no matter how fragile they may initially be. But the exchange of goods is only one side of the evolving transnational and global economy; the cooperation between its actors under conditions of growing cultural complexity as the relation between commonality and diversity is the other.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_5

1 Cultural Complexity and Economic Perspective

1.1 Cultural Complexity and Economic Development

Research into developing, quantifying and managing the consequences of cultural complexity has a long tradition in a variety of academic fields (Cf. Hannerz, 1992, 1996; Axelrod, 1997; Chick, 1997; Denton, 2004; Ochieng et al., 2013; Lücke et al., 2018). This also applies to the self-unfolding cultural complexity in connection with cultural and economic exchange and cooperation.

In the early twentieth-century Gabriel Tarde, in his Psychologie Économique (1902, p. 78), identified the co-evolution of the free exchange of cultural ideas and economic goods as being either bilateral and value-creating "fruitful couplings" ("accouplements féconds") or the source of "deadly collisions" ("chocs meurtriers"), because the former involved the mutual addition of cultures and not their substitution. Unlike simple economic exchange transactions, which involve giving something and taking something for it in return, according to Tarde the exchange of cultures is a process in which each of the parties involved gives something and takes something but, in the position of the giver, simultaneously gives something and keeps it. They transfer to the Other their cultural experiences and meanings, while simultaneously keeping them for themselves. Or in other words, initially, each party continues to use their own inventory of traditional, shared cultural meanings and is confronted with the reality of newly emerging, disruptive cultural diversity. Since this is a joint transaction, they must respond to this situation, in one way or another. From this perspective, culture is a process of growing complexity, of the relationalisation of the commonality produced by shared meanings and perpetual diversity. The mode of mutual giving and taking holds the possibility of the emergence of new commonalities. However, cultural difference lives on within the mode of mutual retention, and it is this dialectic of the potentially new on the one hand, and the persisting difference on the other, that constitutes the logic of cultural complexity to begin with. For Tarde, the appeal of new cultural events, provided they aren't completely rejected as "chocs meurtriers", is dictated by the "laws of imitation", that is, by repetition, mutual adaptation (variation) and innovation. All parties involved "are in turn inevitably transformed" (Tarde, 2003, p. 376). Yet it is precisely here where, from an economic standpoint, the potential positive (access to resources) and negative (frictions) consequences of coupling cultural and economic transactions, of simultaneous commonality and diversity, lie. However, regardless of its potential consequences, this coupling is constitutive and of particular importance for economic development since, according to Tarde, beyond a relation to culture, a pure or hypothetical "libre-échange économique" would be ineffective to establish ("aussi inefficace qu'inoffensif") (Tarde, 1902, p. 79). In his view, simple, discrete and dyadic exchange transactions cannot survive in societal interactions and their corresponding networks, and it is only their docking on cultural events of all types, that is, their transformation into relational transactions, that paves

the way for economic processes of value creation. In this regard, culture is not to be understood as a superstructure or negative consequence of economic development. The relationalisation of economic codings is intertwined with that of societal and cultural codings and they spur one another on; it is a perpetual, self-unfolding process, the constantly growing complexity of which, stemming from commonality and difference, can be found today in the interactions between regional and global economic value creation and the connections between the regional and global worlds of cultural events. It is the respective system and organisation-specific codings that lend these events a cultural meaning, and which constitute the network of "signifying" (Hall, 1997) events for a given transaction. And it is the successful structural couplings within this diversity of codings that determine the number of practical opportunities for either the discovery of existent commonalities or the emergence of new ones, no matter how fragile they may initially be. We will discuss this in more detail later in the paper.

But the exchange of goods is only one side of the evolving transnational and global economy; the cooperation between its actors under conditions of growing cultural complexity as the relation between commonality and diversity is the other.

Robert E. Park (cf. Park, 1950, pp. 345ff.) sought to theoretically capture the figure of cultural exchange as the simultaneous existence of mutual giving, taking and keeping from the micro-perspective of the individual social actor, as a learning process for the "Marginal Man". For Park, being able to successfully deal with cultural differences in the 1930s was a sign of the Modern, an inevitable consequence of and prerequisite for societal, and especially economic, migration in its various guises as a form of collective action, the creation of new cultural patterns and structures, achieved through mutual social influences (Cf. Axelrod, 1997, pp. 149 ff.). The actors involved, he claims, are in the first period of their migrant existence "marginal men" (ibid., p. 354), who no longer live in their old culture, but have not yet fully arrived in their new one. They are, as such, literally on the border "in between", where the ability to effectively deal with cultural complexity represents a fundamental civilising competence, one that is acquired in the acculturation process (ibid., p. 376). The effect of this competence, he claims, is the development of a culture of mutual understanding as an emergent product of a dynamic social process, one based on the production of positive examples through communication and participation (ibid., p. 17). As such, it is the practical interaction between provenance and community-based cultural commonality on the one hand, and newly emerging cultural diversity on the other, that can, over time, produce new social and cultural commonalities without diversity being fully lost (Cf. for "seven arguments for diversity" Hannerz, 1996, pp. 57ff., Axelrod, 1997, pp. 159f.).

For an initial summary of the process of cultural complexity, to which transcultural competence is relationally linked, I would like to underscore the following aspects. Today, the development of international societal exchange and regio-global value creation are essential drivers for the continual emergence of cultural complexity as an ongoing interaction between commonality and diversity, in keeping with Tarde's mechanism of repetition, mutual adaption and innovation.

The resultant systematic need for successful cooperation under conditions of cultural diversity as a prerequisite for, and consequence of, economic relational transactions can, then, only assume the form of dynamic collective action for the mutual benefit of the actors involved.

It is the dialectic of relationalising cultural giving, taking and keeping that, through imitation, adaptation and variation, can produce shared, temporary or fragmented cultural interpretations under the continuing existence of diversity. These interpretations can in turn offer points of departure and connections for the continuing linking of cultural and economic transactions.

In the following, proceeding from this relational and economic perspective I will fundamentally approach transculturality as the growing cultural complexity of economic transactions. Over the past decade, leadership and the management of cultural complexity in regionally and globally networked economic transactions have, following in the tradition of the previously discussed sociological discussion (Tarde, Park) on culture and economy, become part of the research agenda from which Relational Economics was developed (Cf. Wieland, 2009; Wieland & Leisinger 2016; Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2019; Wieland, 2020: Chap. 8, and the publications in the Transcultural Management Series).

1.2 Relational Economics and Transculturality

Transculturality, as part of a research programme for Relational Economics as a political economy (Wieland, 2020), is by its very nature interested in investigating cultural events from a different perspective than, say, social or cultural sciences, psychological, managerial or institutional economics approaches (Cf. e.g. Giessen & Rink, 2020; Bennett, 2013; Bolten, 2011, 2016; Deardorff, 2009; Fink & Mayrhofer, 2009; North, 1990, Chap. 5, 10, 2005, Chap. 3). A diversity of perspectives is, on the one hand, one of the prerequisites for meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration as joint efforts in which representatives of different fields explore a shared question, in this case, the nature and evolution of transcultural competence, which will be discussed in the following pages. On the other hand, in some cases this can make the discussion more difficult for all parties, since epistemic and methodological assumptions, as previously mentioned, can lead to different perspectives and observations. Accordingly, in the following section, I will first attempt to briefly characterise the perspective of Relational Economics and point out the conceptual differences it can potentially lead to.

First of all, one key aspect concerns the fundamental epistemic interest. Economists focus on the conditions and processes of private and public economic value creation. In this context and with regard to economic transactions, transcultural competence becomes a potentially productive resource, whether in terms of reducing frictions in collaborative projects or in terms of boosting the productivity of the resources invested in a joint project. Acquiring and providing these individual and organisational competences can produce costs (e.g., managing frictions in the

cooperation) or revenues (e.g., reduced relational costs and higher cooperation rents) (Wieland, 2020, Part IV). This applies not only to global production networks, which I will discuss in more detail below, but to every type of economic value creation that is conducted by organisations and networks as collective actors and not by impersonal and anonymous markets. Relational costs and revenues are central categories in Relational Economics, and consequently also in the analysis of cultural complexity.

The epistemic basis of Relational Economics is heavily influenced by the philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead (1929) and the sociology of Georg Simmel (1917/1999). For economic theory-building, the assumption that all being is relational means there are no such things as discrete and dyadic transactions, unlike what standard economics has always assumed. Relational economic transactions are attractors for cultural events, which dock on these events and then separate again as part of a self-unfolding and recursive process involving networks of interactive events.

When it comes to pursuing research on cultural complexity, the consequence of this aspect is that, for example, comparing two national cultures to explain social behaviour as analogue to the economic assumption of dyadic and discrete relations of interaction in networks can only be ascribed a limited, not an extensive, explanatory power. This is also, if I see it correctly, the state of the art in the theoretical, though not the practical, discussion (Cf. Barmeyer, 2020; Giesen & Rink 2020, and much earlier Hofstede et al. [1990], for an insightful discussion Lücke et al. [2018]). In addition, it follows that the specific events of “culture” in a network of “intersectoral” (ibid., pp. 299ff.) social events (such as economic, legal, social, political, moral and so on) shape the research perspective because and to the extent that they draw distinctions by ascribing meaning. By this definition, culture would then be a nexus of “signifying” (Hall, 1997) events, a cooperation of meanings (Bennett, 2016) or “relational shared meanings” (Lücke et al., 2018) in the networks of society and not a more or less stable and homogenous entity. Culture is a dynamic phenomenon, “an action we undertake”, as Bennett (2016, p. 7) has described it using the terminology of action theory, and not a discrete space.

In Relational Economics, economic transactions are attractors for multiple decision logics, which interact with one another, and which, through the different assessments of the transaction or specific elements thereof, fundamentally transform the character of the transaction. The basic unit of transcultural analysis from the economic perspective, then, would be multi-coded decision values as events related to a specific transaction. A purely economically coded transaction, say, the production and purchase of a T-shirt (T_e) become—by applying moral (m) and legal (l) questions regarding human rights, adherence to social standards (m), political (p) regulations (l) and fairness (m) to the production and sale of the said T-shirt—a relational transaction ($RT_{e, l, p, m\ldots}$), which is integrated not by means of a purely market-based, but rather an organisationally based, relation as a governance structure for the commonality of multiple events. In terms of theory, in a first step the complexity of the term “culture” is condensed into different decision values and codings as “signifying events” of distinct transactions, making it (through a specific, adaptive governance structure) “operationalisable”, in the sense of capable of being operationalised, to begin with.

Lastly, this also makes it possible to link transculturality research and practice on the one hand with economic theory-building on the other, since all types of societal coding have an impact on relational costs, factor-incomes and the rent from cooperation (relational rent). At this point we can already begin to see why, later in this paper, I will propose that we view transcultural competence as the ability to successfully relationalise, as the ability to enable productive interaction and collaboration between multiple cultural events via cost-adaptive governance structures.

In the following, the governance of cultural complexity will be discussed in more detail, and in two senses. Firstly, from complexity theory (Axelrod, 1997) we know that, when we investigate multivalent interactions, what we are dealing with is not a rational choice or the maximum achievement of objectives, but rather the adaptivity of their governance. Secondly, as previously mentioned, we wish to understand cultural events as "signifying events" that, by docking on intersectoral transactions, can take on the form of collaborative or shared meanings. As such, however, they must manifest and take on a form in which their effect can unfold. Ulf Hannerz (1992, 1996) has, very much in keeping with Robert E. Park, pointed out that culture is a form of "collective action" (1992, p. 3). This means it is only created and exists in the consummation of social interactions, in the relations and relationalisation of society. Society is a "cultural flow" (ibid., p. 4) characterised by the ceaseless generation and allocation of meaning. As such, however, it not only exists in the minds of the actors, but also creates its own "public forms" (ibid., p. 7), that is, informal and formal institutions and organisations (North, 1990, 2005). These cultural manifestations can be rituals and customs, but also firms and digital media. They are, in the words of Hannerz, "social organizations of meaning", or in the categories of Relational Economics, governance structures of meaning and therefore forms of relational governance (Cf. Wieland, 2020, Chap. 4).

> As a social organization of meaning, culture can be seen as made up of an extremely complex interlinkage of such formulae; a network of perspectives, with a continuous production of overt cultural forms between them. In this manner, the perspectivation of meaning is a powerful engine in creating a diversity of culture within the complex society. (Hannerz, 1992, p. 68)

Here, we are talking about the processing of cultural complexity, about suitable governance structures for the extremely complex interlinkages within a network of perspectives cited by Hannerz. Cultural complexity is produced when and because the flow of meanings continues to spread, penetrating more and more areas of social interaction. The globalisation of cultural events is ultimately a "long distance cultural flow" (Hannerz, 1996) in which "the lines between 'us' and 'them' (…) (are) continuously redefined through the global realities" (Benhabi, 1995, p. 245).

Cultural complexity stems from an intensification of the structural couplings between various decision-making contexts, decision logics and language games, that is, from diversity as a multitude of cultures and from difference as an event of mutual demarcation. The systemic locus of culture lies in the process of relationalising social transactions, in their relational governance—the primary function of which is not to overcome diversity and difference, but rather to relate them in a form

that offers a productive approach to difference, and with it, the creation and stabilisation of new cultural commonalities. In the following, I will further expand on those points outlined briefly here, presenting them as the relational view of transcultural competence.

2 Relational Dimensions of Transcultural Competence

2.1 Territories, Actors and Codes

As previously mentioned, when viewed through the lens of Relational Economics, transcultural competence can be understood as a potentially productive resource in regional, national and global value creation networks. This picks up on the notion, presented at the beginning of this paper, that the development of cultural commonalities from diversity under the continuing existence of diversity is just as equally original as solving the problem of successful economic cooperation in dynamic economic areas. In other words, the conceptual quality of the management of cultural diversity depends on the presupposed concept regarding the mechanisms of the economic system at hand. In traditional economic theory, the *territoriality*-based assumption, namely that modern economies, both at the national (economy) and international (trade between national economies) level, represent the consummation of discrete and dyadic market transactions, is still largely accepted. Yet this conception is highly misleading. Roughly 60 to 70% of all business transactions are not attributed to the market mechanisms of international trade, but rather to intra- and inter-firm trade in transnational and global production networks (Cf. the latest World Development Report 2020 from the World Bank Group, Washington). In addition to market transactions, those transactions within and between various individual and organisational *actors*, that is, relational transactions, must be included in the analysis. This is especially true for intra- and inter-firm interactions, but also for extra-firm transactions involving governments, NGOs and other entities (Cf. for this aspect Antràs 2019, and, as a reference text, Gereffi 2018, esp. Parts II and III). It is the relocation of economic value creation from the market to the organisation that makes the notion of a simple economic exchange activities within and between two (dyadic) culturally homogenous economic areas and discrete economic actors (producers/end-consumers) questionable. Relational interactions, that is, the regional, national, transnational and/or global network of economic and societal actors, are the paradigmatic point of reference for transcultural management. To name just one example: anyone who wants to grow their business in the ASEAN states may have the prospect of investing in what will be the world's fourth-largest economy by 2050, but there are more than 600 million people with a host of languages, dialects, cultures and religions living in and between its 19 member countries. As such, the chances of success for such an undertaking directly depend on the ability to manage the attendant cultural complexity

and dynamics of cultural *coding* of events in relations with partners, customers and employees alike.

> Executives who can manage effectively while respecting employees' and customers' multi-faceted diversity are the ones who thrive and create value for their companies. (Ratanjee & Pyrka, 2015)

In such contexts, transcultural competence as the ability to enable economic cooperation under conditions of cultural complexity can only be a relational competence. By this, I mean that it refers to the ability to relate the dimensions of cultural complexity developed in this paper to polyvalent interactions within networks, and with regard to a given transaction (or project) in its respective context. I would like to differentiate this ability from culture-specific purpose competence, which focuses on specific cultural dimensions (such as the "culture" of nations or organisations) and their comparison. Economically speaking, this represents the transition from simple market exchanges to complex relational transactions between organisations, which are, as previously mentioned, attractors for various societal actors and decision-making values. Value-creating networks are, as polyvalent networks, the empirical reference for transcultural management, since within these networks, transcultural competence regarding the relationalisation of cultural events is a crucial, endogenous factor in value creation. In these networks, intra- and inter-firm cultural diversity are now fundamental aspects, although extra-firm interactions, particularly in the area of innovation management (Cf Cliquet & Nguyen, 2004, Igartua et al., 2010, Rese & Baier, 2011), are now growing in importance. In brief, transcultural competence refers to the general capability to productively relationalise cultural diversity, which is itself the product of transactions and interactions between multiple individual and collective actors, each of which has its own value codings and language games. Transcultural competence concerns itself with the diversity of relational spaces, actors and codings (Murdoch, 2006).

2.2 Multiple Types of Value

Up to this point, we have distinguished between three different relational dimensions of cultural complexity. Firstly, there are social territories like regions or nations, each with its own traditions and language(s). Cross-cultural research on the semantics of emotion has revealed that, at this level, both universalistic psycho-physiological mechanisms (valence, activation) of the efficacy of values, and their diverse meanings in different experiential and linguistic spaces, exist (Cf. on the aspect of language as a medium of cultural distance and commonality Jackson et al., 2019). Secondly, we distinguished between individual and collective social actors like organisations and persons (such as firms vs. individuals), which, given their own interests and cultural patterns of interpretation, must be jointly interested in the mutually beneficial continuation of their cooperative communities. And thirdly, we highlighted the diversity of value-related codings like multivalent, systemic decision logics and

language games (like those used in economics, law, ethics and religion), which can be mutually conveyed and combined thanks to social actors' polylingualism and structural couplings (Cf. Luhmann, 1987; Wieland, 2020).

Now, as a fourth aspect, there is a distinction between different types of social values. For this purpose, in the following, we will assume that values and their underlying principles are "signifiers" used to evaluate and assign meaning to events, and at all levels of actors. Of course, this is by no means to say that values are the only possible "signifiers" of a culture, but I agree with Milton Bennett's (2013) assumption that "values are the most abstract cultural-general concepts" (p. 8). As events in a transaction, they are the basic unit of transcultural analysis and practice. I would also like to distinguish between performance values, communication values, cooperation values and moral values (Cf. Wieland, 2010). These categories are based on the Aristotelian distinction between moral and intellectual virtues as the elementary prerequisites of a successful life. The values matrix below (Fig. 1) includes a number of examples to help illustrate the two types.

In the category "performance values" we have, as examples, relational costs, the cooperation rent, efficiency and innovation; their shared point of reference is the effectiveness of a given relational transaction. Openness, transparency, appreciation and modesty—for which the common point of reference is the quality of discourse in a given relational interaction—are listed as "communication values". "Cooperation values" like loyalty, flexibility, belonging and recognition focus on keeping the potential frictions and contingencies that can arise in collaborative projects down to a manageable level, and, by doing so, ensuring the continuation of said projects.

Performance	Communication
Shared Value Creation Relational Costs Efficiency Innovation	Openness Transparency Appreciation Modesty
Loyalty Flexibility Belonging Interaction	Honesty Fairness Responsibility Sincerity
Cooperation	Moral

Fig. 1 Values matrix for relational transactions

Lastly, there is the category of "moral values" like honesty, fairness, responsibility and sincerity, which help to safeguard the integrity of relational transactions and their governance structures. The use of these categories is accompanied by the theoretical and practical challenge of relationalising the different types of values in connection with a specific transaction or collaborative project. In this regard, trade-offs between all four types are always possible, and perfectly normal. Transcultural competence is just as essential when it comes to seeking to do away with or reconcile these trade-offs, as it is for dealing with the three previously discussed dimensions of cultural diversity. More importantly, however, the successful and productive relationalisation of the four types is what determines the degree and orientation of the effectiveness of values in relational transactions.

2.3 Functions and Contexts of Values

From the standpoint of Relational Economics, the practical importance of values is not intrinsic; rather, it emanates from their functional and contextual specification.

First of all, we can consider the functional level of value coding, where the specific meanings of values form a mode of *framing*, which shapes the perception and relevance of a given value. Whether child labour constitutes a violation of human rights, or an obligation to contribute earnings for the family as a whole, depends in part on the cultural concept of childhood in the respective region. Moreover, values are a source of *behavioural orientation* for actors, supplying them with purpose, aims and behavioural standards. What is the purpose of a firm, what are its goals and what type of business is it attempting to pursue? Here, too, values can provide key insights. Lastly, sharing certain values gives actors a sense of belonging to a region, project, team or organisation. A relational view of transcultural competence prefers the term "sense of belonging" rather than "identity". The latter ultimately focuses on developing individual or collective actors' self, whereas the former focuses on developing their ties to others (Cf. for this discussion Anthias, 2013). The relationalisation of framing; orientation (purpose, aims, behavioural standards) and creating a sense of belonging, that is what we expect from transcultural competence.

A further aspect: the functions and context-dependency of values, discussed above, lead to an indifference of effect with regard to the value coding in Fig. 1. With "indifference of effect" I am referring to a specific quality of values, namely that their importance, what type of behaviour is or can be expected, is subject to a fuzzy logic. Whether "tell the truth" is always the right choice, or whether it can also mean "don't lie" or "remain silent" in certain cases, depends on the situational context. Michael Walzer (1994) has dubbed this the difference between thick and thin; Kwame A. Appiah has referred to it as values' horizons of meaning (2006) and Jürgen Bolten has underscored the polyvalence and vagueness of cultural meanings (Bolten, 2011, 2016). Fundamentally speaking, this indifference of effect means that direct and concrete recommended courses of action cannot be derived from values alone; this can only succeed through relationalisation with contextual factors and trade-offs with

other value codings. Moreover, indifference of effect means that it is not clear *ex ante* whether a given value orientation will have any impact at all on a situation; if so, whether the impact will be positive or negative; or in which direction the situation will develop. This is a point I will revisit later in the paper.

Lastly, we must make a distinction between transculturality as individual and as organisational competence, and subsequently view the two in relation to one another. At the level of the individual, coping with diversity and establishing cultural commonalities are especially based on the creation of a shared horizon of meaning (framing, purpose, standards, sense of belonging) and on reducing the fuzziness of value codings, though the latter can never be done away with entirely. In other words, the functions and relevance of values must be relationalised in such a way that they permit a shared view of all actors involved with regard to the execution or implementation of a given transaction or collaboration. An analogous process must be initiated at the level of the intra-firm organisation (cf. for its importance Orlikowski, 2002, Kirkman et al., 2013, Nyman, 2019), a process that can formally manifest itself in a values management system (cf. Wieland, 2010) as a governance structure that, through its elements—a code of ethics, code of conduct, policies & procedures, communication and learning—, helps to clarify and specify the functions and meanings of values, and which can facilitate or hinder their implementation at the level of practical transactions and interactions. At the level of governance of transcultural competence, we find the formation of temporary inter-firm teams for specific transactions (such as cooperative product or process innovations, cf. Kelley et al., 2009) or extra-firm dialogue platforms (such as multi-stakeholder dialogues, innovation platforms, cf. Wieland, 2020; Zumbusch, 2021), which, as Communities of Practice (Cf. Hoffman, 2021; Schwengber & Kindlein, 2021), are central sites for the acquisition and stabilisation of transcultural competence.

The process of governing the interactions of cultural events characterised by different territories, coding contexts and types of value (with multiple functions each) leads to particular and temporary clarifications of values' meaning and direction of action, in the form of contextualisation and recoding. The transition from empirically given cultural differences to their recoding as temporary cultural commonalities leads to the emergence of shared motivations, know-how and skills among the participating stakeholders in a dialogical learning process.

2.4 Three Dimensions of Transcultural Competence

If we summarise the discussion of the relational aspects of individual and organisational transcultural competence up to this point as the willingness (motivation) and ability (skills, communication, learning, governance) to relationalise cultural difference through structural coupling and the production of new shared meanings, then the following essential aspects of cultural complexity define the criteria on the basis of which transcultural competence must prove its value.

(a) The cultural complexity of value codings for specific economic transactions is the product of three aggregation levels, which should be distinguished from one another. At the macro-level we find institutional cultural differences between and within nations/regions, city/countryside, languages, legal norms, moral or religious convictions, traditions and so on. At the meso-level, the differences are between collective actors from organisational cultures, departmental cultures, sector-specific cultures, company traditions and so on. Lastly, at the micro-level of individual actors, we find the cultural diversity of professions like natural and social scientists, managers, engineers and business cultures, and the virtually infinite diversity of combinations and prioritisations of all three levels among individual actors. Specific regions or districts within a given country, or intra-organisational interactions between the employees of a given company, are characterised by cooperation between a range of national cultures, in which, with regard to a given transaction, it is not the actor's belonging to a specific nation that must play a critical role, but rather his or her age, gender, profession or individual political views.
(b) At all three levels, the codings of cultural values are characterised by indifference of effect and uncertainty. As a result, there are both positive and negative trade-offs between these codings, which, by potentially substituting for one another, complementing, interacting with or combining with one another, can serve as functional equivalents (Cf. Wieland, 2020, pp. 45 ff.). Transcultural competence is in no small part the ability to avoid zero-sum games when it comes to conflicting values and, through relational governance, the ability to make mutual functional equivalence, and with it, the continuation of cooperation, possible.
(c) This is a direct consequence of the assumption that values' direction of action is indeterminate, and the resultant need to format them through shared practices and governance. The *ex ante* non-deterministic effects of values with regard to specific transactions and local situations in practice are what open up the possibility of developing a theory and practice of transcultural competence to begin with (Cf. Bolten, 2011, 2016; Henze, 2020). However, for this very reason, transcultural competence cannot be limited to the capabilities of individual actors (motivation, knowledge, skills, communication, learning); rather, it must view those capabilities in relation with organisational arrangements (values management systems, communities of practice, communication, learning) and the emergence of new organisational forms (such as digital platforms) as media for transcultural competence.

We still know very little about the dynamics of asymmetrical interactions between cultural events and their relationalisation at and between the levels of institutions, organisations, professions and persons, and further research will be essential to understand the nature and mode of action of transcultural competence (Cf. for an overview Lücke et al., 2018). Figure 2 stems from previous publications (Wieland, 2020) and is intended to clarify the intended message.

First of all, we can see that a relational economic transaction is influenced by cultural events at various levels (Cf. the discussion of the literature in Fink &

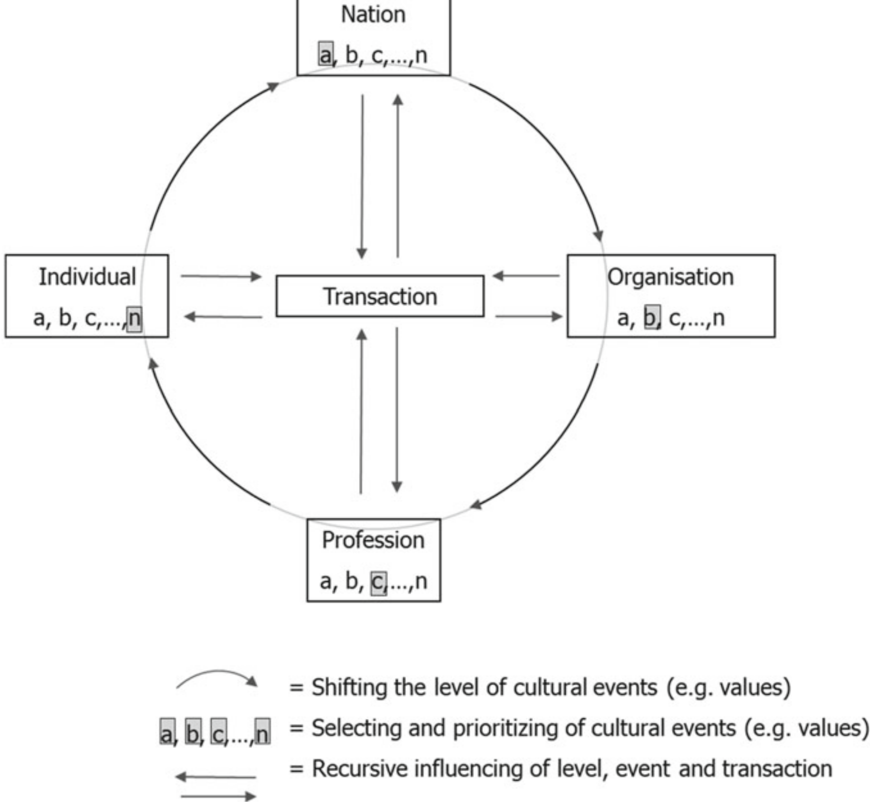

Fig. 2 Transcultural process logic (Wieland, 2020, p. 114)

Mayrhofer, 2009). As such, national and organisational cultures can certainly and self-evidently affect the execution of economic transactions. However, it is never the collective and individual cultural actors in their imagined totality that produce these effects; rather, it is the specific events that emanate from them. Nations consist of regions, firms consist of departments, staff consist of people with various cultural histories and professions such as engineering include various specialisations and associations, while individuals are culturally idiosyncratic entities. This "intra-categorical complexity" (Lücke et al., 2018, p. 300) is infinite in scope, and determining a priori which events, or which combination of events, is or will become relevant for the completion of a distinct transaction is impossible for theoreticians and practitioners alike (Cf. Lücke et al., 2018, p. 297). Accordingly, it is the adaptivity of forms of governance for transcultural complexity that determines their potential for creating value by reducing frictions and expanding the available cooperation opportunities.

This opens up the possibility of shifting the above-mentioned levels of action as part of transcultural competence. As such, an existing regional corruption culture

(a) that burdens a given transaction with a high compliance risk or even makes it impossible can, for example, be limited to some extent by the integrity culture (b) of an organisation or sector. From the standpoint of the suitable governance structure, in practical terms this means shifting the focus from formal and law-driven compliance management to leadership ethics and integrity management, in order to satisfy the legal requirements for an "effective compliance system".

Lastly, we cannot rule out the long-term effect that, through the asymmetrical interactions of level, event and transaction, adaptations can produce changes, which in turn affect the inter-relationships for future transactions and necessitate the development of new forms of cultural cooperation. These processes of expanding and reducing value-creating transaction opportunities also account for the relevance of transcultural competence as a source of cooperation opportunities, and therefore of rents, for Relational Economics.

3 Relational Costs and Cooperation Corridor

3.1 Transcultural Competence and Costs

From the process perspective adopted here, transcultural competence is a resource for the governance of cultural complexity, and is shaped by a diverse range of value functions (framing, purpose, aims, standards of conduct, sense of belonging) and value codings (performance values, cooperation values, communication values and moral values) belonging to individual and collective actors at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels of societies or other areas of cooperation, such as global networks in the economy, politics and society. Cultural complexity lies in the interaction of polyvalent signifying events that either do or do not lead to the spontaneous creation of shared meanings. Transcultural competence is, then, the willingness and ability on the part of an individual or organisation to relate reasonable differences in order to initiate a cooperation process, and to participate in it to create commonalities in the context of relational transactions (Cf. Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022; Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

From an economic perspective, the following aspect of the point made above is of particular interest: in global value chains and networks, which are characterised by a very high degree of cultural complexity, the size of the relational costs and rents produced by economic cooperation, and with it, the size of the achievable cooperation corridor (Cf. Wieland, 2020, 2022), directly depend on the transcultural competence of the individual and collective actors involved. There are a variety of mission-critical factors to their willingness and ability to cooperate (cf. Wieland, 2020, pp. 140ff.) one of the most essential being transcultural competence, which significantly influences the relational costs of a given transaction. These costs represent the time and effort needed to create a corridor of cooperation opportunities through the willingness and ability to cooperate. Elsewhere I have defined relational costs as:

> the costs that a given organization has to pay in order to continually fulfil the purposes of its existence, namely interaction with stakeholders and their resources. More specifically, they are the costs incurred by generating and maintaining the willingness and ability to cooperate. (Ibid., p. 149)

With regard to the cultivation of transcultural competence and the management of transcultural cooperation projects, these would include, at the organisational and individual level, the costs involved in developing a regional and global adaptive corporate culture; the costs of programmes on coping with cultural diversity; the costs of intercultural or cross-cultural training for staff at all levels of an organisation and the costs of global team-building. In addition, it would be worth exploring whether the costs of ensuring sustainable and ethical global supply chains should also be allocated to this category. These are just a selection of examples, and further research is required in order to more fully identify and quantify the costs of transcultural competence-building.

3.2 Transcultural Costs and Cooperation Corridor

As previously mentioned, Relational Economics proceeds from the assumption that the number of cooperation opportunities available to an organisation or individual, and therefore the size and intensity of the achievable cooperation corridor, are determined by the willingness and ability to engage in social cooperation. In turn, the number of cooperation opportunities determines the achievable factor incomes and cooperation rent for a firm or team (Cf. Wieland, 2020, Part IV; Wieland, 2022). In other words, the size of the relational costs incurred in connection with transcultural competence is the limiting factor.

The connection between relational costs stemming from transcultural competence, the size and interactive intensity of the cooperation corridor, and the resulting social cooperation opportunities, shown in Fig. 3, is represented by a function assumed to be linear. The budget line a1 limits the number of cooperation opportunities available to an organisation, based on the costs. When we mark the increase in transcultural competence resulting from a learning process on the expansion line OKR, then—if there are no changes in the basic assumptions—the budget line shifts to a2, and the space for potential cooperation opportunities grows from b1 to b2 for the given costs. However, if we abandon the assumption that the function is linear, and instead assume that, through an economisation of the relational costs associated with transcultural competence, the cooperation opportunities and the resulting cooperation rent increase as costs decrease, then we arrive at the economic heart of the analysis of transcultural competence.

In a world of constantly changing cultural environments, it is the economisation of relational costs that contributes decisively to the continuation of cooperation without frictions and stagnation and therefore the loss of potential cooperation opportunities and rents. Consequently, as an element of Relational Economics and a relational view, transcultural competence is also, and in no small part, a type of competence that can

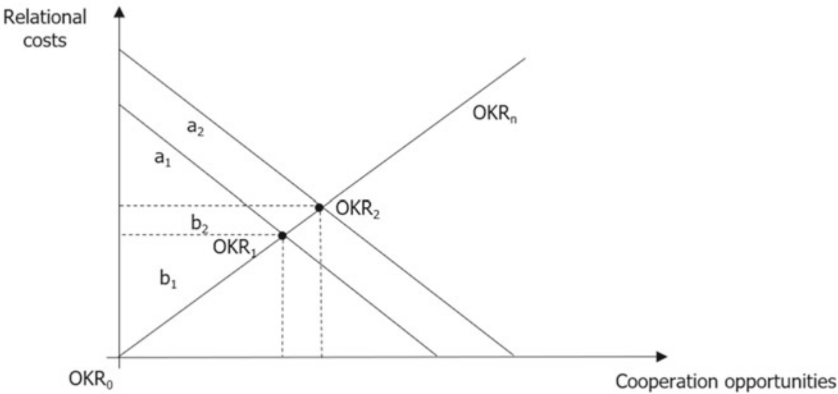

Fig. 3 Transcultural competence and cooperation corridor (*Source* modified from Wieland, 2020, pp. 149ff.)

enhance organisations' competitive positions in networks and markets. Transcultural competence is a general-purpose competence, not being specialised in a specific type of culture, but in dealing with cultural diversity and dynamics as such. It therefore has what Birger Wernerfelt (Cf. 2016) calls "excess capacity" (pp. 102 ff.), the ability to generate additional cooperation opportunities without additional expenses.

4 Research Prospects for Cultural Complexity

In this article, I have attempted to systematically present the prerequisites for, and consequences of, the cultural complexity that individual and organisational transcultural competence necessarily addresses. Intercultural management, cross-cultural management and transcultural management are different methods used to process cultural complexity. Transcultural competence is an emotional and cognitive resource that allows us to relationalise cultural events. Transcultural management focuses on the practical organisation of actions in order to actually achieve the envisioned goals (Cf. Fink & Mayrhofer, 2009, p. 47). For transcultural management as a component of Relational Economics, the processing of cultural complexity means defining a distinct economic transaction as the basic unit of management in the context of the continuation of its governance structures, as well as mobilising the required resources to complete said transaction. The situation is analogous for transcultural competence. Its goal is not primarily to identify all potential trade-offs between cultural events, relate them to one another *ex ante*, and subsequently optimise, do away with or resolve them in some way or another. Rather, it is to create—drawing on the motivation and capabilities of the actors involved—adaptive governance structures with

which, regarding a distinct transaction, this complexity can be relationalised and processed in a value-creating manner. It is about employing adaptive governance to shape and productively use the uncertainty arising from complexity. In this regard, the main focus isn't on practical complexity or the assumption that the density of events and their mutual interactions increase numerically. From time to time, global value creation networks are considered to be complex in this sense. However, from a process philosophy standpoint, cultural complexity can also be understood in such a way that the number of observations and decision logics that are possible, plausible and generally considered to be reliable with regard to an event and its interactions grows. Culture, understood as signifying events, as the "social organization of meaning" (Hannerz, 1992), can only be suitably analysed from this perspective. After all, one of the theoretical desiderata that are connected to the concept of transcultural competence is to learn more about the interaction of ascribed meanings and their dynamics, particularly in empirical studies.

In the economic deliberations on transcultural competence presented here, cultural differences are a fundamental driver regarding the costs and revenues of cultural complexity, yet they are not the "agens movens" of its management. That role belongs to the structural coupling of cultural diversity and, in this context, the discovery and development of shared cultural commonalities in a process designed to economise the relational costs of practical cooperation. Within said process, the discovery and cultivation of commonalities, as a mechanism for processing diversity, manifest as the growth of a shared sense of belonging with regard to a given transition or cooperation project, and less in perceived conceptual or practical similarities in the value codings of the participating actors. This also means that cultural differences and commonalities, which are what jointly make up cultural complexity, are not so much discrete events geared towards achieving a balance between the two; rather, they are elements of a self-unfolding and recursive relational process, one that is accompanied by personal and situational unpredictability and contingency. Accordingly, cultural commonalities are not static; they are diversity-driven, dynamic events. They can be weakened in the course of their creation, or they can produce new and unexpected meanings, leading to new differences in the process. In some cases, new cultural commonalities can also result in new or perhaps intensified differences. Lastly, in this paper cultural commonalities have been presented as fragmented and temporalised. Shared meanings are not homogenous events in a state of static equilibrium; they constantly interact with differences (both previously existing differences and those of their own creation). Transcultural competence is also the willingness and ability to engage in this process and shape it as the continuation of cooperation.

From a conceptual perspective, cooperation always presupposes the successful relationalisation of diversity and commonality, of individual and collective interest. It processes the two events (diversity/commonality; individual/collective interest) as a unity of difference. To put it in Gabriel Tarde's terms once more, cultural cooperation involves both giving and taking, but the former is always in a mode of giving and simultaneously keeping. At the level of individual and collective actors, transcultural competence, as a resource for cooperation, reflects the "laws of imitation"

as the willingness and ability to engage in the continuous repetition and situational adaptation (variation) of cultural commonality and diversity.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Transcultural Competence and Relational Costs", by Josef Wieland

- What are the positive and negative impacts of cultural complexity on economic costs and value creation?
- Which leadership competences are needed to manage global values?
- What are the drivers of the recursive interaction of diversity and commonality?

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Elaborating on Transcultural Competence

A Cultural Reflexive View on Transculturality

Kirsten Nazarkiewicz

Abstract In this article, the approach of transculturality is examined from three culturally reflexive methodological meta-perspectives in order to find out how exactly the commonalities that are so significant for the relational paradigm can be developed. In doing so, it is shown that cultural reflexivity works with three different qualities of knowledge: knowledge as interpretative knowledge, knowledge as ideology permeated with power structures, and constructive nescience. It is argued that transculturality requires all three approaches to create common ground in concrete groups by using interpretative, deconstructive, and constructivist activities. The example of listening is used in each case to illustrate how to make use of these resources.

1 Introduction

For decades, with regard to interculturality the difference paradigm has dominated many disciplines. Increasing criticism of, among other things, the "culturalism" of explanatory approaches, the inherent latent problem and conflict orientation, and overlooked given power relations have shown that a difference-oriented approach to a networked globalized world is under complex and too static. It is therefore hardly surprising that in the recent Delphi study "Transcultural Competence" among experts on interculturality worldwide, the focus has shifted (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). The paradigm shift to transculturality breaks away from the difference paradigm in favor of given as well as context-bound and -related construction of commonalities.

In the following, I will make connections between three cultural reflexive meta-perspectives and the approach of transculturality arguing that a concept of transculturality needs all three perspectives to specify its goals. For this purpose, I first outline the cultural concept of transculturality in its transdisciplinary core with references to Transcultural Management. I then discuss the transculturality approach

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_6

in the light of a selection of three methodological meta-perspectives (Nazarkiewicz, 2016). These methodological meta-perspectives bundle approaches in interculturality studies along with their dominantly used cultural concepts and their understanding of "knowledge" as a prerequisite for communication, learning, and competence. Their epistemological perspectives can help to specify the paradigmatic approach of transculturality and to ask for its inspiration in the concrete level of action.

Transculturality as understood by the relational approach requires openness, listening, and negotiation in communication.[1] So, the relational approach challenges us to presuppose the negotiability of the given social order, to open up possibilities for shaping supposedly closed categories and boundaries, and to define conceptually the resources of openness and finding commonalities more precisely. In this respect my transfer example will be how listening as a method for opening up is understood with respect to the different meta-perspectives. I will follow the question of the transcultural approach: What if we focus on developing commonalities (and we have to silently add) across the differences? The supposedly simple idea of transculturality based on constructivism contains some challenging questions when looking at concrete situations and one central aspect of communication for developing commonalities, namely enabling openness.

2 Transculturality

The term transculturality has now found its way into various disciplines and fields of practice. In the German specialist literature, the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch is usually mentioned as a reference who introduced transculturality as a cultural concept into the debate. Early on Welsch (1995, 1999) criticized already the classical essentialist conception of cultures, which goes back to Herder's sphere model, as "highly imaginary". Along with this, he names the concepts of interculturality and multiculturality as separatist, which promoted regressive tendencies. With the concept of transculturality, he refers to the pluralization and networking as well as the transnational character of cultures and their inner differentiation in immigration societies. Both on the macro level in the form of an "interdependent global culture" and on the micro level of individuals ("we are cultural hybrids", Welsch, 1999, p. 5), life forms and identities are multiplied and mixed. In 2017, Welsch adds that the causes of transculturalization have continued to increase due to globalized value chains and transnational movement of goods, economic migration, flight, and social media, among other factors. He evaluates transculturality as being bivalent but considers above all "opportunities for new understandings" (ibid., p. 3) and emphasizes that concepts of self-understanding such as identity or culture have a

[1] The communication theory I use is based on Ethnomethodology (Bergmann, 1994; Garfinkel, 1967). A methodology focused on the question how the social order is produced through the process of social interaction. This approach does not at all ask what the subjective intentions of a speech act are but what are the possible effects of the construction of a speech and what are the options that the interlocutor can choose.

special responsibility because they influence the subject matter. The reflexive importance of terms of self-understanding cannot be emphasized enough. However, there are conceptual ambiguities in Welsch's concept of transcultural. An understanding of mixing, crossing, and overlapping, i.e., multiplication alone does not overcome a static understanding of culture. Cultural entities would have to be conceptually pre-transcultural and answer how cultural entities handle the relationship between connection and demarcation or unity and difference, and what can be understood methodologically by a cultural entity at all (cf. also Mecheril & Seukwa, 2006). This consideration will be elaborated on further below.

Indeed, Welsch's short draft raises some questions regarding the co-construction of culture that can be made more precise with Bolten's open concept of culture (Bolten, 2014), although he does not use the word transculturality at all. Bolten speaks of a "holistic, non-linear concept of culture" as a consequence of the second modernity, which, in its dynamics of change as well as network thinking, eludes the previously century-long striving for clear categorizations (ibid.). Bolten sees the definitions of cultural concepts as dependent on their historical and social contexts of use. Reflexively formulated: The meaning of cultural terms is in principle themselves culture-bound. Today, unambiguous classifications would neither be possible nor meaningful if the life process itself consisted of spatially unbound relationships and changing group affiliations. Reciprocity relationships of varying intensity link individuals and form experiences that, depending on their intensity, have more or less cultural influences and pulls. Decisive for the connection to transculturality, however, is not the aspects that lead to cultural closures as one side of the common construction of communities, but the permanent "intercultures". Via concrete situations and acting lifeworlds are continuously generated synergetically, i.e., as a third space. These outcomes of action are, in principle, unpredictable. So, whatever already coagulated experiences, knowledge stocks, or lifeworld conventionalizations may be present in the participants of the situation, they have to be re-actualized contextually in reciprocity relations and practically in communication and mostly modified or even reinvented. Culture is not a substance, but a relation. Emphasized in this relational process perspective are the opportunities for relationships and networking, that is, the "connective potential" (Bolten, 2014).

On the other hand, a political, power- and dominance-critical approach can also be found in connection with the concept of transculturality. This already begins, among other things, in the fact that with regard to the beginnings, reference is made to the Cuban anthropologist, historian, and cultural scientist Fernando Ortiz. As early as 1940, Ortiz (Ette, 2021, p. 743f.) had drafted a "history of the movement of cultures" under the neologism "transculturation", which conceives of cultures as mobile and subject to constant change and dislocation. His perspective on Cuban society is based on the anthropological analysis of slaves, migrants, and deportees in the Cuban state structure. He describes a radical uprooting and dislocation, which also opens the view of transitory effects of power and domination. Socio-economic situations are here the basis of localized transcultural phenomena with a focus on demarcation, differentiation between own and foreign. The approach can be connected to the concept of super-diversity by Vertovec (2007), who, however, like Bolten, does not use the

term transcultural, but rather speaks of transnational. This is also against the backdrop that he is concerned with the dynamic interplay of multidimensional socio-economic variables that are related to access status in relation to a state. Accordingly, statuses within national groupings differ in terms of their chances of immigration and integration. Vertovec identifies as implications of the current constitution of societies (using the example of Great Britain) as super-diverse, new patterns of inequality and prejudice and lines of segregation as well as new forms of cosmopolitan orientations and creolization, network formation and connecting bridgeheads. Super-diversity with a focus on migration and immigration emphasizes a new complexity of constraints and opportunities as well as experiences and developments.

Transculturality as a relational approach in the Delphi study ties in with the roots in the literature but emphasizes the development of commonalities of acting individuals in concrete contexts found via relational openness. From the perspective of Transcultural Management Studies cultures of already formed communities are the preconditions for cooperation and transactions (Wieland, 2017, 2020). Cultures of different actor levels flow into this (organizations, regions, professions, etc.). Thus, existing cultural differences are the starting point for the development of new local commonalities. Transculturality is that dynamic process "in which temporary and fragmented commonalities are obtained and then further developed" (ibid. 115f. translation K.N.). Thereby "commonalities need communities", i.e., common resilient value bases. They are to be thought as precondition and as result. Consequently, economic transactions are also endogenously value- and culture-based, which is to be priced into the transaction costs: "[…] culture is an informal institution tasked with enabling and completing the economic value creation process for cooperative interactions themselves" (Wieland, 2020, p. 111). The thinking here is in networks of stakeholders who have resources, and only these enable the value creation process. Thus, it is not a matter of only knowing the differences to the other, but of creating a new culture ("to create a new cultural situation of rapprochement in connection with a specific, local transaction") (ibid., p. 111). A cooperation succeeds on the basis of commonalities of a "community of practice",[2] and cultural factors are, according to Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022), the resources of a cooperation. The starting point is always a specific transaction as the actors have a common interest to engage in newly created commonalities "to form local, temporary and transaction-specific communities of practice and to base them on emerging cultural commonalities which may be stabilized and persist if they are developed in a joint learning process" (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2019, p. 11). Accordingly, the three steps of transcultural learning are defined as follows: 1. recognition of cultural diversity, 2. identification of existing commonalities, and 3. the development of new commonalities (ibid., p. 201). Transcultural Management in this respect is "a continuous learning process

[2] The term "communities of practice" describes a speech community with mutually engaged members in a joint enterprise sharing a repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p. 76, referenced by Corder & Meyerhoff, 2008, p. 444). While negotiating, performatively norms and sociolinguistic meaning emerge. The idea is that we learn while practicing in self-organized networks and relationships.

geared toward the production of cultural similarities, complementarities and communities, which form organization-specific and network-specific global common goods" (Wieland, 2020, p. 112).

Against the backdrop of the recently conducted Delphi study aimed at focusing the experts on commonalities the results can be summarized as follows:

- "Relational focus: Abandoning the assumption that all being is relational shifts the focus to the quality and implications of socio-cultural encounters as context-dependent relational constellations.
- Process perspective: These encounters are events in an ongoing process of relationing, rather than static ties among entities.
- Constructivist understanding: These processes refer to the construction of shared meaning and action.
- The nuance of 'trans' as meaning 'beyond': A transcultural understanding puts emphasis on the creation of new commonalities beyond existing cultures" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 52).

With its strong process-oriented focus, the transcultural approach understood in this way emphasizes contexts, dynamics, the constructional character, and synergetic results of negotiation processes in different situations. Power issues are less addressed.

This core of the paradigm is discussed in the following in the light of three cultural reflexive meta-perspectives. The double view of structures and processes leads out of the aporia of the indefinability of culture. At the same time, it is then necessary to look closely at how structure and process are concretely mediated in each case; this is where the paradigmatic approaches differ. One can say in short, with regard to mediation, essentialist approaches opt for the interpretive power of closed categories, and for understanding their rationale, power-reflexive ones opt for the dominance of (power) structures with a close look at the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, and multi-collective transcultural ones opt—just like transculturality—for the principled openness of the production of the same. The points that are so important with regard to a transcultural view will be asked, i.e., where openness and processuality exist and how (new cultural) commonalities can contextually emerge.

3 Cultural Reflexivity

Cultural reflexivity attempts to grasp situations and encounters with a moving scientific mind. The perspectives serve as heuristics and evolved cognitive processes on the concept of culture. The cultural reflexive approach works with different notions of culture with their respective theoretical traditions and includes what is meant by knowledge. Cultural reflexivity can be considered a systematic way to deal with the

knowledge taken for granted, including our scientific reflection on this knowledge.[3] The concepts of culture, which, too, constitute the dividing line between the meta-perspectives, are the most central body of knowledge. They will be explained and discussed in relation to transculturality in the following sections:

- Quasi-natural world view
- Power reflexive practice
- Systemic constructivistic co-creation.

The word "kulturreflexiv" (cultural reflexive) comes from the systems theorist Dirk Baecker (2000), who assigns culture the social function of binary comparison and unification. For him, culture has an entangling referential structure. Self-evident practices of society would be contingently set and at the same time blurred in the offer of contingency-compensating values. Thus, culture would always be committed to the past. For him, it is a matter of "restoring to culture that moment to which the modern concept of culture owes its origin: the moment of the experience of an open future" (Baecker, 2000, p. 10; translation K.N.). From this spirit, from which the transculturality approach is also inspired, cultural reflexivity is derived.

My proposal is epistemological and I assume that we cannot operate with one paradigm alone but need several approaches to explore and deal with culture(s). The fact that there are three meta-perspectives is not accidental. The cultural reflexive meta-perspectives are to be understood in sociological and methodological terms and take into account the quality of the respective notion of culture from a scientific point of view, the quality of knowledge, and the acquisition of cultural knowledge (in the service of intercultural learning), which results in different options for action. However, the central reason for the development of the three cultural reflexive perspectives is not only theoretical but is inspired by the challenges to accompany transnationally mobile persons in hybrid organisations as well as considering the challenges of doing business, acting politically, of living and working in times of global migration and its impacts on societies. Existing models and scholarly approaches could only inadequately relate to the rapidly evolving multidimensional entanglements; moreover, they have sometimes categorically excluded other approaches. Cultural reflexivity is a structured approach to the concept and body of knowledge of culture, which is conceived differently in each case: Cultures can be assumed to "exist" and respective knowledge can be applied, or premises of the notion of culture can be questioned and deconstructed in an ideologically critical way, or commonalities can be seen as being jointly and constructivistically created.

The three meta-perspectives

- pick up and link to theoretical traditions in intercultural research.

[3] Since the meta-perspectives each connect to different theoretical traditions, they differ paradigmatically. The approach seems eclectic at first reflecting how culture, identity, or the foreign are determined. Hence, also the language game changes in the representation. The meta-perspectives are connected by the point of view of what would have to be done if culture were to overcome its separating function and divisive meaning through the recognition of different fields of meaning relevant for cultural studies.

- meet the plurality of identities, positions, and experiences in everyday life.
- imply different qualities of and ways of dealing with knowledge.
- make it possible to group and specify corresponding competencies (interpret, deconstruct, question).
- take into account separating power structures without making the chance of developing commonalities (theoretical and practical) impossible.
- foster social justice.

Cultural reflexivity is not a word that is commonly found in everyday life, thus it is an unencumbered word as well as a second-order term. At the same time, the term refers to the fact that culture has a cipher character, i.e., it represents a search. In short, references to culture—if thematized—are always to be discovered and deciphered anew. Finally, cultural reflexivity can also be used to look at different understandings, theories, and practices of culture; this makes it possible to sort and structure the numerous approaches methodologically. For this purpose, theories, bodies of knowledge, and methodological approaches to culture from different disciplines were received, reduced, and grouped. The reduction to three of several possible perspectives is based on assumptions about the influences of culture as well as on the methodologically different scientific understanding of culture(s). A distinction is made between firstly interpreting with an everyday understanding of culture(s), i.e., culture as a describable way of life or practice and knowledge as everyday knowledge, secondly considering pre-distributed privileges as power-reflexive practice, i.e., culture and forms of knowledge are determined as ideology, and thirdly reflecting on culture as a construct, i.e., culture and knowledge are differential determinations of self and other.[4]

3.1 Quasi-Natural Worldview

If existing cultural differences in the transcultural approach are taken as the starting point, the classical intercultural approach is not obsolete. Even the most dynamic concept of culture, which assumes that cultural agreements are always renegotiated, must take into account a closing moment: the commonalities formed and which are passed on. They consist, for example, of coagulated habits, shared orientations or values, and a common understanding of meaning, which are presupposed by further interactions and are reopened and reciprocally negotiated when new participants join. It is this facet, captured in Bolten's (2014) structural view or summarized in categories of nations, styles, or patterns (Gelfand, 2018) by other scholars in the essentialist case of, e.g., "the US Americans", that is the focus of the first meta-perspective. In all cases characteristics can be named, and perspectives can be learned and taken.

[4] I would like to thank my colleague Rafel Mollenhauer (co-author in this book) for pointing out that meta-perspectives can also be understood as different approaches via (a) individual knowledge about cultures in the perspective of the quasi-natural worldview, (b) society and societal power structures in the perspective of power-reflective practice, and (c) communication processes in the perspective of constructivist co-construction.

The first meta-concept takes into account the given (unquestioned) and generalized knowledge about collectives and cultures, be it the members of a specific soccer club, French passport holders, or Hindi-speaking persons. We then see cultures as a category associated with rituals, values, national or other borders, or linguistic skills, and explain the world to ourselves on the basis of geopolitical realities, assumed communities, and the body of knowledge available about them. This perspective is based on the relatively natural worldview (Schütz & Luckmann, 1979), in which our thinking and speaking take place in everyday world "first-order categories" and "primary frames" (Goffman, 1974). We do the same when applying scientific constructs (i.e., individualism and collectivism), we interpret behavior. Therefore, I do not differentiate between first and second-order constructs in this paradigm especially because all paradigms are to be seen reflexively.

Since we never start out cultureless it can be said that interaction partners "from" different cultures meet in the third space of "interculture" where translations, exchanges, and negotiations take place. With this widespread understanding of cultures, one tends to join the essentialist concept of culture the moment that a category is built. Culture, from this perspective, is a unifying and binding grammar and consists of common and shared symbols, practices, artifacts, and institutions. If one assumes that different cultures can be relevant influencing factors for interaction, ways of life, or orientation toward different standards, values, or cultural dimensions become significant factors of difference. People meet who view the situation on the basis of different cultural meaning practices and experiences and thus initially have difficulties in communicating. What is foreign or "strange" is what is unknown to one, and in intercultural communication, one speaks of the danger of misunderstandings due to misinterpretations based on different systems of interpretation and meaning of the actors. Accordingly, depending on the theoretical approach, the understanding of individual identity can vary between a narrow notion of a mentalistically understood imprint and mental programming (Hofstede, 1986) and a broader one: that of orientation to shared cultural standards (Thomas, 2010). It is assumed that the respective collective contact group had a formative influence on acculturation. As the gap is a lack of established practices and meanings, the central goal of intercultural learning is a change of perspective. For this purpose, knowledge about "others" is acquired and applied, i.e., interpreted in a culturally relevant way. Commonalities could be given against the background of this meta-perspective (i.e., overlaps) or have to be established in a third space (Barmeyer, 2018).

Despite all constructivism and all relationality, the transcultural approach cannot completely shake off this presupposition of cultural differences. Wieland and Baumann Montecinos (2019) also speak of different cultural commonalities as a starting point as well as a result of transculturality. That dimensions of cultural relations have been multiplied, created, and generated in a more complex and multidimensional way does not change the fact that there is categorical closure. So, closed categories cannot be avoided and, with reference to Mecheril/Seukwa's criticism of Welsch the pre-transcultural premises are missing. However, this is unproblematic as long as one remains culturally reflexive and if the way in which boundaries are drawn is reflected upon.

3.1.1 Listening and Transculturality from the Meta-Perspective of the Quasi-Natural Worldview

In everyday interaction, moreover, we cannot avoid approaching from a meaningful pre-understanding, which we can then open up. For example, when you hear the speech act: Shall we have lunch together? it can be interpreted as a binding invitation. If you now consider interculturally competent knowledge, e.g., that intentions to act can be very different and therefore misleading, or if we even know that the question could also mean a non-binding suggestion, listening from this meta-perspective means to be open to different interpretations and to a change of perspectives. Openness from this meta-perspective usually means to listen consciously and carefully and to anticipate that there are different meanings. If necessary, it means to even engage with what is initially incomprehensible to find out more interpretative knowledge. In terms of intercultural learning, this meta-perspective aims at grasping the inner meaning of different cultural practices and at enabling the sense-making of the other using our basic skill for reciprocity, and as a result, learning different meanings, changing mental maps, and switching frames of reference. The following excerpt from an explanatory sequence shows typical activities to foster the change of perspectives (for a detailed description cf. Nazarkiewicz, 2010, 2012):

```
95   Les.:  by the way what could be tiresome in respect to time
96          ┌ too  ┐ is that in indian politeness it is ahm very common
97   Pet.:  └yes yes┘
98   Les.:  to decline a few times before saying yes after all
99   Bar.?: mh
100  Les.:  this is in some [countries] it's also common in belgium
101         in england it is pretty common too
102  Pet.:  oh ┌yes┐
103  Les.:     └ahm┘ that is the indirect communication you know
104         <<in English> ┌would you ┐like a cup of tea oh no >
105  Pet.:                └so  always┘
106  Les.:  oh <<in English> go on have a cup of tea >
107         like that you know? so you let yourself be persuaded
108         it's a game back and forth
```

Source Excerpt taken from Nazarkiewicz (2012), p. 39 (transcript follows transcript conventions instead of spelling rules, translation from German K.N.)

Les. introduces a value (Indian politeness, 96), names the rule of how to behave (to decline a few times before saying yes. 98), and names the pattern in a second-order construct (indirect communication, 103). Then, she illustrates this orientation with a staged example including quotes (would you like a cup of tea, oh no, go on, have a cup of tea, 104f.) and (as the original language of the excerpt is German) practices a code switch. Finally, she totally slips into the perspective of a person using indirect communication (you let yourself be persuaded, 107). I described this way of explaining cultural orientations and practices as "transcultural talk" (Nazarkiewicz, 2010). Speech activities of transcultural talk help the listener to shift from an outsider perspective to an insider perspective while explaining the meaning

of a certain behavior. We do not see the reactions of the listeners here except Pet. who recognizes a pattern (102) and draws conclusions (105) as to what to "always" do, but this interpretation is speculative. Listening from the meta-perspective of the quasi-natural worldview then is—as in everyday life—to understand the interlocutors by interpreting from different perspectives.

Developing a common culture transculturally presupposes being able to name given cultural peculiarities and negotiate new ones. The open moment here lies in the chance to use diverse interpretations in mutual understanding and in finding new commonalities through rapprochement or new practices. Empirical studies (Nazarkiewicz, 2010) show, however, that the shift to the level of reflection of cultural patterns is difficult and takes quite a while.

3.2 Power Reflexive Practice

Cultural starting positions are by no means always equivalent, as assumed in the first concept focusing on understanding, interpreting and the change of perspective. The next meta-concept emphasizes the role that different power and domination relations play. This meta-perspective takes the global, macro influences on people's identities and their interaction into consideration as well as strategies and discourse dynamics of ex- and inclusion and contains political dimensions. Due to circumstances, we have different resources, e.g., whether we are a person of color (PoC) or not, a male, female, or diverse person, with or without handicap, gay or heterosexual, old or young, married or unmarried, with children or without, well-educated or not, etc. All these categories (some of them known as diversity categories) involve asymmetric relationships. With regard to people's opportunities to take part in economic success, social participation, and an eye-to-eye negotiating position asymmetrical positions are reproduced structurally as global positions. In any given context there are people or collectives with privileges and there is a mainstream, seen as "normality". Those who join the mainstream usually enjoy greater power, opportunities, and resources. The same applies to company headquarters, the reputations of nation states, or historically determined dominations.

Thus, this meta-perspective anticipates the power constellations and cultures of dominance embedded in knowledge structures and discourses as well as identity-creating diversity aspects. According to this understanding, culture is not a way of life, but an arena of conflicts, in which interest-driven struggles for belonging, co-determination, recognition, and privileges in the form of power of definition take place. Collectively and historically developed dynamics and discourses cause asymmetries, affect the actors, and form a preliminary decision regarding their social positioning. Power in this context is seen as a hidden domination of the prevailing asymmetrical social structures. Considered in this way, any "cultural habits" or understandings of "normality" are distrusted. For all participants and situations, it is relevant to reflect on who is speaking to whom with which already socially weighted voice. Various dimensions of inequality from the diversity categories (such as age, sexual

orientation, physical or mental abilities, gender, religion) and power relations (class, race, gender), as captured in the intersectionality approach (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016) are questioned with a view to the—dynamic, situationally changing—power constellations in the course of interaction. Reflecting on power, they are anticipated as preconditions—also in situ—and need to be deconstructed in an ideologically critical way.

Since, from this perspective, all participants are entangled in ideological discourses, so too are the positions of scientists. Hence, scholars in the field of critical intercultural communication criticize a notion of culture that deals with habits and values that overlook the epistemic control of knowledge, and do not ask if everyone can speak.[5] They consider the talk of culture obscures inequalities and injustice. In fact, from this cultural reflexive perspective, culture is seen to cover and hide the struggle for power (Piller, 2009). If we consider the pre-existing conditions that underlie most situations, we can see that positions of power are already distributed unequally. Consequently, everything we associate with intercultural communication in our natural worldview is—from this meta-perspective—ideology. The conception of particular cultural characteristics is used to define a person, which is often a form of orientalism, sexism, or neo-colonialism. Holliday et al. (2004) call this “othering”. Culture from this perspective is an arena where there is a battle for resources, belonging, and agency, in essence, even for the very right to exist, if we consider the “Black Lives Matter” movement, for example.

This approach is called power-reflexive practice because, while speaking, we reconstruct or deconstruct and renegotiate these power positions. Every practice of knowing, thinking, interpreting, and speaking relates to dominant patterns of discourse. The knowledge and words we use carry the asymmetries as hidden meanings and values, and addressing them is delicate. Hence, these power influences and daily practices may co-exist with equality laws or laws against discrimination. Diversity descriptions such as gender, age or ethnicity are not to be thought of as characteristics of people, but as the result of boundary drawing processes. If one assumes potential commonalities, someone is not “limited” physically, but is being made disabled, so to speak. The orientation toward a dominant culture of normality, as is often found in railway stations, for example, does not allow people who are dependent on mobility aids such as wheelchairs to participate without difficulty in the absence of elevators and boarding aids. When age or youth, religion, or social origin is made relevant, the question always arises as to what purpose the demarcation serves. Consequently, according to Mecheril and Seukwa (2006) legitimate (respectable) and illegitimate (disregarded) forms of transculturality can be observed. Multilingualism and the transgression of ascribed boundaries of belonging are challenges for monocultural educational institutions, for example, an empirical limitation that is not adequately addressed in the concept of transculturality. Thus, it is necessary to consider who is compelled to transgress boundaries and who has options for action open to them, as well as who is granted the distinction between inside and

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[5] I choose this formulation in accordance with Spivak´s famous essay “Can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak , 1988).

outside in existing structures of order (ibid.). From this approach, the crossing of borders is mediated by hegemonic structures and subjectivity is to be seen in relation to power constellations. Finally, the place from which transculturality is postulated and also celebrated has to be questioned, since it would depend on who benefits from, and can use, networking and hybridity. If transculturality is a process, as one can conclude following the authors, then one has to ask how agency and participation are made possible. One possibility that can be mentioned here is to build co-membership. Practicing co-membership according to Erickson and Shultz (1982) means to build situational commonalities regarding social identities. Togetherness can arise through the common affiliation to a category, e.g., being fathers or having a common profession. However, Auernheimer (2005) emphasizes that this opening must occur on the part of the privileged in order to be effective.

It would be naive to assume that power relations do not play a role in the context of economic transactions. We can think of differences in the reputation of national economies and politics, resources between headquarters and branches, the different weighting of languages and their competencies, the normalization of heteronormativity, and much more. Considering these premises, the change of perspective, which seems so desirable and helpful in the reciprocity approaches, especially in the first meta-perspective, against the backdrop of this paradigm, is not even possible. If I could walk on two healthy legs all my life, I would lack the experience of the barriers and discrimination that wheelchair users experience on a daily basis. From this point of view "understanding" and empathizing have strong limits on the one hand. On the other, latent as well as open lines of conflict lines can be expected to run through the contexts.

3.2.1 Listening and Transculturality from the Meta-Perspective of the Power-Reflexive Practice

In the case of conflicting interests, the interest-bound defense of one's own worldview (and privileges) is likely, individuals encounter each other in the dynamics of powerful discourses. Opening up, and listening is the most challenging. Wong (2004) therefore practices and recommends leaving the arenas of discourse, remaining silent, and reflecting on what can be learned from the situation as the only option to overcome the drafting of asymmetrical borders. She also argues that any speech act is potentially normative: full of constraints and epistemic control. We "know" instead of being open to rich moment-to-moment experiences which are prevented by concepts and categories in their discursive rationality. This argument is especially relevant in interest-based contexts as in the relational view of Transcultural Management. Wong suggests offering the "listening silence": a communicative space that appreciates the fluidity of being. She aims at stopping asymmetrical discourse formations. Her solution, being mindfully open to bodily, emotive knowing while creating a coexistence that tears away ideological modes of reflection, seems to be unrealistic and unusual in this context, however, it is not, and is already applied. We will have a closer look at this in the next chapter.

The power-reflexive practice is based primarily on giving up being right and enduring differences and tensions with fit the transcultural paradigm. This silent discomfort is the indicator that openness is made possible. As this is a practice of mindfulness Wong (2004) calls it “knowing through discomfort”. The connection to listening is described thus: “The surfacing of pain is often necessary for deep healing to take place. It is a cleansing process that calls for mindfulness – awareness with gentleness and loving kindness – in our care of and listening to the integrated wholeness of body, heart, mind, and spirit on our journey of decolonization” (Wong, 2018, pp. 270f.). If the promotion of openness for transcultural negotiation processes in the first meta-perspective lies in the change of perspectives, here it is the abandonment of categories. Spencer-Oatey calls this “mindful stereotyping” (2013). By that she aims at open-ended categories, and a meta-cognitive awareness of their limits, an openness for information and creating contexts with the willingness to change categories and minimize group distance. Both authors emphasize a receptive intercultural communication process: perceiving and reflection, observing, and listening attentively with all senses. This effort for openness also links to the next meta-perspective, the constructivist paradigm.

3.3 Systemic Constructivist Co-construction

Transculturality is most readily associated with the perspective of systemic-constructivist co-creation. This paradigm is also based on the idea of interconnectedness, overlapping, and multidimensionality. However, the strong presuppositions of this methodology must be taken into account, and can then be a great inspiration. When we speak of a systemic-constructivist perspective, we mean that there is no objective truth or reality. Everything depends on the observers and their perspectives. Systemic thinking describes and differentiates in terms of relationships and interdependencies. There is no “true identity” of individuals or of collectives, as all categories we use are simply a matter of perspective. Systems, their components and interconnections, exist as long as we communicate about them. There is no ultimate “cause” of social action.

We practice a variety of reciprocity experiences in different groupings every day. Due to the individual multiple collective affiliations, we navigate through the interactions, find or develop commonalities with others if necessary, and yet remain strangers to each other at times. Often, one has to deal with behavior in situations without knowing or being able to understand the meaning, motivation or intentions. So, this meta-perspective is aware of the fragmentary nature of one’s own perspectives. Here it is important to take the approach that the actors cannot ultimately know what, in this diversity, the other person is oriented toward in the encounter, or what moves other participants in the interaction. There is always an unfamiliarity and the question of what can be shared at all (Rathje calls this the “missing link paradigm”, 2011, p. 108). Rathje argues that interculturality is not given but produced: “What makes a situation intercultural is rather the perceived missing link between the involved. An

interaction can thus be labelled intercultural if the involved attribute their experience of foreignness to a lack of belonging to a shared collective" (Rathje, 2011, p. 108). It is this gap that the last of the chosen meta-perspectives seeks to make fruitful.

From this gap-oriented constructivist understanding, the concept of culture is ultimately to be described in terms of systems theory, i.e., a multi-layered communication system based on self- and other-references as well as their observation.[6] The mental system selects perceptions and interpretations and reproduces its own (system-maintaining) interpretations. By describing others as "different", we look into a mirror, so to speak, and become aware of our own expectations through resulting confusions. Mindful of the possibility that multiple systems and subsystems may (but need not) be relevant, with respect to which one has limited or no knowledge. From a systems-theoretical point of view, there "are" no strangers, but a distinction is constructed between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Mutual understanding performances are incommensurable, i.e., horizons of meaning are not at all translatable for each other, which leads to disturbances of routine processes and self-references. In contrast, the unfamiliar is "contingent". While communicating, there is a basic inability to connect with the consequences of confusion, ambivalence, perplexity, and the necessity of (re-)orientation. With these systemic premises it is assumed that strangeness is a process of drawing of boundaries rather than a given fact and that the path to finding each other and to the creation of commonalities leads through the anticipation and recognition of not-knowing and not-understanding. Identity is understood in systems theory as a mental system or system of consciousness that organizes itself self-referentially and can be irritated by foreign "rules of the game". Foreignness is therefore the optional, the contingent, and the challenge of intercultural communication shows up in the form of "disturbances" of self-control—even of larger systems such as organizational cultures. How can we overcome the missing link and establish commonalities?

3.3.1 Listening and Transculturality from the Meta-Perspective of Constructive Co-creation

An inspiring path to bridge the gap is finding a source in nescience (Nazarkiewicz, 2018). Dealing with not knowing is best described by Otto Scharmer in the context of management studies. As already mentioned, also Wong and Spencer-Oatey Scharmer relate to activities of mindfulness (e.g., Iser, 2017), attention control, and special forms of communication and communication fields (Scharmer, 2009). Scharmer calls this form of "extended" perception "presencing" on the basis of his Theory U (ibid.). Presencing is an artificial word formed from the components presence and

[6] From the point of view of systems theory, human beings are observers and opaque for others as well as for themselves in the interplay of their biological-organismic (metabolism and cell processes), psychological (consciousness), and social system connections (communication)—in mutual dependence, i.e., structural coupling. They are non-trivial, complex systems, and have a wide scope of operating, i.e., different decision possibilities. Their behavior is potentially unpredictable, they cannot be controlled from the outside, but they can be stimulated.

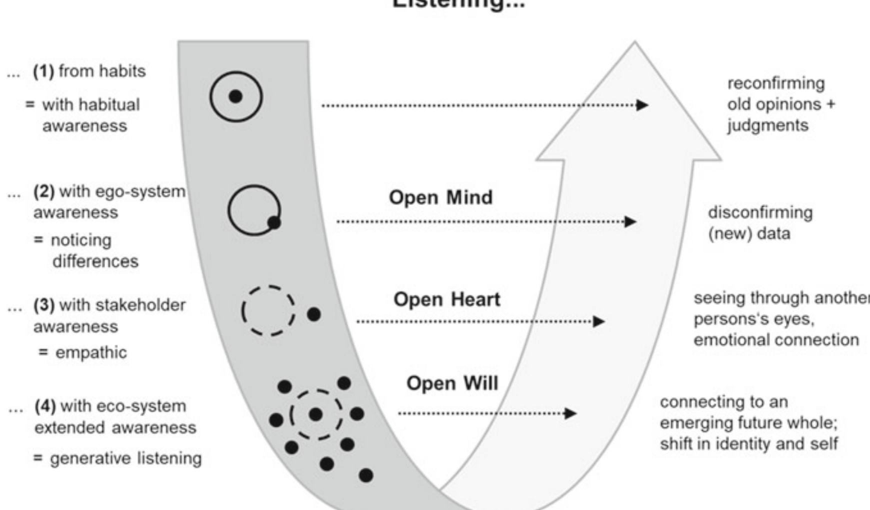

Fig. 1 Adapted and modified graphic according to Scharmer (2009, p. 241f and Presencing Institute www.presencing.com/permissions)

sensing. In my opinion, the creation of openness is most succinctly represented here from an ecological point of view via the types of listening (see Fig. 1).

How is it possible to exercise this so-called meta-competence of "deep listening" and to go through these phases and adopt their attitudes accordingly? Crucial are the foci of attention, as shown in the graphic. (1) The habitual form of listening is to look for the confirmation of one´s own opinions and judgments (listening from habits). We can easily link this to the idea of our customary attention including unnoticed ethnocentric cultural judgments. The focus of attention is within me (reconfirming what I already know). (2) The moment we can allow and perceive differences, our worldview is refutable, so this listening is open minded to data that does not conform. Listening with ego-system awareness includes being aware that this is a relative view and not the only source of knowledge. Hence, in this phase the attention focus lies between me and the other (noticing differences and listening attentively when there is new information). (3) Listening while opening the heart (emphasizing how the other one feels) comes from changing perspectives emotionally which also establishes an emotional connection (listening with stakeholder awareness). Our mind looks through the lens of others and the awareness is empathic—also a typical goal of intercultural competence. This is why Scharmer calls this openness "Open heart". The really new aspect comes in phase (4). The special openness of the "Open Will" engages in generative listening with extended and eco-system awareness (seeing and sensing from many different angles and various perspectives). Generative listening is based on all foci

simultaneously as ecologically expanded perception.[7] It comes together with being present while sensing and waiting for what develops emergently and synergistically. Listening to the future wanting to emerge stands for being oriented toward the development of the new. This is the source from where presencing (if all participants are open for this) draws on directions and solutions. According to Scharmer, we are connected with something that is larger than ourselves, with the willingness to step back from personal interests and to learn and change.

It goes without saying that this attention control requires some practice. But it also becomes clear that purely interest-driven action is out of place here because it would revert to an earlier stage and not lead to the desired common ground. In the context of transculturality it is remarkable that this theory, of all things, has won awards and gained currency in management studies as well as in consulting practice, since it suggests getting rid of all intentions for a moment in order to advance the common.

If we take up the basic idea of transculturality, looking for connecting links across cultures and differences, the phases in Scharmer's work show how a generative dialogue in communities of practices is made possible: via extended multi-perspective perception. In this way, he can show more than others how the development of common ground can succeed in a sustainable way beyond negotiations, compromises, or charters. How exactly "the new" then emerges, however, is missing in his descriptions and writings. One can add here: for this expanded perception as it is also referred to in the mindfulness-based thoughts of Wong and Spencer-Oatey we definitely need the body in two ways: as body in flesh and blood as well as "Leib" (e.g., finding commonalities is based on the senses and joint attention) and a bodily phenomenology. Social constructivism, which is often fixated on consciousness, obviously needs the underestimated resources, potentiality, and materiality of the human body. The connection of body with the medium of bodily communication, in short bodily knowledge, can be felt and used as a dynamic structure when looking at the emergence of commonalities. Unfortunately, the idea cannot be pursued further in this article.

4 Summary

The shift to a more complex and dynamic understanding of encounters as genuinely transcultural as well as the dominance of a relational approach among the experts of the Delphi study brings out inspirations as well as new challenges. Following the trans-cultural approach, cultures and their differences as formed communities are

[7] One uses this extended perception also in the constellation work within and outside business (cf. Nazarkiewicz, Finke & Oberzaucher, 2020; Finke, Nazarkiewicz& Oberzaucher, 2022).

seen as preconditions for cooperation. How can this be thought of together with the process perspective? Secondly, as interactions are permeated by powerful hegemonic structures, one must ask which of the agents has more options in the networks to transgress boundaries and which ones do not. Finally, regarding these latter questions, how can the concrete co-created development of commonalities take place?

By combining three cultural reflexive meta-perspectives and relating them to transculturality the aim of this article was to examine more closely how the relations of commonalities and (powerful as well as other) differences are combined with respect to different methodological views on collectives and cultures. Following this approach, three questions are relevant in each context: Which meanings and cultural factors could play a role? Which power asymmetries need to be considered? What solutions that can integrate differences emerge?

It has been shown that the openness and the co-creation of (new) commonalities, which are set so prominently in transculturality, can be described more precisely when working with different paradigms. In particular, breaking the question down to the communication situation itself and to only one aspect of communication (listening) could demonstrate that all paradigms have their own dignity and relevance theoretically and in practice. Hard to imagine that it could be possible to only relate to one alone to anticipate the challenges of transculturality. Table 1 provides a summary of the arguments.

After the fruitful discussion of transculturality in the light of cultural reflexive meta-perspectives it can be summarized that the aim of developing commonalities in the relational paradigm could be specified. Transculturality necessarily is not yet able to dissolve cultural boundaries in general, has to anticipate power structures, and to determine precisely the conditions, resources and practices of openness. From a cultural reflexive approach, one can say that the processual production of commonalities needs to be accomplished in different ways:

(1) by gaining and applying knowledge, trying to understand differing sense-making meanings, and changing perspectives,
(2) in overcoming conflicts by interrupting hegemonic discourses, experiencing discomfort in the silence, and practicing listening to the integrated wholeness of body, heart, mind,
(3) and finally, in practicing an uninterested extended eco-system awareness based on empathy to all stakeholders with open mind, heart, and will and the openness to learn and change.

These preliminary tentative answers for a complex task, namely defining the development of commonalities in the transcultural relational paradigm starting from multiple cultural differences, of course, need further elaboration and raise more questions (see Questions to ponder).

Table 1 Summary and table by the author

Cultural reflexive meta-perspectives	Quasi-natural world view	Power reflexive practice	Constructivist co-creation
Special focus	Considers cultural differences, culture-general, and culture-specific knowledge	Considers power influences on knowledge, identity, and interaction	Considers the gaps due to multicollectivity and multiple perspectives (missing link paradigm)
Notion of culture	Essentialistic: ways of living, "countries"	Cohesive: ideology- and power- critical, difference- and diversity-oriented	Systemic: "patterns of meaning", rules of the game, autopoiesis
"Strange" is…	…what is not familiar	…what is excluded	…what is contingent
View on intercultural communication	Misunderstandings	Ideology	Disturbances
Typical question(s) regarding a given context/situation	Which meanings and cultural factors could play a role?	Which power asymmetries need to be considered?	What solutions that can integrate differences show up?
Gap that must be overcome to build common ground	Given cultural differences, lack of change of perspective and sense-making meaning	Different afflictions and experiences regarding "normality", belonging to different status groups and unequal distribution of privileges	General missing link because of permanent unfamiliarity. Necessity to always build a community of practice
My own interactive action	Using contents I know	Anticipating pre-distributed privileges I deconstruct	Practicing co-construction We create
Approach	Working with assumptions Gain and use knowledge, interpret, explain	Working on the preconditions Consider positionings: Who is talking to whom? Deconstruct asymmetries	Working with nescience Self-reflexive, solution-oriented, cautiously groping with time for emerging commonalities
Contribution of this meta-perspective to transculturality	Supports change of perspectives and mutual understanding in the context of given cultural differences	Power sensitivity: anticipates and reflects power asymmetries and borderlines in transactions	Consequent orientation toward an open common search to bridge the missing links
Form of listening to enable the development of common ground	Conscious and careful listening: interpreting with different perspectives and diverse knowledge stocks, with feedback and comprehension check	Stop and breathe, interrupt the epistemic power of words and hegemonic discourses, and experience the discomfort, practice listening silence	Generative listening: with open mind, open heart, and open will, using eco-system awareness, empathic to all stakeholders, open to a learning shift

Questions to ponder

Chapter "A Cultural Reflexive View on Transculturality", by Kirsten Nazarkiewicz

- What is the difference between developing commonalities from a transcultural point of view compared to what we already know about negotiating the third space in intercultural competence and learning models?
- Which communication theories connect well with transculturality?
- What are the pre-transcultural premises of the transculturality approach?
- What is the role of the body in transculturality—theoretically and practically?

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Transcultural Competence: Present-at-Hand and Ready-to-Hand? A Communication Theory Approach

Rafael Mollenhauer

Abstract This article aims to provide a communication-theoretical starting point for a concept of transcultural competence. In dealing with concepts of intercultural competence, it is first established that such a concept basically concerns two levels. On the one hand, it can concern competencies that help the individual to deal with people of different cultures in an appropriate and effective way; on the other hand, it can address competencies that are identifiable from an observer's perspective across all cultures. While the approach via cross-culturally identifiable competencies is not suitable as a concept of transcultural competence to guide actions, the distinction between knowledge that is present-at-hand and knowledge that is ready-to-hand, elaborated in this framework and originally introduced by Heidegger, proves to be a crucial basis for such a concept, which is relational in many respects and whose core point is seen in the reflection and explication of cultural experiences.

1 Introduction: *Intercultural* vs. *Transcultural*

For several decades now, there has been much literature using the term *intercultural communication*. However, numerous publications are anecdotal, have little explanatory value, and not infrequently produce the very misleading stereotypes they are supposed to deconstruct (Loenhoff, 2003). This is mainly because the results of a thematizing cultural comparison are carelessly transferred to the analysis of the process of intercultural communication. In addition to this mixing of participant and observer perspectives, other problematic presuppositions manifest themselves in the relevant literature, including the assumption of the uniformity and homogeneity of a culture or the equation of culture and territory (Loenhoff, 2003).

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_7

These problems, which are only hinted at here, are further potentiated by the term *intercultural competence*. To begin with, the concepts behind this term differ considerably depending on the discipline and even within disciplines, so there is no consensus on what is meant by *intercultural competence* at all (Deardorff, 2006, 2011). To make matters worse, similar approaches or concepts are sometimes expressed by divergent terms such as *intercultural communicative competence*, *cultural competence,* or *global competence* (Fantini, 2009). Accordingly, "it is essential to arrive at a definition of intercultural competence before proceeding with any further assessment endeavors" (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). However, along with this, the appropriateness of the term itself needs to be clarified. In the context of the Delphi study on transcultural competence conducted by the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin (LEIZ), it was pointed out that intercultural competence (in contrast to transcultural competence) focuses on overcoming cultural differences rather than on fundamental cultural commonalities (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). This becomes clear if one considers intercultural communication as communication in the context of which a divergent cultural affiliation of the participants becomes relevant or problematic, and consequently the overcoming of culturally varying ways of dealing with or looking at the world is in the foreground. While the term *intercultural* seems to make sense in the case of a communicative process between at least two agents, the term *intercultural competence* suggests that such an interpersonal process is shifted to the individual; it is also supposed to describe competencies that prevent intercultural problems—the proof of intercultural competence is therefore difficult to provide, precisely because it would be characterized by the absence of intercultural communication in the sense mentioned above.

Many concepts of intercultural competence furthermore refer to the importance of a knowledge that can be fed in this form solely from the confrontation with one (or more) specific culture(s) (Lustig & Koester, 1993, 2003; Paige, 1993; Pedersen, 1994). During our socialization, such as in repeated interaction and communication processes, we acquire knowledge, which is sometimes specific to our respective culture or sub-culture, but sometimes also recognized across cultures. In intercultural encounters and through the shared experiences of others, we can also arrive at presuppositions regarding the practices of other cultures or sub-cultures. The fine line between resulting competencies and simple prejudices will only begin to dissolve even with a quantitative increase in related (own and shared) experiences, and only with respect to those specific (sub-)cultures about which we accumulate knowledge. Wiseman et al. (1989) nevertheless propose to view intercultural communicative competence as a bundle of skills, *knowledge*, and motivations needed to interact effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures; other authors emphasize the importance of language skills as a prerequisite for intercultural competence (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997; Samovar & Porter, 2001). However, if one considers the fundamental contingency of cultural forms of life, intercultural competence in this sense can only address skills that promote interaction with a cultural group

that is already more narrowly defined in advance. It therefore seems appropriate to start at a more general level, as exemplified by the concept proposed by Deardorff (2006). Deardorff emphasizes the processuality of acquiring intercultural competence, which includes attitudes and perspective-taking in addition to critical thinking. Bok (2006) also adopts a more culture-general perspective, where the focus is not on the actual knowledge acquired, but on the acquisition of skills that allow for intercultural thinking. There are certainly starting points here for a concept of transcultural competence.

At least at the terminological level, a concept of transcultural competence avoids many of the problems described above from the outset. Whereas *inter* transfers a process, which as such can only have taken place between agents of certain cultures, to the individual, *transcultural* initially only refers to competencies shared by people of all cultures or competencies concerning the handling of cultural diversity in general. But how can a concept of transcultural competence (based on communication theory) be developed in more detail? This question is addressed in the following. Thereby it is assumed that transcultural competence basically concerns two levels: On the one hand, competencies that help the individual to deal effectively and appropriately with foreign cultures. Here, the more general concepts of intercultural competence, which resist the implications of the term *inter*, offer themselves as points of contact. On the other hand, transcultural competence can also refer to competencies that are identifiable from an observer's perspective across cultures, including in particular the use of symbolic means together with the necessary cognitive-motivational resources. Although this approach is not in itself suitable for generating a concept that can guide one's actions, the examination of this approach promotes findings that can serve as a basis and point of orientation for the more detailed elaboration of such a concept.

The aim of the following discussion is to provide a communication-theoretical starting point for a concept of transcultural competence. For this purpose, culture-general characteristics of specific human communication are addressed first (subchapter 2). In this way, it will become clear that the competencies of the individuals involved in communication processes can certainly be considered transcultural, without this already implying anything about a competent handling of cultural variances. At the same time, the question of whether communication and the competencies associated with it are to be regarded as cultural commonalities or as the basis of culture is to be pursued. The relationship between implicit processes and explicit thematizations, which is established in the context of the discussion of the genesis of human-specific communication, then forms the basis for the subsequent approach to competencies that promote dealing with foreign cultures in general (subchapter 3). Finally, the findings are summarized against the background of a relational approach to transcultural competence (subchapter 4).

2 Communication: Cultural Commonality or Prerequisite for Culture(s)?

The concept of transculturality is primarily aimed at cultural commonalities (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). With regard to the first approach mentioned above, transcultural competence can refer to competencies that can be identified across cultures. This shifts the focus to abilities, skills, and processes that are human-specific. From a communication-theoretical perspective, it undoubtedly makes sense to address communication itself as a cultural commonality, especially since no common cultural concept doubts the importance of language and (symbolic) communication. Approaches that extend culture to sub-human species such as chimpanzees, which are capable of using tools, immediately attribute to these species the ability to use symbolic means and to participate in complex communication processes (Boesch, 1991, 1993; Savage-Rumbaugh & Lewin, 1994). This apparent dependence of cultural phenomena on communicative phenomena in turn tempts to understand communication as a precondition or substrate of culture. It does not seem necessary to determine the exact points of transition from sub-human to human-specific communication on the one hand and from pre-cultural communities to cultural communities on the other in order to answer the question as to whether communication can be regarded as a cultural commonality or rather as a prerequisite of culture. A closer examination of corresponding evolutionary developments, however, is of great importance insofar as the determination of the relationship of the points of transition to each other is regarded as decisive here. Where culture begins, where communication begins, and how these beginnings relate to each other, immediately requires the explication of a preliminary understanding of culture (see also subchapter 3) and communication: In the following, I will always speak of communication when the interacting individuals are related to each other in mutual communicative intentions. As will be shown below based on phylogenetic and ontogenetic considerations, this does not necessarily presuppose the use of symbolic means, but it does presuppose that communication has already taken place symbolically.

2.1 Symbolic and Sub-symbolic Communication

Decisive for the following concept of human-specific communication is first of all a social constellation as proposed by Mead (1934). Communicative processes are phylogenetically and ontogenetically always embedded in sociality. A comparable foundation is chosen by Karl Bühler (2000, 2011), who, in contrast to Mead, does not attempt to trace the transition from sub-human to human-specific forms of behavioral coordination, but who makes semiotic differentiations with respect to the quality of the respective interaction means. Here, Bühler's distinction between symphysical and empractical means of communication on the one hand and synsemantic forms of sign use on the other shall be drawn upon in particular.

A *symphysical* use of the means of communication takes place when the physical environment provides the basis for the interpretation of the signs, which would be communicatively and socially meaningless and could not fulfill their identification function if detached from the marked object. Such a symphysical use of signs exists in the case of a tree marked by a dog as well as in the case of a brand name on food packaging. Research into ape language (Premack, 1976; Rumbaugh, 1977), for example, is also highly determined by this quality of interaction and has so far not produced any evidence of the use of symbolic means in the narrower sense (Mollenhauer, 2010). The *empractical* use of signs, on the other hand, can be illustrated by the example of a surgeon asking for a scalpel during a surgical procedure. The intended tool may or may not be presently sensually perceptible here; it could, for example, also be in a drawer or even in the next room and thus not in the field of perception of the attending individuals. In any case, whether the designated entity is inside or outside the shared field of perception, the single word can only be interpreted via the context of action. It remains on the level of naming and referring, to whatever extent the action context is symbolically constituted. This is the empractical use of the means of communication, which can be found only rudimentarily in sub-human species.

In a *synsemantic* use of communication signs, which Bühler introduces as an enhancement of the symphysical and the empractical contact and as a reflection of the specific semanticity of language, the meaning of a word is determined only by the speech surrounding the word. The symbol that conveys a certain meaning by virtue of convention thus fulfills its function only within a symbolic field. This may be illustrated by Bühler's term *Deixis am Phantasma*, which refers to the communicative creation of a space of action in the consciousness of the communication partners. By the use of symbols, the ideas of the counterpart are controlled in such a way that the scene of action becomes present to him as a phantasm. As a purely linguistically constructed product, the phantasm contains the directional points of control, so that the acts of referring also take place within the phantasm. This synsemantic sign use cannot be found in non-human species and, to that extent, is human-specific. It is, however, identifiable across cultures and can therefore be considered transcultural.

The semiotic potential of language, however, must not obscure the fact that language does not only act on a synsemantic level, but that it instead represents an economic solution containing different levels of quality. Thus, the mere occurrence of linguistic means does not necessarily imply a quality of interaction reserved for humans. Often linguistic and other apparently symbolic means function as simple signals, which are weakened in their linguistic meaning or even completely emptied. How much the different levels intertwine is shown by the example of a route description, which shifts its focus from acts of reference in the common field of perception more and more toward the symbolic field. Nevertheless, human usage of single symbols or gestures usually seems more complex than functionally comparable uses of signs in non-human species. Like the request for a scalpel by a surgeon, the warning call of a green monkey referring to a specific predator is to be classified as an empractic use of signs determined by the context of action. A crucial difference, however, arises from the framing by a symbolic background knowledge given in the

human example. The relation of this framing to the actual sign use can only be broken down in more detail by specifying the transition from sub-human to specific human forms of communication.

2.2 Reflexive Intentionality, Communicative Intentions, and the Symbolic Background

While the cited work of Bühler does not explain in detail how the transition to specifically human forms of communication occurs, research into joint attention (Metcalfe & Terrace, 2013; Moore & Dunham, 2009; Seemann, 2011) and the model of cooperation proposed by Tomasello (2008) may help here. Social-cognitive approaches to joint attention (Bruner, 2009; Carpenter & Call, 2013; Rochat & Striano, 1999; Tomasello, 1999a, 1999b, 2009) highlight the dawning ability around a child's first birthday to participate in activities of joint attention. Tomasello (1999a, 2008, 2014) extends this concept to phylogenesis by positing a specifically human capacity to understand others as intentional agents (1999a) or to participate in acts of shared intentionality (2008, 2014). While he ultimately falls into the trap of a methodological individualism and a circular explanatory model due to his psychological position that starts from the individual (Mollenhauer, 2015, 2016), his elaboration of the socio-cognitive foundations that are phylogenetically and ontogenetically crucial for the acquisition of symbolic means can nevertheless hardly be appreciated enough. The transculturally given cognitive competencies crucial for participation in transculturally identifiable (symbolic) interaction formats can thus be seen in a form of reflexive intentionality.

Only with reflexive intentionality which, for its part, can only develop within the framework of recurring interactions, does the transition from sub-symbolic to synsemantic communication begin, the genesis of which, in turn, correlates with the genesis of communicative intentions and cultural forms of life. Henceforth, communicative intentions can also be given without symbolic means being used, but communication takes place against a symbolic background knowledge (as in the case of the surgeon who, like all those present, has already accumulated symbolic knowledge about hospitals, his role represented in this framework, the surgical procedure, etc.). The difference, then, between human-specific and sub-human acts of referring consists in the framing by a background knowledge, referred to here as *symbolic background*. The symbolic background is grounded in symbolic communication and makes human naming and referring seem more complex than acts of referring in the sub-human realm because of an implicit or explicit social reference to precisely that mutually attributed knowledge.

If one were to restrict the concept of communication to purely synsemantic contacts, many linguistic encounters as well as human-specific (communicative) uses of gestures would remain unconsidered. Accordingly, the concept of communication has already been linked to the existence of mutual communicative intentions.

However, understanding presupposes knowledge about those parts of the world about which one wants to communicate, as well as knowledge about understanding—after all, one has to be aware of the possibility to communicate about different parts of the world. This knowledge is at least partially explicable but does not necessarily need to be explicated. For example, the father who points to his son's back to inform him that he has forgotten his backpack before he leaves for school (Tomasello, 2008) refers to a complex symbolic background (concerning, for instance, the institution of school) without using synsemantic means. The presence of mutual communicative intentions, which was assumed here as a crucial characteristic of communication as specific human form of interaction, is thus semiotically secured. Thereby, it becomes possible to identify the use of mere signals as human-specific. Although they are limited to naming and referring and can therefore be found in functional equivalence in the sub-human realm, the human use of these signals is based on implicit knowledge, which in this form can never be fully detached from symbolic knowledge acquired in the course of socialization. This symbolic background is itself a mirror of communicative intentions and can only be derived from a social constellation. The coupling of the concept of communication with the *intention* to communicate is therefore not at all mentalistic; rather, the genesis of the necessary cognitive-motivational factors (reflexive intentionality) as well as the internalization of symbolic background knowledge takes place exclusively in the context of recurring interactions. Ultimately, communication is not bound to the current use of symbolic means, but it presupposes that the agents involved have built up a symbolic background knowledge in the course of previous symbolic communication.

Culture is thus bound to communication (it is of course possible to extend the concept of culture to the sub-human realm, but then the link to communication in the narrower sense is lost). The manifestations of culture in this sense vary considerably depending on the specific group (they are contingent), therefore we speak of different cultures. Common to them all are symbolic means of communication. Communication in this sense is not the substrate of culture but is inseparably linked to culture via an evolutionary co-genesis. However, it does not seem to make much sense to see *transcultural competence* in the basic ability to participate in communication, because then we would all (apart from communication-related limitations) mature into transculturally competent agents. Here, however, it should not remain with this statement, because the chosen approach via communication and its genesis offers decisive insights which can serve as a basis for an alternative approach to transcultural competence. The concept of culture provisionally derived here offers in its connection to communication, communicative intentions, and a symbolic background for its part the possibility to distinguish implicit and explicit (sub-symbolic and symbolic) knowledge—an important criterion for the concept of transcultural competence to be developed here.

On the interactional level, Fig. 1 allows for a phylogenetic reading that derives symbolic communication from interaction via the genesis of reflexive intentionality. Regarding the child's ontogenesis, the focus is on individual components, whose genesis, however, necessarily takes place embedded in interactions. In the context of

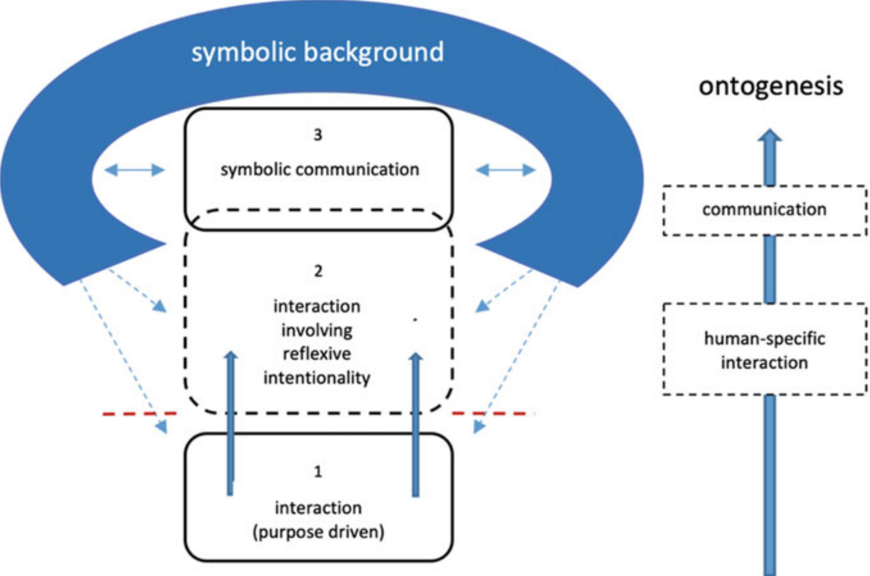

Fig. 1 Human-specific interaction and communication

a world that is already symbolically structured and symbolically mediated by caregivers, skills of reflexive intentionality emerge in the second year of life and enable the child to participate in formats that are triadically organized not only in functional but also in cognitive terms (Box 2). The genesis of reflexive intentionality and the genesis of means of communication, which can take on a synsemantic quality in the context of action coordination (Box 3), are to be seen as temporally displaced but closely interconnected continuums; with the use of first arbitrary means of communication, the development of reflexive intentionality is thus by no means completed (overlap of Boxes 2 and 3). Participation in synsemantic acts of communication is then in a reciprocal foundational relationship with the symbolic background, which, in the ontogenetic reading, concerns the individual knowledge (as well as that attributed to the counterpart) that frames the act of communication, but at the same time emerges from it. The establishment of a symbolic background, which in turn is to be understood as a continuum, finally stands in a referential context with sub-symbolic forms of interaction. In consequence, the latter proves to be human-specific even without communicative intentions and reflexive intentionality being present. Compared to the symbolic background, this human-specific quality of an interaction lacking symbolicity and reflexive intentionality is by no means thought to be subordinate. Instead, a co-genesis is assumed, within the framework of which a new quality of non-symbolic (and even non-communicative) practices continuously emerges. While these practices are not one-to-one translatable into explicit knowledge, they are nevertheless explicable.

Concerning the question as to whether symbolic communication and reflexive intentionality represent cultural commonalities (because people of all cultures share them) or whether they are preconditions for the formation of cultures, it must be stated that without human specifics such as reflexive intentionality, communicative intentions, symbolic means, and a symbolic background, there can be no talk of culture(s) in the narrower sense. At the same time, symbolic means are the medium of all manifestations of culture. They are not a precondition of culture insofar as a co-evolution of symbolic means and culture (a mutual condition relationship) is to be assumed. Although the transculturally identifiable competencies and practices elaborated with the approach chosen here do not seem suitable to (practically) guide the handling of cultural variances, the findings obtained through this approach—especially the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge—play an important role in the following concept.

3 A Concept of Transcultural Competence: Taking It Further

The concept of culture was here tied to symbolic means: People who participate in culture have internalized the symbolic means of their respective culture during their socialization and, in turn, create ephemeral and enduring symbolic values. Beyond this binding of cultural processes to symbolic processes, the concept of culture shall be specified here in another respect. It has already been suggested above, via the objection that culture should not be confused with nationality or territory, that a demarcation between different cultures is almost impossible and that talk of intercultural communication is not justified just because a Dutch customer in a German supermarket talks to a cashier of Turkish origin about the weather. Although the term *intercultural communication* is fundamentally more suitable for describing a process than the term *transcultural communication* (which suggests, among other things, the transport of cultural goods), it must necessarily be narrowed down to the extent that a divergent cultural affiliation of the participants must acquire relevance in the course of the interaction. In other respects, however, the concept of culture needs to be broadened: If a Pakistani surgeon talks to a US-American colleague about the latest surgical procedures at an international medical congress, it hardly seems justified to assume intercultural communication, whereas, on the other hand, different group affiliations do come into play when one of the participants explains the details of the surgical procedure to his patient. In everyday life, we are constantly confronted with situations in which the divergent group affiliations of those involved become relevant. Already in socio-perceptive contact, we classify our counterpart (usually unconsciously) with regard to various variables, including, for example, milieu or age. Thus, the classification of the counterpart as *old* may lead to patronizing communication or forms of overaccommodation (including louder or slower speech,

an adaptation of the vocabulary used, etc.) due to prevailing images of age (Coupland et al., 1991; Ryan et al., 1995). Insofar as variables such as (presumed) ethnic origin, age, milieu, etc., can be separated from one another analytically, but not during interaction due to the overall perception of the counterpart, and the communicative means used take this overall perception of the counterpart into account, it is argued here that intercultural communication should be limited by the necessity of making different group affiliations relevant, but at the same time should be extended to sub- and co-cultures, especially since it is hardly possible to draw a line anyway. This results in a broadly defined concept of culture (which is, however, narrowly defined with regard to communicative means), according to which intercultural encounters in the sense of intergroup communication are the rule rather than the exception.

Encounters between people with at least partially different cultural affiliations take place on a regular basis; only the extent of the cultural discrepancy may vary. The greater this discrepancy is, the greater the likelihood that it will be addressed in the context of communication or become relevant in some other way, so that there can be talk of intercultural communication. However, the framing of the communication must always be taken into account here. For example, the likelihood of intercultural communication in the narrower sense at the aforementioned medical congress is much lower than it would be in a chance encounter between the same participants in everyday life. But if almost every communication has the potential to be intercultural (in the sense of intergroup communication), a concept of transcultural competence based on communication theory must claim validity for all these cases, but at the same time it should be possible to derive it from general principles of communication. Here, the distinction between *ready-to-hand* and *present-at-hand* introduced by Heidegger (2002) is of decisive importance.[1] Heidegger thus refers to the peculiar double reference of all experience and cognition which was introduced above via the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge. According to this, what agents experience in the consummation of their experience and what they construct in the reflective handling of this experience are completely different products. Only things that are known from acting in a concrete context are thematizable, linguistically nameable, and objectifiable (Loenhoff, 2003). Thus, explications of cultural practices appear as secondary products that are by no means identical with the acts on which they are based. As a result of a practice of objectification and reassurance on the part of members of linguistic and cultural communities, collective concepts, symbols, and rituals usually exhibit a stereotypical character (Loenhoff, 2003), which is undoubtedly intensified in its reception by members of foreign

[1] An alternative approach would be a perspective that, oriented towards Merleau-Ponty (1945), focuses on the dimension of intercorporeal co-presence and operates under keywords such as *intercorporeality* or *embodied interaction* (Meyer et al., 2017). In this perspective, however, bodily intentionality remains underdetermined in its function as a coordination resource of interaction, as the question of the specific semanticity of those means that first produce intercorporeality is not satisfactorily addressed (Loenhoff, 2022). The Cartesian dualism of body and mind, resolved at this cost, will be seen here as already semiotically bracketed within the framework of action coordination (Bühler 2000; Loenhoff, 2022). In this way, a connection potential for the forms of knowledge brought into play with Heidegger comes into being.

cultures. The supposed knowledge that Germans drink beer may tempt a culturally trained French host to serve his German guest beer instead of wine—which is very likely to lead to a negotiation of stereotypes (especially if the guest is not a beer drinker). According to the understanding represented here, however, this does not provide evidence of transcultural competence but, at best, evidence of a (mutual) knowledge of cultural stereotypes.

Common concepts of intercultural competence, as well as intercultural training in the organizational context, are often based on conveying such stereotypes about different cultures. They may (as in the beer example) promote the discussion of mutual presuppositions about the cultural background attributed to the respective counterpart (and thus intercultural communication in the aforementioned sense), but in the case of such a discussion, the participants immediately move to the level of cultural comparison supported by stereotypes. The mediation of such stereotypes as an approach to intercultural competence is made all the more problematic by the assumption that the respective communication trainer is arguing from a neutral point of view. A US company with close ties to China may face this problem with a communication trainer who is from China but socialized in the United States. However, all comparisons have a cultural location—in the example cited, that of the Chinese immigrant population in the US—and associated locational disadvantages that quickly lead to misunderstandings and misjudgments (Loenhoff, 2003). Ideas about one's own culture as well as those about foreign cultures are always part of the respective culture, so attributions regarding other cultures must also be regarded as intrinsic cultural projections (Loenhoff, 2003). In addition, there is heterogeneity within cultures, especially (but not only) in modern societies, due to which it hardly seems justified to speak of "the Chinese" or "Chinese migrants in the USA." Cultural characteristics are by no means equally distributed; rather, different milieus, social classes, and communities participate in cultural practices to varying degrees or even form their own sub-cultural practices (accordingly, the plea here for a broad concept of culture that also includes sub-cultures and co-cultures).

If a concept of transcultural competence is to claim to de-problematize intercultural encounters, it seems to make little sense to choose an approach aiming at specific cultures, which, due to the double reference of human experience, is inevitably supported by stereotypes based on cultural comparisons. A more appropriate approach would seem to be a cross-cultural one, as suggested by Deardorff (2006, 2011). In her model of intercultural competence, she first emphasizes individual attitudes, including respect (valuing other cultures), openness (withholding judgment), and curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity), which on the knowledge level result in cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness and enable the individual to listen, to observe and evaluate, and to interpret and relate. On this basis, the desired internal outcome consists in an informed frame of reference shift and the interactionally desired external outcome in effective and appropriate communication and behavior in an intercultural situation. This outcome in turn affects the attitudes, the degree of which determines the extent of intercultural competence. The starting point of this model, which is rightly designed as a process, appears problematic insofar as it begins at the individual level (attitudes). Attitudes,

however, do not come from nowhere, but are based on interactions that take place in the course of socialization (including one's own and/or communicated experiences about other cultures or at least the intercultural training in the context of which this model is taught). Taking this aspect into account, the model, in view of its abstraction from culture-specific moments, nevertheless forms a suitable starting point for a concept of transcultural competence.

Referring to the distinction between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand introduced by Heidegger, I would like to take up in particular the cultural self-awareness that undoubtedly also goes hand in hand with corresponding attitudes and, building on this, to emphasize the importance of explicating and reflecting on one's own preconceptions and prejudices. This is done in distinction to the already introduced problematic assumptions regarding cultural comparisons and intercultural communication. Thus, (1) an agent who is to be considered transculturally competent must first reflect on his or her actions against the background of his or her cultural standpoint and realize that, even in the case of extensive engagement with other cultures, he or she can never be considered a neutral authority. The classification of cultural practices should always take into account their fundamental contingency. Just because we do something the way we do it, does not mean others have to do the same. Openness and curiosity as attitudes addressed by Deardorff (2006) are of particular importance in this context. In addition to group-specific assumptions, respective personal experiences must also be included in the reflection process. In connection with this, transcultural competence (2) requires an awareness of the unequal distribution of cultural characteristics. No one fulfills all the cultural projections related to one's own culture, nor does this apply to one's respective counterpart. The above expansion of the concept of culture with regard to sub-cultures and co-cultures is of particular importance here. Accordingly, the process of reflection and explication should include sub- and co-cultural practices (of certain milieus, age cohorts, etc.), which can result in forms of intergroup communication. Here again the necessity of (3) avoiding the erroneous assumption of an equation of culture and territory follows. Beyond this aspect, transcultural competence (4) requires context sensitivity. As in the example of the doctors' congress, corporate relations have also become internationalized in the course of globalization so that, here, in accordance with the expanded concept of culture, we can speak of an evolved sub- or co-culture (transcending national borders/territories), the practices of which, however, lose their claim to validity when the business partners meet in a different context.

The reflection on one's own prejudices and preconceptions has a thematizing character in principle and on all levels described. It is therefore present-at-hand. This raises the question of how it can become ready-to-hand and thus have a (positive) influence on intercultural encounters and to what extent this culture-general concept of transcultural competence circumvents the weaknesses of culture-specific models. For this purpose, a reference back to the model presented in subchapter 2 is appropriate. The symbolic background described there can be seen as a kind of reservoir of the symbolic products internalized during interactions. These products are of course not explicitly present at all times, but can be made explicit when needed. The reflection processes proposed here can also be subsumed to them. Although these products

are completely different from the implicit processes and therefore cannot be translated one-to-one, they are related to each other in a referential context. The symbolic background knowledge of the agents involved in an interaction determines both the symbolic and the non-symbolic consummations, whereby the interactionally co-constructed symbolic products are internalized and thus become part of the symbolic background knowledge. To illustrate this, here is an example: A person who wants to learn to drive is not immediately able to drive a car when the driving instructor explains the action sequences. It is true that the knowledge communicated by the driving instructor can now be subsumed into the symbolic background knowledge of the learner driver and, if necessary, made explicit, but it is initially only present-at-hand. The acquired knowledge cannot be translated into action without further ado. It can just serve as a basis for action. However, nobody will deny that the explicit instructions of the driving instructor can promote the acquisition of practical skills. Here, the referential connection between implicit actions and explicit thematizations is revealed. Accordingly, the explication of one's own cultural preconceptions and prejudices is not in itself a guarantor of successful intercultural encounters, but as part of the symbolic background knowledge they can nevertheless influence intercultural encounters without the participants necessarily having to reflectively break out of the interaction. In the course of or through repeated intercultural encounters, they can become ready-to-hand.

The double reference of human experience is just as unavoidable in a culture-general concept of transcultural competence as in a culture-specific approach. In contrast to the latter, however, the culture-general concept is not oriented to unreflected stereotypes, but, in demarcation from problematic presuppositions, relies on an explication or reflection of one's own preconceptions. The term *trans* seems to be the obvious choice for these general-purpose competencies. Nevertheless, there seems to be a reason to add one more decisive aspect to the model of transcultural competence, namely (5) the awareness of the double reference itself.

4 Conclusion: Transcultural Competence as a Relational Phenomenon

In the Delphi process conducted by the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin, transcultural competence was characterized as a relational phenomenon (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). Accordingly, it also became clear here that what can be understood by transcultural competence is related to the perspective adopted in each case. Is it a matter of elaborating competencies that are shared by all cultures of the world, or is it a matter of elaborating a concept on the basis of which individuals are enabled to deal with intercultural communicative problems or to avoid them from the outset? As a cross-cultural phenomenon, the use of symbolic means was elaborated (based on a social constellation and reflexive intentionality), the design of which varies considerably in different (sub-)cultures (this contingency of

cultural practices is another relational moment). The relation of implicit practices and explicit thematizations identified within the framework of this approach, taking into account the symbolic background, then served as the substrate of a concept of transcultural competence (disregarding culture-specific moments), which is based on the explication and reflection of one's own preconceptions. It includes:

1. *the reflection of one's own cultural standpoint*
2. *the awareness of the unequal distribution of cultural characteristics*
3. *the awareness of the difference between culture and territory*
4. *context sensitivity*
5. *the awareness of the double reference of human experience.*

The relational characteristics of the double reference of human experience have already been addressed. The other aspects listed here can also be reformulated in relational terms: (1) What is my relationship to the culture experienced as my own and what is my relationship to other cultures? (2) What is my relationship to individuals of my own cultural group(s)? (3) To what extent is my cultural affiliation related to my nationality and/or to geographic boundaries? (4) How do(es) my cultural affiliation(s) relate to the respective communicative context? Similar to the concept of intercultural competence proposed by Deardorff, the approach described has a processual character. The reflection of one's own presuppositions is never completed, but is constantly adapted in relation to new experiences gathered in intercultural constellations (and experiences communicated by others). There is no doubt that future research will require further and more detailed elaboration of a communication-theoretical concept of transcultural competence that has only been hinted at here.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Transcultural Competence: Present-at-Hand and Ready-to-Hand? A Communication Theory Approach,", by Rafael Mollenhauer

- What is the relationship of a concept of transcultural competence to those communication-related characteristics of human communities that are identifiable cross-culturally (or "transculturally")?
- Regarding different perceptions of culture, communication, etc.: What consequences arise in the context of a concept of transcultural competence from conceptual-terminological preliminary decisions or their avoidance?
- How can the identification of the double reference of human experience (the execution of experiences on the one hand and the thematizing handling of them on the other) contribute to a further elaboration of a concept of transcultural competence?

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Time Matters. Tempocentrism—Key Impediment for Transcultural Processes

Werner Zips and Angelica V. Marte

Abstract We interpret the core agenda of this volume as the development of theories for governance practice(s) in management and leadership based on (cultural) commonality and diversity. Our contribution will explore a multi-disciplinary approach marrying concepts from relational economics and leadership research with broader analytical perspectives of anthropology. We will discuss how anthropological concepts of transculturality and transculturation transplanted into the field of relational economics could translate into change and transformation by diversity. To have a substantial impact, cultural (and biological) diversity depends on de-essentializing perceptions of rigid identities and fixed identifications, enabling a complementary or truly *transcultural* comprehension of relational "otherness". Such an oscillating open-ended procedure resists dominant orderings of "otherness" as pre-conceived labeling and leads to a permanent discursive reflection of diversity and cultural difference/s. It acknowledges that identification of divergences is more often than not stereotypical. Practically, this means for us to draw our main interest to *all* levels of (power) hierarchies in corporations, organizations, and networks. Leadership strategies cannot prescribe top-down transcultural change, if no more than window dressing is attempted. Therefore, we suggest strengthening bottom-up approaches aimed to promote social *and* environmental justice through transcultural procedures. We are convinced that the transformative upsurge should not be restricted to the narrow confines of the social sphere of "human resources" but must address the devastating impact of human economic activities on nature in the "Anthropocene". Relational economics and its underlying concept of relationality will have to extend to all ends of human/social embeddedness in natural processes and ecosystems. Taking relationality seriously means thinking (and acting) in terms of decolonizing nature from centuries of human interventions of progressively suspending ecological self-regulation. The practical aim of this contribution is geared toward substituting

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_8

the once dominant habitus of tempocentrism with effective and accountable sustainability. The triple ecological crisis of the coronavirus pandemic, species extinction, and climate change needs urgent institutionalization of sustainable transformation or "timefulness". We thus provide a critique of the long-standing norm of "time (money) matters" and argue for historicization of time (as temporal) matters in research of transculturality.

> *"Who is gonna pay reparation for my soul?*
> *When there is so much segregation*
> *Who is gonna pay reparation for my soul?*
> *When there is so much sufferation"*
> (Song lyrics from the Reggae artist Perfect, *30 Pieces*)

1 Introduction

Our contribution addresses fundamental issues of transculturality and transculturation from two vantage points: economics *and* anthropology. It takes Bourdieu's apodictic statement, "the real is the relational", as a starting point for a notion of relationality that goes beyond the centering of social relations in sociology and economics (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). Relational economics and its underlying concept of relationality will have to stretch toward all ends of human/social embeddedness in natural processes and ecosystems.[1] Taking relationality seriously, means thinking (and acting) in terms of decolonizing nature from centuries of human interventions of progressively suspending ecological self-regulation.[2] The debate of transculturation therefore focuses on aims of decentering *human* in relationships with all other mundane parts of "his/her" natural environments (Lange, 2018, p. 289).[3]

[1] As Spretnak (2011, p. 4) emphasizes: "All entities in the natural world, including us, are thoroughly relational beings of great complexity, who are both composed of and nested within contextual networks of dynamics and reciprocal relationships. We are made entirely of relationships, as is the whole of the natural world". Accordingly, this approach positions humans (and economy) as partners of natural systems and no longer the "crown of creation" (Bennett, 2009).

[2] The paternalistic attitude toward nature and ecology may be subsumed under the notion of "everyday crises of daily routines" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 255), whereby the valorizations of nature follow the tempocentric trap of short-term (over-)consumption.

[3] The prefix "*trans*" in anthropological theory signifies the transitory character of cultural exchange in situations defined by a sense of reciprocity and complementarity (cf. Wernhart, 2014, p. 49). By inversion of the argument, the notion of transculturation does not capture situations of unilateral assimilation, accommodation or forced adaption, the current dominant attitudes camouflaged by discourses of "integration" in Europe and beyond. They are rather examples of failed transculturation.

The fairly new notion of "de-anthropocentrisation" sums up calls for a transformation of all economic activities in the broadest sense (Weston, 2009, pp. 109–130).[4] It absorbs the growing awareness for climate, biodiversity, and social crises referred to above (cf. Glaubrecht, 2021; Reichel & Perey, 2018). The emerging *new* consciousness draws on *old* concepts of interrelatedness nurtured until this day by many local communities and indigenous peoples globally. This opens doors for inclusion of seemingly "new" actors who were formerly marginalized, excluded, or assimilated.[5]

Thus, the contextual frame of relational economics, as suggested by the editors of this volume (Wieland, 2017; cf. Wieland & Montecinos, 2018, pp. 10, 17), starts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted by UN resolution (2015).[6] Obviously, this ground-breaking resolution merely represents the beginning, not the end. It needs to be seen in line with further international instruments in the struggle against global biodiversity, climate, and social justice crises. Again, an ecological worldview re-connected to economics by a notion of inescapable interrelatedness, opens its ears to "the cries of the world" (Barlow, 2012).

Transculturation seen as a dynamic process initiates global economic transformation, because it questions Western material economism with alternative epistemologies and interrelated worldviews addressing biological, social, economic, and environmental needs, e.g., of indigenous origin. Notably, these silenced voices become increasingly foregrounded at large global gatherings, such as the various *Conferences of the Parties* (COPs on climate, biodiversity, and so forth). Amazingly, at these formerly elitist gatherings, indigenous participation has gained global attention. Their image is rapidly transforming from "anachronistic remnants of a distant evolutionary past" to forerunners of biodiversity competence and trailblazers in the politico-legal struggle for climate justice (cf. Zips, 2006, pp. 27–29).

The blatant anthropological nucleus of transculturation thus has a chance of becoming neutralized or even counteracted by integrative and inclusive relational conceptions, including non-human life—a focal point of indigenous peoples. Cultural diversity as the core conceptual agenda of this volume almost automatically refers to an all-encompassing idea of biodiversity that transcends the short-term interests of *Homo Oeconomicus*. This is due to the simple reason that transculturation can only be developed if set free from restrictions by (powerful) elites, formerly known as exclusive "decision makers". The practical focus on transculturality, particularly in its dynamic twist of (ongoing) transculturation, *includes* necessity.

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[4] Weston calls for a new environmental etiquette rather than a formal ethic. This refers to "de-anthropocentrizing" the world, a philosophical design he sketches thus: "Modest enough, barely 'philosophical' at all according to Platonic standards, below the usual disciplinary radar, the project is nonetheless audacious in its own terms, specifically *in its willingness to undertake open-ended transformation* (emphasis by the author)".

[5] This means a fundamental reappraisal of global historical structures of assimilation, apartheid, and genocide. Rankin and Tardif (2020) provide a poignant example in this respect from the Canadian context.

[6] Resolution A/Res/70/1 adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2015. For an overview of the 17 development goals that comprise "The 2030 Agenda", see: https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

Currently, cultural diversity pops up on most institutional or corporate websites at first click. Most of it appears to be mere lip service and window dressing (Zips & Marte, 2021). Such "diversity-washing", usually together with "green-washing", will likely prove counterproductive. In an era where even conservative parties pose with "social justice programs" (as seen in the 2021 election of a new chairman of the German center-right political party CDU), nice and easy, ready-made rhetoric and images will not suffice under globalized business (and social media) conditions. Further shaping the concept of relational economics demands urgent attention to (the lack of) transcultural competence. Enhancing this quality in leadership seems promising to overcome growing social and environmental divisions, as far as the editors of this book are concerned. Referring to the question as to why people perceive and evaluate cultural diversity as negative or positive, the Delphi study on Transcultural Competence revealed the importance of history and collective memory (e.g., colonialism, slavery, the Holocaust).[7] We therefore emphasize the necessary historicization of transculturation.

All the practical goals of a theory of transculturation in practice demand that the vantage points of economics and anthropology do not receive separate treatment. Rather, we aim to merge economic and anthropological considerations in the conceptual frame of a "general economy of interests". To achieve this, we will focus on four main aspects:

a. An exploration of the potential inherent in the anthropological concept of transculturation for transformative relational economics.
b. Reflections on how the incumbent historicization of transculturation (based on the anthropological meaning of the notion) may afford new ways to benefit "… effective and efficient global and local cooperation by making diversity's productive potentials accessible and containing diversity's destructive potentials" (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, p. 8).
c. Identifying and analyzing "tempocentrism" as a key impediment for triggering cultural competence for substantial participatory co-creation.
d. Conceptual ideas of how a departure from anthropocentrism and tempocentrism can be translated into leadership transformation and transcultural organizational change.

The dominant imperative of conventional economics—"time matters!"—points to its double meaning: firstly, to the capitalist notion of "time is money"; secondly, to historical time, or rather historicization. The latter takes center stage in our contribution to point at past mistakes, failures, and injustices. Accordingly, social, and environmental justice have pivotal importance in relational economics, based on the awareness of interrelated complexities.

[7] We deduce this from the preliminary results of the Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence, Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022) as it fed into the editors' outline for this volume.

2 Transculturation—Origins, Practical Interests, and Potential of an "Old" Concept

In his conceptualization of relational economics, Josef Wieland (2018) opted for the notion of transculturality as a key paradigm. We consider this appropriation a prudent choice for the implementation of cultural diversity, although it appears somewhat surprising from an anthropological perspective. Since, for the last few decades, it was much less fashionable in cultural anthropology, whence the concept originated. Anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies, and related academic fields were much more prone to employing catch-all phrases such as syncretism, creolization, hybridization, bricolage, mestizaje, and so forth to describe the "mixing" or "amalgamation" involved in cultural contacts (cf. Arroyo, 2018). Arguably, these terms express little more than the obvious: a process of exchange that started some seven million years ago with the early hominids in the evolution of mankind.[8] In this sense, they are analytically weak concepts, their sensorium for domination, power, and violence remains vague.

Furthermore, these notions for deliberate "mixing" suggest flat to no hierarchies, which are, as we all know, rather the exception than the rule. Whereas uneasy forms of syncretism carry within them an inner dissonance marking resistance to Western culture from within Western culture (Young, 1995) theories of hybridization thus not only hint at wishful thinking but reveal an ongoing obsession with organic miscegenation as well (Hanchard, 2006, p. 197ff). Or, as Young (1995, p. 4) convincingly argues, such theories exhibit modern extensions of "colonial desire", in line with Victorian racialism: "There is a story behind the way in which the organic paradigm so beloved of the nineteenth century quickly developed alongside one of hybridity, grafting, of forcing incompatible entities to grow together (or not): to that extent we still operate within its legacy of violence and corruption". Illusionary propositions of artificial synthesis related to colonial "culture contact" correspond in some respect to popular catchphrases in today's leadership and management (Marte & Ermer, 2018, p. 52), with idioms such as "corporate identity, corporate mission, Diversity & Inclusion (D & I) leadership principles, D & I Culture etc." (Zips & Marte, 2021, p. 22ff). Inclusive leadership transformation therefore prompts critical questioning: "How together are we in this together?" (Marte, 2020).

Transculturation, on the other hand, reviews the (often violent) "mixing" as a starting point for critical takes on dominance, hegemony, and power. And so many other "items" that come with these: paternalism, non-transparency, exclusion, racialism, or patriarchy. This holds true for companies, global corporations, and network governance systems in the context of relational economics, as it does for the consequences of imperialism, colonization, and cultural dominance, for which the notion of "*transculturación*" was originally coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. We believe that therein lies an important strength of the paradigm

[8] And certainly, became dramatically accelerated with the evolutionary appearance of homo sapiens, some 300,000 years ago and its global migrations starting in Africa some 70,000 years ago (cf. Glaubrecht, 2021, pp. 60–99).

that has not yet been accounted for in relational economics. For obvious reasons: Fernando Ortiz' emancipatory ideas focused on the deep histories of postcolonial contexts as prerequisites for decolonization, independence, and nation building in Cuba and Latin America. His theorization of "*transculturación*" wanted to escape the pitfalls of the dominant concepts of acculturation at the time. For contemporary anthropologists and the colonial administrations, acculturation meant hardly anything other than assimilation (cf. Malinowski, 1947, pp. xii–xiii; Zips, 2014, p. 224).

"*Transculturación*" offered Cuba a dynamic source of nation building based on forging a new identity, in resistance to (post-)colonial assimilation. The notion directs attention to the ongoing, never-ending process of engendering transculturality. It is thus thoroughly transformative. Transculturation consciously prompts the dynamism of converging cultures by recognizing their multi-faceted design. Its underlying implications indicate a need for complementarity of diverse experiences, without masking power and historical structures of domination. We will emphasize this important asset for "making diversity work" in today's corporations, institutions, and organizations in the last section.

Transferring this concept for the never-ending shaping of new (postcolonial) cultures into relational economics delivers a punchline for the ignorance of cultural diversity in modern societies. There is not much reference in economics to the origins of the concept in the project of decolonization (Ortiz, 1940). However, its introduction in leadership and organizational change projects of global corporations and organizations provides analogous channels for appropriate understandings of cultural complexity, which are never inclusive from the start. Accordingly, the idiom of mere participation will not suffice. It may need—in both cases—a deliberate recognition of past exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization: a sense of retributive justice almost inbuilt into processes of transculturation, as it was addressed by Fernando Ortiz. In the current state of heated debates on identities, circling around discrimination, decolonization, reparations, "privilege(s)", and racism, the sincere quest for social justice deserves renewed heed. Transcultural competence is not a given, it must be built. Only then may it be expected to—in time—materialize in shared (global) values, as results of individual and collective learning processes (cf. Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, p. 7).[9]

The next section will employ this implicit appeal to historicization on transcultural competence in leadership. It builds on the double historicity of social structures, namely the complexity of dealing with dominant structures embodied in individual

[9] The rise of transcultural recognition is exemplified by recent debates and first practical follow-ups in the postcolonial restitution process of art objects, or in individual tributes, such as the 2021 *Nobel Prize in Literature* awarded to Abdulrazak Gurnah, "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents" (Svenska Akademien, 2021). Not that transculturation was a likely criterion of the Nobel Committee, but Gurnah's novels like *Paradise* (1995) are thoroughly transcultural, in their lack of the monochrome color grading prevalent in many postcolonial studies.

habitus and social structures. The following discussion aims to enhance the relational view on cultural complexity with a complementary understanding of cultural diversity (so important to Fernando Ortiz).

Our empirical experiences in the fields of leadership/organizational development and anthropology have taught us that it all starts with recognition, namely recognition of diverse and divergent individual and social experiences (Marte, 2014). Their extraordinary and complicated dimensions lie in past and present inequalities. Transculturation as a concept and program with an indispensable historical emphasis allows imbalances to be tackled. It may therefore prove an adequate procedural medium to redeem the mortgage of past marginalization that we are globally reminded of by numerous voices of the so-called "subaltern" growing ever louder (cf. Spivak, 2020). Herein we detect the main reason why the unlikely choice of transculturation as an anthropological notion for decolonization has the potential to transform diversity management and corporate social responsibility grounded in global value creation (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, pp. 34–35).

3 Recognition and Historicization

Whether it concerns propagating cases of presumed discrimination in business contexts or the marginalization and eviction of indigenous peoples from their lands in legal anthropology contexts, the first and foremost pivotal point centers on histories of withheld recognition and disrespect.[10] Urgent interventions of diversity change programs usually come (too) late to enable leadership to grasp the historical roots of the problem and reopen the broken channels of transcultural competence. A discursive ethic of historicization creating awareness of past inequalities and their effective presence in ongoing differentiations eventually gives *communicative rationality* a realistic chance to prevail. This core theoretical category has a procedural foundation (Habermas, 1989, 1992). For this reason, it takes on practical importance for our later suggestion of *Transcultural Procedural Change* as the discursive space for *Transcultural Values (Self-)Management*. Any practical attempt at finding (re)solutions is bound to fail if the most complex histories of discrimination accumulated in the social and individual habitus as well as in hegemonic and hierarchical structures are ignored (Hanchard, 2018).[11]

[10] In terms of our empirical experiences, we think here of such diverse situations as multi-layered internal conflict resolution processes in multi-national companies triggered by taboo words, frivolous remarks, or derailed jokes on the one hand (Marte & Solf, 2019), and national dispute settlements on the other, such as the internal displacement of the San from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana (Zips-Mairitsch, 2013).

[11] For Michael Hanchard (2018, p. 18), a political scientist primarily concerned with comparative analysis of ethnocentric, racialized democracies, a key question reads as such: "How to make societies less ethnocentric, and more ethos-centric, is one of the great challenges of balancing cultural difference and democracy in contemporary nation states". Substitute societies with organizations

Our discussion of transculturation's conceptual origins in the last section had the key intention to highlight the concept's potential for setting the (historical) record straight. This aspect makes all the difference to models and change programs strictly dedicated to the present and future. Its effectivity becomes particularly apparent in the wake of the so-called "woke movement". *Wokeness* with its strong religious connotations, sweeps through universities, performance, visual and fine arts, museums, the media, and certainly does not stop at workforces. Some consider it a tsunami that has not yet reached its global climax (cf. McWhorter, 2021).[12] Others belittle it for its cultish incoherence, Jehovah's Witness-style indifference to rationality and a special affinity for categorical mistakes (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020).[13] Be that as it may, "woke" seems here to stay. And there are no common intellectual grounds at hand, as McWhorter (2021, pp. 157–187) analyzes lucidly on the example of silencing voices deemed "inappropriate".[14] Transculturation as the underlying framework for *Transcultural Values Management* obviously offers no panacea for such watchtower-like policing.[15]

But how can transculturation of leadership procedures do its job? We argue that the concept is better able to deal with such conflicts if it proves proactive. As shown before, transculturation in its emancipatory and anti-hegemonic stance tackles the all too real experiences of racism, racialism, colonization, and "mental slavery".[16] It implicates a tendency to dissect these and other structures of domination. And it unanimously protects against essentialist constructions of identity, dependent on unconscious internalizations of these very structures in individual and social habitus. Historical racialization is not easily fought with reproduced racializing approaches. Because of its focus on differentiation—much in the way as it shimmers through our 200-year-old quote from Simón Bolívar—conceptual transculturation harbors the

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and companies and you are at the core of the transculturation debate in relational economics (cf. Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, p. 29ff).

[12] In its country of origin, the USA, *wokeness* has achieved a momentum of accentuated polarization, far beyond academic fields. The threat of blaming and shaming without prior notice and transparent validation has created an atmosphere of *angst* that deepens academic (and social) schism. Pars pro toto, the recent founding of an "anti-woke-university" in Texas serves as an astounding example of how far the fission (some speak of "war") between self-acclaimed "social justice warriors" and "free-speech-warriors" has gone (cf. Pines, 2021; Wong, 2021). Many have observed how implacable cleavages significantly influence the entire public sphere, including electoral behavior (e.g., Fauci quoted by Gilbert & Bahnsen, 2021, p. 49).

[13] See also the parody of "Wokeness" written by the British comedian Andrew Doyle under the pseudonym of fictional Titania Gethsemane McGrath (2019).

[14] The rampant notion of "cancel culture activism" conceals the irrational violence involved and appears misleading and belittling in this regard. Acts of deletion and silencing backed by moralist self-righteousness reverse the '68 French student revolt freedom motto "*il est interdit d'interdire*" in its exact opposite: "il est obligatoire d'interdire".

[15] We do not read it as coincidence that Watchtower is the title of the English journal of Jehovah's Witnesses. Its German counterpart *Erwachet!* (in English: Awaken!) illustrates the evangelic lenience of the woke movement, as McWhorter (2021, pp. 23–60) eloquently diagnosed.

[16] As Bob Marley referred to the internalization of dominance in his famous *Redemption Song* (1980).

cognitive means to distinguish between actual experiences and imagined injuries. The latter are mostly claimed by woke sympathizers who have not actually suffered intrinsic violations. It is at this entry point where the current maze of confused identity politics begins. Admission requires a self-denial of the multiple identities that all human beings distinguish (Appiah, 2018, p. 20).[17]

In a book, written well before the current identity craze, Amartya Sen (2010) challenged reductive identity constructions for their inherent violence. Starting with his childhood experiences during the ill-conceived decolonization of India and partition from Pakistan, he refers to the intricate entanglement of identity and violence as an illusion of destiny. The sudden identification of former friends and neighbors as "the Muslim or Hindu other" served national power seekers and disserved the masses. Identities based on the one all-important illusionary trait (race, religion, ethnicity, color, gender, and so forth), according to his brilliant exegesis, almost by necessity trigger dissent, incompatibility, and symbolic or physical violence.

Amartya Sen's intellectual rally against essentialist reductionism expounds a reminder of the multiple identities marking all humans. In a breath, it warns of imposed identification with the "one and only" decisive organic or cultural attribute. Humanity is involved in a permanent learning process: a complementary exchange despite every attempt of hierarchical ordering. Cultural or any other purity is the myth. It appears responsible for a great many derivative violent myths in the twentieth century, particularly throughout colonial history. Unfortunately, these myths prescribe identities in antagonism and strict delineation to historical powers. In this context the colonial masters, according to Sen (2010, p. 103), still wield dominant influence on the postcolonial mind of today.

It is for this reason that currently strained common-sense notions such as "cultural appropriation" appear nonsensical, when over-stretched to include anything and everything. Possible consequences intended or unintended, may trigger tensions between allies, stir up division, separation, and segregation. The transcultural debate effectuated in what Wieland and Baumann Montecinos (2018, p. 33) call *Transcultural Values Management* or we refer to as "transcultural procedural change" in contrast may prove enabling, empowering, and, above all, practical. The vision behind such a conception refers to a notion of complementary acceptance of cultural and any other differences. It deliberately recognizes historical imbalances critically and prospects mutual respect in turn.[18] But it does not stop there. The solitary recognition of multicultural differences appears as insufficient as the restating of obvious diversity.[19] If the plurality of cultures becomes translated into a paradigm of separate identities, it resembles what Sen coined "plural monoculturalism". Such weak

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[17] For the devastating effects of identity politics on social and individual freedom, as key quality of any democratic political system, see Bröning (2021).

[18] On complementarity as the most complex interpretive pattern of relational "otherness" see Schäffter (1991, pp. 25–28).

[19] In a comparable vein, Hanchard (2018, p. 214) criticizes superficial diversity ethics in the context of democratization: "Diversity on its own will not produce democracy, no more than homogenous societies will".

concepts of diversity produce solitarian illusions of singular identities comparable to ships passing each other in the night (Sen, 2010, pp. 165, 186–193).

Human beings are made up of complex, multi-dimensional identities accumulated by experiences of socialization and (historically more or less violent) transculturation. Plurality marks not only the external social composition but starts with the internal complexity of the individual. In other words, every human being has a plurality of identities. Reducing these multiple configurations to one-dimensional defining features sets identities against each other. Conceptual transculturation leaves no room for such self-oppressive and potentially violent illusions of reductive identities. On the other hand, it creates no space for idealistic illusions of "one big happy humanity" either. The inbuilt engagement and even confrontation with historical structures of dominance and illegitimate power avoids lapsing into dreamland(s) of social harmony (cf. Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, p. 33).

Therefore, the ultimate goal of conceptual transculturation lies not in an unrealistic vision of overcoming cultural differences. In fact, it envisions no ultimate goal at all, as such determinations need to remain with the (transcultural competence of) social actors. Rather, the potential impact for social transformation persists in the empowerment of recognizing and respecting cultural differences with a sense of purpose. Its main thrust points toward putting these variations—or *diversities*—to work in the interest of social, biological, and environmental justice based on unfettered communicative rationality. Perhaps the most important aspect of transcultural learning is constituted by the historicizing vigor of unveiling tempocentrism, the social and ecological equivalent to "temporal illiteracy" in reference to geological time (cf. Bjornerud, 2018, pp. 6–20). We will therefore, in the following section, debate this underrated cause for problematic and inadequate choices regarding social, economic, and environmental practices.

4 Tempocentrism—The Root of "Short-Termism"

So far, we have focused on historicization to approach the double historicity of discriminatory social structures head-on. The bias may be partly due to the anthropological perspective rooted in histories of enslavement, forced labor, colonial rule, and its totalizing marginalization, that our Reggae preamble to this contribution refers to. However, it may be argued that the obligations for retributive justice cannot be imposed on the business sector or any private organizations. Furthermore, it may also be argued that their primary tasks may hardly consist in social healing, which should be left to national states or international bodies. Such appeasements ignore the rapidly growing surge of rights-based approaches in all social fields at their own risk.

Social Corporate Responsibility is no longer a play on words, as practitioners in environmental law warn with a threatening undertone.[20] Their main arguments target corporate responsibility for indemnities of past and present tempocentric economic practices and the resultant eligibility of future generations. Leaving this highly important extension of the legal sphere to environmental and climate degradation aside, this section takes a close look at diversity's productive potentials of self-reflecting learning processes involved in transcultural leadership procedures.

Tempocentrism is a long-established (although largely ignored) category for the deep, hidden "roots of economic, environmental, biological and social ills". It was originally coined by the late anthropologist Robert B. Textor who repatriated his anthropological methods from research in Thailand to the Silicon Valley. Questioning the long-term impact assessment of new technologies with such far-reaching consequences as IT and social media start-ups forged his pivotal interest. For obvious reasons, Silicon Valley, as the dynamic center of technological innovation on the outskirts of "his" Stanford University, offered a test case for theorizing the determining category of tempocentrism as a driving force of unsustainable hyper-capitalism. His findings in Stanford and beyond demonstrated an alarming indifference of global economies for the concerns of future generations (Textor, 1985).[21]

In contrast to the notion of "short-termism", much more common in financial market debates, tempocentrism refers to the double historicization of myopic economics in the individual habitus and organizational structures.[22] The analytic notion of tempocentrism tackles the tacit attitude toward *time matters* (with the outlined double sense) in a self-reflexive mode.[23] Self-reflection or self-reflexivity as general attitudes are conceived as hubs of change for transformative learning from others. Transcultural Values Management draws on this potential of "putting diversity to work".

A critical approach to tempocentrism thus endorses transcultural impact assessments of long-term sustainability for all "vital matters", to quote a notion coined by Jane Bennett (2009) for her vision of more responsible, ecologically sound politics. Post-growth, de-growth, green economy, or neo-ecology are but a few actual concepts to grasp the response called forth by the condition of the living planet caused by

[20] See, for instance, the legal action undertaken by Roda Verheyen, the environmental lawyer against the German automobile industry for its carbon dioxide emissions (Grabbe, 2021).

[21] The "and beyond" refers to his study on the awareness of Austrian decision makers (in the early 1980s) about future consequences of IT-technologies in different social fields (cf. Textor et al., 1983).

[22] Definitions of short-termism therefore focus on individual or organizational action, not on the heuristic concept: "Short-termism is what people suffer from if they focus excessively on short-term results at the expense of an individual's, company's, or country's long-term interests. People who are doing things that make themselves better off in the short-run but worse off in the end are guilty of short-termism" (Market Business News, n.d.). See also Roe (2013), Dallas (2012), Fitzjohn-Sykes (2015), and various reports of the *Chartered Financial Analyst Institute* (CFA).

[23] This critique of tempocentrism views other critical approaches to the "self-propelling process of acceleration" in late modernity as kindred spirits (cf. Rosa, 2015). See also Glotz (2001).

decades of the careless and irresponsible economic practices of over-consumption and environmental destruction.[24] Relational economics with its understanding of interrelatedness between human and non-human forces ties into broader conceptions of sustainability (Wieland, 2018; Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, pp. 17, 33).

Transcultural Values Management, as proposed by Wieland and Baumann Montecinos (2018), targets global cooperation through "moral conversations".[25] These should ultimately lead to the formulation of "Codes of Ethics", binding corporations to normative behavior with respect to social, biological, and environmental justice. With the emergence of *Fridays for Future*, "time matters" reached a new dimension. Suddenly long-term future considerations stretch over decades and even centuries in public discourse. Various social movements with a key focus on climate and biodiversity protection demand prioritization of a temporal or historical perspective that foregrounds future impacts. Transcultural exchange may serve its realization by building competence on strategic obstacles based on tempocentrism. Let us give a brief overview what the notion of tempocentrism entails in relation to the more common term of short-termism in economics.

Short-termism marks practices and (not so sound) strategic decisions limited to short-term perspectives at the expense of long-term interests. The "values" forming their background are material profits at all costs. "Time (or money) matters!" determines these economic transactions as the predominant imperative. Historical time matters (without exclamation mark) hints at the subconscious obsession with tempocentrism in the actors' habitus. As a selective mode of perception, like eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, orientalism, androcentrism, and so forth, the notion problematizes unwanted consequences of any habitualized, excessive concentration on a shortened time frame of the immediate present or near future.[26] In fact, tempocentrism is often connected to ethnocentrism and egoism or selfishness, as it is much easier to benefit in the present from future expenses covered by "other people(s)". The tempocentric habitus involves a denial or incapability, which Textor insinuated more than four decades ago with the following analogy:

> (T)empocentrism can be conceived as the vertical analog of the horizontal notion of ethnocentrism. In the case of ethnocentrism, the individual is cognitively and emotionally unable to deal with another culture that exists contemporaneously with his or her own. In the case of tempocentrism, the individual is similarly unable to deal with his or her own culture as it could or might change through time. … (T)he crucially important point is that neither ethnocentrism nor tempocentrism is appropriate as a conscious or unconscious stance for

[24] See for instance Banerjee et al. (2021), Escobar (2015), Reichel and Perey (2018), and Reichel (2021).

[25] This term is borrowed from Kwame Anthony Appiah, the eminent liberal thinker of transcultural relations (cf. Appiah, 2006: 46). His philosophical and engaged call for "rethinking identity" is highly recommended in the context of identity politics that radically shorten the complexity of the subject (cf. Appiah, 2018).

[26] According to Pierre Bourdieu's (1976, pp. 208ff, 322ff) praxeology, incorporated structures of perception, interpretation, and action are usually camouflaged by misrecognition of habitus, which tends to protect itself against challenges—perhaps most clearly visible in the upsurge of conspiracy theorists.

> a leader, planner, educator, or, indeed, for an active citizen. In the case of ethnocentrism, this inappropriateness is now fairly widely recognized, at least in principle. In the case of tempocentrism, however, it remains much less widely recognized. (Textor, 1980 , p. 36)

In connection to natural environment destruction, regarding (rain)forests, marine pollution, water waste, and species extinction, indigenous peoples and local communities have been at the forefront of the struggle against tempocentrism of overconsumption. Despite their efforts benefitting the entire living planet or perhaps because of these, indigenous peoples are commonly victimized to bear the environmental and social costs of global ecological irresponsibility. A broad understanding of "transculturality" includes their effective stakeholder perspectives, even if they are not directly represented in the respective organizations. Traditional ideas of shareholders determining strategic decisions (Marte et al., 2017) become increasingly contested by the broader concept of stakeholders. These may include future generations, non-human life forms, and even material formations such as landfills, affecting life in all forms hereafter—as Bennett's (2009) "green materialist" ecophilosophy imagines.

It is only now that the stakes of the former colonized nations, indigenous peoples, and future generations are slowly entering the governance arena of economics. Not that "good governance"—as envisioned by numerous international frameworks and transnational law—has really got very far in global politics, but global, inclusive leadership seems to lag behind (Zips & Marte, 2021). Otherwise, demands for adequate inclusion in the opinion- and decision-making process prior to democratic formation of will, due diligence proceedings, and long-term accountability would not be desperately raised in numerous circumstances. How many international corporations really meet the minimum requirements defined by the UNDP, back in 1997?

Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent, and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social, and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (United Nations Development Program, 1997, p. 3).

Certainly, binding international conventions, inter- and transnational treaties, as well as non-binding declarations (such as the pioneering *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2007) lead the way for potential future transformation, but in the present, window dressing prevails. Tempocentrism attracts the company of ethnocentrism and nationalism in opposition to transcultural ideals. The subjective interests of a company, a nation, or an individual in immediate and permanent material value creation may be seen as the root cause of many myopic ventures, as Textor illustrated this omnipresent attitude back in 1980:

> Tempocentrism (…) refer(s) to a complex psychological state in which one is locked into a narrow or otherwise inappropriate time frame and lacks the salience, clarity of awareness, and strength of motivation necessary to attend to, and reach, adequately informed and useful judgments about longer-range phenomena or issues. People become so wrapped up in running a government, getting the next fiscal year's budget through the legislature, reducing this year's unemployment rate, meeting a payroll, bringing off a business deal, getting promoted,

> winning a spouse, surviving until the harvest, paying the bills, moving to a new house, planning the annual vacations, or even shorter range concerns…. (Textor, 1980, p. 35)

The tempocentric imperative of *time matters!* may even work as an unconscious self-legitimation for precipitate, often unilateral, action, thereby ignoring (historical) time matters of far-reaching consequences. We therefore apprehend the attitude as *the* impediment for transcultural values management directed to the discursive creation of norms and committed to ethical economic behavior.

This is so for a variety of reasons: (1) the focus on tempocentrism allows for an assessment of the underlying double meaning of "values" as ethical and materialistic; (2) it offers critical parameters for inconsiderate capitalism—i.e., an either-or stance of economy vs. ecology; and (3) it creates symbolic pressure to include all stakeholders who are dependent on vital natural resources.

This evaluative approach gives transcultural competence a kick-start for a transformative learning process. Self-reflexivity appears almost inescapable, if divergent experiences are brought not only in direct contact but become strained to enable decisions sensitive to minority visions. It harbors the intention to cause less mischief for (materially) weaker actors and the voiceless but affected non-human forces. Such an inclusive competence not only enables transcultural procedural change with all its consequences for the motivation of all concerned, but also enhances *historical time matters* into the distant future, and thus empowers shared leadership.[27]

5 "Inclusive Leadership", or How to Become an Inclusive, Transcultural Organization?

The following section deals with "how" to transculturally transform organizations and individuals. It will address the need to institutionalize procedures enabling transcultural competence to grow. Therefore, we suggest "transcultural procedural change" to enable possibilities for inclusive decisions, in setting normative standards or even Codes of Ethics. Facing the fierce competition of divergent life contexts, religions, identities, gender constructions, and an abundance of possible preferences and ideologies, normative burdens may easily turn overburdening and even risk backfiring

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[27] These considerations mainly refer to the practical level of transcultural management. On the theoretical level, they bestow leadership studies with a social science approach that reviews capitalism in its latest stage critically without getting trapped into a vulgar anti-neoliberal rhetoric. The latter invasive criticism of "neoliberalism" often expresses little more than everything "we don't want", as Ferguson (2009, p. 171) pointedly states: "[T]hat such an all-encompassing entity (of neoliberalism) can easily come to appear as a kind of gigantic, all-powerful first cause (as categories like "Modernity" or "Capitalism" have done before it) – that malevolent force that causes everything else to happen. This yields empty analysis (since to say that all our problems are caused by "neoliberalism" is really not to say much) and may also lead to ineffectual politics – since all one can do with such a gigantic, malevolent "thing" as "neoliberalism" conceived in this way is to denounce it. (And *that*, the evidence suggests, doesn't seem to do much good)".

on the targets of inclusiveness, de-essentializing identities, and building commonalities based on recognition and respect for diverse histories. If that sounds difficult, we want to disagree, by referring to the saying that "talking brings people together". How to enable "more together" with more differences?

In short, we suggest prioritizing historicization as a prerequisite and subject for transcultural change processes and good governance (cf. Marte & Zips, 2018, p. 99ff). The inflationary use of the dictum "time is money" (and therefore matters) equates investments of time and work with material gain. It prioritizes economic profit over other aspects of well-being. In contrast, cultural critics object to the functionalist imperative "time matters!" This critique embraces the alternative "time is life" motto, by acknowledging the increasing (sense of) loss of time due to unnecessary hyperactivity. From the costs of the "nonstop society" (Adam et al., 1998) or the price of the "accelerated society" (Glotz, 2001) to the danger scenarios of the "acceleration trap" (Backhaus & Bonus, 1998), a whole section of cultural and social science literature deals with the problematic handling of time as a thematic pivot. Is acceleration, which to some has come to a standstill (Virilio, 1998), still compatible with human beings and above all with the environment? Or does it fall into place with those revolutions that consume their children after a short space of time?

Differential de-growth stands for more than just coining a new compound expression. By this notion we mean implicitly: Growth of sustainable strategies, practices, and technologies that unleash communicative reason within a transcultural framework. The latter includes local communities and indigenous peoples, currently in most locales the guardians of the earth's resources. On the other hand, de-growth refers to harmful environmental practices as well, particularly the use of fossil fuels, their concurrent emissions, and the devastation of forests, glaciers, coastlines, or oceans.

Unsustainable (over-)consumption betrays its close kinship with historical forms of subordination. This includes other worlds of experiences and traditions through spatial expansion, intellectual usurpation, and subsumption into one's own worldview (cf. Schäffter, 1991, p. 11).[28] Transcultural exchange conceived in this sense depends on a thorough understanding of complementarity, incompatible with one-way-street conceptions of learning, transmission, (parochial) instruction, or ordering.

The de-essentializing perceptions are designed to enable a *transcultural* comprehension of relational "otherness". To emphasize our introductory remarks, we opt for an oscillating open-ended procedure resisting dominant orderings of "otherness" as pre-conceived labeling. The assumed procedural paradigm leads to permanent discursive reflections of and on diversity. It acknowledges that identification of divergences is more often than not stereotypical (cf. Schäffter, 1991, p. 27).

We do not intend to disdain the global surge for social justice in academia, arts, and civil society invigorated by global activist movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, or Fridays for Future. Quite the contrary, we call for its strengthening by

[28] It is worth noting that this understanding of usurpation differs from the now common reproach of cultural appropriation for even the most sympathetic borrowing of intellectual and artistic properties. It rather refers to illegitimate unilateral take-overs or expropriations that bypass their originators.

critically reflecting on the "common sense" of Black and White (or any other essentialist identities) framing (Zips & Marte, 2021). The concept of transcultural change opts for procedures based on communicative rationality, an attitude validating the soft pressure of reason(s) or the "unforced force of the better argument in reasoning" (German: "*der zwanglose Zwang des besseren Arguments*"), according to Habermas (1992, p. 170; see also 1989, pp. 374–403).[29]

We hope these reflections will contribute to an integrated understanding of cultural competences, complexities, and commonalities, which this book and the Delphi study—as one of its main starting points—addresses (Montecinos Baumann & Grünfelder, 2022). Much in the sense of a general historical economy of interests, envisioned by praxeological theory (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 116; cf. Zips, 2017, pp. 273–277) and a similar "general" conception of relational economics (Wieland, 2014, 2018).

Considering this, we suggest the following three pillars needed for an impactful co-creative transculturation process:

5.1 *The First Pillar: How Time Matters in Transculturality*

Relations manifest in interactions over time, based on procedures leading to a specific organizational culture. Therefore, we want to emphasize the importance of time in building transculturality, defined by Wieland (2016, p. 22) as: "(…) a process of relationing different cultural identities (…) It does not constitute a space but aims instead to make cooperation by culturally diverse individual and collective actors institutionally and organizationally possible". This bridge building of commonalities refers to a communicative mode of reciprocal exchange oscillating between the perspectives of self-reflexive historical analysis and practical application. "The prefix trans", according to Wieland (2016, p. 18), "designates the relation, the creation of a connection, the building of a bridge".

If we consider time—historic, present, future—in transcultural learning and change procedures, we build on the exchange of ideas, not least to counter essentialist notions of diversity. Codes of Ethics may result from institutionalized procedures of transcultural learning (cf. Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2018, pp. 20, 31). Yet, their final enactment appears much less important to us than the constant relentless debate. We consider this transformative approach and normative debate as a potential epicenter of social and organizational integration. This is actually meant by procedural paradigm—conceived as pointing to an ongoing change of complementarian organizational (re-)formation. In the political or economic realm there is no decision without alternatives—against popular and populist claims to the contrary. Thinking in valid alternatives thus privileges true involvement and strategic ownership.

[29] Self-righteous "social justice warriors" might have to be prepared to face questions on the backbone of their justice constructs, according to the procedural paradigm (cf. Zips, 2007).

So far, diversity management usually means trouble shooting in cases of conflict. The paradigm refers de facto much less to the game changing potentials of cognitive or other diversity dimensions.[30] Diversity management thus aims to enable and empower perspectives shaped by different cultural, social, and environmental experiences over time. It likewise intends to undo any tempocentric "left-overs" for the realization of sustainable solutions. Transcultural change processes linked to the historicized quality of the notion target set the discursive motion free—liberating from communicative taboos.

5.2 The Second Pillar: How Time Matters in Inclusive, Transcultural Leadership

When do we feel included? As defined by Jansen et al. (2014), "Inclusion is established when individuals have a sense of belonging to the group and, at the same time, perceive themselves to be distinct and unique individuals".[31] Yet in our view, just the "sense of belonging" appears insufficient for (inclusive) transculturality. This definition of inclusion refers to a status quo but skips the possibilities of reciprocal co-creation. Transcultural concepts of "Unity in Diversity" build on a co-creative process that occurs, ideally, through complementary modes of recognition, respect, and developing commonalities. The main idea is to fertilize differences, instead of essentializing them. It means to stay clear of value judgements of any kind, assigned to "the other" (Zips & Marte, 2021).

We may thus need two levels for reflection and change. One is the individual or self-management level. The other one is the system-level as in transcultural change processes. The former necessitates a deliberate stance of self-reflexivity, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 137) stated: "(T)his work of management of one's dispositions, of habitus as the unchosen principle of all 'choices', is possible only with the support of explicit clarification". The latter requires the willingness of an institution or organization to allow fundamental innovations.

In order to develop into an inclusive, transcultural corporation, all stakeholders are requested to co-create (transcultural) joint ethics, in time potentially evolving into

[30] These diversity dimensions embody complexities created inter alia by divergent historical experiences and thus almost enforce a broad understanding of the notion (see Gardenswartz & Row, 1998). To give an example for such broad conceptions, we think for instance of digital inequalities as a new (critical) diversity dimension (cf. Özkazanc-Pan, 2019).

[31] Jansen et al. (2014, p. 371) come to this definition by building on two theories: (a) optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT): "… where individuals have two fundamental and competing human needs – the need for inclusion and the need for differentiation – that can be met by membership in moderately inclusive (optimally distinct) groups" (based on Brewer, 1991); (b) self-determination theory (SDT): "… where the need for uniqueness is the motivation to have a distinctive self-concept. Satisfying this need requires that people perceptually distance themselves from meaningful others by downplaying one's commonalities with others or by defining oneself in terms of one's idiosyncratic traits and opinions" (based on Snyder & Fromkin, 1997).

a Code of Ethics. They may choose to do this by consciously considering histories of divergence and other "time matters". If given sufficient space and time this procedure may shape defining values, mission statements, leadership strategies, corporate policies, and compliance, not only bottom-up or top-down, but also middle-out and outside-in (Scharmer, 2016). In the end the organization may declare the outcome of communicative competence as its fundamental parameter for inclusive, transcultural leadership.[32] Of course, if the procedural paradigm is taken seriously these consensuses remain open for constant discursive evaluation and revision. Its historical sensibility accounts for the divergence of temporalities, in applied reflexivity of complementary otherness, togetherness, and commonalities (cf. Schäffter, 1991, p. 27).

We therefore suggest a practice-oriented approach by enabling, facilitating, and enhancing co-creative leadership procedures. These processes are established as dialogues or rather discourses directed to achieve impact measures. Existing conflicts cannot be decided top-down, they must be negotiated by considering all parties concerned and their possible interests (inter alia: gender relations, racialized experiences, decolonization, anti-corruption, accountability, transparency, career obstacles, strategic participation). In these processes the suggested transcultural competences are put to work (as indicated by the results of the Delphi study presented in this volume). Concrete debates may critically embrace deeply rooted experiences of historic injuries, cultural stereotypes, and tempocentric attitudes.

5.3 *The Third Pillar: How Co-creative Procedures for Transcultural Processes May Result in DE&I*

If inclusive leadership based on the complementary formation of transcultural competence is declared as a common aim, two key questions should be answered: (a) "How together are we in this together (so far)?", and (b) "How can we meet in our (global) commonalities and grow by our (local) differences?" (cf. Zips & Marte, 2021, p. 31). These questions invite co-creative procedures based on principles of inclusive transcultural leadership. They indicate how "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DE&I) can be co-created in equitable procedures.

Therefore, in a co-creative process, mutual diffusion potentially evolves when based on respect, patience, and fault tolerance.[33] This allows for reciprocal sharing of participants' distinct (historic) experiences, which in turn possibly opens the space for revisions of power structures, agenda-setting, topic selection, and eventually decision outcomes. All participants are invited to partake in this process, giving them

[32] We refer to the concept of transcultural leadership being based on nine fundamental values that are understood to be accepted, namely: respect, empowerment, integrity, protection, cooperation, ethical leadership, fairness, development of people, and sustainability (Moehrer et al., 2015).

[33] The communicative condition is important in this regard, to avoid the common "DE&I washing" (Zips & Marte, 2021, pp. 14–16, 33–34).

the chance to argue for historical revisions, honoring their forgotten interests and needs. Their contributions become valued items "on the table of communication". In this sense, transculturally competent leaders transform their leadership styles by establishing co-creative communication (in adequate spaces and formats, e.g., strategic "town halls", virtual lunch meetings, etc.) on a regular basis for all parties concerned and stakeholders involved. Such procedures follow the common organizational change development mantra "affected persons are turned into parties involved", inviting them to raise their (historical) perspectives and concerns (cf. Schein, 2004).

Based on the transcultural, relational learning concept (cf. Wieland, 2014), a value system of "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DE&I) is established through co-creative procedures dealing with commonalities and differences by (a) exploration of mutual otherness or togetherness, (b) equality as a basic understanding, and (c) appreciation of, and relating to, the "other", and "enabling participants to be themselves".[34] The organizational perspective of DE&I can be found in the answer of "how much diversity occurs in culture, structure, and (leadership) processes".[35] It foregrounds communicative rationality to enable complementary processes of inclusion. This concept ensures inclusivity, simply because exclusive communicative rationality constitutes a *contradictio in eo ipso*. The contingent exclusion of (some) others from building consensus belongs to the sphere of self-interested instrumental rationality or functionalist reason that the very notions of communicative rationality and competence antagonize (cf. Habermas, 1989, pp. 394–402).

To answer the question posed in this section, inclusive leadership needs to be based on a non-tempocentric understanding of co-creative transculturality. The process leading to its practical implementation is referred to as transculturation. It involves a self-reflexive historical re-appraisal to shape equitable relationships in the present for a socially and ecologically inclusive future.

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[34] Co-creation refers to cultural competence paraphrased by Baumann Montecinos et al. (2018) in the mode of practical instruction: "1. Recognize existing differences: Embrace a defensive, non-normative attitude in order to observe and analyze differences; the overarching goal is not necessarily to overcome differences, but rather to develop awareness regarding "otherness" and to adopt a non-judgmental attitude and behavior. 2. Recognize and strengthen existing commonalities: Be curious and learn about existing commonalities. Strengthen those commonalities through dialogue, interaction and shared experiences. 3. Create new commonalities: Invest in common experiences in order to develop and strengthen new commonalities based on common perspectives". These leadership directions build on an adequate understanding of transcultural learning (see Wieland, 2014, 2016).

[35] These aspects are important for change projects relating to: (a) *culture and values* (acceptance of diversity problems, appreciation of differences, creation of commonalities via various interventions leading to changes of values, norms, rules, patterns of thinking, and behavior); (b) *leadership* (inclusive values & principles, changes of power structures); (c) *people* (representation of diversity in recruiting, retention, and promotion); (d) *co-creation* (purpose, self-reflection & respect, skills, resonance, psychological proximity); (e) *working methods* (e.g. relational dialogues, fault culture, participation & moderation, trust building).

6 Conclusion

Transcultural Leadership may not harbor a ready-made answer to the question posed in the Reggae preamble (*who's gonna pay reparations for my soul*?). We nevertheless trust that transcultural procedures reinforce (trans)cultural competences to confront past injustices and contribute to significant equity transformations, beyond the window dressing of mere symbolic consolation. A broadened relational view on cultural diversity potentially reaches deep into the temporal realm of past injustices and the spatial realm of interrelatedness of human, non-human, and material spheres. The dictate of economic growth—the unquestioned and unquestionable imperative of unsustainable capitalism—thus has a chance of becoming liquidized in future-driven transcultural discourses resilient to tempocentrism.

And the reward for economics and leadership? Our interdisciplinary rethinking of transculturation suggests making investments, both into inclusive commonalities formation and sustainable environmental as well as (global) social relations. Transculturation promises an impactful remedy against the pitfalls and societal separation of diversity framings based on essentialist identities. Against the viral propagation of "plural monoculturalism" (Sen, 2010) it envisions an expansion of communicative rationality and relational economic reasons by co-creating an ongoing common, inclusive presence for a non-tempocentric future.

In other words, transculturation as the broad-based economic strategy sketched above, develops procedures for an ecologically post-destructive, post-fossil, and socially responsible world. Its ultimate success depends on deepening discursive change to foster momentum for structural transformation. Facing ecological challenges with the key imperative of decarbonization by jointly increasing social justice emerges as a proactive policy for relational economics. Their practical aim is geared to substitute the once dominant habitus of tempocentrism with effective and accountable sustainability. The triple ecological crisis of the coronavirus pandemic, species extinction, and climate change needs urgent institutionalization of sustainable transformation or "timefulness" (Bjornerud, 2018). We have criticized the long-standing norm of "time (money) matters" and argued for historicization of time (meaning temporal) matters in transculturality. In this current state of the world "time matters" receives a third meaning—the urgency of effective attention to actual change. Actions speak louder than words in this regard.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Time Matters: Tempocentrism—Key Impediment for Transcultural Processes", by Werner Zips and Angelica V. Marte

- Transcultural transformation: How together are we in this together?
- How can transculturation of leadership procedures increase commitment?
- How can environmental and social justice enhance leadership?

- Could a procedural paradigm in relational economics benefit inclusive leadership?
- What are potential implications for sustainable solutions of competing validity claims?

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Towards Transcultural Self-Writing: Mapping the Struggles of Minoritised Cultures in Colombia

Valerie V. V. Gruber, Gilbert Shang Ndi, and Rigoberto Banguero Velasco

Abstract More explicitly than in most other countries, the case of Colombia reveals that for members of minoritised groups such as Afrodescendant and indigenous communities, transculturality can be both a mobilising vision of hope and resistance, and a traumatising experience of colonisation and marginalisation. Against this backdrop, our chapter focuses on self-writing as a means of exploring the historical and ethical preconditions for a jointly envisioned transculturality, which are often overlooked in neoliberal discourses of a globalised world. Based on ethnographic experiences and self-writing research from Colombia, we examine how memory, corporality and territoriality constitute avenues of transcultural imagination. We argue that transculturality needs to be rooted in a critical consciousness of historical processes of colonisation, collective trauma and persistently unequal power relations. For peoples of formerly colonised spaces, rewriting the self is a matter of urgency and agency. It is the basis for the (re)negotiation of their existence, interaction and exchange with other cultures.

1 Introduction

The Fanonian critic, Lewis Gordon, posits that racialised and colonised subjects "make extraordinary efforts to live in ordinary ways" (cf. Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 127). This position echoes Fanon's (1973) insinuation that the colonial and racialised condition of Black subjects prevented them from exercising the ethical obligation of the gift, as a gesture of recognising shared humanness that is only possible amongst liberated subjects. This insightful realisation underlines the necessity of self-writing by communities that have mainly been (mis)represented as "others" by dominant and hegemonic orders. Such neglect of human equality has compromised

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_9

a mutually enriching exchange between peoples and cultures. Hence, there is an urgent need to explore the preconditions of non-oppressive transcultural relations in postcolonial contexts, to which self-writing can make a meaningful contribution.

Conceiving transculturality from a relational perspective implies uncovering and constructing cultural commonalities with respect to the complexities of the context: "A major focus of the transcultural approach involves analysing the enabling conditions of the awareness, acknowledgement and appreciation of cultural diversity, and how these interconnect with one another [...] for the purpose of discovering common ground and generating new commonalities" (Baumann Montecinos & Geraldo Schwengber, 2021, p. 20). We argue that self-writing helps reveal the social relations and power hierarchies that shape concrete spatial and temporal configurations. We focus on Colombia, as this country exemplifies the historical and contemporary tensions as well as the challenges of transculturality experienced at the peripheries of global capitalism in particularly perceptible form. The Colombian case shows how the coloniality of power, structural inequalities, racism, systemic and epistemic violence as well as indifference of privileged groups towards communities stigmatised as inferior "others" inhibit transcultural dialogue.

However, transculturality is also a necessary vision of hope and resilience in the country with the longest civil war in contemporary history. We propose creative self-writing as a means of making these ambivalences around cross-cultural interactions traceable. We argue that it contributes to the construction of transcultural relations that recognise, valorise and respect the nuances of multi-faceted lifeworlds in contexts where certain cultural groups, such as Afrodescendant and indigenous peoples in Colombia, are structurally minoritised, silenced and invisibilised. Consequently, we aim at discussing how self-writing helps pave the way for transculturality in settings where commonalities are hard to uncover owing to persistent experiences of violence, marginalisation and exploitation.

Apart from literature review and creative self-writing research, we base our reflections on empirical insights gained from our different positionalities. Valerie Gruber, social geographer from Germany, worked intensively with minoritised communities and diverse artistic groups during four research stays between 2017 and 2022 in Colombia, comprising almost nine months in total. Within the same time span, Gilbert Shang Ndi, Cameroonian literary scholar, spent two years in Colombia. In collaboration with the Manos Visibles Corporation, he facilitated numerous workshops on African Literature in three cities of the country's Pacific region. Rigoberto Banguero Velasco, ethno-historian from the Colombian Cauca region, has been involved in the quest of indigenous and Afrodescendant communities for decades as an organic intellectual à la Gramsci, doing educational and research work both within and outside academia. All three authors continue to conduct online and on-site projects with social and artistic groups from Colombia, Brazil and other countries.

Based on these practical experiences, our chapter reflects the results of a transdisciplinary dialogue geared towards gaining deeper insights into transculturality in countries where the painful consequences of colonisation and enslavement are

experienced on a daily basis. We set out to scrutinise the struggles of marginalised communities in Colombia in order to examine cultural complexities in (post-)colonial settings, which are often overlooked in neoliberal discourses of a globalised world. After this contextualisation, we map out ways in which creative imaginations and practices of self-writing could forge an alternative vision of transcultural dialogue. We specifically focus on the axes of memory, corporality and territoriality. In these spheres, self-writing posits itself as a viable means of addressing the coloniality of knowledge and being (Quijano, 2000) in minoritised communities whose self-knowledge is mediated by hegemonic education, media and its respective forms of "knowledge" creation and dissemination. Self-writing places these factors in their historicity and portrays how they determine life chances within a specific context of power and cultural relations, both individually and collectively.

2 Tensions and Challenges of Minoritised Cultures in Colombia

Adopting a relational approach to transculturality urges us to recognise that cross-cultural interactions hardly ever occur on a level playing field. They are rather shaped by power asymmetries, racialised discrimination and socio-spatial inequalities. This is particularly salient in Latin America, which is not only known for its high cultural diversity, but also for being the most unequal continent in the world. The Gini coefficient, which reflects income inequality and ranges between 0 for perfect equality and 1 for perfect inequality, was around 0.50 across ten Latin American countries with available data for 2020. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the rate of inequality in the region had been decreasing steadily for almost two decades, as the income of the groups with the fewest resources has risen in relative terms. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Gini coefficient surged by almost 8% from 2019 to 2020 in Colombia (Acevedo et al., 2021).

With regard to cultural diversity, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2021) estimates that 134 million Afrodescendants live in the region, i.e., 21% of its population. Moreover, Latin America has around 58 million indigenous people, belonging to 800 recognised indigenous groups, accounting for 9.8% of the regional population (CEPAL et al. 2020). According to this data, both groups make up almost one-third of the Latin American population, but these numbers are assumed to be considerably underestimated owing to a lack of reliable statistical data as well as practices of discrimination, stigmatisation and invisibilisation.

Beyond the polemics around the exact numbers, there is no doubt that indigenous and Afrodescendant people are structurally minoritised, excluded and discriminated against on many levels. Comparing Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay, five countries in which ethno-racial self-identification is included in census data, the incidence of poverty amongst the Afrodescendant population is, on average, more

than 10 percentage points higher than that of people who do not identify as Afrodescendant (ECLAC, 2021). In the same countries, the proportion of indigenous people living in conditions of poverty is more than 18 percentage points higher than that of the population not identifying as indigenous or Afrodescendant (CEPAL et al., 2020). Such remarkable levels of ethno-racial inequality can also be observed in other areas such as access to quality education, health care, labour market, exposure to violence and political representation. Therefore, Colombia and its neighbouring countries have been described as "pigmentocracies" (Telles et al., 2015). This system marginalises Afrodescendant and indigenous communities through racialised discrimination based on skin colour, manner of speaking and physical appearance.

Due to historical processes of colonisation, enslavement and Christianisation imposed by Europeans and their progeny in the Americas, Afrodescendant and indigenous communities have been uprooted and forced into a teleological time-space for more than 500 years. Colonialist practices of oppression, intended to suppress the collective memory of the colonised, freeze their cosmogonies as supposedly pre-modern "others", and impose a violent "chromatics of power" upon their bodies (Albán Achinte, 2009). Decolonial thinkers such as Aníbal Quijano (2000) and Walter D. Mignolo (2007) have described this racialised matrix as the coloniality of power, emphasising that this persistent system of exclusion is reproduced in contemporary forms by global capitalism.

In view of the cultural consequences of these processes, Fernando Ortiz (1987) coined the term "transculturation" in his work *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar (Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar)*, where he analyses the complex phenomena that informed and shaped politics, economics, law, language, religion, morality and other spheres of daily life in Cuba. He emphasises that transculturation is a process which necessarily implies the loss of cultural elements while new ones emerge: "We find that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the transitional process from one culture to another. This does not consist only in acquiring a different culture, which is what the Anglo-American term *acculturation* strictly indicates, but it also implies, necessarily, the loss or uprooting of a previous culture. That could be considered as partial *deculturation*, and, moreover, it entails the subsequent creation of new cultural phenomena that could be called *neoculturation*" (Ortiz, 1987, p. 96).[1] He also describes the traumatising nature of the cultural encounters which prepared the ground for contemporary lifeworlds in the Americas: "If the Indies of America were a New World for the European peoples, Europe was a very New World for the American peoples. […] The contact between the two cultures was terrible. One of them perished almost totally, as if struck by lightning. Transculturation has failed for indigenous peoples and has been radical and cruel for the parvenus" (Ortiz, 1987, p. 94).

As a consequence of this historical trauma, minoritised communities often associate transcultural encounters with an inevitable loss of their culture. Arturo Escobar (2016, p. 20) describes their resistance strategy as follows: "By interrupting the

[1] All translations from the Spanish original texts into English are ours.

neoliberal globalizing project of constructing One World, many indigenous, Afrodescendant, peasant, and poor urban communities are advancing *ontological struggles*". Their struggles for respect of cultural differences and multiple ways of being and knowing are rooted in their long-standing experience of unequal relations between cultures, in which they have been forced to assimilate into the culture of the colonisers for the sake of an assumed progress and development. Practices and knowledges of marginalised communities, in turn, have been extracted without recognising their substantial contribution to economy, society, politics and culture. Hence, transculturation has been experienced as a parasitic rather than a symbiotic relation by the exploited groups.

Self-writing has proven to be an effective and affective medium to reflect on these traumatic experiences, while new visions of transculturality are foregrounded in relation to the living experiences of minoritised groups. To forge a world of cultural exchange where progressive aspects of otherwise colonialist cultures are respected is only possible in a globalised context wherein cultures of marginalised peoples are accorded due dignity and understood in their complex historicities and spiritual densities.

3 Cultural Complexity and Transcultural Self-Writing on the Colombian Pacific Coast

On the Pacific coast, where the majority of Afrodescendant and indigenous people in Colombia live, the practical consequences of the above described phenomena are striking. Violence imposed by military, paramilitary and guerrilla groups, for example, disrupt their daily life for the control of territories and natural resources, as well as other disputes related to neoliberalism, drug trafficking and armed conflict. The latter has been ongoing since the 1960s in Colombia, being the world's longest contemporary war. Inhabitants of the Pacific region are affected disproportionately by massacres and forced displacements linked to this conflict. However, in this highly complex landscape where human and non-human beings coexist along rivers and coasts, people concomitantly reinvent Afrodescendant and indigenous knowledges, practices and cosmogonies in order to resist and re-exist in a world which racialises, essentialises and inferiorises them (Banguero Velasco & Gruber, 2020).

Figure 1 gives an insight into these entanglements of violent exploitations, ongoing conflicts, ancestral knowledges and cultural practices. This phenomenological mapping of a research trip along the San Juan river exemplifies how Afrodescendant and indigenous communities are denied equal citizenship status through multiple forms of exclusion, while they concomitantly create "liberated spaces of thought and being […] in response to the physical, symbolic, existential, and epistemic violence of modernity and coloniality" (Walsh, 2012, p. 19). This dialectic is

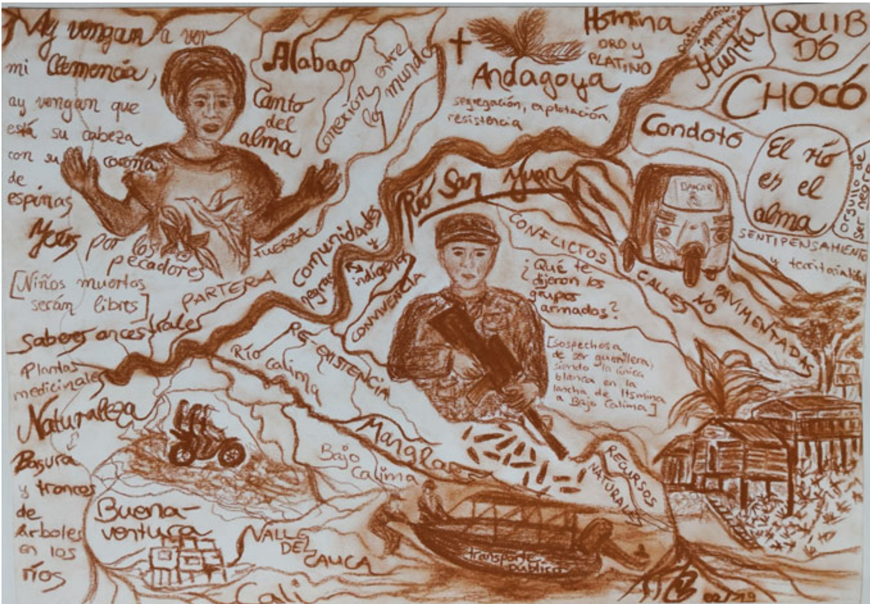

Fig. 1 Sanguine drawing by Valerie V. V. Gruber (2019) depicting a research trip along the San Juan River in the Colombian Pacific region

depicted in Gruber's sanguine drawing through the opposition of the armed soldier and the open-armed lady known as a "sabedora", a living repository of communal history, who is performing a syncretic funeral chant called an "alabao". Despite their social and spatial exclusion, represented in the precarious fluvial and terrestrial transport system, Afrodescendant and indigenous people relate to multiple ways of being-in-the-world which impact their cultural, political and social practices. They are situated within ancestral and globalised dynamics at the same time, providing them with diverse cultural elements and avenues to (re)construct their identities.

For many people living in the context illustrated by Fig. 1, a jointly envisioned form of transculturality would valorise their ancestral knowledges, such as healing practices with "plantas medicinales" ("medicinal plants") and the spiritual "alabao" chants, as equal to those "knowledges" unilaterally enforced by Western cultures. This constitutes an emancipatory political project to dignify their existences in the face of the collective trauma of colonisation and enslavement. Transculturality would be a space in which multiple identities can flourish and nourish each other, while commonalities are (re)created. This is in line with Stuart Hall's (1996, p. 6) understanding of identities as dynamic and fragmented "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us". The notion of alterable and multi-faceted identities rejects racialised categories and fixed socio-cultural positions imposed by (post-)colonial regimes. It rather adapts to the fluid meshwork portrayed in the drawing.

The cultural complexities visualised in Fig. 1 found their verbal expression in the self-writing exercises of the literary workshops organised by the Manos Visibles Corporation in Buenaventura, Quibdó and Tumaco, all located on the Colombian Pacific coast. The series of workshops was informed by the concept of youth empowerment and capacity building through literature. A selection of the participants' texts was published in the volume *Vení, te leo* edited by Sura and Manos Visibles (2021). The initiative was based on the premise that there was a dearth of creative writing amongst Afrodescendant communities, partly due to a lack of adequate training, underestimation of the role of literature in self and collective liberation as well as a discriminatory editorial landscape that disfavours authors from racialised groups. It consisted in using self-writing texts by African and Afro-diasporic authors as both creative and epistemological starting points for discussions regarding memory, identity, socio-cultural appurtenance, individual/collective agency as well as the audacity of social change and transformation.

At the end of nearly every session, participants submitted biographical poems and short stories that portray the mutual re-definition that underlies the relationship between self and community in the Pacific region of Colombia. For instance, in the self-writing piece "El Pueblo de Mamá Irene" ("Mama Irene's village") by Solangel Murillo (2021), the narrator paints the ecosystem of his homestead as the basis from which he negotiates his being-in-the-world. This is where his quest for equality, justice and rights takes its roots and power. It is an existential struggle for him, given the profound ways in which his community has been destroyed as a result of the violence by rebel groups involved in drug trafficking. Under these conditions of adversity that threaten their lifestyle and communal ethos, exemplified by Murillo's text and Gruber's drawing above, Afrodescendant and indigenous communities constantly struggle to persist in their territories and reinvent their cultures into progressive frameworks for self-realisation.

Javier Morán Caicedo (2021, p. 142), who participated in one of the workshops in Buenaventura, makes this clear in his text. He states that: "To my friends, I was what they colloquially and derogatorily referred to as *cholo*: a mixture of Black and mestizo. To carry this cross since when I became conscious of the world around me was one of the most difficult torments, because it meant bearing the mockery and discrimination by my friends for my 'unusual' (according to them) skin complexion". After narrating the episodes of blatant discrimination he faces in the city of Bogotá, the protagonist's subsequent discovery of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask* "recomforted my spirit and reinforced my dignity as a Black person" (Morán Caicedo, 2021, p. 147). This text, offered to him as a gift by his elder brother, and his socialisation with other Afrodescendant youth in the same situation, enables him to place his personal experiences within the transcultural framework of Black experience and to rebuild his self-esteem, making him consider his African descendance as a source of strength and resilience and not of shame, diffidence and self-pity.

Such personal narratives underline the necessity to foreground transculturality on a critical revisiting of the premises of human encounters in imperial histories. These deep histories continue to affect lives and define visions of transculturality in very tangible ways. Healing the bleeding wounds of colonisation, conflict and injustice is

a long-term and processual task to which self-writing can contribute in a meaningful way.

4 Axes of Transcultural Self-Writing

Self-writing probes into the progressive constitution of the self over time and space, with the understanding that the self is a social and relational (and not a hermetic and pristine) entity which enters into dialogue with other selves in the gradual formation of communal ethos and identity. The "self" in self-writing, rather than being a marker of eccentricity, isolation and solipsism, is a locus of connection with beyond-the-self. It is a socially, politically and economically embedded entity whose narrative can be considered to a greater extent as part of the collective memory and striving of the community in which it is embedded.

In *Narrating the Self and Nation*, Samuel Ndogo (2016, p. 218) holds that "a writer who uses this form to tell her/his personal story is primarily concerned with trying to make her/his life meaningful not merely through description of individual accomplishments but, more importantly, in terms of other individuals as well as community. Consequently, they tend to appropriate history and also become part and parcel of that history". In this light, self-writing, as a representational medium, portrays the struggle of the collective self in asserting its agency in a society with both established, unwritten as well as dynamic rules which may either inhibit, defer or enhance self-realisation. Thus, far from being an introspection on individual trajectory, self-writing provides insights into collective identity, cultural frames and how they influence cross-cultural relations in a particular context.

It is in this light that we examine creative self-writing through frames that can serve as interstices between both individual and collective experiences: memory, corporality and territoriality. These are three major axes through which minoritised cultures engage with transculturality. Literary self-writing has the possibility of turning these three notions, otherwise permeated by violence in the experience of marginalised peoples, into potential channels for change and healing. By telling their own stories, minoritised communities negotiate their existence in the marketplace of globalised cultures. Their texts contribute to deconstructing the paradigms of representation by dominant groups that caricaturise other cultures and simplify their worldviews by portraying them through Western meaning-making frames.

Hence, the three axes of transcultural self-writing serve as narrative tropes and topoi through which minoritised communities subvert the prevalent hegemonic structures and imagine alternatives that take into cognizance their own histories as non-marginal. Re-writing these three notions allows them to conceive their cultures not merely as victimised, but, more importantly, as resilient. Rather than closed concepts and entities, the axes of memory, corporality and territoriality constitute struggles, processes and possibilities through which individual and collective imaginaries coalesce and attempt to find anchorage.

4.1 Memory

As coloniality of power affects being in space and time, the linear chronology of Western modernity cannot be set as a standard in transcultural dialogues. Vázquez (2009) puts it succinctly: “Here, the modernity/coloniality tandem is seen as the institution of a politics of time that is geared towards the production of specific economic and political practices oriented towards severing the oppressed from their past, their memory. The ensuing temporal discrimination makes invisible all that does not belong to modern temporality”. This means that indigenous and Afrodescendant communities are immobilised and forced into a linear conception of history, from which they are excluded as protagonists or even active participants (Albán Achinte, 2009).

Through their submissions during the literary workshops, many Afrodescendant youth from Buenaventura transmitted the paradox of that city as being the main seaport in Colombia, while the majority of its population is racialised and discriminated against as underdeveloped and backward. The living conditions of the Afrodescendant workers are utterly dehumanising, although they account for the main labour force of the port, which is considered as a reference of modern temporality and economic development. Against this paradoxical reality, Salvatore Laudicina (2021) dwells on the mental, physical and spiritual strength of the Afrodescendant characters in his short story “Guaguancó”. He stresses their ability to convert their city into a space of vitality and existence. In this way, self-writing helps people reclaim their subjectivity, dignity and agency in space and time, while rejecting a single worldview that neglects the crucial role of minoritised cultures in historical, political and economic development.

In light of this example, it comes as no surprise that narratives of Western modernity and enlightenment are remembered differently in formerly colonised societies. This ties in with Walter Mignolo’s (1995) argument which highlights the hiatus between progressive ideas in Europe and the simultaneous experience of European barbarity on other peoples in the Global South. To overcome the coloniality of being and time, memories of marginalised cultures need to be reconstructed in order to question and destabilise the dominant narratives of those who speak in the name of history. As Chinua Achebe forthrightly puts it: “There is that great proverb – that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. […] It’s not one person’s job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail – the bravery, even, of the lions” (Brooks, 1994). The second part of this quote finds an echo with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2019) submission that “the danger of a single story” can only be overcome if different cultural groups bring their narratives into dialogue. The trend of self-writing in marginalised communities is thus aimed at disrupting one of the most grievous effects of coloniality—the permeation of the colonised subject’s knowledge of the self by Western colonial prisms.

The above standpoint has been argued even more forcefully by the Kenyan novelist, critic and essayist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) in *Decolonising the Mind,*

where he holds that the modes of cultural encounters were premised on the superiority of Western traditions, thought systems and languages over peoples from Africa, Latin America, Asia, etc. From this perspective, Ngũgĩ elaborates modalities of cross-cultural dialogue by moving the centre, i.e., displacing the primacy of the West as the incontestable locus of cultural accomplishment, and rather envisaging a world made up of multiple centres that interact on the basis of mutual respectability and reciprocity.

In this regard, transculturality should enable a move against the disenchantment with the exclusionary project of imposed Western modernity, which currently impedes an egalitarian interaction between cultures. It rather reinforces politics of mitigation and silencing of historical burdens, while reproducing neo-colonialist mentalities of political and economic elites. This results in a normalisation and givenness of conditions that in reality trace their genealogies to brutal colonial encounters. A dignifying process of transculturality could, in turn, add to social, political, economic and cultural transformation and enable a mutually enriching advancement of our shared human nature.

Therefore, transculturality needs to break with the politics of time imposed unilaterally by the Western-centred State and (post)colonial elites. Instead of predetermining their past, present and future, transculturality ought to strengthen Afrodescendant and indigenous peoples in (re)constructing their ancestral memories as a basis for their visions of a good life. Memories of the past are necessary to make sense of present experiences and to think about the future. Transculturality should ultimately contribute to developing a life system under dignified conditions for all cultures, which cannot just be reduced to economistic measures of well-being and development. It rather implies a good life with and beyond diverse cultural memories.

4.2 Corporality

Memories are both inscribed in and ascribed to the body as a living metaphor that is crucial in understanding the relation between the individual, family as well as the communal. Bodies are bearers of mnemonic memories of resilience in marginalised communities. By intervening with their rejected, dehumanised and othered bodies, indigenous and Afrodescendant people disrupt the coherence of hegemonic discourses in order to underline an inclusive conceptualisation of the human family. Corporality is a territory loaded with representations, upon which cultural imaginaries of identity and alterity are projected. It is both historical and present, that is, a sign of testimony, immediacy and the undeniable thereness of being. As the site where the vital, aesthetical, ethical and figural forces of writing come together as a whole, representations of the body constitute a basic trope in the imagination of cultural encounters.

The body, as a complex metaphor of identity at the levels of the self and social community, is depicted poignantly in the short story by Mario Dulcey Idrobo (2021) titled “Selva Misteriosa” (“Mysterious Forest”). Dulcey recounts the trauma

he endures due to society's persistent negative perception of his afro hairstyle as unkempt, asocial and non-conformist. He experiences conflicting moments as a young child growing up in a society wherein what pertains to the Afrodescendant identity is shunned and degraded. When he wins a prize in a short story contest, he faces a standoff with his father and the school principal who subscribe to racist standards of what it means to be presentable during such a stellar moment for him, his family and his school. In preparation for the occasion, his father and the school principal ask him to shave his afro hair. This demoralises the otherwise upbeat boy who sees this as a suppression of his identity: "I felt helpless in the face of the principal's attitude. He reproached me for my long afro haircut. I knew something was wrong, but at seventeen, I didn't quite understand the complexity" (Dulcey Idrobo, 2021, p. 119).

As he grows up, Dulcey vehemently rejects the received stereotypes about Black hair and grooms his afro hairstyle into an artistic trademark and source of inspiration, hence the title of his story, the "Mysterious Forest". With the gradual understanding of his place in the world, he forms a more forceful ideology related to his body-identity: "In the past seven years, I have had to resist this attitude on a daily basis from those who do not accept that my hair and I be different" (Dulcey Idrobo, 2021, p. 120). What is at play is the disciplining of the Black body in conformity with colonial norms of ethics and aesthetics. The afro hair is considered a symbol of lack of manners and etiquette. The young writer belongs to a generation of Afrodescendant youth that is not ashamed of assuming their Black identity: "Thus began my struggle. Since I took that decision, I have had to resist gazes, comments and insults for maintaining my afro hairstyle [...]. At work and at the university, it has turned out to be an even bigger challenge: my hair is considered unprofessional; they brand me as marijuana smoker and I am considered vicious simply because I get angry whenever someone touches my hair" (Dulcey Idrobo, 2021, p. 120).

In this vein, corporality is one of the key topoi of representation in African and Latin American authors. Colonial encounters in themselves could be envisaged as encounters of bodies, and discourses of the bodies have been very determinant as far as colonial and neo-colonial othering/ordering is concerned. The question of power relationships can thus be understood as the relationship between bodies, their strengths and frailties; their contextual myths and stereotypes; their pleasures and pains; their honour and shame; their sustenance and diminution, etc. (Ndi, 2016). Awareness of processes of racialisation that force members of minoritised cultures into fixed and stigmatised categories, as well as their struggles of subjectivation which confront these, is an indispensable precondition for transculturality. This implies analysing how relations between racialised bodies are structured by the colonial matrix of power and how they are contested, urging us to recognise human commonalities that make cross-cultural encounters possible in the first place.

Consequently, transcultural self-writing that confronts stigmatising discourses contributes to the emergence of dynamic identities, subjectivities and lifeworlds. It enables Afrodescendant and indigenous peoples to construct dignifying narratives against the threat of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), which deny racialised bodies their right to live. As the Colombian case shows strikingly, recognising these communities'

dignity is the condition *sine qua non* for ensuring their egalitarian participation in cross-cultural interactions. But to date, they are endangered through ethnic cleansing of communal leaders, breaching of peace agreements and other forcible dynamics which impede a respectful dialogue based on the equality of cultures. In this context, self-writing is a form of working through the wounds and scars of subject bodies. It is an attempt to come to terms with them by inscribing them within narratives of ideological liberation and the unleashing of both self and collective potential.

4.3 Territoriality

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha (1994, p. 142) postulates that "etymologically unsettled, 'territory' derives from both *terra* (earth) and *terrere* (to frighten) whence *territorium,* 'a place where people are frightened'". This etymological definition of territory is a corollary of territoriality defined within the confines of Westphalian statehood that is based on the forging of a monolithic identitarian space where the state reserves the monopoly of violence. Bhabha criticises such an imagination of territory and rather foregrounds territoriality as a space that leaves room for the other, for different identities, where citizens celebrate their diversity and hybridity as they interact with other cultures and worldviews within the same territory. Such a space is not one for the flourishing of the Master Sign, but rather, for the circulation of meanings amongst groups that have multiple trajectories and visions of life.

From this perspective, transculturality is born in complex spaces where identities related to multiple belongings can interact. However, this process is fractured in Latin America, where cultures in conflict strive to defend their autonomy over their land and their culture. The process of drawing boundaries around ancestral uses and customs can historically be understood as a form of resistance to European colonisation and the independence movements in which creole elites took over national power, monopolised access to resources and dictated what constituted national culture. Moreover, the shift to multiculturalism formalised by the Colombian constitution of 1991 grants Afrodescendant and indigenous groups collective rights of territorial self-administration if they demarcate their communities based on their own culture, traditions and history. This enables their cultural re-existence, aiming at decentralising established norms in order to search within indigenous and Afrodescendant communities for modes of organisation, production and aesthetics, which foster self-dignification, self-reinvention and self-transformation (Albán Achinte, 2009).

However, structural de-territorialisation of Afrodescendant and indigenous groups for economic and political interests as well as the exploitation of natural resources impede such initiatives. Territories are permeated by death, violence and suffering, but also by the projection of life. To construct transculturality with dignity, territoriality needs to be reinvented in a way that enables cross-cultural encounters without violence, displacement and dispossession for the sake of a Western notion of development and progress. A transcultural understanding of territoriality needs

to be amenable to diverse modes of relating to the earth, which differ considerably amongst indigenous and Afrodescendant communities, even within the same country. While many indigenous American conceptions of territoriality, for instance, consider humans as sons and daughters of Mother Earth ("Pachamama"), Afrodescendant communities partially reinvent relational philosophies from the African continent and combine them in a syncretic way with experiences from their diasporic lifeworlds (Banguero Velasco & Gruber, 2020).

Therefore, a necessary first step for transcultural dialogue is to be open to the epistemologies of cultures in resistance, as Escobar (2016, p. 16) summarises: "To think new thoughts, by implication, requires to move out of the epistemic space of Western social theory and into the epistemic configurations associated with the multiple relational ontologies of worlds in struggle. It is in these spaces that we might also find more compelling answers to the strong questions posed by the current conjuncture". Self-writing has the capacity to imagine territoriality as a space for transcultural connections in historically minoritised communities. In the face of ongoing crises caused by the coloniality of power and savage capitalism, people find in their symbolic universes vital possibilities of resilience. The self itself becomes a territory of care, of the articulation of one's ethical and aesthetic approach to the world. Against this backdrop, self-writing is a potent method to invent transcultural spaces in which different forms of relating to the territory can coexist.

In her memoir *El poder de lo invisible (The Power of the Invisible)*, Paula Moreno (2018) provides an ethic of territoriality that deconstructs discourses of domination with regard to Colombian nationhood. Her text offers insightful reflections on the challenges she encounters as a newly appointed Minister of Culture from the minoritised Afrodescendant communities and outlines her vision of culture in a diverse nation such as Colombia. In a country where mestizo-creole values constitute the norm, she faces the task of re-defining the territoriality of Colombia, mapping out initiatives that foreground an inclusive sense of national belonging whereby the cultures, languages and mores of minoritised communities would earn recognition. In other words, she finds a situation where there is no level playing field on which a transcultural project can be premised. Moreno encounters an oligarchic set-up which seeks to portray her as an exception, as one who is unlike the majority of the people from the Colombian Pacific region. She is used as a token of representativity and not as an equal member of a territory that is part of the fabric of Colombian nationhood.

The strong attachment to territoriality and all that it supposes is brought out in Moreno's (2018, p. 95) encounter with the indigenous leaders: "In one of my first meetings with the community councils of the Atrato River (Cocomacia), one of its leaders told me, 'We want to dialogue with you, but without impositions […]. Remember that we are equals and no one masters our territory and our process more than we ourselves.' The message was clear: they were the main actors and those in charge of bringing about the changes. Such that I needed first to learn about and acknowledge their history and their struggle in order to build up something together".

This preamble underlies the necessity and/or the prerequisite for a transcultural dialogue with members of territories that have suffered denigration in the course of colonial and neo-colonial histories. We are required to unlearn and learn from/with

people from those territories about their values, visions and lifeworlds. These are shaped by their struggles for re-existence and their relationship with the world. The challenge for peoples that have suffered the weight of European imperialism is to imagine a form of territoriality where multiple lifeworlds can flourish without being respectively considered to be of more or less value due to the hierarchising legacy of European modernity.

5 Conclusion

Our reflections make it clear that there is an urge to construct new temporalities, subjectivities and territorialities—in short, commonalities that allow for connections between diverse forms of being-in-the-world. But if transculturation is linked to colonisation in the specific histories of formerly colonised peoples, it is hard to imagine transculturality without remaining alert to the possibility that it could paradoxically reinforce coloniality, despite our best intentions. Hence, a relational approach to transculturality is an indispensable but highly challenging task. This relational dimension can be clearly captured through analyses of self-writing endeavours.

Using the axes of memory, corporality and territoriality analysed above, self-writing texts engage in a counter-discourse with regard to hegemonic frames, practices and imaginaries. Beyond that, they envision cultural exchanges that recognise the possibility, necessity and urgency of different cultures to share a common human space and exercise the ethical obligation of the gift. Self-writing becomes a means of representing communal memories and collective struggles that define the values that are crucial for the existence and perpetuity of minoritised groups. It underlines the stakes and shapes the contexts in which transculturality can be negotiated while taking into consideration the standpoints and worldviews of such groups. This entails that the outcome of a transcultural process cannot be predefined. It is a complex quest for the coexistence of diverse cultures in dignity and equality.

From this perspective, transculturality is a transitional process born from the interstices of cultural conflict which, in our view, should aim at overcoming colonialist, monolithic and ethnocentric positions. Creative self-writing contributes to this process, as it has the power to rethink boundaries between supposedly fixed categories, languages and worldviews. It allows for an open-ended negotiation of different senses of belonging, from which new and dynamic constructs of identities can come to the fore. Using literary representations as a form of empowerment, African and Afro-diasporic authors deploy their imaginative potency in order to forge new horizons that lay claim to collective memories of resilience. Thereby, they remain open to newness and collective self-transformation. Caught in a world in which being Black is considered as a lag and lack, racialised people often fall back on their ancestral connections as a source of strength. Their identity is the locus from which to negotiate their being-in-the-world and to relate to other members of the human community.

Raising awareness about existing hierarchies in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural contexts is indispensable to transcend the coloniality of being and knowing. In this regard, transculturality needs to enable a co-presence of diverse presents, pasts and futures. Amongst minoritised groups, transcultural self-writing contributes to this ideal by subverting strictures, instead expanding our horizons to new possibilities in ways that logocentric modes of thinking may not easily fathom.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Towards Transcultural Self-writing: Mapping the Struggles of Minoritised Cultures in Colombia", by Valerie V. V. Gruber, Gilbert Shang Ndi, and Rigoberto Banguero Velasco

- How do we reflect on and engage with memory in a way that underlines the capacity for agency of minoritised groups, and not represents them purely as subjects of victimisation?
- To what extent do memories of oppression impede transcultural collaboration between racialised communities and groups historically associated with hegemonic power?
- Given that the body is at once the most common and the most uncommon trait of human existence, how do minoritised groups mobilise it in a way that does not reproduce in-group discrimination?
- What are the relations between corporality and culture? Is the "Black"/"White" body necessarily a repository of "Black"/"White" culture?
- In a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state like Colombia, how do governing authorities respect the cultural specificities of its constitutive territories and, at the same time, implement a coherent national "development" agenda?
- How can self-writing go beyond the private space to address structural exclusion in the public sphere?

Acknowledgements This article is the outcome of research conducted within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy—EXC 2052/1—390713894.

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Leveraging Relationality in Contexts of Cultural Complexity

The Essence of Multilogue, Nudges, and Queries: Enabling Un-Alienated Collaboration Spaces

Nikola Hale

Abstract The Multilogue is an approach to developing transcultural competence as we collaborate and live together in diversity. Moving beyond cultural differences, and through cultural commonalities, the Delphi project investigates what transcultural competence means in cultural complexity. At the intersections of cultural complexity, we have a choice: grow from the infusion of multiple perspectives or languish comfortably in our echo chambers. This essay weaves together some seminal concepts in the intercultural field with selected insights on culture, identity, and diversity. The tapestry of ideas provides the foundation for a cosmopolitan perspective, the Multilogue. My intention in developing the Multilogue approach is to enable co-creation of un-alienated lifespaces and workplaces. How the Multilogue was conceived and some tools to construct, grow and sustain our communities of practice are offered to the reader to experiment with. Multiloguing is like communal gardening. We, the gardeners, consciously work together to create a fertile and flourishing environment. The essence is dynamic, situational, and performative. Multiloguing is bound to the current situation, i.e., relevant to a unique group at a certain moment. The context influences how we collaborate: who is present, where and when we meet, what we are trying to do together, and why this is important to us. Fleeting and impermanent, multiloguing is performative. This means we can only develop our transcultural competence while bouncing ideas off each other, preparing the soil of innovation together and depending on each other for input, insights, and expertise. Transcultural competence is not a vaccination against ethnocentrism or fixed mindsets; we need to guard against sinking into toxicity, such as groupthink, power plays or false harmony. Nudges and queries can remind us to regularly examine the quality of our interactions. These Multilogue tools of inquiry impact how we take care of the atmosphere in our collaboration spaces, which in turn influence how richly and inclusively we can co-create.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_10

> You appear in me, I in you. We hide in each other
>
> —Jalal ad-Din Mohammad Rumi

1 This Piece of Earth in the Era of Discontinuity, or Where Are We Now?

Wherever on the earth you have been living since March 2020, we have something in common. In the era of "discontinuity", as a *NYTimes* writer describes our current times (Weil, 2022), our experience and expertise from the pre-pandemic past no longer serve us. Similar to crossing national cultural borders, we left the cultural norms of our previous lives, where we sort of knew what to do and how to do it. Entering global ambiguity, we found ourselves in a liminal space of fast and unpredictable changes. Privileged people had the luxury of gain. With time and space to continue working or schooling from a safe home, they could rethink their living styles and redesign their worlds. The marginalized ones, not so fortunate, had the poverty of loss. They lost important people in their lives, their jobs, and homes. They faced gaps in access to medicine or adequate physical space for work, school, and social distancing. Some voices claimed that we were all in the same boat; I would argue we were in vastly different yachts and dinghies; some leaked or capsized, and others were far better equipped. One of the common outcomes for all has been discontinuity; the old cultural norms, lifespaces and workplaces have changed. With a clarity more brutal and naked than ever, the pandemic revealed the polarization and inequalities already existing within our societies and between nations.

We saw huge differences in our societies in how we, as individuals, reacted to the impact of the corona virus, and in how national governments reacted. And yet, another commonality we now have is the chance to reconsider our "circles of concern" and to redesign our "circles of influence" (Covey, 1989). Promising responses are unfolding around the world, as lighthouses of reset illuminate a more compassionate way to live and work. Since the lockdowns started, some people have begun identifying what is essential. Now it is time to make these discoveries known, to build on them, and to impact the circles we can influence, large or small.

2 Are You a "Recovering Interculturalist", or How Do You Answer, "What Do You Do"?

A friend in a community of practice who identifies as a "recovering interculturalist" pondered what "transcultural" could mean in our mutual context of working globally across diversities of many kinds. In contrast to the waves of focus up until now, from cross-cultural to intercultural, intracultural, multicultural, and global competence building, I do not see the term "transcultural" as the next big thing in labels. For me,

this exploration is a reminder to attend to the relationality of what is happening in the "Cultural Intermezzo", the space where people from various cultural groups meet. (Hale, 2012). All societies have a heterogeneous nature: constructed of ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, generation, socio-education, politics, profession, cognitive styles, degree of religiosity or secularity, among others. Cultural groups have moved, mingled, and brought up children, discriminated against outside groups and oppressed others, since the beginning of human history. Emigration, immigration, cultural heterogeneity, and cultural imperialism have always been present. Our access to newly articulated theories for understanding cultural complexity has accelerated rapidly over the past 50 years with the advent of technological connectivity, shared frames of reference, and access to worlds previously isolated.

3 Are We Good at Talking About Cultural Complexity and Diversity, But Stuck in Our Echo Chambers of How We Think About Them?

3.1 A Little History, Interpreted

Most scholars working in social sciences these days have long departed from a purely positivist approach to viewing society as consisting of "social facts", as did Durkheim (1895/1982). Many interculturalists have dismissed the essentialist view of culture as an island or a thing. It is not my intention here to favor a single best scientific paradigm for our investigations. We preach appreciating and recognizing the validity of diverse ways of being and doing to our colleagues and trainees. It follows that we practice this inclusion of diversity in our choice of research methods, paradigms, and theoretical frameworks in our own work. For example, when coaching a global virtual team, we will reach a fuller and deeper understanding by drawing on multiple paradigms to explore the issues and support resolution of challenges. Positivist, interpretive, post-modern, and critical views for research need to be considered, as Laurence Romani presented at a SIETAR Conference in 2011 in Mannheim, where she discussed the character and validity of these paradigms (Romani, 2008, 2018). We can employ multiple concepts and explore various reasons for why this team keeps getting stuck.

As collaboration enablers across diversity, we need to move away from what Joseph Henrich has entitled a "WEIRD", i.e., western, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic, (Henrich, 2020) orientation and from an English-language domination in the research on cultural management. What is missing today is our own cross-fertilization of the diversities of research being conducted in various disciplines around the world. The very question we may ask a multicultural collaboration group, "What are you not seeing, not knowing?" is one we need to ask ourselves. How very stuck am I in my academic background, my socio-cultural programming, and my cognitive lenses? Which questions are not within my worldview to even come up

with? Through exposure to research and practice in different languages, from diverse perspectives, in other educational systems and academic disciplines, I improve my capability to discern. We need a transcultural paradigm accepting a multiplicity of perspectives to grasp what is happening in intercultural interactions. Just a few of the scholars who have informed my reading of transculturality follow below.

4 Are We Good at Talking About "Culture", But Still Stuck in Our Boxes and Categories?

4.1 A Little More History, Interpreted

With the Cultural Turn in the social sciences in the 1970's, we no longer viewed "culture" as a static entity. Stephen Best defined culture as, "the social process whereby people communicate meanings, make sense of their world, construct their identities, and define their beliefs and values" (Best, 2007). He added nuance to the concept of culture from Geert Hofstede's "collective programming of the mind that distinguished the members of one group or category to another" (Hofstede, 1980), and to the essentialist paradigms among other researchers, who made use of cultural dimensions, standards, or orientations.

Consultants and trainers in industry soon recognized that conflating people from a nation with a monolithic culture did not support innovation or resolution of tensions in groups of diversity. During the Relational Turn of the 90's, Mustafa Emirbayer emphasized the fundamental dilemma facing sociologists: "whether to conceive of the social world as consisting primarily in substances, processes, static things or in dynamic unfolding relations" (Emirbayer, 1997). In his seminal article on transculturality, Wolfgang Welsch elegantly contrasted concepts of single cultures, interculturality and multiculturality. His discussion prepared rich soil for reconsidering the intermingling and blurry lines in societies that "draw from pluralized cultural repertories" (Welsch, 1999). Welsch argued that the early characterization of a culture by Herder as a "closed sphere" or "autonomous island" with ethnic consolidation was untenable.

The term I proposed for the space in which people from various socio-cultural groups meet and interact was "Cultural Intermezzo" (Hale, 2012). We can best understand what happens here by using networked representations of cultural mingling and mixing, instead of previous canons of tree-like paradigms. Leaning on the shoulders of Deleuze and Guattari in Mille Plateaus (1980), I was inspired by their distinction of arborescent versus rhizomatic philosophical contributions. Their vertical hierarchy in the arborescent paradigm of scholarly thought represented the essentialist and dualistic tendencies to understanding cultural interactions. In the arboresecent paradigm, cultural dimensions were used in the canon of knowledge to differentiate one people's behaviors in one national cultural group from another such group, e.g., you belonged in the high-power distance box or low-power distance box. Deleuze

and Guattari's essay on the rhizome captured my imagination as a more appropriate way to decode the cultural intermezzo. Rhizomatic plants, such as irises, ginger, or mangroves, have no single beginning or end. They pop up simultaneously in various, seemingly unconnected places, just as cultural themes and memes, viruses and technology do. In the rhizomatic exploration, identities and behaviors are no longer seen as monoliths connected to nations, but rather as individual complex, multilayered, merging, and contextualized phenomena.

Culture as a networked web, and not a static monolith, figured into Afef Benessaieh's work, in which she declared transculturality a "conceptual landscape for considering cultures as relational webs and flows of significance" (Benessaieh, 2010). The larger image of this tapestry of insights from the selected writers above paints a multi-paradigmatic approach to deciphering the cultural intermezzo. Today a rhizomatic web and flow metaphor for cultural exploration fits our internet-connected networks, organizations, societies, and identities better than the Herderian cultural islands or essentialist canon metaphors of the past.

5 Who Am I? My Identity Will Not Be Stuffed into One Little Box

Intriguing proposals on transcultural competence and relationality are presented by the Delphi Project researchers (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). Their focus on commonalities shifts our perspectives towards cultural complexity. This cultural complexity refers to intersectionality not only of groups but also of our self-identity, as the US American conceptual artist Hank Willis Thomas has displayed in his work, "*I AM MANY*" (Thomas, 2009). He refuses to be defined or identified through only one lens of gender, or nationality, ethnicity, generation, profession, or other labels. We have all been richly shaped by a multiplicity of socio-cultural influences.

In Les Identités Meutrières (1998), Amin Maalouf introduced multiple identity and belonging, in the "vertical heritage", our cultural legacy from our familial ancestors, and "horizontal heritage", the cultural acquisitions in the current tribe of people with whom we regularly interact. More recently, Jürgen Bolten provided us with "fuzzy cultures", describing the socio-cultural composite of belonging to multiple collectivities (Bolten, 2013). We now know that the idea of training a so-called French person how to work with a so-labeled Chinese person does not fit the reality of our culturally complex situations, in which many other factors besides nationality impact the encounter. We see that the seeds of the concept "transculturality" have been sprouting in various contexts, places, and languages. It is time to exchange our multiple perspectives and cross-fertilize our gardens.

What fascinates me is what happens when actors from different socio-cultural groups, already heterogeneous in themselves, come together to collaborate. What is going on in the ambiguity of this new border-crossing? Together with 50 experts,

the transcultural researchers in the Delphi Project, Josef Wieland, Julika Baumann Montecinos, and Tobias Grünfelder, explore this fertile field for co-creation, focusing on the relationality of the actors. This project has begun to source research strands from diverse disciplines to add richness to our exploration of transculturality. Spin-offs from this project will provide insights and inspiration for the reset and redesign of what I call the "un-alienated life" ahead. Let us now turn to a case of alienation.

Mia's story of alienation in collaboration at the university. (Names and identities have been changed)

Mia's story "*Oh, I was so upset after my last online meeting with Thomas and Bernhard about the course design, I was shaking!*" my friend Mia told me at dinner around her outdoor fireplace last weekend. She was talking about attempts to plan a graduate seminar on Architecture and Psychology with two colleagues, professors of psychology. "*What's going on, Mia?*" I asked my architect friend. We've known each other for years, enjoying not only walking and dinners, but also infecting each other with enthusiasm about teaching. Influences we share, such as Paolo Freire, flipped pedagogy, the inverted classroom, and our roles as guides in education, contrast sharply with traditional frontal lecture styles of some professors to this day.

Mia continued, "*Oh, Thomas and Bernhard are so full of themselves and their way of teaching; how are we ever going to agree on how to work together? They just don't get it. I thought we would work together to create something new and exciting. They seem to just want to divide up the topics and each of us does their own thing.*"

She explained, "*They have no respect for French writers who have greatly influenced my work and have no idea what co-designing a cross-cultural, peer-taught, interdisciplinary course means.*"

Exasperated, Mia finished, "*When I first explained my concept to them, they seemed committed. But now, I feel like giving up! Why bother? They're just so stuck in their ways. It seems that they don't want to collaborate to create something new. All they want to do is re-hash some old lecture notes, add a couple of new references and bombard the students with speeches.*"

6 How Can We Decode und Uncover What's Going on in This Case?

If I reveal the ages of the protagonists or their nationalities or academic schools of influence, will your brain jump to assumptions about them? Or can we use slow brain thinking to gently assess our biases (Kahneman, 2011)?

Let me reveal brief profiles of the three professors: Mia is French, 57 years old, currently dean of the school of architecture, educated in Paris and Zürich; Thomas is 38, English/German, a colleague of Mia's at the same university, who studied in Tübingen. Bernhard, German, professor emeritus, age 72, last taught in Berlin. So,

do these superficial biographies help us decode the situation? Or do they filter our perception and foster the attributions which pop into our minds upon learning this?

If we dig deeper, we learn that Mia was steeped in the French perspective of the Cultural Turn revolution. Besides the architectural influences of Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn et al., she said she was nourished by the thinking of the "68 generation in France, e.g., Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard. The frames of reference that Thomas and Bernhard employ originate from two different generations of a mainly Germanic perspective on psychology. These two professors seem to prefer and practice traditional "chalk and talk education". Does this background information bring us any closer to discerning best approaches for the course designers so that they can more easily collaborate? Or does this evoke even stronger associations and stereotypes that we hold about certain professions, disciplines, national educational systems, genders, or generations?

Perhaps all three are merely demonstrating ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors. After all, the more experience we have, the more stuck we may become in our convictions, even it's just about who has the best recipe for carrot-ginger soup. In the face of disagreement, we commonly revert to our default comfort zones and socio-cultural "knowns". Mia's situation reminds me of the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki's adage, "In the *beginner's mind there* are many possibilities, but in the *expert's mind there* are few". Yet I propose that the challenges here are based on more than solely the common blindness of the expert, or the arrogance of big egos.

A helicopter view of the system in which these actors find themselves can help. When collaboration from multiple perspectives gets stuck, I dare to borrow Albert Einstein's admonishment. We cannot resolve the obstacles with the same mindset that caused the issues. We need to change the environment in which the actors are working. I focus here on enabling the actors themselves to approach HOW they collaborate. The Multilogue approach does not negate or dilute the diversities and multiple perspectives, nor does it only focus on the commonalities. Multiloguing goes through and beyond what formerly existed to construct a new and dynamic transcultural collaboration space.

Having spent the pandemic trying to stay connected and useful, we have had to pivot to virtual communities, of practice, of work and of life. The Multilogue considerations in this piece apply to virtual, hybrid and in-person capacity-building, and support creating fertile collaboration spaces together.

7 How Can We Fertilize the Soil for Our Collaboration Gardens?

Transcultural competences evolve only WHILE we are collaborating in diversity. In the situations we share and activities we participate in together, we grow our attitudinal, communicative, and behavioral competences. The best practices we create for alignment in one group do not directly transfer to the next hybrid setting; this process

of discovery is iterative for every new project group. By investing time in reflecting on how we work together, we can discover commonalities. Anthony Kwame Appiah reminds us "Cosmopolitanism believes that every human being matters and that we have a shared obligation for one another" (Appiah, 2006). We need to concentrate on our humanity, on what we have in common, and not on what divides us.

The Multilogue is a cosmopolitan perspective that offers the intercultural discipline a fluid, dynamic and enabling approach for assuming responsibility in building relationships in collaborative work. We learn how to think together as a community that thrives on diversity. Intersections of diversity we encounter may be interdisciplinary, intercultural, cross-professional, multigenerational, inter-religious, politically diverse, and cross-gender, among others. Experience at these crossroads has shown that merely identifying cultural differences has not helped us get stuff done. Accepting that diversity exists is also an essential early stage in cognitive frameshifting; subsequently, we need to explore how we feel, think, and react when experiencing alienation in cultural encounters.

The Buddhist monk and teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh described "inter-being" as a way of living in relation to others. Similarly, the Multilogue supports seeing the "other" as a fellow human and rejects the constructs of race or status or gender which divide us (Hanh, 1987). In my vision of an un-alienated life, we dare to jump out of our echo chambers. Learning happens at the outside edge of our comfort zone. This is where we learn how to transcend the tensions of polarities. If we truly SEE each other as human beings, then we recognize that our differences are real. The scars, and trophies we carry in our hearts exist. Our default behaviors and patterns may have served us in the past, but we are not forced to let them define how we feel, think and act in the future.

The huge step towards discovering commonalities means returning to the human universals we share with each other when we find ourselves in ambiguously defined new spaces, roles, and projects. While our starting points may be different, our reactions and responses to the challenges of the liminal spaces we enter may be similar. For a recent example, in the liminal space between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic, or living with the pandemic world, we all experienced a disruption to our old "normal". Our reactions may have oscillated from disbelief, anger, fear, discomfort, excitement, to curiosity, but the commonality was that we had a new environment and experience of living. This was the human universal: that we didn't know what we didn't know.

8 What Does Your Garden of Collaboration Need to Get Things Done?

We may first think of commonalities as shared values, the same professional training seminars, or perhaps similar lived experiences. There are other commonalities, however, which stem from a deeper place: the emotions, the physical sensations, and

the memories of feelings. These powerful sources of cognition have been neglected in our educational and training institutions. Embodied cognition, or the learning and knowing which comes from attending to our emotions and physical sensations, is beginning to receive more attention as a great potential. Using these ways of knowing, from the mind, heart, and body, we can align more authentically with ourselves and others. The Multilogue approach encourages using not only intellectual exchanges of what we want to do, but also attending to emotions, feelings and bodily sensations which arise in our encounters.

Definition of Multilogue
A Multilogue is an approach to building a safe space, co-created and nurtured by the actors themselves, for collaboration in diversities. Here, all voices and perspectives matter, and the willingness to continually reflect on the process enriches innovation. Multiloguing creates un-alienated lifespaces and workplaces, where we can breathe freely, learn to dance together to many rhythms, and grow.
(nikola hale 2023)

9 The Origins of the Multilogue

There is nothing intrinsically good or bad about monologues or dialogues or multilogues; they differ in the intentions we bring, the expectations we have and the impact we achieve. A monologue is one person talking, either to themselves or to others. On the stage, a monologue serves as a magical way to get inside the character's head and understand their perspective. The speaker in a monologue is not seeking verbal participation from me; this can lead to my feeling relaxed if what they say resonates for me but can also lead to frustration or boredom. A dialogue obviously involves more than one party; the assumption here is that ideas are exchanged. This could be one-to-one, or a situation in which when an engaging speaker dialogues with their audience. Think about when you are in a dialogue with one other person, peer-to-peer. Is every so-called dialogue you have truly an exchange of equally appreciated inputs, or do we find ourselves all too often in the middle of two veiled monologues?

The Zen teacher, Diane Musho Hamilton, provides an aspirational definition, calling a dialogue the "*cornerstone of all significant change in our society and the basis of our efforts to create fairer, more equitable conditions for everyone*" (Hamilton, 2020). If this were true for all dialogues, we would not need to work on creating compassion, equality, inclusion of diversities, and social justice. Given that not every dialogue fulfills this high standard, I would like to explore concepts which go deeper in achieving the compassionate conversations Hamilton writes about.

In "*riptide: a cosmopolitan perspective*" (Hale, 2020), I used the term "multilogue" for the first time to connote more than just the number of actors in conversation. A Google search provides definitions of multilogue as a social interaction

between numerous people in virtual meeting spaces. How the multilogue is created, and how we can foster psychological safety required for inclusive collaboration to occur, have not yet been sufficiently delineated. What is missing are the attributes of the multilogue: the quality, intention, composition, context, and purpose of these many-in-many collaboration spaces.

Are you curious about the Multilogue? The quality of the Multilogue is a conscious or subconscious feeling of psychological safety. It just feels right! The intention of the Multilogue is to listen and learn, not just speak. The context is one of self-awareness about my own tendencies in behavior, which may or may not encourage others to contribute or listen and bubble up with curiosity, energy, and enthusiasm. We are aware of our tendencies to speak more, or less, than others, and we consciously try to dial up or dial down our autopilot behaviors. Depending on the mood, energy, identification with the topic, we may sometimes just listen to others in the Multilogue, and not need to take a front-row seat. The purpose of the Multilogue is to remain conscious of the changing needs of the members to nourish and nurture this garden of collaboration, so that all voices are heard, and all hearts are reached.

10 Will We Throw the Old Gardening Tools Away, Redesign How We Use Them, or Make New Tools?

The reset of our societies and communities requires more than silo-busting of known boxes of classification and structures. A little secret: I don't really like the idea of "thinking outside the box" since it often leads to just creating new boxes. Are there still any sacred canons of classification we need to fit into? Perhaps you have recognized that the old boxes don't fit any longer. What do you really know about me if you only see my passport or my physiognomy? And please don't stuff me into one system of reference or one box in the family history of humanity. The hyper-connected world today gives us global and local frames of reference. Our composite identities, emerging from multiple influences, are poignantly illustrated by numerous TED talks speakers, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the *Danger of a Single Story*, Hetain Patel in *Who am I* or Taiye Selasi in *Don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm local*.

Searching for commonalities needs more than synergies, or so-called best practices. We need to investigate our experience of the liminal space we enter, when crossing disciplines, cultural groups, and diversities of all kinds. This in-between space, at the edge of what we know, provides a rich potential for discovering our blind spots. The Multilogue approach supports our ability to work together, even when we disagree. We can hold opposing concepts in mind, simultaneously allowing the "genius of the AND" (Collins, 1995). While we might have different assumptions about the profile of a leader, for example, we also, and AND, might share common beliefs about how this leader should support their team. With AND, instead

of “the tyranny of OR” (ibid.), we can create new ways of working together which are mutually negotiated, co-designed, and continually revisited.

This is transcultural competence, going through and beyond the differences to reveal our commonalities so that we can find create safe, liberating spaces to nurture the relationships we have with our colleagues and to construct an environment which is conducive to collaboration.

11 What Might You Discover in an Uncomfortable Situation, if You Were Willing to Take a Pause to Find Out?

Entering collaboration with you means I first encounter you in an ambiguous liminal space. I don’t know how to greet you, what to reveal at first, and what to hold back. Our first commonality is the fact that we both experience this ambiguity. Although we have different stories, histories, backgrounds, and disciplines, neither of us know what we haven’t yet learned. We are both impacted by this non-defined state, even if you do not talk about it much, and perhaps I talk about it all the time. How you perceive me in a certain role, or which attributes I ascribe to you, are based on our initial unconscious biases. But you know what? If we stepped back, slowed down, breathed deeply, and observed for a few moments, we could perhaps begin to see the huge freedom to learn, every single time we meet. As Patanjali says in *Yoga Sutra 1.1*, “*Atha yoga anushasanam”*, or “now the secrets of yoga reveal themselves” (Hartranft, 2003, p. 2). What would our meetings feel like, if we stepped into every community with a fresh beginner’s mind, as if for the very first time?

12 May I Have This Dance? How Can We Find a Rhythm of Communication Which Works for Both of Us?

Even when organizational hierarchies or geographic dispersion or power differentials exist, when we multilogue, we strive to see the ideas of all participants as equally valid from their perspectives. Intentionally mixing subgroups counteracts the growth of groupthink in which new or deviant ideas are squashed or marginalized.

Acknowledging the variety of diverse forms of discourse is essential to collaboration. Communication is not merely a tool for exchanging information; its main goal is managing the relationships between us. Do I dare let you near me? Let you in? Let you know me? Or am I the kind of person who discloses too much too soon for you, or invades your space with an enthusiasm you are not comfortable with? How can we create a space in which we find our communication rhythms which can fit? Will it be a tango, or salsa, a waltz, free dance, or a slow walking meditation? Or maybe we’ll just jam! How will we learn to dance together if our default rhythms are not

in sync? W. Barnett Pearce bases his CMM theory, the Coordinated Management of Meanings, on the idea that we live in communication.

> … this life challenge: learning how to manage the meanings we intend so that we can make our social worlds coherent. We do not do this in isolation. This can only take place with each other. We are always and necessarily coordinating the way we manage our meanings with the other. (Pearce, 1989).

13 What Could This Mean for You, to Create an "Un-alienated Lifespace or Workplace"?

I used the word, "un-alienated" as a goal at the beginning of our lockdown when I was feeling rather alienated myself. A friend asked why I used what he considered a negative term, instead of a positive affirmation of what was desirable. I chose "un-alienated" deliberately, just as we talk about "un-learning" old narratives about ourselves as we pass through stages of our lives. We need radical new propositions about border-crossing collaboration, to un-alienate ourselves in this radically disrupted era of discontinuity.

The riptide of the pandemic unveiled the dangers, weaknesses of our worlds and the naked gaps in equality which contribute to alienation in our societies, neighborhoods, and workspaces. The alienation which occurred has been induced through social isolation away from people, school, the workplace, or our colleagues. Two years have been lost for children and students who could not experience the community of the playground and classroom; two years of getting used to what was the luxury of time and space for privileged people and the damnation of lack of access to earning a living and getting an education for others. External pressures and fear of the unknown have given us a coronacoaster of experiences and realizations about what is essential and whose voices matter. Now, how can we create un-alienated lifespaces in which we can learn and grow?

My search is to build an environment with you, in which our nervous systems are not poised for flight, freeze, or flight, but instead we feel alert, psychologically safe, open, and curious. In an un-alienated lifespace or workplace, I can participate with my voice and my truth. I know that even if someone speaks or acts in a manner that I don't like or agree with, we can sit with that difference. We don't have to defend, counter-argue, or ignore, we can just listen at first before entering a discussion. Already in 1999, Amy C. Edmondson brought to our attention, a term that has become mainstream, "psychological safety" which she defined as "… a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up", among other characteristics, and which greatly impacts group dynamics and individual agency (Edmondson, 2019).

The main attribute of multiloguing is the actors' ability to co-create and maintain psychological safety. How can we sustain what one trainee called "friction without fire" and "deviance without division"? By regularly returning to the mindful query, "are we here for each other or for our own egos?", we strengthen the ability in the

group to work through any tensions of polarity. We become freer to ideate and are simultaneously more connected to our aspiration towards an inclusive collaboration space. The Multilogue is an iterative process, like a spiral, which supports regularly investigating how we are treating each other and ourselves.

Source Author's photo, nikola hale

In an un-alienated space, we recognize that people prefer their default ways of doing things and people feel vulnerable outside their comfort zone. And we see that people need to be treated the way THEY want to be treated. There is no universal rulebook for co-creation of collaborative spaces. In an un-alienated space, we see ourselves as liminal space explorers, trying to figure out how to get stuff done in a group with diversities. We know that we don't have the solution until we interact, listen, and build together.

14 How Do Nudges and Queries Support Co-creating Our Collaboration Spaces?

The Multilogue is not a model; it is not a theory; it is an approach, a perspective we can take when we work at the intersections of cultural groups or communities. The Multilogue offers nudges and queries to enable the actors in a group to construct their own psychologically safe, brave new spaces for collaboration.

"Queries", in the tradition of the Society of Friends I was exposed to growing up in Philadelphia, are a series of specific questions used for reflection. I call the general proposals or options we consider when designing the queries, "nudges". They are not meant to be manipulative or paternalistic; we respect the dignity of the individual and the validity of diverse opinions and preferences among group members. These nudges and queries need to be developed by those involved in your community of

practice. This community is any group of people whom, "you regularly meet and work with and with whom you share a concern or a passion for something you do and want to learn how to do it better" (Nyberg, 2019).

Warning about creating queries and nudges
The nudges we choose will impact the queries we develop, and these queries we design influence the development a group may take. As such, they are designed to steer the construction of the collaboration space in a certain direction. This direction is consciously biased towards egalitarian, non-hierarchical, non-discriminatory, inclusive community-building. This means that groups which do not ascribe to these values will not find any resonance here. The intention is not to cancel voices which appear, or censure opinions. Replies which are deviant or unexpected deserve exploration and will ultimately strengthen the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Each group that ventures down the Multilogue path needs to communicate with each other as to which queries and nudges are appropriate for their intentions and goals at a certain point in time.

15 What Are Examples of Nudges and Queries? How Do I Use Them?

I offer you the nudges and queries below to experiment with and have no expectation that they meet your needs. Feel free to tweak them or completely re-invent the nudges and queries your group can benefit from. Initially, a smaller group of members in your community, perhaps the advisors or the most active members, can examine these nudges in the first list below to choose a theme which fits the energies, needs, or hopes for your group at present. Next, explore and once again, adopt or adapt some queries from the examples of queries to foster the discovery process in your community.

If you are willing to share how you used nudges and queries in one of your groups, please tell me. You may decide that an external facilitator could best introduce this approach; ultimately, as you become familiar with the multilogue approach to co-creation of your collaboration space, the goal is that all group members propose nudges and queries themselves.

Examples of nudges to adopt or adapt

- **ENERGIZE: How will we energize and nourish our collaboration space**?
  - How often? Who will choose the queries? How shall we integrate these into our meetings? The multilogue approach reminds all actors present in the specific moment, for a particular situation, and context to regularly reflect and continually co-create our space with intention.

- **BALANCE: Which queries can we use to balance energies and align the group again, if interactions begin veering off towards toxicity or ego-land, complacent echo chambers or groupthink?**
  - Does the group need to tone down dominance or dial up contribution? No collaboration group can sustain the intensity of multiloguing at every moment; actors in the group will weave in and out of multiloguing moments.

- **MULTIPLICITY: How will we collect our interdisciplinary and diverse perspectives?**
  - The multilogue approach feels safe, people feel welcome and welcomed, regardless of status, title, or role. Actors stay alert and remain conscious of the impact and consequences of their behaviors. How will we recognize our own blind spots and unconscious biases?

- **PARTICIPATION: How will we uncover our multiple expectations about participation?**
  - Have we been judging behaviors that do not fit our own assumptions about participation? This has diverse connotations; people need to feel comfortable to contribute, in the way and frequency they desire. All voices matter. If people want to share, we listen without unsolicited advice, blame, or judgment.

- **FRICTION: How will we deal with conflict, friction, disagreement, and deviance**?
  - What does this mean in practice for us? Are the following to be avoided or explored: friction without fire, deviance without division, and conflict without combat? Our group could provide us access to diverse sets of experience, if we stay open to others' insights. Even in conflict, we are present for each other, and we remind ourselves of the potential growth by shifting our own perspectives.

16 How Do Queries Shake Up, Wake Up, or Take Up Unspoken or Controversial Thoughts?

In the multilogue we are all learners, not assuming, not expecting, staying spacious, many-to-many. Once a smaller group has discussed the nudge to try out first, queries are needed to guide an open discussion, or meditation, free dance, drawing session, break out rooms, small group sprints or whatever techniques you prefer to gather collective wisdom and input.

Queries are the specific questions that a community of practice can use to enable collaboration in diversity, from the very first meeting to subsequent points in time.

Queries can strengthen supportive, inclusive, and collaborative behaviors when things are moving forward smoothly. And they can help in unpacking the alienating or toxic sticky stuff, by removing blame and through seeking understanding, if necessary, when the group or some members are somehow stuck.

My fascination with how people collaborate is buoyed by the concept of "warm ideas" from Arthur P. Bochner. He called ideas "warm" if they "compel us to move closer to our subject matter, using ideas to extend inquiry into new territory and amplifying our understanding beyond what we knew before we started". Bochner (1981) asks, "is the world of inquiry large enough to accommodate all the multiple interests …" in a group? We, as collaboration enablers, need to carefully curate the queries and nudges that we design for our communities of practice, our groups of trainees, or our cohorts of learners.

Examples of queries to adapt, adopt, and experiment with

- **ARRIVAL & GROWTH: What are some situations in which queries support the growth of our collaboration gardens?**
  - At the first meeting, or when new people join, or at the beginning of every meeting, we need to consider multiplicity. We access diverse modes of entry, from visual images, physical movements, written text, background music, a video clip of a post-modern dance performance, some words in the chat, an introductory round, or a few moments of silence to settle in. Only through experimentation with different arrival modes can we discover what resonates for the members of our group. These small group or pair discussions break the ice, share multiplicity, and begin trust building.
  - How do you prefer to start a meeting? What atmosphere do you want to create? What's happening in our worlds that we want to mention? Or that we don't have to mention?
  - How did the video, poem, photograph, etc. we chose today resonate with you? Which images or associations came to mind?
  - How would you prefer to first exchange about a complex topic? Receive an email with the topic in advance of the meeting so you can prepare, in writing individually, in pairs with someone you already know, in the chat, anonymously, first talking to a local colleague and then replying through a third person? Or first listening to the others, and then sharing your ideas?
- **FREQUENCY: How can we re-energize groups that meet regularly and have become stale?**
  - The frequency and timing of the use of queries varies; one community may use a query at every meeting, another may focus on alternating the focus on the project or decision to be made, and perhaps hold a query at the end of the meeting or the following week. Any member can request a query moment, even if they then need to wait to address it.

  - Most important is this: queries are not designed for only when people or progress are stuck. Queries are also employed to recognize, appreciate, and reinforce behaviors and patterns which are helpful for collaboration. Considering the history of group development, current atmosphere, external pressures, internal situations, we pose those queries which are relevant at this moment, designing them for the atmosphere in the group.

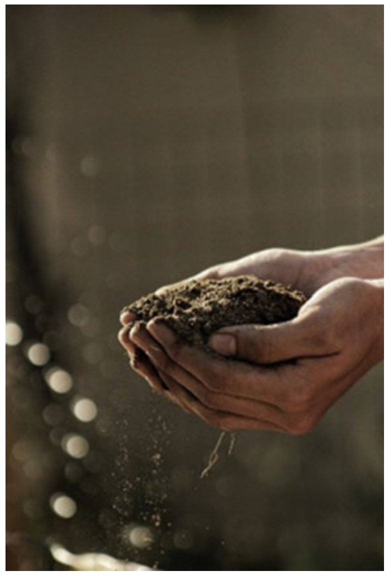
- **THE HOW: In our communities of practice: have we really discussed HOW we collaborate?**
  - Are we asking the right questions? What are the right questions? What are we missing? What does our group need right now? What don't we need? What has worked in building trust and a safe exploration space in our group? What motivates you to attend, listen, observe, contribute?
  - What might happen if we explored our different expectations and assumptions about how we communicate? Do you think while speaking, or prefer to think first on your own, and then share a more carefully crafted statement? How do you define participation, or making a valuable contribution? How do you need our collaboration space to feel?
  - What should we focus on, the WHAT we are doing or the HOW it feels? Or both? Or something else? Is the balance comfortable for you? What surprised me about your behavior today? What surprised you about my behavior today?

- **EXTERNAL PRESSURES: Would it make sense to dedicate some time and energy to figuring out HOW we get things done?**
  - When we need to work according to stakeholder requirements, which may be externally given or internally defined by the group itself, then deadlines, crises or other burning issues create pressure and tension. How the group deals with these issues is a choice. To avoid getting lost, wasting energy or time or other resources, it is valuable to return to the following queries which promote alignment and inclusion.
  - Do you dare to share what feels like pressure or stress for you? How are the external events, deadlines, the pandemic, the need to isolate, the obligation to return to the office, etc., impacting your ability to focus? Which choices are you making which allow these events to cloud your ability to see clearly? Is there an ally in the community whom you want to talk with?

- **PROJECTED SIMILARITY: Are you sure everyone holds the same ideas about what we are doing in our group?**
  - How do we understand our project and what stakeholders expect? What do we, you, I still need to finish? What don't we need? Who has capacity, knowledge, expertise, resources to support someone else?
  - Since every group varies in their focus, purpose, and intentions and every project has different conditions and framework, you need to develop queries which make sense for your unique circumstances.

17 Are You, in Your Community of Practice, Ready to Grow Your Multilogue?

The Multilogue is a beloved garden. We need to prepare the earth, aerate the soil, provide nutrients into the existing ground, nourish, and sustain it. The supportive environment we construct is a dynamic, on-going process which needs regular attention like a seedling. It needs to sprout, grow roots, be planted, fertilized, watered, and protected from predators and harsh conditions.



Source Photo by Gabriel Jimenez[1]

Mia, Bernhard, and Thomas have begun preparing the soil for their garden of innovation. Using the queries which resonate for them, they are taking the time and effort to ask and listen, to share "their" default ways of working, thinking, collaborating. By exploring their projections of similarity, their fixed mindsets, and unconscious biases, they are finding responses to the need for balance and multiplicity. The result cannot be predicted; they are willing to experiment with the ambiguity of this new collaboration space they are creating.

Perhaps a new design for their garden, the interdisciplinary course, will begin to flow. Maybe a common understanding will evolve of the value of multiple perspectives on process, contents, flavor, felt sensations, told and untold stories. It will make

[1] (https://unsplash.com/@gabrielj_photography?utm_source=unsplash%26utm_medium=referral%26utm_content=creditCopyText) on Unsplash (https://unsplash.com/s/photos/gardening?utm_source=unsplash%26utm_medium=referral%26utm_content=creditCopyText).

sense particularly for them. Are you ready to bring the patience of the gardener's hand to nurturing your own Multilogue?

Our challenge is to rethink our lifespaces and workplaces to include and learn from voices not heard enough in the past, and incorporate voices never heard before. With deep respect and belief in the creative power of our diversity, we shift our paradigms by focusing on commonalities. The Multilogue is a step on this transcultural journey by creating un-alienated spaces for collaboration in diversity.

> Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
> There is a field. I'll meet you there.
> —Jalal ad-Din Mohammad Rumi.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "The Essence of Multilogue, Nudges and Queries: Enabling Un-alienated Collaboration Spaces", by Nikola Hale

- Are you a "recovering interculturalist", or how do you answer, "what do you do"?
- Are you good at talking about cultural complexity and diversity, but stuck in your echo chambers of how you think about them?
- Are you good at talking about "culture", but still stuck in your default categories?
- Who are you? Do you stuff identity into boxes? Is identity static?
- How can you fertilize the soil for your collaboration garden?
- What does your garden of collaboration need to get things done?
- Will you throw the old gardening tools away, redesign how you use them, or make new tools?
- What might you discover in an uncomfortable situation, if you were willing to take a pause to find out?
- How can we find a rhythm of communication which works for both of us, if you prefer a waltz and I like salsa better?
- What could this mean for you, to create a lifespaces and workplaces in which people do not feel alienation?
- Are you, in your community of practice, ready to grow your Multilogue?
- How could nudges and queries support your group?

Acknowledgments I feel deep gratitude to my students, to the communities of practice I am active in, and to my peers in the exploration of human behavior, and to Julika Baumann Montecinos, Jeremy Solomons, Sabine Aydt, Sheila Ramsey, Nadine Binder, and Holger Barunke for their warm support. For in-depth exploration of Gendlin and his work on "felt sensing" in embodied cognition, see Sabine Aydt's chapter, "Co-creation of Meaning".

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Co-creation of Meaning Through Experiencing: How to Transform an Alienating Situation into a Situation of Belonging?

Sabine Aydt

Abstract Humans have a feeling of belonging to their fellow beings when they can say what they mean and are able to act accordingly toward others. When what we say or do does not make sense for others, we feel a diminished sense of belonging. Within this paper such situations are referred to as alienating situations. When a loss of sense of belonging threatens the relationships the challenge is to restore a shared understanding. The following questions become relevant: How does co-creation of meaning work? And how can co-creation of meaning be fostered in alienating situations?

Drawing on Eugene Gendlin's theory of experiencing (Gendlin, in 1962, 1997), this article will explore the process of meaning-making in more detail. The Austro-American philosopher and psychotherapist draws attention to the key role of experiencing when we create meaning. Some relevant aspects of his work on *"Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*" (Gendlin, E. (1962, 1997). Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning. A Philosophical and Psychological. Approach to the Subjective. Northwestern University Press.) will be presented. He emphasizes the importance of the human capacity to relate to a preverbal, embodied but very precise experiencing of situations, that he calls "felt meaning." The hypothesis is: if we can learn to intentionally use "felt meaning" in the process of creation of meaning, this can be a resource for creating a sense of belonging with others with whom we bring forth new meaning. This paper will present case studies for situations of alienation, introduce felt meaning and describe a teaching mode based on this approach developed and applied by the author in the context of intercultural competence courses in higher education. It aims at showing how co-creation of meaning through experiencing can make a practical contribution to the concept of transcultural competence.

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© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2023
J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_11

1 Introduction

In most situations of human encounter, co-creation of meaning works implicitly and subconsciously. However, in certain situations, we notice that the symbols we use do not evoke in others the meaning that we wanted to point to. We experience that something in the situation "doesn't make sense." When we reach the boundaries of our understanding, it can trigger a feeling of alienation.[1] With Edward Hall the idea arose "that under these conditions we must learn to understand the 'out of awareness' aspects of communication" (Hall, 1959, p. 29). The encouraging message of his approach is that, by doing so, everyone can learn to communicate across diverse mindsets. Since Edward Hall, an entire field of scholars and educators has been concerned with the question of how to accomplish this and what competencies are needed to do so. The Delphi Study on Transcultural Competence has recently united experts in this field to reflect current discussions. It stated as an intermediate result: "*Transcultural competence refers to interactively and intentionally negotiate and (co-)construct meaning by shared experience*" (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). If we want to foster this competence, it will be interesting to describe in more detail the out of awareness aspects of what we do, when we construct or create meaning. The focus of this article is not on a definition of what "intercultural" or "transcultural" is. Rather, it is concerned with elaborating the process of meaning-making as a cultural practice and competence. We will then try to point out how this can enrich the concept of transcultural competence.

There are two major paradigms that address the issue of shared meaning in different ways. On the one hand there is the paradigm of a dualism of an inner and outer world, which has been deeply rooted in European philosophy since Descartes (cf. Aydt, 2015b, p. 237f). If we follow the idea of such a separation, meaning is a particular internal datum represented externally by symbols. These symbols are familiar to a certain group of people, but their meaning can be hidden to the outgroup. Intercultural learning activities often aim at discovering and explaining the hidden meaning. But once the hidden meaning is recognized, the problem of acceptance and (non-)willingness to adjust arises. It is not evident that understanding what others mean is sufficient to adapt to a new situation. Nor does adjustment always lead to acceptance. Another worldview, that of constructivists, focuses on the construction of meaning by social actors in a particular context (cf. Bennett, 2017). When a person learns to recognize that they are the author of a certain meaning they can deconstruct their understanding and construct new meaning, ideally together with the members of the other group. However, both views on meaning and learning lack a description of what exactly we do when we discover meaning, adapt to the new meaning or (jointly) construct meaning.

[1] For a deep understanding of alienation see Barbara Schellhammer´s book "Becoming alien-able" (2019).

2 Alienating Situations—Examples and Learning Approaches

In the following the author will describe case studies from her experiences during a long-term stay in Benin, West Africa. These narratives will be used to illustrate the experience of alienation, the loss of a sense of belonging, and the attempts to create meaning from such situations.

2.1 Explaining and Understanding Cultures

I was new as an Austrian development worker in Benin. It was the first conference to which I was invited. The invitation said that it would start at 10:00. When I arrived on time, two men were running around the conference room, sweeping the floor and rearranging chairs. I was the only attendee present, and clearly something was wrong here, very different to what I had expected. I checked to see if I had read the invitation correctly and found that the place, day and time were right. I did not know what to do, felt uncomfortable, out of place. Nevertheless, I looked for a place where I would not stand out too much, and waited. Stereotypical interpretations ran through my head: "Europeans have the clock. Africans have time." But it was not possible to deduce from it how I should behave. "Should I go home and come back in an hour? Or will the other participants come in the next few minutes?" I asked myself. I lacked points of reference to guide my behavior and felt helpless.

The room gradually filled with people. The invited speakers took their places at the podium. Nevertheless, there was still nothing to indicate that the event would begin. I had read in the invitation that a representative of the Ministry of Education was to give the opening speech. I suspected that we were all now waiting for this person to arrive. When he finally appeared, about an hour and a half after the announced start, he spoke a few formulaic phrases and then left the hall again with his entourage. Resentment stirred in me. How could so many people be kept waiting? Why did this person get all the respect and could afford to disrespect everyone else? I drew the conclusions that society in Benin must obviously be hierarchical, undemocratic, and formalistic. I asked myself: "Will I ever be able to get used to this? On the other hand, might it actually be more relaxing for me in the long run if I take the clock less seriously and adjust to just having time? How can this go on?" I felt strange and alone.

Reflecting on this experience I assume that I didn't feel like a complete outsider from the beginning because I felt I had enough relevant information to participate. At some point, I realized that I had fallen out of meaningful interaction with the environment and I changed perspective. I took on the role of an observer, detached myself from the situation and began to look at myself and the others as if from the outside. It seemed to me that something was going on that was hidden from my understanding. The view from outside is typical for the anthropological view

in search of meaning in the world of others (Geertz, 1983, p. 9), which is also the background of intercultural theory (cf. Moosmüller, 2007).

Later, I was able to draw on concepts from this field to describe the different, invisible cultural patterns. For example, the use of time is relevant here. Levin distinguishes cultural patterns that are oriented by time of the clock from others that are oriented by event time (cf. Levin, 1999) An event (the start of the conference) can be triggered either by a specific time (announced in the invitation) or by another event (the arrival of the guest of honor). But there is overlap, too: In my experience in an Austrian environment, the guest of honor also plays a special role, but, in contrast to the example, is nevertheless integrated into a generally valid (clock) time frame. Interpreting situations using cultural patterns helps to see that the unexpected behavior of others makes sense in their logic. It is also possible to learn to apply one behavior pattern or another in a given situation. But that does not make the different concepts compatible and conflicts may arise. Such conflicts can occur externally—between the users of the different patterns, about who adapts to whom—or internally—between the desire to adapt to new patterns and the adherence to one's own patterns. It remains to be feared that, under stressful conditions, there will be a reversion to the pattern that is familiar. From here, the question arises as to how a sustainable transformation of patterns and relationships can take place.

2.2 Deconstructing and Constructing Meaning

The next example is also from Benin and shows a situation where the problem was that the explanations failed completely. It made me realize how dependent I am on (rational) explanations (cf. Aydt, 2015b). Benin is known as the cradle of the Voodoo tradition. Voodoo practices are not at all what one would expect from having seen some horror movies. Voodoo is one of the official religions in Benin and its traditional customs are deeply rooted in everyday life. But since I couldn't really understand what they meant, they were unsettling to me. However, there were some performances of masked dances that were popular with many foreigners and I decided to attend such an event. These masks were called *Zangbeto*. The mask consists of a conical basket slightly higher than a person and completely covered with colored bast fibers.

One Sunday afternoon I sat in a stadium to watch the *Zangbeto* show. On the field, I saw several *Zangbeto* who were escorted by guards to keep them away from each other and the audience, which made them seem rather dangerous. All of a sudden one of the *Zangbetos* started to dance. At the sound of drum music, he moved in circles all over the place and the raffia flew around him. My western thinking concluded that it was a man covered with a basket and moving. But then something spectacular happened: the *Zangbeto* came to rest and the guards lifted up the basket. The audience could see the inside of the basket—completely empty. We saw an egg lying on the ground. The guards put the basket back on the ground and the *Zangbeto* started dancing again only to stop at another spot. When the basket was raised again

we could see a chicken running like mad. The procedure was repeated several times. The *Zangbeto* tried to outdo one another with their skills. They even produced little figurines with colored lights nodding their heads mechanically. I knew about the art of illusionists and imagined that there was a possibility for hiding inside the basket. However, I could not explain how a basket hiding a human being could be lifted up without any effort. What a great show! But how did they do this? Later, I was told by some colleagues that there actually was a human being under the mask. These people, probably men, are initiated into a special knowledge. When they dance they enter a trance and become "inhabited" by a "spirit." It is the "spirit" that gives them the power to transform themselves into all the objects and animals that we had seen. I could not grasp this idea. But I could not find any other satisfactory explanation either. I was literally at the edge of my understanding and was desperately looking for an explanation.

I remember that after a while of not understanding my restless mind came up with more or less the following ideas: "Obviously, there are some 'initiated' people who keep the secret knowledge about these ceremonies, I get that. But how confusing that my colleagues can accept the 'magic' powers of the *Zangbeto*. They are academics who had a westernized education. Can they really believe in this? But wait a moment! Every week I get a fax from Austria without understanding how the technology works. I am completely ready to accept the 'magic' produced by the technology of my culture. I just trust in the knowledge of the 'technically initiated' people."

What had happened? The explanation I had received from my colleagues could not help me understand the meaning of the phenomenon and how it worked. Instead, more questions arose, I struggled with the incompatibility of two worldviews and my alienation from my colleagues grew. But I had already spent some time in the country and was ready for a relativistic approach and to deconstruct my view. I assumed that there had to be something understandable. From that stance I found common ground and constructed a new meaning for the situation from the "parts" (technology + initiated) that were already there, which helped me stay on an equal footing with my colleagues. My construction of meaning helped me to overcome my non-understanding without devaluing otherness, and enabled me to stay in touch. But I still felt the distinct difference between "me" and "them," "my world" and "their world". I was aware that the functioning of a transformation by spirits and communication by fax was not the same. A bridge had been constructed—the belief in the "initiated"—but from the bridge it was clear that there were two banks and troubled waters in between. In this case, the attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct a new meaning could not yet overcome the alienation.

In both examples from Benin, learning steps were taken, but no intentional co-creation of meaning with others could take place. However, when I later came into contact with Eugene Gendlin's theory of experiencing (Gendlin, 1962), it shed new light on my alienating experiences. And an idea of how to intentionally engage in and teach co-creation emerged. Therefore, some relevant aspects of Gendlin's theory are now presented.

3 Eugene Gendlin's Experiencing Theory and Its Relevance to Situations of Alienation

So how does creation of meaning work, and especially co-creation of meaning that enables the sense of belonging to others? Eugene Gendlin has a surprisingly simple answer to the question. As a philosopher and as a practitioner in psychotherapy he draws our attention to a phenomenon that comes so "naturally" that normally we do not even notice it: He lays out the potential of "experiencing." For him, experiencing is the key to describing the creation of meaning. He writes his theory of experiencing against the background of his life as a foreigner. He had to flee Nazi Vienna and learn a new language and cultural patterns in the United States. He studied and later taught philosophy at the University of Chicago.

Gendlin applied his philosophy in the field of psychotherapy in collaboration with Carl Rogers the co-founder of the humanistic approach in psychotherapy (cf. Schoeller, 2019 pp. 183–190). In his seminal book *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*, he explores "*how experiencing functions in our cognitive and social activities*" (Gendlin, 1962, p. xi). Gendlin himself never laid out the philosophical roots of his work in detail (cf. Gendlin, 1962, p. xvi). This has probably also led to less attention being paid to his work in the academic world. Today, Donata Schoeller has the great merit to have elaborated the philosophical references in the past and present and thus to have made his work more accessible.[2] It also becomes clear that what Gendlin described in 1962 corresponds in an astonishing way with current embodiment approaches e.g., in the cognitive sciences (e.g., McGilchrist, 2009, Varela et al. 2016), in linguistics (cf. Busch, 2012, pp. 21ff) and intercultural communication theory (cf. Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004). They all emphasize the importance of the inter-relationship between bodily experience and symbols, words, concepts, patterns, signs, and actions (cf. Gendlin, 1962, p. xi). Gendlin states: "*Meaning is formed in the interaction of experiencing and something that functions symbolically*." (ibid., p. 5) Gendlin's specific contribution is that he also shows how we can use this insight in practice.

3.1 What Is Meant by Experiencing?

It can be demonstrated by a simple experiment with the term "relationship." Relationship is not an entity we can see and point to, but we know what it means to us. As a reader, you might pause for a moment, take the term "relationship" and feel its meaning in a physical way. Gendlin would suggest putting the book aside,

[2] Schoeller shows that Gendlin's thinking was inspired by American Pragmatists: Charles S. Peirce and his emphasis on the role of a pre-conceptional embodied feeling, John Dewey (situation) and William James (stream of consciousness). He was also influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey's reference to experiencing (Erleben), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and others (cf. Schoeller, 2019, 2021a, p. 209); Schoeller & Dunaez, 2018, pp. 133–139.

paying attention to the center of your own body, and asking yourself, "What is it like in there when I hear the term 'relationship'?" …. Before words or other symbols come up, there may be a bodily felt "something" that you can point to, that you can relate to, a complex but precise intuitive "knowing" of what "relationship" means to you. There may also be, for example, a warm feeling in your gut or a tension in your chest. Furthermore, images or memories (a symbol, a person, a situation …) and feelings (love, anger, …) may emerge. Experiencing encompasses *the whole* of what "relationship" means to you. Even before we use words and concepts, we always have a preverbal, embodied but very precise "feel," an experiencing of the word or concept, which includes more than an explicit explanation of the term can ever cover.[3] Gendlin calls this phenomenon "felt meaning" (ibid., p. 11).

Questions to ponder

- Do you remember situations in which you referred to embodied cognition or felt meaning?
- Can you pay attention to your embodied "feel" while you continue reading the text?

3.2 What Is the Function of Felt Meaning?

There are two directions of the relationship between felt meaning and symbols: the richness of felt meaning—an unseparated sensory, embodied, preverbal "feel"- fuels the meaning of words and concepts (e.g., relationship). And conversely words and concepts can invoke a rich felt meaning (cf. ibid., pp. 95–100). Once a relationship between felt meaning and a symbol is established the symbol can be recognized and has the function of invoking felt meaning in many other situations and in other persons (cf. ibid., pp. 100–106). There is a process of moving back and forth between felt meaning and symbols, a "*'zigzag' which employs both powers*" (ibid., p. xvii), the implicit felt meaning, and the explicit symbolizations. This happens, for example, when children try out a new word. They have a "feel" for what it means and then use it to "test" how adults react to it to enrich the felt meaning. Similarly, an adult who learns a new word in a foreign language refers to the felt meaning of the familiar word, e.g., *bread,* and "uses" it to "feed" a new word, e.g., *pain* in French, and then incorporates further felt meaning in the context of the new language. This process allows for a dynamic change of meaning and for learning. The zigzag-process based

[3] Bennett and Castiglioni (2004) elaborate a very close idea of an "intuitive feeling of culture" which "is built on sensory feeling, but it resides more at the interface between physical sensation and conscious awareness." They refer to it as "embodied feeling" (ibid., p. 250) which for them is "a key to training for intercultural competence" (ibid., p. 249). The term "felt meaning" described in this article could be a completion of their approach in theory and practice.

on felt meaning *"can make new sense and lead us to modify our concepts, rather than being confined in them or ending in mere contradictions*" (ibid., p. xvii).

Gendlin shows how language works[4] and highlights that it is also a way of integrating the general and the particular. "*When we use language to talk, to think, hear or read, our words themselves […] are general for all speakers of that language. But what you mean and want to say is particular and always bodily implicit*" (p. 139). Using language allows humans to accommodate commonality and particular difference.

Gendlin points out that we have implicit body knowledge not only in relation to words, but also in relation to *situations*. This happens unconsciously, for example, when one enters a room and immediately perceives, feels, senses, … the atmosphere. There is a tendency to overlook felt meaning because it initially comes without words. But if we value and hold on to the state of "there is something relevant and I do not have words for it yet," a different perspective can open up: Felt meaning is more precise than what we can explicitly say because it is not limited to words and can take in all the complexity and intricacy of all situations in the past and the present, as well as everything we can imagine for the future. For example, if an experienced mountain guide says to you, "I cannot explain exactly why, but I don't feel comfortable on this hike," you probably won't go on and take his "feel" about the situation seriously. I argue that the use of felt meaning in language and in situations is an essential cultural competence. Being able to use it intentionally enhances a sense of self-efficacy which is crucial in situations of uncertainty and alienation.

3.3 Can We Learn to Use Felt Meaning Intentionally?

Gendlin's point is that everyone has the potential of relating directly to the implicit, the "felt meaning" of a situation, which he later also calls "felt sense." In his research with Carl Rogers he was able to show that clients in psychotherapy need to access what a situation implicitly really means to them and to develop and share this felt sense with another person. He proved that the functioning of such a process was the indicator for changes in the therapy (Gendlin, 1962, pp. 34–43). According to this approach, experiencing *is* accessible and communicable under the conditions of a certain attention and attitude.

Gendlin also found that not all clients could use this skill as a matter of course, so he developed a method of practice he called *Focusing* (Gendlin, 1978). He has also elaborated a model for creative scientific thinking from the felt sense called *Thinking at the Edge* (Gendlin & Hendricks 2018a). These methods or more generally "*felt sensing*" (Schoeller, 2021a, p. 213) as a practice train us to focus attention on the felt sense and to allow words to come *from there*. It also allows one to "open up" the

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[4] Schoeller undertakes a detailed linguistic-philosophical classification of Gendlin's philosophy in her book "Close Talking" (Schoeller 2019).

meaning of a familiar word, concept, or situation by diving into the felt sense, where one would find a surprisingly dense web of meaning that allows for new connections.

What comes from felt sensing needs to be welcomed with an attitude of curiosity, without interpreting, labeling, or judging it quickly. Thus, felt sensing enables a new way of thinking that allows to open up the *"games"* (Wittgenstein) and patterns of language and culture. This is what makes this skill so relevant not only in psychotherapy but also for situations of alienation, in which it is necessary to open up the already established meaning of a situation to a new meaning that can be shared freshly with others. Based on his experiences in Nazi Austria, Gendlin also emphasizes that this ability is also very important as an antidote to any kind of closed system of thought (cf. Schoeller, 2021b).

Gendlin elaborates further that *new* meaning can only emerge from felt sensing (Gendlin, 1962, p. 45). He illustrates the operation of the creative force of felt sensing with the metaphor of a poet who wants to finish a poem (Gendlin, 1993, pp. 28f). At the end of a line, a word is missing ….., but the poet has a felt sense which Gendlin illustrates with "….." The "….." *"knows, […] implies, wants "*the last word (ibid., p. 28). The ending is not predetermined, but still, not just any word can fill the "…..". The felt sense is precise. What the poet does is more than working with "trial and error," he refers to his implicit knowledge and thinks from and with that bodily knowledge. He lets words come from there, checks again and his bodily knowledge will "answer." When the word comes that was "implied," he will feel that the poem is now complete. The implicit felt sense has been symbolized in words, a creative shift has happened and the situation has been "*carried forward*" (ibid., p. 29). A similar experience can be made by academics who are in the creative process of writing a text. The poem or new text can now be a point of reference for the reader, who will experience the occurring of meaning as they read the words. I suggest to take this as an instance of a process of co-creation of meaning.

At this point we can resume, from the perspective of experiencing theory, what we do when we "create" meaning: *"Meaning occurs for us, when something experienced assumes a symbolic character. We employ words as symbols. We can also employ acts or images or some inner act of holding something in awareness, labeling it 'this'."* (Gendlin, 1962, pp. 45f). This helps in describing what we can do intentionally in alienating situations, in which we need new meaning to "occur": we can refer to experiencing, let a bodily felt inner datum (the felt sense), emerge, "hold it" and let meaning "occur," symbolize it (in words, images, acts or just "this feel") and share these new symbolizations with others.

Questions to ponder

- How do you listen to felt sense?
- Have you ever experienced a creative shift that resulted from (un)intentional felt sensing?

3.4 What Happened in Benin?

Looking back on my experiences: In the conference situation my thinking was stuck in my culturally predetermined concepts of punctuality and hierarchy. The different conflicting patterns seemed to separate two worlds. I could not access the implicit "feel" of the situation as a whole from where I might have found creative ways to carry the situation forward. In the *Zangbeto* situation I was equally stuck in my concepts of humans, spirits and objects. They were distinct for me and my mind could not grasp the meaning of a situation in which I observed a transformation of humans into spirits and objects. My not being able to understand the explanations and my "meditating" on the *Zangbeto* situation brought forth a new idea. From the point of view of the experiencing theory this can be understood as relating directly to the felt sense of the whole situation. From—unintentional—felt sensing, a new concept emerged that "somehow made sense," the "technically initiated people." And it made a difference: the relevance of the whole situation shifted. The situation was "carried forward." A new meaning of the situation was symbolized in rather strange words which could not establish a common meaning but allowed me to think my way out of the already given concepts and become receptive to new meaning. Today, I assume that this situation was a moment of creation of new meaning from felt sensing and could have been a chance for co-creating meaning. If I had already understood felt sensing as a resource, I could have told my colleagues what—surprisingly—had come up in me—as an invitation to check what my idea of "technically initiated people" would bring up in them and start a co-creative and playful dialogue.

3.5 How Can Felt Sensing Become a Resource for Co-creating Meaning?

Thinking, speaking, writing, and acting from and with this bodily knowledge to meet a new situation does two things: a) it helps to intentionally go beyond familiar meaning and b) it brings forth words or symbols without already "imposing meaning" on them (Schoeller, 2021a, p. 207), thus helping to avoid a struggle for meaning. The emergence of "fresh" words ("the technically initiated people"), is an "explication" (Gendlin, 1962, pp. 106–111) of the implicit felt sense. In Gendlin's thinking, explicating refers to unfolding the implicitly felt meaning and making it explicit in a tentative way, which is different from explaining in a definitive way. Felt sensing and explicating require a sense of safety and an attitude of attention and sharing. Focusing practice shows that another person witnessing this unfolding of the implicit can develop their own meaning by checking the fresh words with their felt sense and re-sharing explications again, thus entering in a transformative dialogue. Such a process of co-creation of meaning empirically fosters a feeling of belonging with the others with whom we bring forth new meaning.

In situations in which mutual understanding or interacting gets stuck in some way the following steps can be identified for co-creating meaning through interactional felt sensing:

a. Become aware of a feeling of not understanding, of alienation and/or not belonging;
b. Recognizing this as an opportunity to engage with embodied meaning;
c. Pausing and felt sensing;
d. Allowing new meaning to emerge, a creative shift to occur;
e. Welcoming the new meaning without judging and categorizing it;
f. Articulating and sharing new words or symbols;
g. Listening and felt sensing by the partner(s) of interaction;
h. Repeating d) to g) by the partners in turn;
i. Reflect on what is helpful to cultivate a space for interactive experiencing.[5]

An environment that integrates experiencing must be cultivated and the practice of felt sensing must be learned. So let us see how an environment that allows such a process can be cultivated in higher education.

4 Learning to Communicate Through Experiencing—A Teaching Mode

I have been teaching seminars on "intercultural competences" for teachers and educators at universities and colleges for teacher training for many years. In doing so, I have found that learning about cultural differences and similarities can trigger a eureka! moment, but did not result in a sustainable action orientation (see also the conference example above) and often led to more uncertainty (cf. Aydt, 2015a). In addition, I found that cultural definitions imposed meaning on the situations of alienation that do not do justice to the great diversity and complexity of the situations experienced. Therefore, I began to guide students to examine their experiences of alienation and inductively derive patterns themselves before introducing cultural definitions. It became clear how much living in a situation of alienation is experienced as a struggle for meaning—on the one hand as an inner struggle (see inner conflicts in the examples) but also as a struggle for power of definition in society (and in the seminar group). It was therefore my concern to maintain an atmosphere of security, openness, and exchange in the seminar. Gendlin's approach to language and meaning revealed to me an alternative to this struggle: the possibility of consciously opening up concepts and using the creative potential of felt sensing. In this way, I found that some forms of speaking and some concepts about alienation and culture

[5] I am indebted to Nikola Hale for pointing out some similarity of these steps of felt sensing with the principles and practices of "Personal Leadership" developed by B. Schaetti, S. Ramsey and G. Watanabe (cf. Schaetti et.al. 2008). Interactional felt sensing is also very close to "Multiloguing" presented by Nikola Hale in this volume.

helped students to open up to new meanings and others led to closing off or even resistance. Accordingly, I chose the way of speaking, the concepts and also the timing at which they were presented very deliberately. The results encouraged me to work more and more with experiencing and felt sensing. This mode of experiential teaching made it possible to try to creatively develop a common language with the students about culture and alienation. Many of them discovered that integrating felt sensing into speaking and listening is a helpful practice when one is stuck in prejudices, normative patterns, closed categories, internal conflicts or has no orientation in a new situation. This has developed into a mode according to which I teach in seminars of one to four days. Depending on the time available, I have to choose concepts, but I always refer to experiencing, which is not always easy. I try to build, step by step, the conditions under which the collaborative creation of meaning from experiencing can take place in the classroom. The guiding question of the seminars is: How can we transform an alienating situation into one of learning and belonging? Here are some key aspects of my teaching experience described as far as I am able to explain my own practice, which is constantly evolving.

Teaching content: Alienating situations as opportunities and challenge.

- Perceiving the many contexts in which alienating situations can be relevant and describing how they can feel;
- Reflection on the potential of alienating situations as (outcome)open, ambivalent, directed toward something new.

Experiential teaching mode: It is my goal to integrate speaking and listening from the felt sense from the very beginning of a seminar. I try to set the example so the students will experience how it works. I share my stories and invite the participants to tell each other stories about when they were in alienating situations. When I listen to what they report back, I integrate felt sensing into my listening. When I sense that expressions point to an implicit complexity, I highlight them by simply reflecting back the words. After reflecting back, I usually pause in order to give time and space for more implicit meaning to unfold, if the participant wants to tell more. (Student: “The situation was unsettling.”—Teacher: “It was unsettling ….”—Student: “Yes, … it felt like I was invisible.”).

Teaching content: Foundations for safe handling of the experience of alienating situations.

- Introduction of concepts which describe the phenomena of alienation, discrimination, and the socio-psychological consequences as responses to the typical struggle for meaning, e.g.: the “crisis” of the stranger (Schütz, 1944), othering (Spivak, 1985), prejudices (Allport, 1954), stigma (Goffman, 1975);
- Developing empathy for vulnerability in such situations;
- The importance of self-care and safety in alienating situations as a condition to maintain an openness for learning.

Experiential teaching mode: After introducing a concept or model I ask students: How does that resonate with you? I encourage them to bring examples from their experiences and sense into the situations. Every example gives me an idea about the students' particular felt meaning of the concept and I reflect back which aspect of the concept seems to be of significance for her/him. Mostly the different examples point to different aspects. My goal is to allow each explication of particular felt meaning to stand equally next to the other. I model the attitude of curiosity and not judging to give the students the confidence that new ideas are welcome and it is safe to express them. The group experiences the rich intricacy of lived experience to which the concept points but that we can never capture with one definition. Thus, concepts can be "opened up" and different perspectives can be more easily related to and accepted.

Teaching content: Introducing "felt meaning" as a key to dealing with "culturally" alienating situations.

- Introduction of concepts that encircle the concept of "cultural knowledge" rather than defining it, e.g.: "web of meaning" (Geertz, 1983), "thinking as usual" (Schütz, 1944), "silent language" (Hall, 1959) and "tacit dimension" (Polanyi, 1985);
- Describing the phenomenon of confusion at the level of such normally unquestioned knowledge as "cultural alienation";
- Establishing a foundation for directly referring to "felt meaning" as a means of dealing with culturally alienating situations.

Experiential teaching mode: I use concepts that give phenomenological descriptions and/or use metaphors to point to the relevance of pre-conscious, incorporated, socially embedded knowledge in the context of alienating situations. At a certain point, students capture the complexity of the meaning of "culture" without trying to impose one meaning and confining it to any given definition. It becomes clear that concepts work the way we use them and any use gives rise to new felt meaning that can be explicated in words or metaphors. By using the concept of culture in this way it can easily be linked to other concepts and to the experience of alienation. The students experience how a "web of meaning" is being woven in the seminar by unfolding meanings creatively together and allowing connections to emerge. I can then point to felt meaning as something we have already been using throughout the seminar. I can indicate the ways to refer to felt meaning that we have already been practicing: slowing down, valuing "not understanding," speaking from felt meaning, and listening to implicit meaning and to others without quickly imposing meaning.

Teaching content: Reflection on the steps of the teaching model and the learning process of the students.

- Reflection on definitions of inter- and transcultural competences;
- Reflection on the competences acquired in the seminar.

Experiental teaching mode: As an example for the reflection of the students about their learning process here are some of their descriptions:

> "It was a process of becoming familiar with each other."
>
> "A common language emerged."
>
> "Dialogical thinking was possible."
>
> "Explicit knowledge can block something, close it off, and it is up to me to open it up."
>
> "It's not about conforming or not, it's about being allowed to be and being connected."
>
> "I've been given opportunities to separate myself from categories and learned how to do that and the mindfulness of not falling back into categories."

5 Felt Sensing as a Contribution to the Concept of Transcultural Competence

The hypothesis of this paper based on Gendlin's experiencing theory was: if we can learn to intentionally use "felt meaning" in the process of creation of meaning, this can be a resource for creating a sense of belonging with others with whom we bring forth new meaning. Therefore, an attempt was made to specify the process which is mostly out of awareness but implied when we speak of "co-creation of meaning." The strength of this approach is that it makes explicit what is always implicitly going on in human relationships and cultural practices—the interaction between felt meaning and symbols. It shows what we can do intentionally: It is possible to relate directly to felt sense, to let it unfold, and to share that with others. This enhances a sense of self-efficacy and encourages stepping into the flow of a meaning-making process that is directed toward something new. In the constant process of weaving (new) meaning from experiencing, one practices accommodating commonalities and particular differences. It is a practice of small steps which can transform an alienating situation into one of mutual learning.

For this purpose, a qualified interaction space has to be created. The example from classroom practice was used to illustrate how an environment can be cultivated that fosters the cultural competence to engage in intentional experiential meaning-making processes. This kind of bringing forth meaning in connection with others can be a joyful activity[6] that increasingly provides the stimulus to interact with others. As a result, incorporating the practice of interactional felt sensing into the concept of transcultural competence cited in the beginning leads to the following proposal: Transcultural competence refers to interactively and intentionally *cultivating a space of interaction in which* meaning is *co-created* by *felt, articulated,* and shared *experiencing*. This is meant to be an invitation to further develop this concept in the spirit of a co-creative process.

[6] The importance of joy as an impulse became clear in a co-creative felt sensing dialogue with Greg Walkerden.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Co-creation of Meaning through Experiencing: How to transform an alienating situation into a situation of belonging?", by Sabine Aydt

- Do you remember situations in which you referred to embodied cognition or felt meaning?
- Can you pay attention to your embodied "feel" while reading the text?
- How do you listen to felt sense?
- Have you ever experienced a creative shift that resulted from (un)intentional felt sensing?
- What happens when you pause and attend to your felt sense of the whole article?
- Can you grip that "feel" and relate it to your field of research or practice and let a new meaning emerge?

Acknowledgements for co-creative thinking: to all my students and to Nikola Hale, Milica Jankovic, Mandana Kerschbaumer, Katharina Novy, Regina Novy, Lil Reif, and Michaela Stumberger.

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Story Circles as an Intercultural Tool for Fostering Relationships

Darla K. Deardorff

Abstract This chapter details UNESCO Story Circles, a concrete tool for developing and practicing key intercultural competencies. UNESCO Story Circles have been used successfully around the world in a wide variety of contexts and can be foundational for intercultural dialogue and for bridging divides.

Humans have a deep need to connect and to live in relationship with one another. The pandemic emphasized this interconnectedness, even in the midst of isolation. Connections occur within and beyond the various groups of which we are members. The success of such connections depends to a great extent on the degree of intercultural competence demonstrated by those engaged in the interactions. The United Nations (UN), through its agency the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has developed a concrete tool for developing and practicing key intercultural competencies. This chapter explores this tool, known as UNESCO Story Circles, as a way to deepen connections and relationships among humans through practicing intercultural competencies.

1 What Is Intercultural Competence?

Before examining UNESCO Story Circles, it is important to understand what is meant by intercultural competence. There are many different definitions of intercultural competence, as well as over 30 terms used to describe this concept. UNESCO

Adapted from *Manual on Developing Intercultural Competences: Story Circles* (UNESCO/Routledge 2020).

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_12

intentionally uses the term intercultural competences and its 2013 publication "Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework," recognizes that much of the literature on this topic comes predominantly from the Global North. This publication examined some of the emerging themes within intercultural competence literature from different regions around the world. Based on that publication, the definition of intercultural competence was broadly defined as "adequate knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about …issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required (in)… interacting with others from different cultures" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 16). Some of the common elements of intercultural competence across different cultures include respect, self-awareness/identity, seeing from other perspectives/world views, listening, adaptation, relationship building, and cultural humility (UNESCO, 2013, p. 24). This 2013 publication included a visual conceptualization of the ways in which the many facets related to intercultural competence fit together. A key part of the publication is an Operational Plan that outlines five steps for implementing intercultural competence including clarifying, teaching, promoting, and then enacting intercultural competence with specific activities that could be implemented under each of these steps, primarily at the organizational or societal level. Missing from this was what could be done at the individual level in developing intercultural competence. As Hall and colleagues note, "it is important to view the acquisition of intercultural competence as a learner-centered process" (Hall et al., 2012, p. 8) meaning that, to develop intercultural competence, it is important to start with individuals, emphasized even more through UNESCO's mandate which acknowledges that peace begins in the minds of men and women.

There are many other definitions (and terms) of intercultural competence, depending on the language and culture (see Deardorff, 2009; Spitzberg & Changon, 2009 for examples). For instance, intercultural competence, through a summary consensus definition and as found in Fig. 1, has also been defined as "communication and behavior that is both effective and appropriate when interacting across difference" (Deardorff, 2009). Other definitions note the developmental stages of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1993; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005), the role of language (Byram, 2022), the importance of identity (Kim, 2009; Nwosu, 2009), the nature of relationship (Zaharna, 2022), and the role of mindfulness (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Many of the definitions highlight specific knowledge, skill, and attitude dimensions of competence and nearly all address differences between individuals. The 2020 UNESCO definition of intercultural competences (Deardorff, 2020) expands this notion of difference to include any difference, be it generational, gender, religious, socio-economic, linguistic, geographic, and so on.

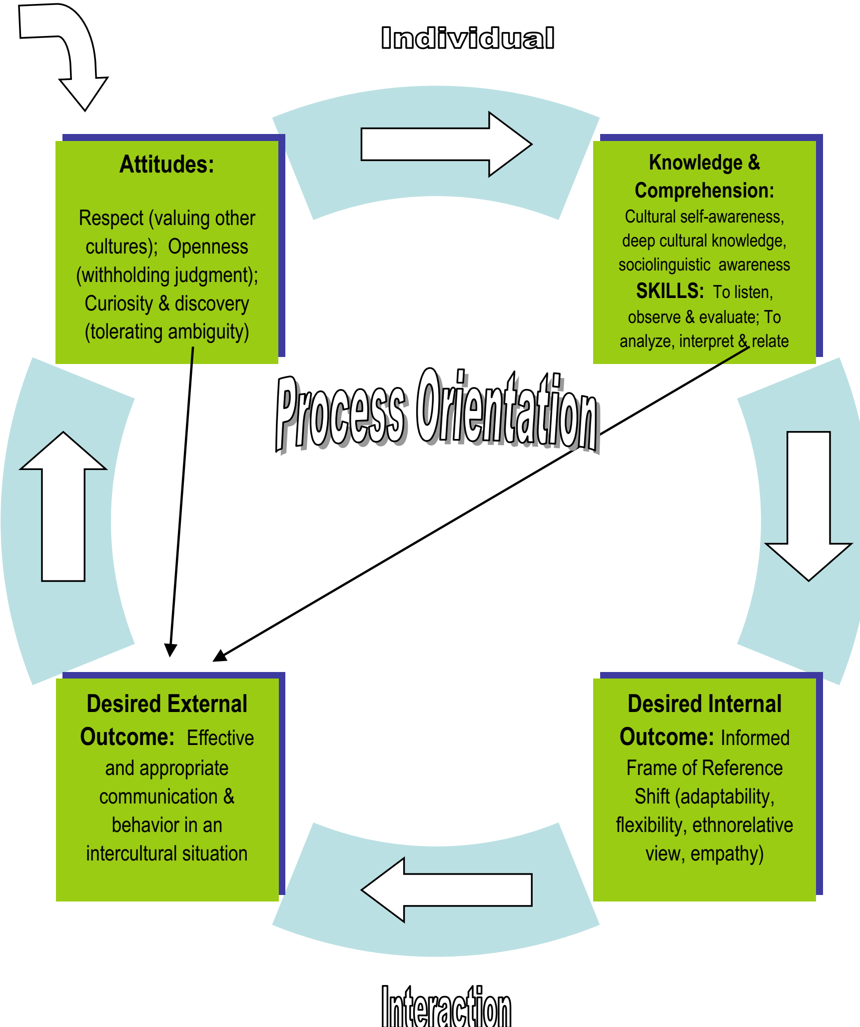

Fig. 1 Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009)
Notes Begin with attitudes; Move from individual level (attitudes) to interaction level (outcomes) Degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of attitudes, knowledge/comprehension, and skills

2 Developing a Practical Intercultural Tool

Seeking to identify a practical tool that could be used to develop intercultural competencies, UNESCO also desired that such a tool could be used with any group of people, anywhere in the world, using few to no resources and that could be facilitated by someone with no formal intercultural training. Emerging from numerous

focus groups and interviews around the world was the intercultural tool of UNESCO Story Circles (2020). Stories are universal to the human experience and circles have existed in indigenous cultures around the world for centuries. In fact, it is important to note that circles have more recently been introduced into mainstream societies for many purposes (Pranis, 2005). There are different types of circles including those for support, community-building, conflict, reintegration, and celebration. Circles have been used to augment the criminal justice system, address neighborhood disagreements, manage school classrooms, develop mission statements within organizations, resolve family conflicts, handle environmental and worker disputes, and facilitate dialogues within immigrant and host communities. However, UNESCO Story Circles are the first time that circles are being used to develop individuals' intercultural competence, which is what makes them an innovative tool for this explicit purpose.

Using Story Circles to develop intercultural competence is an innovative adaptation of what could even be considered an ancient tradition of storytelling found in many cultures. Story Circles used intentionally to develop specific intercultural competencies are innovative particularly in the use of specific intercultural prompts that guide the sharing of experiences and stories that focus on enhancing particular intercultural competence dimensions. This tool works for developing intercultural competence only when used with a thorough debriefing/follow-up discussion in which critical reflection is utilized. Detailed instructions, a list of possible intercultural prompts to use, and other supporting materials can be found in an open access *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competences: Story Circles* (Deardorff, 2020) available in more than six languages and published by UNESCO/Routledge.

Story Circles, as a type of talking circle, bring people together into a situation of relational possibility where, based on the Story Circle process, everyone is respected and considered equal and where participants are able to share more about themselves or a circumstance by telling their own stories based on their life experience. This sharing of personal experience not only validates the perspective of each individual but also generates new understandings and insights, as well as enabling the possibility of finding common ground. In the Story Circle, life experience is highly valued as participants make themselves vulnerable in sharing stories of joy and pain as well as struggle and triumph, which engage participants on many levels including emotional, mental, spiritual, and even physical levels. While participants can decide the degree to which they wish to share (through the experience they choose to share, which can be a more deeply meaningful or a more surface-level experience), research has shown that vulnerability, based on mutuality, can be transformational (Brown, 2012). Sharing such stories is not meant to convince, persuade, or provide arguments but rather, simply meant as a way to share specific life experience with each other.

3 Story Circles and Intercultural Competence Development

Story Circles provide a way for people from different backgrounds to come together to learn from each other and to explore similarities and differences. Through the

sharing of life experiences, participants come to learn more about themselves, as well as their fellow humans and, through this process, participants further develop key elements of intercultural competence including greater self-awareness, openness, respect, reflexivity skills, empathy, increased awareness of others, and, ultimately, greater cultural humility. Story Circles require one to be vulnerable enough to share one's own personal story, which is, in itself, a tool for reflection. Both self and group reflections are essential to the process of developing intercultural competence. The Story Circles experience becomes a tool for not only enhancing intercultural competence development, but also for deepening relationships with others and for emphasizing the interconnectedness of all parties involved.

4 Contexts of Story Circles

Specific situations in which UNESCO Story Circles have been used include the following:

1. Educational Settings—teachers, students, parents, and/or school administrators come together to understand each other's unique perspectives in regard to teaching and learning expectations, impact of cultural contexts on education, and the realities of daily life impacting learning (see Zwicky, 2005). Story Circles have also been used in university settings—in classrooms, for orientations, and for professional development of academics and staff (Deardorff & Quinlan, 2022; Ergai et al., 2022; Pradhan, 2022).
2. Refugees—refugees and community members come together to learn more about each other's experiences and in so doing, develop common ground, helping to build up community relationships and integrate refugees into their new communities.
3. Gender Equity—story circles have been adapted to address gender equity and to empower women to become leaders in their own contexts
4. Healthcare Training—patients and healthcare providers are brought together in understanding each other's perspectives and cultural contexts, as well as realities of addressing and navigating particular healthcare matters, whether a routine issue or serious illness
5. At-risk Youth—community members and at-risk youth come together through Story Circles for support and to strengthen relational bonds and a sense of belonging
6. Community Development—diverse community citizens (of different ages, gender, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, etc.) come together to share their stories so as to create bonds and build relationships across generations, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds in order to bridge divides.
7. Intercultural Dialogue—participants come together first through Story Circles to practice *listening for understanding* and gaining insights into each other's perspectives before engaging in further dialogue across different cultures.

These are but a few of the specific contexts in which Story Circles have been used to develop individuals' intercultural competence. There are many other contexts for using Story Circles including law enforcement, religious contexts, international projects, and in research contexts. Story Circles are also useful in further developing intercultural competence by sharing different views on a significant local or global event and/or possibly moving toward collective action on issues of mutual interest/concern, such as JEDI issues (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion).

5 The Story Circle Process

Story Circles involve the sharing of personal experiences within small groups through a structured yet adaptable protocol or process. Based on an underlying value of the importance of human connection, Story Circles uphold respect and openness as foundational aspects of any story circle, both of which are fundamental in the development of intercultural competence. Note that respect and openness must be upheld by all participants for the Story Circles experience to succeed.

Story Circles operate using two presuppositions and three truths. The two presuppositions are that everyone is interconnected through human rights and that each person has inherent dignity and worth. The three truths within Story Circles are that (1) every person has personal life experience that can be shared, (2) that everyone has something to learn from others, and (3) listening for understanding can be transformational.

Story Circles can occur with four or more people, and generally take place in small groups of four to five (usually no more than 6 per group), regardless of the overall number of participants since the smaller groups help participants feel more comfortable in sharing and help facilitate the development of relationships. The structured protocol of Story Circles involves three rounds of sharing with specific prompts for each round: the first is a "get acquainted" round, the second is a more substantive round of sharing personal stories which addresses some aspect of intercultural competence development, and the last round involves a "flashback" round in which participants name the most memorable part of the second story shared, as a form of affirmation. In each round, a prompt is given to which participants respond and the others in the circle *listen for understanding* (versus listening for response or judgment). *Listening for understanding* is crucial as participants remain open to what they hear, how they ascribe meaning to what they hear, and how they "seek first to understand" instead of the more typical listening which is for preparing a response, judging, or for determining one's position in relation to what has been heard. After the three rounds of sharing, the more free-flowing small group debriefing is crucial in moving forward toward enhanced intercultural competence development for the participants. The whole group then comes back together for guided reflection and further discussion. The total amount of time needed depends on the number of participants, but generally a minimum of 75–90 min is recommended, with the ideal time being at least 120 min.

6 Guidelines and Goals of Story Circles

It is crucial for participants to adhere to and uphold key guidelines for Story Circles; these guidelines become commitments that participants agree to uphold throughout the Story Circle experience. One of the most crucial guidelines is for participants to maintain confidentiality in their groups—what is said in the groups stays in the groups. Other important guidelines include demonstrating respect for others, practicing listening for understanding (instead of listening for response or for judgment), maintaining positive intent, bringing an openness to learning from others' stories, and a willingness to share simply and authentically from one's own life experience. Participants can also add other guidelines conducive to sharing with each other.

It is important to be very clear on the purpose of, and goals for, using UNESCO Story Circles which are to enhance intercultural competence development of circle participants and to deepen relationships. Specifically the goals, derived directly from the intercultural competence framework in Fig. 1, include demonstrating respect, cultivating curiosity about others, developing empathy, gaining increased cultural self-awareness, engaging in critical reflection on one's own intercultural competence development, and developing relationships with diverse others.

7 Using Story Circles

In seeking to use Story Circles, it is important to first ensure the appropriateness and feasibility of using Story Circles within the specific context. This means that participants need to be willing to be involved in this process (not coerced or forced), that participants are interested in developing their own intercultural competence, that experienced facilitators are available, that there is a safe space for this process to occur, that there is sufficient time for the complete Story Circle process (including the personal sharing as well as the follow-up discussion and debrief), and that this Story Circle process fits within societal and cultural expectations of what is considered appropriate. It is important to affirm the equality[1] of all participants in the circles, and the adherence to confidentiality in what is shared. (Confidentiality here means that what is shared within the groups is not to be repeated or shared with anyone else in any way unless permission is given first.) It is also important to allow for adequate debriefing time after the Story Circle time. Learning and transformation (positive change toward increased intercultural competence) occur as participants pause and reflect on what they have heard, on why that new learning is important, and on what they will do now as result of the learning about themselves and others.

[1] The meaning of "equality" may need to be discussed within the group first since there may not be a shared understanding of what is meant by "equality," which is crucial for the story circle to work. Here "equality" means having the same rights within the space of the story circle, as well as having the same status and role within the circle, regardless of gender, age, social class, educational attainment, and so on.

Intentional guided reflection of this process by facilitators is very important and, as such, specific debriefing questions are included in the open access manual.

There are situations when it is not appropriate to use Story Circles. These include when participants are unwilling, when the topic of intercultural competence development is not considered relevant to participants, and when there is a perceived inequality among participants (status, ethnicity, socio-economic level, etc.) AND it is clear that participants will not be able to view all participants as equals at least while in the Story Circles. Furthermore, Story Circles should not be used when participants are not open to hearing and respecting perspectives different from their own or if they wish to convince other participants of a particular viewpoint or position. If other purposes are desired, such as resolving conflict, then a different kind of circle should be used. And if storytelling for performative purposes is desired, then UNESCO Story Circles should not be used since this method is not about entertaining others through storytelling.

Language can become a key limitation in using Story Circles since it is necessary for a common language to be used and understood among participants, or otherwise that interpretation be provided, along with the use of visuals. Further, it is recognized that one experience in Story Circles is a small step in further developing intercultural competencies, which is a lifelong process. Yet, Story Circles can be used iteratively using different intercultural prompts, depending on the context, so that participants can continue to hone their intercultural skills over time. Participants can also be encouraged to complete action plans to implement the insights they gained through Story Circles (the Manual includes such supplementary materials).

8 Effectiveness of Story Circles

UNESCO Story Circles have been shown to be highly effective in helping participants practice intercultural competencies and in beginning to develop deeper relationships with each other. Specifically, after participating in Story Circles, participants have observed, "We are all human beings and we aren't the center of the world, nor are we alone; the things we feel and go through, hundreds of others go through the same or similar things." Others said, "Getting to know someone doesn't mean only talking about likes and dislikes and some life experiences; being open and vulnerable can build a strong bond with others. People can all come from different backgrounds, cultures, and upbringings, but they all can relate to one another at one point in their lives. I feel like I now have four new best friends." And another participant observed that "Story Circles is not only a well-structured methodology but also it is one of the most quick and effective ways to get to know others culturally and interpersonally."

When the protocol and process are followed, Story Circles work well for several reasons. First, participants are connected through personal stories, which means they learn from each other through social-emotional learning. Second, participants are

not merely transmitting knowledge but also practicing key intercultural skills such as listening for understanding. Third, participants are called into a "third space" created by the Story Circle protocol, which means they may all feel somewhat uncomfortable together in a shared experience. And finally Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954) and intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) help explain the success of Story Circles in learning about each other through direct contact, empathizing with each other and in some cases, ultimately reducing prejudice. A further step is community-building through intergroup dialogue aimed at developing relationships specifically through personal storytelling, empathetic listening, and interpersonal inquiry (Maxwell et al., 2011), all of which are demonstrated through Story Circles. The outcomes of UNESCO Story Circles have been shown to far exceed outcomes that can be achieved in a half to full day intercultural training.

9 The Big Picture: From Relationships to Community

Story Circles begin to develop relationships among participants. Yet in developing relationships through intercultural competence and transculturality, it is important to go beyond relationships to living in beloved community, a global vision espoused by Martin Luther King Jr (1957), in which there is justice for all and that all people can share in the wealth of the earth. Such a community means meeting the basic needs of every person and is expressed through radical, inclusive hospitality and generosity. This is similar to the South African concept of *ubuntu*, which underscores interconnectedness to each other. Living in relationship and in community means not only acknowledging conflict, injustice, and pain, but working together to speak the truth in love and focusing energy on removing unjust, oppressive systems and promoting human rights for all, bridging divides through deeper relationships, and, ultimately, being good neighbors—locally and globally—as members of the human family in a global community.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Story Circles as an Intercultural Tool for Fostering Relationships", by Darla K. Deardorff

- How often do I listen for understanding?
- In what other ways can I practice key intercultural competencies on a daily basis?
- What does it mean to be a good neighbor, locally and globally?
- What can I do to build beloved community?
- Where could I facilitate a UNESCO Story Circle?

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Can You Fit a Square into a Circle? Leveraging Experiential Learning to Enhance Relational Capacity Building

Nadine Binder and Jana Hollá

Abstract This chapter examines how we can leverage experiential learning methodology to further enhance the latest trends in relational capacity building, as discussed within the framework of this publication. We are approaching this subject matter from a practitioner perspective informed by our combined experiences of designing and facilitating learning interventions such as training programs. Our leadership training and development practice rests heavily on experiential learning methodology. Given its embeddedness in both cognitive and affective learning, experiential learning provides the perfect avenue to delve into relational leadership. To fully explore this potential, we present and discuss practical tools for developing relational competencies of empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity. Our exploration is guided by an evidence-based training design approach which enables us to position these tools vis-a-vis the theories and processes that inform them. Amongst others, the chapter is drawing upon intergroup theory, neuroscience, the subject-object theory of adult development, and the complex theory in addition to the traditional theories used in the intercultural and transcultural field. We thus embrace the multidisciplinary nature of transcultural competence by entering into a creative dialogue with neighbouring fields of neuroscience, developmental psychology, social and cultural anthropology as well as natural sciences; all in the spirit of true diversity.

1 Introduction

How can we leverage experiential learning methodology to further enhance the latest trends in relational capacity building (as stipulated in this publication)? What is it exactly that experiential learning brings to the table, and are we taking full advantage of it? These are some of the questions we set out to explore on the following pages.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_13

We are approaching this subject matter from a practitioner perspective informed by our combined experiences of designing and facilitating learning interventions, such as training programs. Our leadership training and development practice relies heavily on experiential learning methodology. Given its combined cognitive and affective learning modalities, experiential learning constitutes a potentially valuable methodology for developing relational leadership. To fully explore this potential, we will discuss practical tools for developing several of its key competencies, namely empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity. We do so by embracing the multidisciplinary nature of transcultural competence by entering into a creative dialogue with the related fields of neuroscience, developmental psychology, social and cultural anthropology as well as the natural sciences; all in the spirit of true diversity.

We begin our narrative by a brief excursion into the Experiential Learning Theory of David Kolb (1984). Our exploration is then guided by an evidence-based training design approach which enables us to position the abovementioned tools vis-à-vis the theories and processes that inform them. The main body of the text thus follows the structure of the six steps of the evidence-based training design. After a brief elaboration on the target group, we look at the learning goals against the backdrop of selected theories and processes that inform them, so as to select relevant methods and activities. A brief note on evaluation, a requisite part of any training intervention, concludes this narrative.

Before we dive in…

… here are the key premises that inform our thinking as well as our practice:

1. Changing the paradigm from *Us vs. Them* to *Us and Them*

We understand relational capacity building as *entering into a relationship with the Other*, with an open, curious mindset that happens in the moment: staying present and exploring who the Other is and not falling for our default cognitive mechanisms of control that invite us to engage the assumptions that inevitably lead down the comparativist road of *Us vs. Them.*

The Comparativist approach is the answer to the ethnocentric view of the world. Let's for a moment imagine that there are two people, for easier visualization, we will call them the Circle and the Square people. A Comparativist approach inevitably leads the Circles to try to find a way to get the Squares to fit their reality, or vice versa. The best solution, given the ethnocentric worldview, is thus assimilation. As intercultural practitioners, we "know better", which is where the proposition of creation of a new, so-called "third culture", reality comes in. What we dispute here is that this new reality is very difficult to bring about as long as we operate on the dualistic level of the comparativist paradigm. A paradigm shift leading to a Relational approach is required that opens up a possibility of "different and equal" *Us and Them.*

2. Culture as a complex system

Human behaviour in general is a complex phenomenon. The context of cultural encounters, encounters with the cultural Other, further enhances this complexity. A

triangle of culture–personality–situational context arises, where each point of the triangle adds a particular lens through which to examine the interaction at play.

Zooming in on culture, we approach it as a complex process in itself; which defies the analytical Cartesian epistemology[1] as it entails too much simplification and cannot grasp its fluid, sometimes contradictory, nature. Further ways of knowing are required for its full examination, which is where experiential learning with its affective and embodied knowing comes in.

3. Transcultural approach: going beyond our differences and connecting with our commonalities

The predominant approach to cultural encounters, in inter- and cross-cultural communication, has been to view them through the prism of Difference. The transcultural approach proposes to go beyond our differences and to seek connections based on our commonalities; without falling into the trap of superficial minimization. We would like to take it a step further and propose a different (no pun intended) way of looking at it: instead of differences and commonalities that force us into the dual outlook of the "Us vs Them" ethnocentric paradigm, how about we re-focus on degrees of familiarity? Neuroscience of inclusion, as well as intergroup and complexity theories offer some useful insights into how that can be accomplished.

1.1 Brief Note on Terminology

Navigating between the more abstract language of academia and the more practical terms of the applied training field posed some questions regarding what terms to use, i.e., when we refer to the learners, target group, trainees, or training participants; and learning practitioners, trainers, or facilitators. In the end, we opted to use them interchangeably according to the context. Other terms are used in similar fashion and serve as a reminder of what this chapter holds to be true: that "there is nothing as practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1951).

2 Experiential Learning

If we understand transcultural competence as a multi-dimensional construct that entails affective, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions, learning interventions should integrate an experiential approach that moves beyond cognitive learning to involve learners on an affective and behavioural level. Examples of experiential approaches include mediated experiences through observation and real-life experience of learners as well as structured activities such as role plays or simulations to create an experience that is then debriefed to encourage the making of meaning.

[1] Traditionally employed in the Western cultural space.

Research on the effectiveness of intercultural training has provided evidence in favour of enriching more traditional knowledge-oriented approaches with experiential learning (Fowler & Blohm, 2004; Graf, 2004; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013). This idea is at the heart of Kolb's learning cycle, which is based on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). ELT is rooted in the experiential works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget and defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). The learning process involves a concrete experience which provides the basis for reflective observation which, in turn, enables learners to assimilate their experience and observations into abstract concepts (abstract conceptualization) which can then be drawn upon for active experimentation which, in turn, leads to a new experience. In short, an experiential learning approach invites practitioners to actively involve learners by drawing on their experiences and encouraging them to make meaningful connections to existing and new knowledge. ELT assumes that learners must go through the entire cycle for effective learning, though learners typically have a preference for certain stages over others. Research on learning styles has suggested that preferences are related to personality, current profession and tasks, gender, age, and cultural influences (Joy & Kolb, 2009; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). When using experiential learning methods, debriefing the experience is key to a meaningful learning experience. Debriefing provides an opportunity for learners to process what they have experienced, reflect upon their experience, connect it to concepts, and transfer their insights to real life (cf. Nicholson, 2013).

When examining ELT from a transcultural point of view, its added value is the enriched epistemology, as entering into an experience happens in the moment and thus grounds us in the here and now. We leave the cognitive domain of representation of reality and enter into a direct relationship with it through affective [emotional] and embodied knowing. The same processes are required when entering into a relationship with the Other.

3 Evidence-Based Design

To address the question of how to design experiential learning interventions to enhance relational capacity building and foster transcultural competence, we follow the six-stage process for designing evidence-based learning programs suggested by Stephan and Stephan (2013). This process comprises identifying the target group, establishing the goals of the program, choosing relevant theories, selecting relevant psychological and communication processes based on the goals and the theory, selecting methods and exercises to activate those processes, and finally evaluating the effectiveness of the program.

In stage 1, the target group is identified in terms of cultures and subgroups involved in the program. Acknowledging that each learner is part of multiple cultural contexts, groups, or collectives, this stage requires careful identification of the diverse micro- and macro-networks represented in the target group, spanning from team, department,

or professional cultures to regional and national culture as well as contexts defined by other dimensions such as social class, gender, or religion (Bolten, 2011, 2013; Rathje, 2006). Besides being aware of which groups are part of the target group of a given program, this stage entails gaining clarity on what these groups might bring to the program, what they might expect, and what they might need.

In stage 2, goals of the program or intervention should be established. Goals should be specific and measurable so that they can inform design and evaluation decisions. With regard to intercultural competence, Deardorff (2011) has argued for the importance of realistic and measurable learning objectives to ensure they can be achieved within the scope of the respective program and measured for assessment. Given that transcultural competence is a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted concept, it seems appropriate to apply the same criteria of realistic, measurable learning goals to any program designed to foster transcultural competence.

Stage 3 is about selecting theories of culture, cultural change, intergroup relations, conflict resolution, intercultural communication, and many others, depending on the goals established in stage 2. Given the interdisciplinary nature of discussions on transcultural competence, there is a rich body of theories to draw upon at this stage. We will go into more detail in the subsequent sections.

The goals defined in stage 2 and the theories chosen in stage 3 provide a basis for determining which processes need to be activated in the learners in stage 4 to achieve the goals. Examples include cognitive processes such as perspective-taking, affective processes such as emotional empathy, or communication processes such as effective listening skills.

It is only in stage 5 that methods, exercises, and materials are chosen, guided by the processes they are supposed to activate. In addition, the target group and context should be kept in mind when selecting learning activities and materials, considering aspects such as learning beliefs, developmental stages, and duration of the program.

Finally, stage 6 comprises the evaluation of both the effectiveness of the program and of the processes linked to those outcomes so as to assess the success of the program and inform future design.

For the purpose of this chapter, we will mainly focus on steps 1–5 to explore processes and activities that might leverage experiential learning for promoting transcultural competence. Yet we are fully aware that any program integrating these processes and activities would require thorough evaluation to generate more insights into the extent to which the selected activities were successful in activating the desired processes and the extent to which those processes do lead to outcomes connected to the learning goals.

3.1 Step 1: Target Group

“Know Thy Audience” is one of the trainer and facilitator commandments when preparing for a training intervention, both in terms of design and delivery.

We have mentioned several considerations that need to be taken into account when thinking about the target audience above. Here, we would like to briefly introduce other useful models that relate to mental preparedness of the learners. This is especially the case in the intercultural and transcultural training context, since a key principle of successful training programs is to meet the participants where they are (Gregersen-Hermans & Pusch, 2012).

The first line of inquiry, as related to the Kolb's ELT, is to try to assess the trainee group's predominant learning styles. In real-life training, this is possible only to a certain extent,[2] therefore, the awareness of different learning styles is a must and should remind us to include a variety of methods and approaches to include something for everybody.

In the intercultural context, the next step is often related to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was developed by Milton Bennett (1986, 1993, 2004) and can serve to inform program design, offering a framework for identifying learning goals and methods that facilitate learners' movement along the continuum towards more advanced stages. The DMIS has six stages, each of which represents a way of experiencing cultural differences. The first three stages, labelled denial, defense, and minimization, are ethnocentric stages whereby ethnocentrism is defined as "assuming that the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality" (Bennett, 1993, p. 30). The transition from these ethnocentric to the so-called ethnorelative stages represents a crucial turning point in how individuals experience cultural differences. Ethnorelativism is to be understood as the antonym to ethnocentrism and is characterized by "the assumption that cultures can only be understood relative to one another and that particular behaviour can only be understood within a cultural context" (Bennett, 1993, p. 46). In contrast to the ethnocentric experience of cultural differences as a threat, an ethnorelative perspective sees cultural differences as something inevitable and potentially enjoyable. The ethnorelative stages are acceptance, adaption, and integration.

We propose an interim step of questioning the developmental stages of consciousness at which the learners are. To do so, we use the adult development model as introduced by R. Kegan in his evolution of consciousness theory (1982, 1994). Kegan builds on the work of Piaget and posits that consciousness development is a life-long process. Adult development rests on the creation—coming into being—of the independent sense of Self and thus plays on the tension of the need for differentiation vis-à-vis an equally strong need to be immersed in one's surroundings (Evans et al., 2010). Kegan defines evolution of consciousness as "the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into

[2] Here we refer to reflecting on the predominant learning styles as employed in the education system of a given country/region, unless the future trainees were asked to fill in a learning styles self-assessment and shared their results in advance of the training session. And even if we have all this knowledge in advance, we still need to include the diversity of everyone's learning style to some degree in our training methods.

more complex systems of mind" (Kegan, 1994, p. 9). This transformation requires a shift in how we approach the world and make sense of it. Kegan calls it the Subject-Object shift: moving what we "know" from Subject (where it is controlling us) to Object (where we can control it).

Subject ("I Am") refers to Self concepts we are attached to and thus cannot reflect on or take an objective look at. They include personality traits, assumptions about the way the world works, behaviours, emotions, etc. Object ("I Have") then refers to Self concepts that we can detach ourselves from, that we can look at, reflect upon, engage, control, and connect to something else. Subject controls us, whereas we control the Object (Evans et al., 2010).

This proposed paradigm shift invites us to approach reality as its creators, not mere observers. We move from passively accepting reality as it is to actively co-creating it.

Growth involves movement through five progressively more complex ways of knowing, stages, which Kegan currently refers to as forms of mind. Development begins with Stage 1—the Impulsive mind (in early childhood) and follows through Stage 2—Imperial mind (adolescence, 6% of adult population), Stage 3—Socialized mind (58% of the adult population), Stage 4—Self-Authoring mind (35% of the adult population), and finally Stage 5—Self-Transforming mind (1% of the adult population) (Kegan, 1994, 2000). For the purposes of this chapter, we can safely assume that most of our learners are between stages 3 and 4.

The Socialized mind (stage 3) is safely embedded in the Subject realm of "I am my relationships, I follow the rules". Here, our sense of self and understanding of the world is shaped by external sources, by the ideas, norms, and beliefs of the people and systems around us (i.e., family, community, society, culture, etc.) *I am how others experience me.*

Entering stage 4, the Self-authoring mind, embodies the shift to Object: "I have an identity, I make my choices". Neither our relationships, nor our environment no longer define us, we can define who we are. We develop an internal sense of direction and the capacity to create and follow our own course (Kegan, 1994).

Returning to our target audience in a transcultural context, the Subject-Object shift can be translated into a seemingly simple question: *Do you have culture or does culture have you?* Do the trainees conceive of culture as a Subject or an Object?

When looking at a culture, we move from seeing it as a static set of traits that characterize a group to an interactive process of assimilation and differentiation. The object of the study also changes. We turn from studying the differences—the "nature" of the Other—to focusing on the process, our own relationship to Otherness. And, instead of explaining uncomfortable feelings and objectifying the culture, we explore the uncomfortable feelings and subjectify this experience. In the end, instead of trying to avoid the confrontation of Otherness, in order to function with it, engage with it, we embrace and value the confrontation as it leads to increased authenticity and respect and ultimately trust (Haeberlé, 2003). How many participants in your

training are developmentally able to fully grasp this concept and work with it—and are thus, in Kegan's terms, at stage 4?[3]

3.2 *Step 2: Learning Goals*

Once there is a better understanding of who the target group is and where they are in their development, we can establish the specific learning goals of the program or intervention we are designing. Given that transcultural competence is a complex, multidimensional concept, there needs to be a clear understanding of what exactly the program or intervention is targeting, i.e., which aspects of transcultural competence are most relevant for the target group at this moment in time. Learning goals need to be specific and measurable so that they can guide the selection of theories, processes, and activities as well as to inform assessment and evaluation (Deardorff, 2011; Stephan & Stephan, 2013). They should be realistic in terms of being attainable within the framework of the program and being aligned with expectations and previous experience or learning of the target group (Deardorff, 2011; Gregersen-Hermans & Pusch, 2012).

For the purpose of this chapter, we have selected three key competencies which we consider to be crucial for relational capacity building. They are empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity. For each of them, we will provide an example of a learning goal while also acknowledging that, in real life, the learning goal will depend on what would be an appropriate next step in the learners' development concerning that competency.

3.2.1 Empathy

Empathy comes from the Greek word "empatheia" (passion), composed of "en" (in) and "pathos" (feeling). Its current understanding in the English language comes from the German notion of "Einfühlung" (feeling into). Originally, it described the resonance with works of art and only later was used to describe the resonance between humans (Singer & Klimecki, 2014).

The added value of empathy is that it is not only oriented towards the experience with the Other, it also "grounds our experience not just of them, but of ourselves and the world", a fact that has been corroborated by recent research in psychology (McGilchrist, 2012).

Neuroscience recognizes two processes involved in empathy: affective, or emotional, and cognitive empathy (Singer & Lamm, 2009).

[3] Looking back at DMIS and its ethnocentric-ethnorelative paradigm shift that changes the playing field in approaching cultural difference, it seems it can be related to the Subject-Object process and thus, to a degree, corresponds to stages 3 and 4 of Kegan's model. This certainly merits further thought and inquiry.

In the training world, the metaphor for empathy is often "to put oneself in someone else's shoes". Since most training interventions rarely leave the realm of cognitive knowing, this inevitably leads to cognitive empathy: we try to think ourselves into the shoes of the Other. What can the reality of the Other be like? It's about taking perspectives. Although we cannot guarantee the success of our cognitive empathy, already the act of *trying* to perceive another reality is a step in the right direction. It forces us to acknowledge the distinct possibility that there is a reality different from our own which uncovers the boundaries of the ethnocentric worldview. The danger of cognitive empathy, however, is that, if taken too far, people can mistake their assumptions of what the Other's reality may be for the real thing.

Emotional empathy refers to what it feels like to be the Other, which is not possible as long as we stay in the realm of cognitive knowing. How can I feel what the Other feels? This capability requires higher levels of emotional and embodied knowing. Feeling into the Other person currently borders on mysticism and esoteric practices, as it reaches beyond scientific methodology which still rests heavily on the Cartesian cognitive knowing. While emotional empathy might be more difficult to train than cognitive empathy, especially with more traditional methods of instruction, there is evidence from a meta-analysis by Teding van Berkhout and Malouff (2016) in support of the potential positive impact of empathy training.

For the purpose of demonstrating what learning goals could look like, we offer two examples of cognitive empathy-related learning goals:

1. Upon completion of this training, learners demonstrate awareness of the subjectivity of their own perspective and become curious about other perspectives.
2. Upon completion of this training, learners are able to identify and describe two or more perspectives on the same situation.

3.2.2 Embracing Ambiguity

Interactions with culturally different others are often characterized by ambiguity as interaction partners might, at least in part, draw upon different value orientations, knowledge and information, and schemata that have been formed over time through daily events and experiences (cf. Chang, 2017). In familiar contexts, such schemata serve as a framework for processing social information with low effort and low levels of energy needing to be expended. When experiencing something that is not congruent with our cultural values, there might be a sense of ambiguity, connected to a need to invest additional energy and attention to process social information. Drawing on evidence from cultural neuroscience, Chang (2017) argues that "values are deeply embedded and generally occur automatically" (p. 163), meaning that we might not be fully aware of our own values and how these impact our perception, preferences, and interpretations in that unfamiliar context, thereby adding to a sense of ambiguity. In light of our brain's unconscious preference for familiarity, predictability, and certainty (cf. Casey & Robinson, 2017), such ambiguity can easily give rise to feelings of discomfort and tendencies to retreat into the comfort zone of what is familiar. To support learners in their ability to hold ambiguity, a crucial element seems to relate

to becoming aware of the opportunities inherent in ambiguity rather than the threats. Such a change in perspective can enable learners to see ambiguity as a potential stretch zone rather than as a panic zone.

When talking about ambiguity in the transcultural context, the competence is often coined as tolerating ambiguity. In our practice, we approach ambiguity as a threefold process of holding, engaging with, and embracing ambiguity. Step one is to be aware of the ambiguity and thus the ability to hold it, be in it. The next step is to engage with it, explore it: how does it feel to be in a situation where we are in a state of "not knowing"? What mechanisms and strategies in our cognitive and affective apparatus are triggered to minimize and/or negate this state of not-knowing? It is only once we can hold ambiguity and engage with it that we can embrace it. To be fully with it and allow it to inform the situation we are currently in. Embracing ambiguity is counterintuitive to our brain's cognitive bias for familiarity and thus to the strategies for control we have been socialized into. Yet once we are able to embrace it, it allows us to fully enter into a relationship with the Other. Not knowing equals "the beginner's mind"[4] of openness and curiosity, where genuine questioning can take place, instead of the usual dance of assumptions we engage in when following our default routine of "figuring the Other out".

Here are potential learning goals linked to the two different stages of relating to ambiguity:

1. Upon completion of the training, learners are able to remain in ambiguous situations without withdrawing mentally or physically.
2. Upon completion of the training, learners are able to reflect upon and articulate what they do not know and display curiosity rather than discomfort while doing so.

3.2.3 Holding Complexity

Following on from Bolten's "fuzzy culture" approach, we assume that "cultures cannot be clearly bordered; their edges appear, rather, as a confluence of diverse transcultural networks. Cultures are inherently uneven, or fuzzy" (Bolten, 2014). Within this approach, a person's identity is defined by their membership in multiple groups such as family, religion, ethnicity, profession, and more. In a similar vein, Rathje (2006) has argued for an understanding of culture that simultaneously accounts for complexities and contradictions within cultures as well as the cohesion of cultures despite such inherent differences. Rathje (2006) argues that cultures exist in any human collective, from sports clubs to companies to nation-states, allowing for multiple levels of culture that can overlap and contradict each other. Thus, instead of being a clear-cut, homogeneous entity, culture is a complex phenomenon that reflects the multi-faceted nature of reality and its paradoxes.

[4] Beginner's mind is a term that comes from Zen Buddhism. For more info see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoshin.

To fully enter into a cultural encounter with the Other, the ability to hold complexity is required: both in terms of being aware of our own complex social and cultural identities as well as those of our partner or partners in this interaction.

The ability to hold complexity thus requires adding other thinking tools to our cognitive toolbox, namely the dialectical approach of Both-And. We would like to push the envelope even further and refer to it as And-And.[5]

Dialectical, or holistic, thinking (de Oliveira & Nisbett, 2017) allows for holding multiple realities and paradoxical views as it invites us to view the world as an open system that exists in a state of constant flux with change as one of its stable constants.

Here is a sample of two learning goals related to the ability of holding complexity, which would again require adaptation to the target group in real life:

1. Upon completion of the training, participants are able to describe the multiple layers of their own cultural identities.
2. Upon completion of this training, participants demonstrate an "And-And" perspective (rather than "Either-Or") when analysing a case study.

3.3 Steps 3 and 4: Theories and Processes

Informed by the three key competencies we selected, steps 3 and 4 draw upon an array of theories to identify processes that need to be activated to support the development of empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity. In the following section, we will attempt to provide a brief overview of relevant theories and empirical evidence from neuroscience, intergroup relations, and theories of complexity.

3.3.1 From Intergroup Theory to Neuroscience of Inclusion

Theories and evidence from the fields of intergroup relations and neuroscience offer insights into which processes might need to be activated to strengthen empathy and the ability to tolerate, hold, or even embrace ambiguity. One of the biggest challenges to relational capacity building and transcultural competence is our basic instinct of categorizing people into ingroup (us) and outgroup (them), with the tendency to prefer those who are similar to us, evaluating them more favourably (ingroup favouritism) while perceiving outgroup members more negatively, leading to intergroup discrimination and outgroup prejudice (Brewer, 2007; Casey & Robinson, 2017; Chang, 2017). Cultural neuroscience research has demonstrated that this ingroup and outgroup bias is deeply rooted in the neural system (Chang, 2017), or as Casey and Robinson (2017, p. 8) have put it:

[5] The established Both-And term clearly shows its Western origin as it still holds the duality of the predominantly Western tradition of thought in its title ("Both"-And). If we move towards And-And we fully move beyond duality into the realms of multiple realities and possibilities.

> Understanding that the brain is inherently wired towards sameness and against differences means that we need to continually challenge systems, institutions, practices and policies that perpetuate favouritism and negative stereotypes and prejudices. (...) To do this effectively it is also essential that we learn to manage our own brains. (Casey & Robinson, 2017, p. 8)

Thus, a crucial first step is to become aware of such biases and develop strategies for managing them consciously. According to the dual process model (Kahneman, 2011; Wason & Evans, 1975), human reasoning relies on two different systems, often called System 1 and System 2, or the intuitive/heuristic and the deliberate/analytic system. Learning to "manage our own brains" involves becoming more aware of the biases in our System 1 and using strategies to activate System 2 to process information more deliberately.

Concerning empathy, neuroscience research has provided evidence that our ability to intuitively share other's emotional and motivational states might be limited to ingroup members and not extend to outgroup members. A study by Gutsell and Inzlicht (2012) showed that brain activity differed depending on whether participants observed sadness in ingroup or outgroup members, only demonstrating similar activation patterns when ingroup members were observed. The authors conclude that this empathy gap might contribute to making outgroup members subject to prejudice and discrimination. Yet, they also argue that empathy can be extended to the outgroup by deliberate effort, such as through cognitive perspective-taking and strengthening feelings of connectedness (Gutsell & Inzlicht, 2012). This perspective is complemented and supported by emerging research in social identity theory and intergroup relations on the potential of changing people's understanding of the ingroup by creating more inclusive groups with less salient boundaries of "us versus them" (Hogg et al., 2017). Hogg et al. (2017) argue that previous research has established three specific processes that can be conducive to creating more inclusive groups:

1. Promoting intergroup contact to reduce salience of ingroup-outgroup distinctions.
2. Encouraging recategorization to redefine group boundaries.
3. Emphasize multiple social identities to weaken ingroup-outgroup divides and promote shared identities.

In line with the latter, Kang and Bodenhausen (2015) have argued that while research has traditionally focused on challenges of complex identities, these complex identities also offer opportunities such as shifting dividing lines between ingroups and outgroups, shared ingroup memberships, and more positive intergroup outcomes. A study by Albarello and Rubini (2012) that focused on race has offered evidence that dehumanization towards Black people was reduced most when multiple identities and shared human identity were made salient.

It thus seems that one of the key processes to promote empathy and the ability to embrace ambiguity might be to broaden the circle of who we consider to be ingroup while simultaneously being able to acknowledge the multitude of identities that any individual holds. This seems to connect well to the transcultural competence approach which shifts the focus from differences to existing and emerging commonalities and which can provide a strong foundation for redefining group boundaries and expanding

the circle of who is considered to be "us". To overcome our bias towards sameness and familiarity, Casey and Robinson (2017) have suggested deliberately taking an appreciative perspective when confronting the unfamiliar and actively working towards finding points of connection and commonalities when meeting new individuals who, at first sight, might not be like us.

3.3.2 Navigating Between the Complex and Complicated Domains of Cultural Encounters

If culture is a dynamic complex process (Browaeys & Baets, 2005), then cultural encounters should be approached primarily as a complex phenomenon, not a complicated one. We often use these terms interchangeably, yet borrowing from the Cynefin framework (Snowden et al., 2021), there is a significant difference: the causality we can identify in the complicated domain that helps us predict the necessary actions can be only deduced in the complex domain in hindsight, in retrospect. Depending on the type of the system, we thus have different options on how to enter into the situation and act.

The Cynefin[6] heuristic framework was conceived as a conceptual decision-making tool that helps us identify how we perceive a given situation and make sense of our own and other people's behaviour in order to act effectively.

It comprises five decision-making domains, with their respective practices, that belong to the three types of ordered, complex, and chaotic systems or states. These can be further placed within the sense-making duality of a predictable and unpredictable world. The ordered system is predicated upon the explicit (clear domain) and implicit (complicated domain) causality of events in a given situation. Events have a cause and an effect and are thus predictable. In the complex system, sense-making becomes more difficult as we enter the unpredictable world. Cause and effect can be determined only in hindsight and there are no clear answers, not in the moment of the interaction itself. The chaotic system is characterized by disorder and confusion, cause and effect are unclear. The final, confused, domain is characterized by its liminal space of aporea—a state of authentic confusion (Snowden et al., 2021).

Within the transcultural context, as knowledge and experience of the cultural Other increases, there is a clockwise movement from *complex* and *complicated* to *clear domain*. Similarly, a build-up of biases, ethnocentrism, and/or xenophobia can cause a clockwise movement from simple to complex, even chaotic domains.

Cynefin is a dynamic framework, and the boundaries between the different domains are thus demarcated by liminal spaces. Snowden elaborates on liminality:

[6] Cynefin is a Welsh word that loosely translates into habitat, how we inhabit our worlds. Its creator, Dave Snowden elaborates on this: "Cynefin means the place of your multiple belongings, a multi-threaded and entangled path that makes you what you are and continues to change over time. Learning to live with that and to work with it is key to maturity and impact" (Snowden et al., 2021, p. 64). This elaboration also hints at the spirit in which the framework should be used, requiring a dynamic non-linear mindset.

> Liminality, from the Latin word līmen, meaning 'a threshold,' is about transitions, about being in the 'in-between' and crossing thresholds. Being in an ambiguous liminal state can be disorienting and anxiety-provoking, yet it is also a place of emerging opportunity and many options. (Snowden et al., 2021, p. 76)

Cynefin offers practices for each domain. The clear domain is characterized by sensing (gathering information), categorizing (putting it in categories), and responding to the situation by applying the best practice. Since the complicated domain requires expertise to distinguish the cause and effect, the categorizing is replaced by analysing (by experts) and results in good practice. The complex domain requires probing (experimenting), sensing, and responding that result in exaptive[7] practice. And finally, the chaotic state calls for immediate action (to stabilize the situation), sensing and responding that result in novel practice.

As we navigate the, often, unpredictable waters of complex transcultural encounters, we focus primarily on the practices required in the complex and complicated domains and the liminality between them. Probing and sensing, in the complex domain, calls for embracing ambiguity (discussed in more depth above) and for staying in the state of liminality until a strategy for how to, in the moment, begin creating a third culture space emerges. Staying in the liminal space requires curiosity, openness, willingness to play in a state of tension and suspending judgement. We need to resist the temptation to narrow our perspective and hold complexity: "we keep our options open and cast around to see what is possible" (Snowden & Rancato, 2021, p. 22). To do so, we also need to employ different ways of knowing since the cognitive knowing we so heavily rely on is insufficient.

The practices above require the activation of the following processes:

1. Holding complexity by engaging the dialectic thinking process of And-And in order to stay in the liminal space as a way to transition from complex to complicated domain.
2. Employing different ways of knowing to reduce ambiguity and the willingness to stay open and play in tension.
3. Applying mindful listening to gain further information in a state of temporarily suspended judgement.

In complexity, there is a focus on understanding things as they are. Zhen Goh elaborates, "There is a need to dance a subtle sidestep - the dance between holding the space open to allow for emergence, whilst responding in a manner coherent to the issues at hand" (Snowden et al., 2021, p. 79). Holding complexity thus requires the cognitive process of a dialectic And-And approach, as opposed to the linear dichotomic analytical Either-Or thinking. We have already touched on dialectical thinking above. To describe it further, de Oliveira and Nisbett use the metaphor of a spider's web:

> This thinking style is characterized by strong attention to context and to relationships. Objects are viewed as part of a larger system rather than as discrete, independent entities. One might compare that system to a spider web—each section is connected to the rest of the web. If a disruption occurs on one end of the web, the whole web is affected. (2017, p. 783)

[7] Exaptation is a term that comes from evolutionary biology and indicates the repurposing of an artefact, a trait or a module developed through natural selection (Snowden & Rancato, 2021).

While analytical thinkers perceive states of the world to be stable, for dialectical thinkers, they are "assumed to be subject to constant change as interconnected parts engage in dynamic, mutual influence" (de Oliveira & Nisbett, 2017, p. 783).

Ever since the Enlightenment, the Western world has followed the Cartesian dictum *Cogito, ergo sum!*, which made cognition the only process capable of creating (rational) knowledge (Bratianu, 2015). Yet, as discussed above, experiential learning (and our own training practice) shows that we humans are not merely a "brain on a stick".

Here, we briefly explore the growing body of knowledge on other non-cognitive ways of knowing, namely emotional and embodied knowing.

Emotional knowing translates into taking emotions and feelings as another source of information.

Conventional wisdom considers emotion and cognition as two separate functional entities of the brain. Yet cognitive research has demonstrated that they are inextricably intertwined (Bratianu, 2015, p. 10). O'Rorke and Ortony elaborate that "feelings influence thoughts and actions, which in turn can give rise to new emotional reactions"[8] (1994, p. 283).

As part of the mind-heart-body ways of knowing, emotional knowledge is positioned in the middle as it facilitates a connection between the representational cognitive knowing (re-cognizing the world) and the connected, participatory, knowledge embedded in the body (McGilchrist, 2012). Bratianu illustrates it through the concept of emotional thought:

> The emotional thought is … a functional interface between emotion and cognition that allows thoughts to trigger emotions, which play out in the mind and on the body. In the reverse direction, body sensations generate emotions and feelings that influence thoughts. …. Thus, emotional thought represents the influence of the mind on the body, and that of the body on the mind. (2015, p. 60)

Embodied knowing stands for experiencing, and thus knowing, the world through our body.

Nagatomo further explains that it is not only knowledge that resides *in* the body, but also knowledge that is gained *through* the body (1992).

Embodied knowing is best known through the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty who reiterated the view of Henri Bergson "that the self-experience of the human being is embedded in the world, with the body as the mediator, and held that the human body is the means whereby consciousness and the world are profoundly interrelated and engaged with one another" (McGilchrist, 2012). There is thus no need for representation because there exists a pre-reflective correspondence between body and world (Tanaka, 2011).

[8] Another implication of the importance of emotions in the learning context: "Research demonstrates that when we change our emotional states, we are switching between different ways of thinking". For instance, "a slight positive mood does not just make you feel a little better but also induces a different kind of thinking, characterized by a tendency toward greater creativity and flexibility in problem solving as well as more efficiency and thoroughness in decision making" (Picard et al., 2004, p. 254).

Embracing embodied knowing means recognizing our bodies as a source of knowledge and by trusting our somatic sensations; it is often referred to as “gut knowledge” or “gut feeling”.

Only when we engage all three ways of knowing can the process of effective, also called active, listening truly emerge and bring about empathic understanding—“understanding *with* a person, not *about* him” (Rogers, 1961, p. 332).

We follow Ting-Toomey’s, by now classic, concept of active listening, or as she calls it mindful listening. This is an interactive process that consists of listening with an open and “clean” mind, and actively clarifying that we understood the content of the message. Mindful listening goes, in fact, a step further. By listening mindfully, we are letting the other person know we are committed to understanding the verbal message, as well as the person behind it (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 112).

3.4 Step 5: Activities

In this section, we focus on the potential of adding experiential learning to the mix when designing and facilitating learning programs and interventions targeted at relational capacity building. Before presenting a few examples of specific experiential activities that might support processes related to empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity, it is important to remind ourselves that the experience enabled by an activity is only the beginning and requires skillful debriefing to encourage reflection and meaning-making as well as integrating the experience with existing or newly acquired knowledge.

3.4.1 Embracing Ambiguity—Activity: “Weekdays”

This activity has been adapted based on Thiagi’s “Say it in sequence” jolt which was published in his Game Letter in 2008 (Thiagi, 2008). It can be facilitated face-to-face or online with little preparation and helps learners to experience the difference between System 1 and System 2, which can be a segué into discussing experiences of ambiguity as well as unconscious bias. The activity can be used with small and large groups alike, though debriefing might become more challenging and time-consuming the larger the group is. We typically start the activity by announcing a little challenge that participants can do in a language of their choice. If the activity is done online, it is important to ask participants to unmute themselves, so all participants can hear one another.

Once they have decided which language to use (and have unmuted, if done online), we explain that the task is to say the days of the week as quickly as possible (e.g., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday). We like to use a stopwatch to check how long it takes the group to complete this task. Next, we announce that we will up the challenge and ask participants to name the days of the week again, but this time in alphabetical order. While the first round is a great

example of System 1 at work, the second round typically forces participants to activate System 2 and invest more deliberate effort to succeed, which is evident in the fact that it takes them longer to complete the task. The experience can be debriefed by asking participants about the difference between the two rounds, what they believe made round two more challenging, and how this relates to cultural diversity. We typically use this as a lead into a presentation and discussion on how our brains work, explaining the difference between System 1 and System 2, the role of heuristics and biases, and why we might struggle with ambiguity. To move beyond awareness and towards capacity building, we might deepen the debriefing by asking participants which abilities and strategies they displayed to succeed in this activity and how they can transfer this into their real-life encounters.

3.4.2 Embracing Ambiguity and Holding Complexity—Activity: "The Lemonade"

This activity comes from a classical theatrical improv exercise that was adapted by our colleague Daniel Haeberlé.

In its current form, it is a face-to-face activity that requires minimal spatial preparation; namely an empty space, or room, and a chair. The title and the activity's main aim refers to the popular saying "when life gives you a lemon, turn it into lemonade". "The lemonade" introduces to the learners the concept of ambiguity and complexity by letting them experience these states with the further aim of presencing—working with what they are given in the moment and being able to act response-ably,[9] instead of re-actively.

A minimum of 5–7 participants are needed, yet the group size can go up to 30 participants or more. In such a case, the whole group is divided into subgroups of a maximum of 10 participants each. The larger the group size, the more space is required, as well as more time for debriefing.

The physical setup for a (sub)group requires a chair that is placed in the corner of the room. One person sits in the chair while others form a queue 2–3 m away. The first person in the queue, directly opposite the person in the chair, adopts a neutral expression and begins approaching the chair with even strides. They stop in front of the person in the chair and begin an impromptu interaction of their choice of a maximum of 1–2 sentences (i.e., they ask what time it is, they can aggressively ask them why they didn't show up for an appointment, they can hug the person…). The person in the chair responds without delay. They are not allowed to refuse to respond; also, they take their cue as to who their identity is from the interaction. When the interaction is over, the person who approached the chair moves to the back of the queue and the next person approaches the chair. Each person in the (sub)group

[9] The use of the term response-ability is intentional to highlight its essence of the "ability to respond in the moment while being mindful of others and wider circumstances" as opposed to the often automatic re-action to a situation which implies instant action without any previous reflection and is thus devoid of considerations beyond the immediate moment and its context.

experiences both roles—as the person in the chair and as the initiator of impromptu interactions. The interactions should be spontaneous and the initiators quick on their feet.

The debriefing centres around the following inquiries: exploring the state of holding and embracing ambiguity—how participants experience the state of not-knowing and what strategies they employ to embrace it; staying present in the face of ambiguity and their ability to respond from that place [the response-ability]; holding and interacting in different roles (as a person in the chair, the receiver, and the person approaching the chair, the initiator) as well as being open to adopting the role that the initiator introduced. To deepen the inquiry into holding complexity, the debriefing can additionally touch on the participant's assumptions and intuitive expectations—what they expected from the initiators depending on how similar or different they found them and how these may have influenced their response-ability. To get the full value of debriefing, its inquiry needs to employ all three ways of knowing we have explored earlier.

Besides the activities outlined above, there are well-established exercises from the intercultural field that can help learners to strengthen their competencies regarding empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity. We would like to reference three of them here to illustrate different levels of intensity of experiential learning.

The DIE (describe, interpret, evaluate) exercise is a well-known activity to activate perspective-taking processes and has been widely popular in the field of intercultural communication and education since its emergence in the 1970s. It has been credited to Janet Bennett and Milton Bennett (Nam & Condon, 2010). Nam and Condon (2010) have suggested an adaptation into DAE, replacing interpretation with analysis, arguing the latter is less subjective and therefore allows a clearer distinction between analysis and evaluation, compared to interpretation and evaluation. Depending on how the DIE or DAE model is introduced, the activity can be more cognitive or more experiential. We have often used an ambiguous image, or a rare object, asking participants to share what they see and then reviewing their answers—which typically is a mix of description, interpretations, and evaluations. After revealing the story behind the image or object, we introduce the DIE or DAE model and invite participants to practice applying it to situations from their own context. This approach allows a more experiential lead into the model, though we would still consider this activity a more gentle, less intense experience. DIE or DAE is excellent for practising perspective-taking, slowing down our intuitive response, and switching on System 2 for analysis, therefore, enabling participants to be more aware of their assumptions and to analyse the situation more deliberately.

A more immersive experiential activity that seems equally well-known, especially in the context of working with youth or students, is "Take a step forward" (cf. e.g., Lévinas, n.d.; Salto Youth, n.d.). It is frequently used to raise awareness about inequality of opportunity or power and privilege as well as to foster empathy and switch perspectives. When conducted face-to-face, it involves movement in the space, taking steps forward depending on one's assigned role and the statements

presented. As such it goes beyond cognitive experience and involves how participants experience themselves in their role and in the space. Yet, participants have an assigned role they adopt and then "de-role" from at the end of the activity.

An even more immersive experience is offered through Barnga (Thiagarajan & Thiagarajan, 2011), a card game simulation that offers participants a chance to hold, engage or even embrace ambiguity and hold complexity, all the way to creating third culture spaces or new commonalities. Barnga can be debriefed in various ways, depending on the specific learning goal and, in our experience, offers a rich learning experience for those involved.

We acknowledge that we can only briefly refer to these activities here and we invite our readers to explore more about them and many other experiential activities which have been created, developed, and adapted by our colleagues around the world.

3.5 Step 6: Evaluation

This chapter's focus is on experiential learning and therefore the evidence-based design process has mainly served to demonstrate how theories and processes can inform the selection of experiential activities. However, we still want to acknowledge that any evidence-based design should include an evaluation plan that is tailored to assessing whether, and if so to what extent, the desired processes have been activated and whether learning goals were achieved. Without going into depth here, we would like to highlight the recommendation made by Deardorff (2011) that any assessment should combine direct and indirect evidence. Indirect evidence is typically collected through self-report surveys or "stock-takes" which should be aligned with the specific learning goals. More direct evidence can come from observing behaviour or from critical reflection, captured through journaling, reflection papers, or similar methods, which requires learners to reflect upon what they have learned and what they are going to do differently as a result of that learning (Deardorff, 2011).

4 Conclusion

We set out to explore the degree to which experiential learning methodology can contribute to the development of relational competencies. To do so, we used an evidence-based design approach to ensure that we stay on track and initiate the processes we want to activate while avoiding unwanted side-effects.

Our journey led us to look deeper into what our chosen key competencies (empathy, embracing ambiguity, and holding complexity) entail, both in terms of the theories that inform them, and the processes that they require. We argued that, especially given its capacity for employing and fully engaging affective and embodied epistemologies, experiential learning methodology can and should be privileged when seeking to design effective intercultural learning events.

In the spirit of exploration and inquiry, we hope we are leaving you with more and different questions than you had at the outset.

There is however one question we owe you an answer to since we did ask it in our title: Can you fit a square into a circle? Well, many have tried and even had the illusion of success for a time, yet we believe there should be a counter-question: Why would you want to?

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Can You Fit a Square into a Circle? Leveraging Experiential Learning to Enhance Relational Capacity Building", by Nadine Binder and Jana Hollá

- What has been a powerful experiential learning experience you have had (in formal or informal learning settings)? On further reflection, can you identify instances of emotional and/or embodied knowing it may have triggered?
- How can you harness the power of experiential learning in your own context? What are potential risks and how can you minimize them?
- Besides the exemplary competencies presented in this chapter, which other competencies related to transcultural competence could be part of an experiential learning intervention?
- What do practitioners and educators need to keep in mind or pay attention to when bringing experiential learning into online spaces? Which opportunities and limitations do you see?

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The Arrival of the Transcultural Caravan in the German Armed Forces: The Bundeswehr

Uwe Ulrich, Hartmut Stiffel, and Blerina Buzhala

Abstract In many areas of life, but also in science, the question arises of how to deal with change. In addition to technical or organisational adjustments, the question of how to deal with change is always also about processes of (organisational) cultural change. This is also accompanied by changes and developments in the understanding of central concepts such as "culture". In this sense, the very title "Transcultural Caravan" for the present research project of the Leadership Excellence Institute of Zeppelin University (LEIZ) is an indication of a change in the scientific discussion of the phenomenon of "culture". Opening up to members of other cultures and developing the cultural competencies required for this is therefore a task for society as a whole. Consequently, this topic is now taken into account in many relevant political departments, this explicitly includes the armed forces of Germany. In particular, the question of the didactics of (trans-)cultural competence in the armed forces is dealt with using the example of the generally known method of training boards. The method is characterised by a high degree of self-reflection and interaction, which is promoted by the small groups. Thus, for the present research context, it fulfils one of the core aspects of a relational approach. It is not just about cultural differences, but about the relationship that is created through the interaction between these people as bearers of the culture. The training board helps the armed forces in training to enable just this.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_14

1 Introduction

Everyone knows the sentence that nothing is as constant as change. The expression "everything flows"—"panta rhei" (Greek πάντα ῥεῖ) originated with the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who thus recognised one of the most essential ontological principles. From an evolutionary point of view, according to Charles Darwin, it is of existential importance for all life to adapt to change. But not only in biological, but also in social, economic, political and many other contexts, the question of how to deal with change arises again and again. In answering this question, however, one should be careful not to jump to "naturalistic conclusions" too quickly—David Hume argues that the fact that something is the way it does not allow any conclusions to be drawn with regard to the normative evaluation of "good and bad".

In addition to technical or organisational adjustments, the question of how to deal with change always focuses on processes of (organisational) cultural change. This is also accompanied by changes and developments in the understanding of central terms such as "culture". In this sense, even the title "Transcultural Caravan" used for the present research project of the Leadership Excellence Institute of Zeppelin University (LEIZ) is an indication of a change in the academic analysis of the phenomenon of "culture". The range of understanding is going from primordial ideas (Herder, 1791/2013) to more structural-comparative models (Hall, 1966; Hofstede, 1980; Thomas, 2001) or a more constructivist-processual understanding of culture (Welsch, 1992, 2011) to holistic (Bolten, 1999, 2012; Busch, 2011) or relational approaches (Wieland, 2020) as embodied in the present study. The research group's questions about this are: What are the characteristics of a transculturally competent person? What does it mean when an organisation takes a transcultural approach to developing its global strategy? And what learning processes enable and strengthen transculturality? (cf. LEIZ, 2021).

Progressing globalisation, growing integration into international structures or migration movements combined with demographic change, to name but a few profound processes of change, are increasingly posing serious challenges to postmodern societies. The issue of dealing with socio-cultural diversity can certainly be regarded as the "ultimate litmus test" of modern democracies (cf. Leuprecht, 2009). Opening up to members of other cultures and developing the necessary cultural competences is therefore a task for society as a whole, an educational goal with strategic significance, especially in terms of economic, education, domestic and security policy. Consequently, this topic is now considered in many relevant political departments, not only in the development of "intercultural competence" among personnel, but also in considering the aspect of "culture" in the planning and implementation of missions. This explicitly includes the armed forces (cf. Bachora et al., 2012; Holmes-Eber & Salmoni, 2008; Keller & Tomforde, 2007; Knorr, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2012; Ulrich, 2013).

The authors of this article would like to make use of this systemic understanding in the context of the questions raised by the LEIZ research group. Particularly the

question of the didactics of (trans-)cultural competence in the Bundeswehr[1] will be addressed using the example of the method commonly known as training boards (cf. Ulrich, 2014a). The first step will be to describe the understanding of culture and cultural competence in the Bundeswehr—and its development to a holistic approach—which was influenced by well-known authors in the cultural community. This theoretical part is followed by some general reflections on the educational baselines in Bundeswehr. In the main part the "training board" is introduced as an interactive method for cultural training in the military. Perhaps there are more questions than answers in the end—but as the quotation by Voltaire says: The better is the enemy of the good. So the last part is about the further development of this training method.

2 Culture and Cultural Competence in the Bundeswehr

2.1 Culture: Concept and Models

Ultimately, it seems almost impossible to define culture and describe it with a single model (cf. Keller & Tomforde, 2007). As with all models, it depends on the question and the range of explanations expected. The most effective approach seems to be not to draw a sharp distinction between different concepts of culture but to adopt a holistic, "both-and" perspective. With regard to its understanding of the term, the Bundeswehr strives for pragmatically oriented inter-disciplinarity.

In principle, a distinction can be made between primordial and constructivist concepts of culture. The primordial understanding of culture is based on the assumption that a certain ethno-cultural origin almost automatically determines corresponding cultural behaviour. It assumes that different cultures can be clearly distinguished. In contrast, the constructivist understanding of culture emphasises that

[1] "The Federation shall establish Armed Forces for purposes of defence." This is specified in Article 87a of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany. During the Cold War, this primarily referred to defence against a direct attack on the Federal Republic of Germany and its partners in NATO, as well as protection of the Alliance territory and the population against a potential aggressor. Today, the term "defence" is broader due to new threats such as cyberattacks and international terrorism […]. The Bundeswehr has more than 260,000 personnel, including women and men in uniform as well as civilian staff. […] The Bundeswehr consists of the armed forces and the Federal Defence Administration. Both elements have their own specific tasks and particular strengths. Only together can they fulfil the Bundeswehr's mission. Of course, military personnel are the armed core of the armed forces. They belong either to an armed service or a major organisational element. The armed services are the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The major military organisational elements are the Joint Medical Service, the Cyber and Information Domain Service and the Joint Support and Enabling Service. The second part of the Bundeswehr organisation is the Federal Defence Administration. According to the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, the forces' personnel and materiel requirements must be met by a civilian administration." https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/organization.

culture is created, reproduced and constantly changed through human interaction: cultures are dynamic and negotiable. Against this background, culture can be viewed from the aspects of homogenisation and differentiation, universalism and relativism, structure and process. Likewise, a distinction can be made between emic (internal view) and etic (external view) as well as hermeneutically or analytically/empirically oriented approaches (cf. Jokusch, 2014).

So far, for Bundeswehr, a concept of culture has prevailed whereby culture is defined as a system of orientation that is necessary and typical for a society, organisation and group and that is at the same time dynamic. Culture encompasses values, norms and beliefs that are reflected in structures and systems and are passed on in socialisation processes (enculturation). Understood in this sense, culture conveys belonging and reliability (cf. Thomas, 2006).

A number of cultural models are applied in the Bundeswehr's training practises, each of which depicts individual aspects of the concept of culture. Particularly worth mentioning here are the culture-person-situation model (KPS) (cf. Leenen et al., 2005), the iceberg model (cf. Schein, 1980), the onion model of culture (cf. Hofstede, 1980) as well as models for operationalising cultures, which, in the form of cultural dimensions (cf. Hofstede, 1980) and standards (cf. Thomas, 2001), usually aim to compare cultures.

However, most academic disciplines agree that the greatest explanatory power is achieved not by looking at one factor or the other, but by also looking at their interaction. It is evident in the field of human communication that it is not "cultures" that interact with each other, but people as bearers of culture with their unique physical and mental habits in a specific situation. In addition, in human communication not only the level of factual information is relevant, but particularly also the relationship level. In this respect, a relational approach, such as the one on which this project is based, appears to be a logical continuation of the discussion about the various cultural models or also about the question of whether there is a greater need for either inter- or transcultural competence.

2.2 Cultural Competence—Inter- or Transcultural?

While most Bundeswehr documents have referred to "intercultural competence" since the introduction of the term within the Bundeswehr in the last few decades, it has always been a broad, systemic understanding of the term. This is not least due to the fact that, from the beginning, this topic has been viewed from the perspective of different disciplines in the Bundeswehr. Individual aspects have been effectively integrated under the aspects of a common organisational philosophy and its organisational-cultural design. The fact that the concept of transculturality has not yet gained widespread acceptance is not so much due to a lack of, or an outdated, understanding of the term, but rather due to an effort to avoid causing confusion in the non-academic field of leadership, deployment and training.

The ability to deal appropriately with diversity is to be understood as a basic social competence and is referred to in Bundeswehr as intercultural competence. In this basic understanding, intercultural competence consists of a collection of individual social sub-competences (e.g., tolerance of ambiguity, empathy, communication skills) in relation to an intercultural situation. Essentially, it is about the development of a basic attitude that is oriented to people and open to the diversity of human identities and ways of life. This is the prerequisite for developing the willingness to communicate with others on an equal footing while being aware of one's own cultural orientation patterns. This in turn can prevent other ways of thinking and acting from being unconsciously evaluated in a negative way and, in the worst case, stigmatised. It is a matter of developing your own views and of not abandoning them at random, but of defending them with true conviction—while granting others the right to develop their own, perhaps accepting them but certainly respecting them.

This understanding of intercultural competence certainly reflects the increasing criticism in recent years that the prefix "inter" is based on the outdated, possibly inadequate, primordial understanding of culture. According to critics, the prefix "inter" indicates that clearly delimitable cultures can be assumed and that the differences between the cultures are emphasised. In contrast, it is argued that the term "transcultural" is based on a constructivist understanding of culture and that the prefix "trans" (through, across, beyond) emphasises the crossing of constructed socio-cultural boundaries. This applies both intra- and interpersonally as well as between groups and cultures. However, today the terms "intercultural" and "transcultural" overlap. Many approaches that use the term "intercultural" today assume a constructivist, hybrid and dynamic concept of culture, as well as permeable cultural boundaries and intracultural heterogeneity. Derived from this, "intercultural competences" primarily refer to the ability to self-reflect, change perspectives, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity and respectful interaction with other environments. "Transcultural competences", on the other hand, focus on similarities and synergies with the aim of a potential, resource and goal-oriented approach to cultural diversity. Both aspects have their justifications (cf. Siebert, 2021).

A similar discussion developed around the concept of diversity in Bundeswehr (cf. Bühring et al., 2020). In an initial definition of the term, two interpretations of the term "diversity" emerge: "diversity as differences" and "diversity as differences and similarities" (cf. Krell, 2008). The Charter of Diversity, which was also signed by the Bundeswehr in 2012, states: "Where differences unite under a common goal, diversity emerges" (Charter of Diversity, 2020). Such an understanding also seems appropriate for the Bundeswehr. The fact that diversity and unity are in a dialectical relationship is a well-known idea. Blaise Pascal already knew: "Diversity that cannot be reduced to unity is confusion; unity that ignores diversity is tyranny." However, the effects of diversity are not clear cut and depend on the theoretical approach and perspective. Two approaches can be identified here, the information processing perspective and the categorisation perspective. While the former predicts more positive effects due to the consideration of different perspectives, the latter focuses more on conflicts due to subgroup affiliations (cf. van Dick et al., 2016). Experience has shown that both

heterogeneity[2] and homogeneity[3] are crucial for tasks to be accomplished, depending on the nature of the task, among other things. In this sense, heterogeneous teams with a homogeneous (goal) orientation obviously have the greatest chance of success (cf. Kinne, 2016). Only together and relating to each other do the concepts of diversity and unity form an adequate strategy for mission accomplishment—referred to as Diversity & Inclusion (D&I). Understood in this way, diversity management in the Bundeswehr is part of appropriate accomplishment of the mission. In view of human rights in general and equality rights in particular, it is a normative requirement to deal with diversity in a respectful manner. The systematic, targeted and conscious approach to diversity is functionally necessary with regard to potentially positive and negative effects. The political will to implement this is evident (cf. Bühring et al., 2020). But how can the necessary competences for a constructive approach to (socio-) cultural diversity, especially the aspects of "ability" and "will", be developed?

3 Aspects of Cultural Didactics in the Bundeswehr

Soldiers and civilian employees join the Bundeswehr as adults—this is a fact with far-reaching consequences. For this reason, basic, advanced and further training in the Bundeswehr must be regarded as adult education. Education can be understood as a measure of the correspondence of a person's personal knowledge and world view with reality. This term has two dimensions. It is used both for the educational process ("to educate oneself", "to be educated") and for the state of education ("to be educated") of a person. A feature of education that can be found in almost all modern educational theories can be paraphrased as the reflected relationship to oneself, to others and to the world (cf. Siebert, 2009, p. 4ff.). This understanding of education has its origins in the European Enlightenment. According to Immanuel Kant, "Enlightenment is the emergence of man from his self-inflicted immaturity." Immaturity is the inability to use one's intellect without the guidance of another. Enlightenment always means self-enlightenment, whereby this self-enlightenment has no predetermined dogma to which one must adhere (cf. Kant, 1784). On the one hand, this counterfactual objective of maturity must be formally presupposed under the conditions of adult education; on the other hand, from an educational point of view, it is a lifelong process that is never completed (cf. Ulrich, 2002). The paradigm shift from learning objectives to competence orientation in Bundeswehr corresponds to this understanding (cf. Stiffel, 2019). This applies to all educational content—in historical, ethical, political[4]

[2] E.g., in terms of personality, perspectives, roles, social background, gender, age, status group, sexual orientation, life experience.

[3] E.g., in terms of visions, goals, values, concepts, models, standards.

[4] "Civic education in the Bundeswehr meets the requirement of the Legal Status of Military Personnel Act for civic education […]" (Weißeno, 1999, p. 39). This statutory obligation to

and regarding the present context especially in the intercultural education of soldiers and civilian employees.

The topic of intercultural competence has been present at various Bundeswehr training institutions since the mid-1990s. At the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre in Koblenz, for example, it was initially located in the departments of Human Leadership and Civic Education. At the end of 2008, a Central Coordination Office for Intercultural Competence was established there. After various restructuring measures, Section "VIER" today combines the topics of diversity, interculturality, ethics and religion with specific contact and coordination points (cf. FMoD, 2021b, 2021c). Its core tasks are information, knowledge and quality management—here in the field of intercultural education (cf. FMoD, 2021d). Given the high self-reflective component of intercultural competence, it seems justified to speak of intercultural education here (cf. Kleeberg, 2018).

It is effective at various levels and fulfils a wide range of functions (cf. Ulrich, 2013):

1. socio-cultural diversity in the Bundeswehr (both civilian and military)
2. various forms of international cooperation and
3. Deployment abroad in war and crisis zones.

Intercultural competence serves to increase personal resilience, to shape relationships and thus in many ways to fulfil the (operational) mission of the Bundeswehr. Often presentations and other training materials are entitled "Intercultural competence saves blood and is easy on the nerves", which indicates the serious functional background of the topic in the military.

In this context, acquiring knowledge (e.g., basics of communication or regional studies) is relatively unproblematic. Gaining experience through intercultural encounters and developing or even correcting one's own attitudes, on the other hand, is a constant process of self-education, which is not always pleasant. Intercultural competence is acquired in affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions. *Head (knowledge)*, *heart (willingness)* and *hand (action)* are involved in equal measure. The degree and extent of this competence depends on the course of training, the assignments and thus on the knowledge acquired. The aim is to establish positive emotional connotations for the topic, to underpin it with experience, to set a good example and to integrate it into everyday duty (cf. Zentrum Innere Führung, 2017, Chapter 2.2). The selection of suitable personnel plays a key role in this. This applies in particular to persons who are earmarked for leadership, advisory and training functions (cf. Thomas, 2001).

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provide civic education for its soldiers distinguishes the Bundewehr until today—from all other state institutions. In carrying out this educational task, the Bundeswehr, too, refers to the Beutelsbach Consensus. This is a minimum consensus that clearly defines the requirements for political education. This consensus consists of three parts: The first part comprises the overpowering prohibition. The second part comprises the controversy in politics. The third part of the consensus is to prepare people in class for analysing a political situation as well as their own interests. It is therefore the task of political education to show citizens that they can experience political freedom and that the affairs of society, specifically politics, affect every individual (cf. Breit, 2007).

Intercultural competence is not about skills and knowledge that can be learnt quickly (rules of conduct), but is rather to be understood as part of the lifelong formation of resilient, personalities. The content is primarily taught in all areas that are concerned with dealing appropriately with the areas determined by diversity, i.e., at the interfaces of human leadership and political and ethical education. Training in the subject area of intercultural competence in the Bundeswehr is generally divided into three levels: basic training, consolidation training and specialisation training (cf. Ulrich, 2013; Zentrum Innere Führung, 2017; Chapter 4.1).

3.1 Objectives, Contents—Training Levels

Basic training includes a general cultural raising of awareness for all members of the Bundeswehr at the beginning of their careers. The aim is to become aware of the importance of culture as a necessary orientation system, to develop an awareness of one's own "cultural glasses"—understood as a form of perception filter—and to accept the diversity of cultural patterns of interpretation. The overarching objective in the sense of a basic qualification that is independent of the mission is to deal with different identities and worlds in a constructive, differentiated and reflective way within the framework of mission accomplishment.

The *consolidation training* is related to routine duty, career training courses, special assignments and functions and, ultimately, to deployment. The aim is to understand intercultural competence as an essential factor in accomplishing the mission as well as to recognise its importance for successful leadership and to use it as a basis for one's own actions. In terms of deployment, cultural aspects are taught for the specific theatre of operations. Where possible, (inter)cultural aspects are also integrated into related subject areas (e.g., ethics) as well as into practical training (e.g., behaviour at checkpoints or on patrol). On operations, the decision makers are advised by qualified cultural advisors (CULADs) on the possible effects of the culture of the host country on the accomplishment of the mission. In addition, there is the possibility to reflect on cultural experiences through cultural advisors (CULADs) and other experts and thus make them usable. Processing experiences from operations abroad and settling down at home again also involves coming to terms with specific cultural aspects (e.g., value conflicts, experience of differences), which are integrated into relevant seminars for returnees. Ideally, the experiences of the soldiers gained here are then incorporated into the preparatory training, taking into account individual experiences and existing prejudices and stereotypes.

Specialisation training generally serves to develop function-specific competences. In this context, the targeted selection and development of personnel with the aim of achieving a high level of professional qualification is of great importance. This applies in particular to the training and further qualification of suitable teaching staff, which is carried out by qualified instructors under the responsibility of the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre.

3.1.1 Methods—A Selection

A variety of methods and teaching concepts have been developed for the above-mentioned instruction segments (cf. Thomas et al., 1998) and made available nationwide by the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre (cf. Zentrum Innere Führung, 2017). Particular mention should be made of the “General Intercultural Sensitizer”, which deals with the discursive treatment of critical intercultural situations (cf. Evers, 2001). In addition, the S-P-A-T-E-N[5] model was developed as a mental checklist, which combines most of the aspects of intercultural competence mentioned up to this point (cf. Thomas, 2001). The best known project is probably “Dimension Kulturen” (Dimension Cultures), a central civic education project in the Bundeswehr to enhance cultural awareness. It is based on Bundeswehr’s positive experience with interactive learning—in the sense of serious gaming. Lecturers at the Leadership Development and Civic Education Centre conduct one-day seminars together with civilian facilitators in mostly bi-cultural teams. The entire equipment required is carried along in action vehicles and set up the day before the event begins (cf. Ulrich, 2013; Zentrum Innere Führung, 2008, 2017). On the day of the event, the participants are divided into four competing groups and answer various questions about countries they have selected beforehand in the form of a quiz. Facts are questioned and connections are made. In the second step, the teams are given tasks (event fields) and confronted with surprising situations. The package is supplemented by extensive information material.

3.1.2 Training Boards

In the recent past, training boards have been developed for raising general cultural awareness as well as for culture-specific preparation, which on the whole represent a “missing link” in the method portfolio of intercultural training (cf. Ulrich, 2014a, 2014b). A training board is generally a visually appealing, large-format training document that contains a variety of attachments. It is a visually attractive training document on the basis of which teams of five people work out content autodidactically by means of interaction and discourse, following a predefined path. The teams follow the instructions on the training board independently and, in doing so, deal intensively with the content as well as with their own perceptions and evaluation. The advantage of this method is that it allows many people to be trained in a standardised, sustainable and motivating way within a short period of time.

[5] ***S**toppt den automatischen Bewertungsprozess. **P**räzisierung der Irritation – Was irritiert mich eigentlich? **A**ndere Einflussfaktoren isolieren – situativ oder individuell. **T**hematisieren der eigenen Erwartungen. **E**igenkulturelle Standards reflektieren. **N**ach möglichen fremdkulturellen Standards suchen.:* Stop the automatic evaluation process. Specify the irritation—what is currently confusing me? Isolate other influencing factors—situational or individual. Address your own expectations. Reflect on your own cultural standards. Search for possible foreign cultural standards.

According to the experience of more than 1000 training courses, the effectiveness of the method is particularly due to the small group concept, in which the individual cannot "hide", as well as the high proportion of self-reflection. In addition, the method offers the facilitator the advantage of being able to respond very specifically to individual questions in group discussions. Experience has shown that this training tool is well suited for raising basic awareness and has proven effective in practise, not only in the field of intercultural competence (cf. Kutschera, 2015; Ulrich, 2013). In the period from 2012 to 2018, six such training boards were developed on various topics:

1. Culture of Afghanistan (specific cultural pre-deployment training)
2. Understanding culture (use as part of raising general cultural awareness)
3. Culture of Mali (specific cultural pre-deployment training)
4. We. Diversity in the Bundeswehr (use in political education)
5. Make the right decisions—act responsibly (use in ethical education)
6. Conflicts, understand—act—resolve (use in leadership training)

The training boards are continuously revised and further developed as needed and supplemented by a trainer's guide in order to ensure the quality of the training (cf. Deutscher Bundestag Doc. No. 19/10428 dated 23 May 2019, 19th electoral term). The most relevant for the present context is the training board "Understanding Culture" (© Bundeswehr).

The aim of intercultural training with this training board is to impart basic knowledge, consolidate existing knowledge and practise using practical examples.

This also involves dealing with one's own cultural identity. The aim is to increase the participant's basic awareness of intercultural competence, to improve their ability to understand their own as well as other perspectives and to become more confident when meeting and interacting with people from the other culture. Experience has shown that working time on the training board "Understanding Culture" is about 120 min. Even if the role of the instructors is limited to the introduction and, if necessary, to modest motivation as well as to the conclusion including evaluation, an intensive analysis of the contents and the method is indispensable in order to respond to the questions of the participants and to avoid difficulties. These range from the spatial requirements to the composition of the learning group to understanding the content. Although the training board "Understanding Culture" is written in an easy-to-understand language, this does not exclude the use of technical terms that require explanation, for example. It therefore makes sense to precede work with the board with introductory instruction and to conclude the training with critical conversation.

Baustein 1 20 Min.

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Meine persönlichen kulturellen Wurzeln

In diesem Baustein geht es darum, sich zunächst mit seinen eigenen kulturellen Wurzeln auseinander zu setzen – sich also bewusst zu machen, was einen persönlich geprägt hat.

Aufgabe 1

Auf dieser Seite finden Sie drei Landkarten: Eine von Deutschland, eine von Europa und eine Weltkarte. Öffnen Sie nun Anhang 1. In diesem finden Sie Klebepunkte. Nehmen Sie sich jeweils einen und schreiben Sie Ihr Namenskürzel auf diesen Klebepunkt – anschließend kleben Sie ihn auf eine der Karten und zwar dorthin, wo Ihre persönlichen kulturellen Wurzeln liegen.

In aller Regel ist das dort, wo Sie aufgewachsen sind, was Sie als Ihre ursprüngliche Heimat ansehen oder wo Ihre Familie beheimatet ist – auch, wenn Ihre Familie womöglich heute dort nicht mehr lebt.

Positionieren Sie Ihren Punkt möglichst genau – also beispielsweise innerhalb Deutschlands in die genaue Region.

Aufgabe 2

Nun geht es darum, dass Sie Ihr Team am Tisch über die Besonderheiten und das Typische Ihrer Region und den kulturellen Hintergründen berichten. Was hat sie dort beeinflusst und geprägt? Sie haben dafür 5 Minuten Vorbereitungszeit.

Öffnen Sie Anhang 2. In diesem finden Sie Moderationskarten. Nehmen Sie sich jeweils eine und schreiben Sie Ihre persönlichen Notizen über Ihren kulturellen Hintergrund auf die Karte. Dabei sollten Sie sich an folgenden Leitfragen orientieren – Sie können aber auch andere Aspekte hervorheben, die Ihnen wichtig erscheinen. Konzentrieren Sie sich auf maximal 5 Leitfragen.

- Ist es ein eher ländliches oder eher städtisches Umfeld, aus dem ich komme?
- Was ist charakteristisch hinsichtlich Natur und Landschaft, Wohn- und Arbeitsumfeld, die Unterkünfte, Gebäude, Architektur, etc.?
- Welche Eigenschaften und Merkmale sagt man den dortigen Menschen nach?
- Was sind typische Lebensgewohnheiten und Lebensmaxime?
- Was kennzeichnet eine durchschnittliche Familie und ihr Zusammenleben?
- Welche Rolle spielen religiöse Fragen im Leben der Menschen?
- Was gibt es an Traditionen, Gebräuchen, Ritualen aber auch an Festen und sonstigen Veranstaltungen, die das Gemeinschaftsleben prägen?

Aufgabe 3

Nun zu Ihren persönlichen „Kulturberichten". Jeder von Ihnen hat ca. 2 Minuten Zeit, seinen kulturellen Hintergrund den anderen verständlich zu machen. Betonen Sie dabei vor allem das, was Sie persönlich als wichtig empfinden und was Sie bis heute in Ihrem Denken, Fühlen und Verhalten beeinflusst.

Unterbrechen Sie sich nicht und geben Sie auch keine Kommentare oder Bewertungen ab.

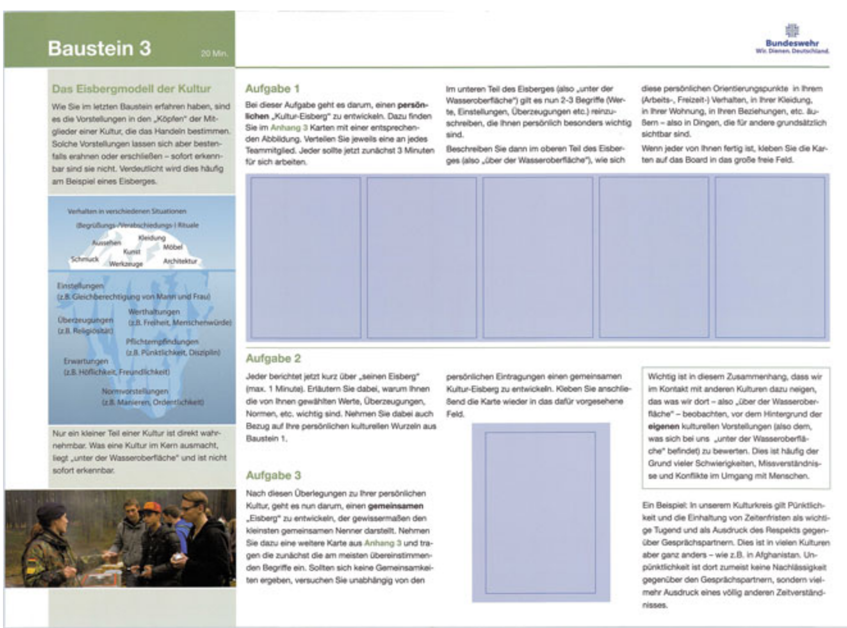
The introduction of the training board comprises methodological instructions and provides the content framework. The training objectives are outlined, and an example of cultural misunderstandings is given to introduce the participants to the topic.

Already on the second page, as part of a personal introduction, the participants are asked to explore their own geographical and cultural roots. To begin with, everyone places him or herself geographically on the map with a sticky dot. It is sometimes surprising to see the diversity of a supposedly homogeneous group. Based on guiding

questions, the next step is to inform the other participants about one's own origin and homeland. Besides the landscape, family and regional backgrounds play a role here—including rituals and religion. Finally, the participants are asked to guess how they are perceived by others and what prejudices others might have about them. In most cases, interesting discussions already develop in this phase.

Subsequently, the participants approach the concept of culture in terms of content. The goal is to develop a mind map together. In a further step, the concept of intercultural competence is presented with regard to differences and similarities between cultures, as well as the question of how we perceive ourselves and how we are perceived by others. In the subsequent discussion, the focus is on sharing one's own experiences.

The third step is very interactive, intensive and therefore particularly beneficial. Based on the iceberg model of culture, the first step is to think individually about what constitutes one's own culture above and below the "water line". The results are noted on a sticky label and stuck on the board. The second step is to develop a common iceberg for the group. There are always surprises: in supposedly homogeneous groups about the many differences and in heterogeneous groups about the similarities. Although the ensuing discussions take time, they are extremely beneficial for all participants.



Baustein 3 20 Min.

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Das Eisbergmodell der Kultur

Wie Sie im letzten Baustein erfahren haben, sind es die Vorstellungen in den „Köpfen" der Mitglieder einer Kultur, die das Handeln bestimmen. Solche Vorstellungen lassen sich aber bestenfalls erahnen oder erschließen – sofort erkennbar sind sie nicht. Verdeutlicht wird dies häufig am Beispiel eines Eisberges.

Nur ein kleiner Teil einer Kultur ist direkt wahrnehmbar. Was eine Kultur im Kern ausmacht, liegt „unter der Wasseroberfläche" und ist nicht sofort erkennbar.

Aufgabe 1

Bei dieser Aufgabe geht es darum, einen **persönlichen** „Kultur-Eisberg" zu entwickeln. Dazu finden Sie im Anhang 3 Karten mit einer entsprechenden Abbildung. Verteilen Sie jeweils eine an jedes Teammitglied. Jeder sollte jetzt zunächst 3 Minuten für sich arbeiten.

Im unteren Teil des Eisberges (also „unter der Wasseroberfläche") gilt es nun 2-3 Begriffe (Werte, Einstellungen, Überzeugungen etc.) reinzuschreiben, die Ihnen persönlich besonders wichtig sind.

Beschreiben Sie dann im oberen Teil des Eisberges (also „über der Wasseroberfläche"), wie sich diese persönlichen Orientierungspunkte in Ihrem (Arbeits-, Freizeit-) Verhalten, in Ihrer Kleidung, in Ihrer Wohnung, in Ihren Beziehungen, etc. äußern – also in Dingen, die für andere grundsätzlich sichtbar sind.

Wenn jeder von Ihnen fertig ist, kleben Sie die Karten auf das Board in das große freie Feld.

Aufgabe 2

Jeder berichtet jetzt kurz über „seinen Eisberg" (max. 1 Minute). Erläutern Sie dabei, warum Ihnen die von Ihnen gewählten Werte, Überzeugungen, Normen, etc. wichtig sind. Nehmen Sie dabei auch Bezug auf Ihre persönlichen kulturellen Wurzeln aus Baustein 1.

Aufgabe 3

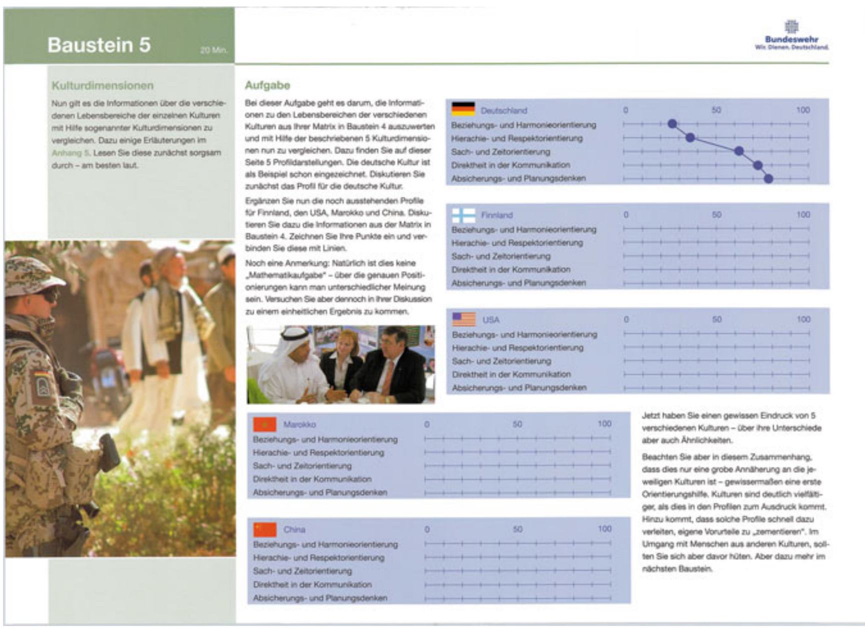
Nach diesen Überlegungen zu Ihrer persönlichen Kultur, geht es nun darum, einen **gemeinsamen** „Eisberg" zu entwickeln, der gewissermaßen den kleinsten gemeinsamen Nenner darstellt. Nehmen Sie dazu eine weitere Karte aus Anhang 3 und tragen die zunächst die am meisten übereinstimmenden Begriffe ein. Sollten sich keine Gemeinsamkeiten ergeben, versuchen Sie unabhängig von den persönlichen Eintragungen einen gemeinsamen Kultur-Eisberg zu entwickeln. Kleben Sie anschließend die Karte wieder in das dafür vorgesehene Feld.

Wichtig ist in diesem Zusammenhang, dass wir im Kontakt mit anderen Kulturen dazu neigen, das was wir dort – also „über der Wasseroberfläche" – beobachten, vor dem Hintergrund der **eigenen** kulturellen Vorstellungen (also dem, was sich bei uns „unter der Wasseroberfläche" befindet) zu bewerten. Dies ist häufig der Grund vieler Schwierigkeiten, Missverständnisse und Konflikte im Umgang mit Menschen.

Ein Beispiel: In unserem Kulturkreis gilt Pünktlichkeit und die Einhaltung von Zeitenfristen als wichtige Tugend und als Ausdruck des Respekts gegenüber Gesprächspartnern. Dies ist in vielen Kulturen aber ganz anders – wie z.B. in Afghanistan. Unpünktlichkeit ist dort zumeist keine Nachlässigkeit gegenüber den Gesprächspartnern, sondern vielmehr Ausdruck eines völlig anderen Zeitverständnisses.

In the fourth module, the participants deal with stereotypes, clichés and prejudices, especially towards German citizens and soldiers, by means of short text modules and pictures as well as suggested solutions.

In module five, the participants then deal with a comparison of countries on the basis of various presentations of cultural standards and corresponding examples from different countries. Especially gender roles, hierarchy issues, the importance of religion, communication behaviour, the management and perception of time and risk behaviour are addressed as cultural categories, i.e., as cultural dimensions. This selection of dimensions and their country-specific description in terms of content in the form of cultural standards were based, in particular, on the models of Alexander Thomas and is also oriented towards the anticipated relevance for the military. All these categories offer descriptions of a total of 21 countries. The countries were selected with the intention of achieving a wide cultural range and not with a view to current or possible future theatres of deployment of the Bundeswehr. The participants are asked to identify five of them, describe them briefly with the help of a matrix provided and thus, above all, enable a qualitative comparison.



Baustein 5 20 Min.

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Kulturdimensionen

Nun gilt es die Informationen über die verschiedenen Lebensbereiche der einzelnen Kulturen mit Hilfe sogenannter Kulturdimensionen zu vergleichen. Dazu einige Erläuterungen im Anhang 5. Lesen Sie diese zunächst sorgsam durch – am besten laut.

Aufgabe

Bei dieser Aufgabe geht es darum, die Informationen zu den Lebensbereichen der verschiedenen Kulturen aus Ihrer Matrix in Baustein 4 auszuwerten und mit Hilfe der beschriebenen 5 Kulturdimensionen nun zu vergleichen. Dazu finden Sie auf dieser Seite 5 Profildarstellungen. Die deutsche Kultur ist als Beispiel schon eingezeichnet. Diskutieren Sie zunächst das Profil für die deutsche Kultur.

Ergänzen Sie nun die noch ausstehenden Profile für Finnland, den USA, Marokko und China. Diskutieren Sie dazu die Informationen aus der Matrix in Baustein 4. Zeichnen Sie Ihre Punkte ein und verbinden Sie diese mit Linien.

Noch eine Anmerkung: Natürlich ist dies keine „Mathematikaufgabe" – über die genauen Positionierungen kann man unterschiedlicher Meinung sein. Versuchen Sie aber dennoch in Ihrer Diskussion zu einem einheitlichen Ergebnis zu kommen.

Jetzt haben Sie einen gewissen Eindruck von 5 verschiedenen Kulturen – über ihre Unterschiede aber auch Ähnlichkeiten.

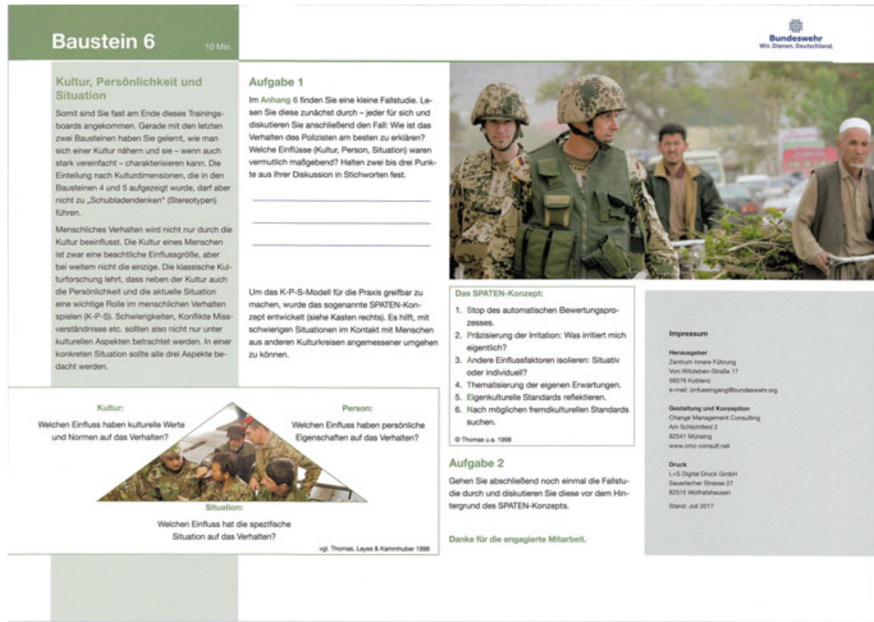
Beachten Sie aber in diesem Zusammenhang, dass dies nur eine grobe Annäherung an die jeweiligen Kulturen ist – gewissermaßen eine erste Orientierungshilfe. Kulturen sind deutlich vielfältiger, als dies in den Profilen zum Ausdruck kommt. Hinzu kommt, dass solche Profile schnell dazu verleiten, eigene Vorurteile zu „zementieren". Im Umgang mit Menschen aus anderen Kulturen, sollten Sie sich aber davor hüten. Aber dazu mehr im nächsten Baustein.

Then, in module six, a quantitative assessment is made in comparison to Germany (indices for Germany are given) on the basis of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension models. Here, differences and similarities are always expressed. At the latest at this point, it should become clear that this training board is not a purely transcultural or relationally orientated training method. It uses, for example, cultural comparison tools based on culture dimension models in order to trigger discussion. It is more or less a means to an end.

In module seven, the phenomenon of culture shock is discussed on a personal level with a view to the concrete effects of confronting other, possibly foreign, cultures (cf. Oberg, 1960). This is done in particular with the intention of sensitising the participants to emotional and mood swings, e.g., in the context of deployments abroad and foreign assignments. It is impossible to completely prevent "culture shock". For this purpose, concrete reports by soldiers on the experience acquired are used. A phase of euphoria is often followed by disillusionment and frustration until one gradually gets used to the changed conditions in the sense of acculturation and the mood stabilises. This process can also be observed when returning home, and the phases can vary greatly from person to person.

The last module places special emphasis on reflecting on observations made in the form of concrete case studies from Bundeswehr operations. Following Leenen's culture-person-situation model, the focus here is on recognising that not all behaviour of the persons involved can be attributed to cultural influences. Personality (e.g., introversion vs. extroversion) and situation (e.g., time pressure) also play a key role. All three factors are dynamically interrelated, which suggests the relevance of a relational approach. The specifics of military operations often make it difficult to

conduct intensive reflection along the lines of the SPATEN model developed by Alexander Thomas in time-critical and sometimes highly dangerous situations. It is therefore all the more important to develop a feeling for the relevant, but limited, explanatory content of the factor of culture in advance.


Baustein 6 10 Min.

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Kultur, Persönlichkeit und Situation

Somit sind Sie fast am Ende dieses Trainingsboards angekommen. Gerade mit den letzten zwei Bausteinen haben Sie gelernt, wie man sich einer Kultur nähern und sie – wenn auch stark vereinfacht – charakterisieren kann. Die Einteilung nach Kulturdimensionen, die in den Bausteinen 4 und 5 aufgezeigt wurde, darf aber nicht zu „Schubladendenken" (Stereotypen) führen.

Menschliches Verhalten wird nicht nur durch die Kultur beeinflusst. Die Kultur eines Menschen ist zwar eine beachtliche Einflussgröße, aber bei weitem nicht die einzige. Die klassische Kulturforschung lehrt, dass neben der Kultur auch die Persönlichkeit und die aktuelle Situation eine wichtige Rolle im menschlichen Verhalten spielen (K-P-S). Schwierigkeiten, Konflikte Missverständnisse etc. sollten also nicht nur unter kulturellen Aspekten betrachtet werden. In einer konkreten Situation sollte alle drei Aspekte bedacht werden.

Aufgabe 1

Im Anhang 6 finden Sie eine kleine Fallstudie. Lesen Sie diese zunächst durch – jeder für sich und diskutieren Sie anschließend den Fall: Wie ist das Verhalten des Polizisten am besten zu erklären? Welche Einflüsse (Kultur, Person, Situation) waren vermutlich maßgebend? Halten zwei bis drei Punkte aus Ihrer Diskussion in Stichworten fest.

Um das K-P-S-Modell für die Praxis greifbar zu machen, wurde das sogenannte SPATEN-Konzept entwickelt (siehe Kasten rechts). Es hilft, mit schwierigen Situationen im Kontakt mit Menschen aus anderen Kulturkreisen angemessener umgehen zu können.

Kultur:
Welchen Einfluss haben kulturelle Werte und Normen auf das Verhalten?

Person:
Welchen Einfluss haben persönliche Eigenschaften auf das Verhalten?

Situation:
Welchen Einfluss hat die spezifische Situation auf das Verhalten?

vgl. Thomas, Layes & Kammhuber 1998

Das SPATEN-Konzept:

1. Stop des automatischen Bewertungsprozesses.
2. Präzisierung der Irritation: Was irritiert mich eigentlich?
3. Andere Einflussfaktoren isolieren: Situativ oder individuell?
4. Thematisierung der eigenen Erwartungen.
5. Eigenkulturelle Standards reflektieren.
6. Nach möglichen fremdkulturellen Standards suchen.

© Thomas u.a. 1998

Aufgabe 2

Gehen Sie abschließend noch einmal die Fallstudie durch und diskutieren Sie diese vor dem Hintergrund des SPATEN-Konzepts.

Danke für die engagierte Mitarbeit.

Impressum

Herausgeber
Zentrum Innere Führung
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Gestaltung und Konzeption
Change Management Consulting
Am Schlichtfeld 2
82541 Münsing
www.cmc-consult.net

Druck
L+S Digital Druck GmbH
Sauerlacher Strasse 27
82515 Wolfratshausen

Stand: Juli 2017

The training board concludes with a reflection about what the participants learned. The following questions are raised: What were your most important impressions? What was new for you? What will you take with you? What was missing? Would you recommend working with the training board to others? Why or why not?

4 Concluding and Further Remarks

There are no statistics or studies but the experience with the training board within the Bundeswehr in the last few years with hundreds of trainings being run has been consistently positive. This is more than a first guess by the authors. The method is characterised by a high degree of self-reflection and interaction, which is encouraged by the small groups. Thus, for the present context of research, it serves as one of the core aspects of a relational approach. It is not just about person A or culture B, but about the relationship that emerges through the interaction between these people as bearers of culture. In this way, trust can develop, which is indispensable if one wants to overcome complex problems and differences in topics and seek common ground in view of growing diversity. The training board helps to create a situation—a

"protected space"—in which this seems possible. The training board confronts the participants with common tasks, regardless of their respective personalities or socio-cultural situation and prerequisites. These tasks may—in the worst case—contribute as the lowest common denominator to people engaging with each other, making them more willing and able to understand each other. In this sense, the training board must be regarded as a means that creates such possibilities. The board raises a lot of interest and curiosity—one can hardly ask for—and expect—more of adult education in the best sense of the word.

It picks people up from where they are and enables them to not only deal with the topic independently, taking into account their individual experience, but also to deal with other people. Working on the training board together, interactively, has the particular advantage that different perspectives are introduced at the beginning. The concept of the training board can also be seen as a further step in developing competence-oriented training in Bundeswehr. Yes, it mainly targets awareness and affective/cognitive learning goals rather than competence-building. But in comparison to traditional methods of presentations, it is a step in the right direction.

The training board can generally be used in the various stages of military training. It can be worked on in its entirety or in individual modules. The use of this training tool has proved particularly successful in combination with other topics of political, ethical and historical education, as well as in the area of training young leaders. The training board "Understanding Culture" is a small but important piece in the overall picture of intercultural education in Bundeswehr. While, at first glance, it seems to be a low-cost method for instructors and teachers, the method does not stand on its own, but needs to be prepared and, especially, followed up. The process of discussing differences and similarities is the core of the method. That takes time. If it is not prepared and followed up well by teachers or trainers it could lead to stereotypes and, in the worst case, to prejudices.

The combination of the different models and approaches within the framework of this training board in a way shows the path that has been taken so far in the Bundeswehr in dealing with the concept of culture. The conclusion is: not "either/or", but "as well as"! In this respect, it incorporates transcultural and also relational aspects of the concept of culture. What is more, the Bundeswehr perhaps has good prerequisites for realising inclusive leadership in a transcultural and relational understanding.

Focusing on the common mission, it is important to bring all knowledge, skills and abilities to bear in order to fulfil it, without so-called frictional losses, e.g., caused by discrimination due to visible or invisible differences, which diminish performance or even prevent fulfilment of the mission. In this context, the commitment to comradeship, i.e., respectful and considerate cooperation, plays a central role, making it easier to overcome differences and recognise commonalities. In a nutshell: *Diversity Management Programs will fail without Inclusion* (Emminger, 2021) and inclusive leadership is based on interaction, which refers to the core of the transcultural caravan. The military is no exception here, but it offers good conditions to build upon.

The positive experience with this training board must be consolidated and the board must be improved in this manner. This research project presents several approaches to this end. It is more than just teaching cultural models or dimensions. For instance, a possible further development of the training board would be to consider not only one's own person in the reflections, but also the others or the "we". The question would then be something like: What does that mean for me and my actions, for the others and ultimately for the actions of the group? In addressing these questions, we look forward to listening to insights from the transcultural caravan and reflecting on how their ideas might be transferred to our context.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "The Arrival of the Transcultural Caravan in the German Armed Forces—The Bundeswehr", by Uwe Ulrich, Hartmut Stiffel, and Blerina Buzhala

- What thematic elements should the training boards have in store for the armed forces?
- How can the necessary competencies for dealing constructively with (socio-)cultural diversity, especially the aspects of "being able" and "wanting", be developed?
- How could the interactive part of the training board be increased without giving up the advantages of the method mentioned in the article?

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Literacy as an Access Method: How Terminologies as a Mechanism for Gatekeeping Influences Participation

Michelle J. Cummings-Koether and Oscar Blanco

Abstract In trying to adapt to the dynamic society in the twenty-first century, individuals may struggle to develop the competences that can help them to succeed and thrive in a changing environment. Dynamic changes in ICT as well as the way individuals interact with one another is a core challenge that lacks a universal answer. We argue the most important twenty-first century skills don't lie in technical skills, but rather the ability for individuals to meaningfully interact with others across different cultural environments. Competently communicating in intercultural contexts requires literacy cultivated through intercultural knowledge and experience. Importantly, this contemporary communication occurs in the vehicle of numerous digital tools. Access to the intercultural studies and bodies of knowledge has never been easier since the proliferation of ICT. However, this access is not equitably distributed due to the digital divide and the role of knowledge gatekeeping. This chapter examines knowledge gatekeeping within the context of individuals seeking to access intercultural studies' knowledge and the space where knowledge is generated. To do so, terminology during the recent Delphi study on transculturality was examined as a potential mechanism for gatekeeping. The language used during panel discussions within the Delphi study conference revealed an unexpectedly high degree of jargon which may serve as a barrier for those who are not already active in this academic and scientific space. Future discourse can benefit non-intercultural experts by shifting terminology and adapting the necessary literacy for knowledge comprehension and contribution.

1 Cultural Skills for the Twenty-First Century

When talking about cultural skills for the twenty-first century, what exactly are we talking about? Some may look to leadership skills, soft skills, intercultural skills, or transcultural skills. To better understand the global human skills needed for the next 70+ years, how can people better learn and engage with others to keep pace

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_15

with society's rapid developments? How can people keep up with the impact of modern technology personally and professionally? How can people use technology in everyday life in the context of a global society? If such an inquiry had been made a century ago, the skills that were relevant in the first quarter of the twentieth century may not have been enough for the following seven decades. In order to begin answering what skills will be required in the modern era, one should first look back at what has brought us to this place in the twenty-first century to examine why some skills may be more important than others.

History has shown that culture will, and does, change continuously over time. As humanity interacts at an ever-increasing global level, the skill set needed for cultures to remain 'in the game' will continue to change. At the same time, the ability to maintain a cultural or even national identity will become increasingly harder. Welsch argues that humanity is no longer divided into separate cultural islands, but has taken on a new transcultural form that passes across cultural boundaries (1999). Welsch further argues that new forms of technology have enabled identical access to information globally and there is nothing that cultures can exclusively own any longer. According to Alasuutari (2015), humans are already a global tribe that expands throughout the world, where each nation is seen as a different clan. The term global tribe originated from a global study of psyculture (St. John, 2012), but has since then turned into a common term for describing humanity on a global level. Globalization, combined with the constant advancement of modern technologies, is causing the lines between different cultures to blur (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). Although access to internet and communication technologies (ICT) is not equal in all parts of the world, populations around the world are becoming increasingly connected to the internet and to global culture by extension. Therefore, this notion of being part of one tribe, where everyone is interconnected with others, would lead to an ever-increasing skill set needed to interact on a global level. This skill set will require cultural, social and technological skills in order to successfully navigate the twenty-first century.

Developing a consensus on how to define culture and subsequently identify the relevant competencies within each group of skills is an ongoing challenge. The Delphi method is an approach that develops consensus by pooling the combined experience of many experts within a particular field. This method can be particularly impactful since it can cover a wide range of specializations and use cases depending on the participating experts. Baumann Montecinos, Grünfelder and Wieland's Delphi examination of transculturality has begun this professional discourse and spread this idea to the cultural studies research and practitioner community. In order to create a synopsis of the necessary skills and define transculturality in the context of the twenty-first century however, discourse requires *all* participants to be communicating as opposed to solely professionals. Along the same lines as the Delphi approach, we argue that the conversation should also extend to others whose voices may not be recognized in the same spaces as cultural experts. We begin with background on means to develop twenty-first century skills, move on to explaining how gatekeeping can influence how people learn about these skills in the context of cultural studies,

and examine how gatekeeping can present itself within the context of expert-level information dissemination and discussions.

2 Digitalization as the Key to Knowledge

This aspect of accessing discourse can be described as colonization of knowledge. In psychology, the colonization of knowledge describes the white western worldview that is often found in multicultural research. This leads to the values of ethnic minorities in multicultural research via western research frameworks and analysis being systematically overlooked (Yakushko et al., 2016). The idea of colonizing knowledge has been historically used as a form of *gatekeeping,* or influencing information according to the framework of selected groups. One example would be the post-colonialism education systems in previously colonized cultures, that often demonstrate the "western philosophy" gatekeeping which ignores other cultures' perspectives (Jal & Bawane, 2020). Quijano (2000) argues that the rise of modern globalization and "Eurocentrism" is founded in the colonization of European countries worldwide, and that brought with it a systematic control of cultural knowledge, which is seen to this day through race-based terminology.

Access to discourse and information is needed for all communities in the era of the global tribe. This should allow everyone involved to communicate their needs, experiences, and possible solutions on a level that provides a low-threshold entry point into the conversation—even those that have previously been excluded or marginalized, as mentioned in the example from Yakushko et al. (2016). This marginalization is possible, in part, through implicitly gatekeeping information by making it harder to access non-majority narratives or knowledge. Access to the twenty-first century culture and skills conversation is arguably almost as important as the conversation itself. Participation and consideration need to be given to those who have previously not been allowed, whether consciously or not, to be a part of the conversation.

It is also important to consider the role of technology as it pertains to modern culture and the skills necessary to continuously adapt alongside its ongoing development. The relevance of cultural competencies in the twenty-first century has been largely driven by globalization which, in turn, has been made possible by the proliferation of the internet. The role of culture in today's world has proliferated in these digital spaces as smartphones and social media apps allow people to connect to one another at any given time or place in real time. Even in the professional realm, a rapid cultural shift in e-commerce has shifted customers' attitudes to expect services and products almost instantly and at their own convenience. Although direct communication between people is only a part of this, the trend clearly shows that people around the world have increasingly easy access to one another.

Technology's influence on well-being has also been seen outside the workplace. Liu and colleagues found that Generation Z had a complicated and worrying relationship with social media during the onset of COVID. They found that Generation Z users on social media felt significant fatigue and fear of missing out (FOMO)

based on their interactions with COVID-related online information (2021). Their findings showed fatigue and FOMO were significantly higher in the early months of the pandemic, which led to people developing a fear of COVID. The reported fatigue and FOMO pushed some to quit social media. During this time, the fear of COVID was reversed due to the reduction of information overload. Such a phenomenon highlights the need for people to properly evaluate information online in order to effectively navigate the twenty-first century.

Regardless of whether one focuses on communicating with others, examines future job prospects, engages in modern social behavior, or even adjusts to the ongoing global pandemic, there is no doubt that *information* and *participation* are an integral part of the twenty-first century.

People today should not only develop their own technical competencies, but also learn, practice, and develop cultural skills. Culture is present as people are fundamentally interacting with one another and technology is merely a tool to facilitate this communication and other digital activities. This should be the goal of twenty-first century skills: to coexist with technology by managing the way people interact with information and with one another. The ability to effectively reach those goals is rooted in the ability to navigate the cultural environments associated with both information and technology.

3 Key Cultural Competencies

Cultural competencies can cover an enormous breadth of concepts and ideas. The Delphi conference and its associated study already delve into this in great detail from its wide-reaching panels of experts so we do not cover this. Instead, this discussion will feature two groups of competencies: cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence.

Cultural intelligence has become popular due to its application in environments that have become more globalized and interconnected. The core premise of Earley and Ang's theory of cultural competencies refers to an individual's ability to effectively adapt to new cultural environments (2003). This can help individuals apply skills to adapt to new cultural environments and, subsequently, many companies and organizations have found value in these sets of competencies. Cultural intelligence validation has been observed on several occasions. An examination of Australian and Chinese managers employed in Australian companies working within China reported the strategies and styles belonging to the pillars of cultural intelligence were seen as effective leadership approaches (Deng & Gibson, 2008). The authors' semi-structured interviews represented many professional areas including the minerals and energy, manufacturing, consulting, building and construction, banking, legal services, and education industries. Similarly, a group of undergraduate students who received cultural intelligence education before a 7- to 14-day long study trip abroad reported better experiences and higher cultural intelligence scores compared to another group who had not received this education (Engle & Crowne, 2013). In the

study by Earley and Ang, the average experience of the interviewed managers ranged from 2 months to 16 years suggesting this effect can be seen both in the short-term and the long-term (2013).

The competencies belonging to cultural intelligence are primarily focused on the relationship between an individual and their (changing) cultural environment. An individual may struggle to access knowledge about a new cultural environment ahead of having a personal experience. This is particularly relevant because, in the modern world, it is not entirely uncommon to work with, or simply communicate with, people who live in different cultural environments. These skills therefore provide the flexibility to change with the twenty-first century global tribe.

By comparison, emotional intelligence is a set of competencies focused on individuals caring for themselves. Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence emphasizes the individual and their ability to identify and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Cherniss et al., 2001). These qualities are important for leaders within companies, and evidence suggests this can translate into tangible organizational performance. Gladson Nwokah, and Ahiauzu identified progressive organizations in Nigeria listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange and, after surveying key informants, found there was an association between higher emotional intelligence scores from these representatives and the company's performance on the Nigerian Stock Exchange (2009). Burnout has also been reported to be associated with social media usage (Han, 2016). This is potentially problematic since over half the world's population is reported to be on social media (Statista, 2021). As social media is a powerful means of facilitating a global exchange of culture, the potential negative implications for individuals suggest individuals could benefit from learning to use this tool in a healthy, balanced way. Emotional intelligence could prove to be an effective set of skills to be able to manage not only relationships with other people, but also the relationship between people and digital tools. The relationship between people and digital tools to access knowledge is where literacy can be impacted through gatekeeping.

4 Learning to Access Knowledge Through Literacy

The twenty-first century offers some unique possible solutions to developing relevant competencies because information is more readily accessible now across many forms ranging from massive open online courses (MOOCs) to YouTube tutorials, and even regularly published professional articles. Yet access to the internet and relevant information can ironically be difficult in today's world. It can be easy to experience information overload considering the vast volume of exponentially growing information; there are documented cases of negative psychological and health outcomes (Misra & Stokols, 2011). We argue that **accessing** knowledge and its creation to learn twenty-first century skills within the modern information society is the primary challenge. To meet this challenge, literacy can provide an avenue towards improving access.

Literacy can be thought of as individuals' knowledge and competences designed to address the challenges of modern society (Sørensen et al., 2012). Though somewhat broad, this definition of literacy is quite appropriate for the broad range of disciplines embedded in cultural studies. It is no longer possible to know and keep track of all knowledge on a subject due to the sheer speed, volume, and variety of information that is generated daily as documented by Dobre and Xhafa (2014). It is important, however, to distinguish between having information on a topic and the competencies to apply knowledge on that topic within a given context.

In modern practice, cultural researchers and practitioners likely encounter challenges engaging with the body of cultural knowledge. This chapter highlights the accessibility challenge through the lens of literacy. It is important to understand that, for the purposes of this discussion, we are assuming that all culturalists are educated and qualified in their current position. Though their positions, education, and training are varied, we are assuming that each individual is well equipped to perform properly in their positions.

Literacy is essential for the modern cultural researcher and practitioner because it helps to mediate the information paradox through which gatekeeping emerges. That is, despite living in times with unprecedented access to knowledge, many individuals may find themselves limited or isolated in what they can do. There are many types of literacy ranging from basic literacy, which is the ability to read and write, to topic-specific literacy such as cancer literacy (Sørensen et al., 2012). Another way to think about literacy is as the minimum required level of knowledge necessary to participate in a particular topic or field. Literacy can influence an individual's ability to access knowledge, understand knowledge, and participate in knowledge discourse. Identifying gatekeeping in accessing knowledge along with digital literacy skills can go a long way towards facilitating access to knowledge communities.

5 The Role of Gatekeeping in Accessing Knowledge

The process of becoming literate in cultural studies can manifest itself in different ways. Cultural researchers will spend time searching for relevant publications in their field of expertise to remain up-to-date on state-of-the-art research. Cultural practitioners will not only look for current research but must also find ways to implement theories and concepts into practice. Not all information will come from digital media, but the internet has become a common gateway for accessing many different forms of content. Various forms of media exist. However, the 'professional' and 'expert' channels of information are not always readily accessible. Research publications may be hidden behind a paywall. Conference proceedings may only be reviewed by registered attendees. Specialized training or workshops may only be accessible for individuals or institutions who can afford to pay. Aside from directly accessing information, there can also be a level of expected knowledge required for individuals to effectively participate in professional discussions such as conference panels, workshops, and teaching. These systemic barriers limiting access to this information

or discourse can be thought of as gates. These gates are regulated via gatekeeping to control access to these professional and expert oases of knowledge and discourse.

In order for twenty-first century cultural skills to be made more accessible, an interplay between literacy and gatekeeping is proposed. Literacy can help cultural researchers and practitioners more effectively understand and interact with relevant knowledge while gatekeeping can reduce the systemic barriers to entry. Literacy can teach skills for newcomers to learn and connect with professional spaces. We examined some of the discussions that took place during the Delphi conference on transculturality to identify the current state of gatekeeping. In doing so, we sought to examine possible barriers and enablers to provide more equitable access to this professional space for current and future culturalists.

6 A Conceptual Understanding of Gatekeeping

To understand how the results of the Delphi analysis are framed, it is helpful to have some background information on gatekeeping. Gatekeeping is the process of controlling the movement of privileged information where impartial rules are applied to gates and gatekeepers to determine access (Steele, 2018). In the context of cultural studies, gatekeeping controls the movement of information flowing into and out of the cultural professional spaces. It also determines who has access to the spaces where one can engage in discourse or contribute to the creation of new knowledge. These spaces can include journals, conferences, training, and others which are typically only accessible by active professionals.

Gatekeeping can be thought of as a naturally occurring phenomenon because it occurs as a result of having limited resources within a population. At some point, a group within a population will access resources and protect them. These are considered an "inner group" whereas those who want the resources are considered outsiders. In this case, cultural researchers and practitioners are considered the inner group while anyone interested in joining the community are classified as outsiders. Gatekeeping becomes the process by which one or more members of the inner group determine whether an outsider will be granted access to the resources or not.

Gatekeeping as a phenomenon can be observed in different ways. For example, some informal interpreters (officially employed as custodial staff) in South Africa were asked to help translate between psychiatric patients and clinicians. These informal interpreters sometimes gatekept information to clinicians by answering clinicians directly when some questions were asked rather than allowing the patient to answer (Kilian et al., 2020). These interpreters served as individual gatekeepers controlling the flow of information spoken between clinicians and patients. On a more systemic level, gatekeeping can also occur when a tightly-knit group of experts controls the flow of information and resources for an entire community. Shmatko and Katchanov observed that a small group of high-tech experts in Russia controlled the agenda for the direction of state-funded technology projects as well as determining which proposals would ultimately receive funding (2015). Rather than individual

gatekeepers, the determined agenda and funding acceptance requirements served as institutional barriers for researchers to participate. In a much more practical and literal sense, Gao et al. identified a literal gatekeeping role for intercultural business exchanges between businesspeople in China and New Zealand through critical incidents. They found that there are designated gatekeepers (guanxi) whose role is to mediate business connections between New Zealand outsiders and Chinese insiders (Gao et al., 2014). The role of the guanxi was to ensure there was effective intercultural communication by minimizing potential conflict while also giving the Chinese businesspeople reassurances that the New Zealand businesspeople were trustworthy.

7 Applying Gatekeeping to Cultural Practitioners

To examine this within the context of the Delphi study on transculturality, we used a two-part conceptual model. This conceptual model is based on its use for examining censorship in libraries. It was selected because gatekeeping in intercultural studies was assumed to be much more prohibitive than promotive and could prevent future colonization of knowledge as described by Quijano (2000). Although censorship is an extreme form of prohibitive gatekeeping, the findings and recommendations based on the model could potentially provide more equitable recommendations to improve access to this professional space.

The first part of this model breaks down this process into six distinct concepts seen in Table 1.

By breaking it down into different concepts, observations and comparisons can be made more precisely. The information messages contributing to the cultural studies professional space can take the form of research observations, publications, expert opinions, and expert discussions. Each of these are possible messages that can travel through communication channels such as text messages, email, and audio/video recordings. It is important to understand that this information can flow bi-directionally: new information flows *into* the body of cultural knowledge from practicing professionals while existing information can flow from the body of cultural research *out* towards others. Within the context of the Delphi conference, gates and gatekeepers are, functionally, almost identical. The gate for an individual to access information discussed during the conference may be a virtual invitation to the online web conference or the physical entry to the location where the event was held. However, these gates were managed by the conference coordinators and the decision to open or close these gates was directly controlled by them. Whether a gate will open or not can be influenced by two sets of factors. Positive and negative factors directly apply towards the gatekeepers themselves. Factors such as an individual's professional status (as a cultural researcher or practitioner), a personal relationship with a gatekeeper, or the motive to collaborate on future projects can all influence a gatekeeper's decision to open or close the gate. Internal and external factors apply directly to the gates themselves too. Continuing with the Delphi conference scenario, examples such as social distancing limitations, internet broadband requirements,

Table 1 Concepts of gatekeeping theory

Information messages	Information messages that are spoken or written. This can be transmitted in formats such as letters, emails, messaging, calls, conferences, or other similar media. This information is designed to be distributed through gates to the target community
Communication channels	Communication channels are pathways along which information messages travel
Gates	Gates are decision points along communication channels where information can either continue flowing or stop
Gatekeepers	Gatekeepers are people, policies, or decision-making guidelines that decide whether a gate is opened or closed for certain communication
Positive and negative forces	Positive and negative forces are factors that influence a gatekeeper's decision. Positive factors influence gatekeepers to open a gate while negative factors influence gatekeepers to close the gate
Internal and external forces	Internal and external forces are factors that can influence the state of a gate directly. Internal factors influence gates from within an organization while external factors influence gates from outside of the organization

Note This table describes the major concepts and associated definitions for gatekeeping theory
Adapted from Steele (2018)

Table 2 Gatekeeping theory applied to Jargon in the context of the Delphi study

Information messages	Contributions from each discussion panel member
Communication channels	Spoken contribution in-person or spoken contribution via videoconference
Gates	The discussion panels and the conference itself
Gatekeepers	Moderators and organizers of the conference
Positive and negative forces	Referencing specific cultural concepts or specific academic jargon, using cultural study-related or general academic jargon, or using culture specific jargon and phrases (secondary jargon)
Internal and external forces	None

Note This table describes the way the concepts & definitions of the gatekeeping theory are applied in towards the Delphi Study conference discussion
Adapted from Steele (2018)

data protection regulations, and even institutional policy can all influence whether a physical or virtual gate can be opened or closed.

The second part of this model separates gatekeeping into different levels of analysis. These different levels of analysis provide context to any system whose gatekeeping processes are scrutinized. At the lowest level, gatekeeping can be examined in individuals' behaviors. The individual is simultaneously the gate and gatekeeper so all influencing factors are applied simultaneously. As the level of analysis rises, the system becomes larger and often increasingly complex. The Delphi conference would be classified somewhere between *Communication Routines & Channels* and *Organizations*. At this level, the gatekeepers and gates do not radically change, although the decision-making becomes more complex. The gates themselves are the means of collecting and storing information as described by the researchers' Delphi protocol and conference plan. The gatekeepers are still the primary researchers and conference coordinators. However, there are significant influencing factors that play a role in the gatekeepers' decision-making process. Research design, ethics, and protocol are particularly powerful internal forces that have a strong impact on the gatekeepers' decision since these determine what information messages will be accepted and how they can pass through the communication channels. In this research context, this internal force could have a stronger impact on the gate than the gatekeepers themselves. However, the gatekeepers are often directly or indirectly involved in determining these guidelines. Positive and negative factors could be measured by the gatekeepers themselves (Fig. 1).

In the context of the Delphi conference, we chose to examine the dynamic of gatekeeping through the lens of *Communication Routines & Channels* between individual participants. There were three discussion panels that took place throughout the multi-day conference. The gatekeeping model was used to examine the contributions shared during these panel discussions.

The focus of this examination was to find out if there were any systematic factors that could indicate gatekeeping through a literary analysis of the contributions. The primary hypothesis was that individuals who wanted to access this professional space must be familiar with jargon. We hypothesized that jargon would function as a regularly occurring part of conversation that could serve as a positive influence for outsiders seeking to engage in this type of discourse. Tying this to twenty-first century competencies, literacy would be the required knowledge of cultural research to participate in the panel discussions.

The working definition for jargon was developed based on Bullock et al.'s work on identifying jargon as a barrier to effective communication in science. Jargon here is defined as specialized vocabulary or terminology associated with a particular context that would have a different meaning under different contexts or circumstances (Bullock et al., 2019). The elements of the gatekeeping model were defined as follows.

8 Gatekeeping Analysis Methodology

The panel discussions were recorded as videos which were subsequently transcribed. Using a deductive qualitative analysis approach, one of the authors reviewed the

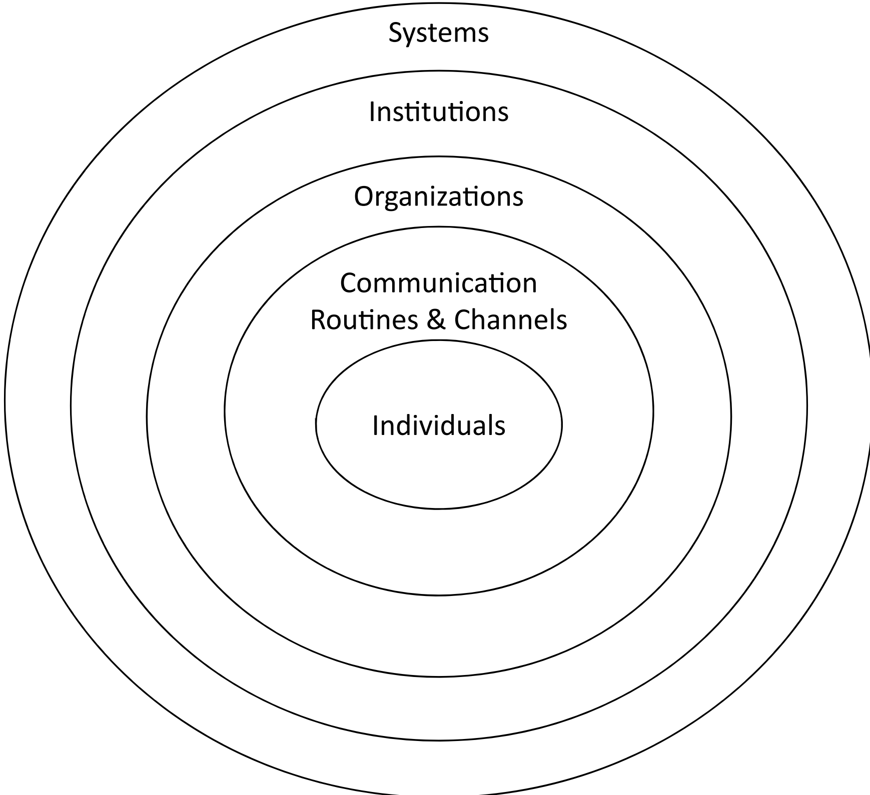

Fig. 1 Levels of analysis for gatekeeping. *Note* Gatekeeping can be analyzed on several different levels depending on the industry or field of practice. Adapted from Steele (2018)

transcripts to identify jargon occurring throughout the discussions. As this author was one of the invited experts for the Delphi study and a participant in one of the panel discussions, their familiarity with cultural concepts and jargon provided an in-group perspective. The jargon used during these panel discussions was selected because the literacy required to engage in such conversations represented potential positive or negative factors for someone that did not already have access to this professional space.

The jargon terminology was broken down into three categories to better understand its use. The three categories of jargon were defined as:

1. Theory-based jargon: This type of jargon includes terminology that is directly linked to, or based on, cultural theories. This includes research-specific terms that describe areas of theory.
2. General jargon: This type of jargon includes terminology that is linked to the academic or cultural field, but is more generalized or not attributable to a specific theory. Such terms are not as often used in daily life.

3. Secondary jargon: This type of jargon includes terminology that is highly specific to certain cultures or organizational fields. These words have specific meanings in the context of cultural studies.

The recordings for each of the Delphi conference's panel discussions were transcribed and the transcription was reviewed for the presence of each of the three jargon categories. For each of these categories, jargon was measured based on the specific terminology used, frequency of terminology used, and the frequency each speaker mentioned such terminology. This was done through examination of each transcript line for line, in order to identify jargon according to the above definitions. The read-through was done several times for each transcript in order to avoid overlooked terms. The terms were then listed by type of jargon, number of occurrences, and the speaker that used them. The list was then arranged in preference of total occurrences, and the top 10 terms were included in the results. This process was repeated for each of the panel discussions.

The authors spoke with two of the conference organizers before the transcriptional analysis to provide a frame of reference based on their professional expectations.

A quote was presented to the panel at the beginning of this time period to start the discussion. As the quote contained jargon it was counted within these analyses. Across the panel discussions, jargon mentioned three or more times were listed separately from the terms mentioned only once or twice. The 10 most frequent terms for each type of jargon were then presented in Figs. 2, 3, and 4.

9 Delphi Analysis Findings

In the first discussion, "Focus on Commonalities", there were four invited panelists alongside the two conference organizers. In this discussion, 204 theory-based jargon terms, 347 general jargon terms, and 43 secondary jargon terms were identified over the course of almost 49 min.

Figure 2 shows the ten most used terms as well as the amount of jargon used only once or twice. In the first discussion alone, the amount of theory-based jargon went far beyond the expectations of the conference organizers.

In the second discussion, "Cultural competence in the twenty-first century" there were five invited panelists alongside the two conference organizers. In this discussion, 226 theory-based jargon terms, 431 general jargon terms, and 28 secondary jargon terms were identified over the course of 55 min.

The second discussion had the widest variety of unique theories and general jargon terms. However, these terms were almost always mentioned only once. This discussion also had the greatest number of jargon terms used more than three times (22 terms).

In the third discussion, "What's new?", there were five invited panelists alongside the two conference organizers. In this discussion, 209 theory-based jargon terms,

Discussion 1 - Most frequently used Jargon					
Theory-Based Jargon	Number	General Jargon	Number	Secondary Jargon	Number
Commonalities	28	Models	8	Ping Ponging	2
Dilemmas	28	Panelists	8	Meet people where they are	2
Differences	14	Quote	5	Open the stage	2
Transcultural Competence	11	Space	5	Interrelatedness	1*
Transcultural/ Transcultural	6	Panel	4	Lucy in Africa	1*
Individual/ Individualist	5	Community	4	Bear in mind	1*
Values	5	Practitioner/ Practitioner Perspective	4	The Bloody Hell	1*
Paradox	4	Competencies	4	Half-Baked	1*
Differences and Commonalities	4	Facilitate Relationships	3*	Bottle that Down	1*
Dilemma Reconciliation	3*	Co-Creating	3*	Keep the Energy	1*
Terms used twice	19	Terms used twice	30	On the Spot	1*
Terms used once	62	Terms used once	208	Operating in the arena	1*
*Selection of terms used 3 times		*Selection of terms used 3 times		*Selection of terms used once	

Fig. 2 Most frequently used jargon, discussion "Focus on commonalities". *Note* Table describing most common jargon terms in the first discussion

280 general jargon terms, and 12 secondary-jargon terms were identified over the course of 48 min.

For this discussion, the term "commonalities" was used in a different context. It was therefore categorized as either theory-based jargon or as general jargon based on the context.

Throughout the three discussions, the secondary jargon was observed to likely be attributed to native-English speaking cultures. It is also important to note the first two discussions also included input from audience members that were not directly panelists. Their contributions were included in the analysis. Since the time they spoke was much different than those of the panelists, it would not be possible to fairly compare the use of jargon per speaker.

In total, 1778 jargon terms were used in roughly three hours of discussion. The use of secondary jargon is significantly lower than in the other two categories (89 times). This Delphi conference was held in Germany and the attendees were comprised of an overwhelmingly international audience. This aligns with the identified pattern of

Discussion 2 - Most frequently used Jargon

Theory-Based Jargon	Number	General Jargon	Number	Secondary Jargon	Number
Leadership	8	Quote	17	Sketch what I mean	2
Transcultural Competence	7	Panelists	12	Boil-Down	1*
Intercultural Competence	6	Context	7	Crack where the Light gets in	1*
Transformative Competence	6	Unmuted	7	Juggling this Complexity	1*
Power Reflexivity	4	Adapt	6	Sparring Partner	1*
Commonalities	3*	Complexity	6	Unpack this Into	1*
Ambiguity	3*	General Competence	6	Wrestle with	1*
Culture	3*	Competence	5	Get out of their Head	1*
Storytelling	3*	Highlight	5	Elephant in the Room	1*
Ethnocentrism	3*	Speaker List	5	Put People to the Table	1*
Terms used twice	27	Terms used twice	31	Check a Box	1*
Terms used once	106	Terms used once	253	Maps into	1*
* Selection of terms used three times				*Selection of terms used once	

Fig. 3 Most frequently used jargon, discussion “Cultural competence in the twenty-first century”. *Note* Table describing most common jargon terms in the second discussion

Discussion 3 - Most frequently used Jargon

Theory-Based Jargon	Number	General Jargon	Number	Secondary Jargon	Number
Commonalities	17	Commonalities	6	Mate	2
Transcultural Competence	14	Discipline	6	Dodgy	1
Transculturality	11	Conceptualization	3	Foliage	1
Competence	9	Generalized Competence	3	Gripping on to Knowledge	1
Intercultural Competence	8	Generate	3	Gut Feeling	1
Transcultural	7	Intercultural Field	3	Juggle all Balls at Once	1
Diversity	5	Sense of Belonging	3	Playing Two Fields at the Same Time	1
Intercultural	5	Viewpoint	3	Summit	1
Decision Making Logics	3*	Central Knowledge	2*	Thinking Outside the Box	1
Intercultural Communication	3*	Meta-Science	2*	Missing the Voice	1
Terms used twice	13	Terms used twice	32	Tick the Box	1
Terms used once	92	Terms used once	186		
* Selection of terms used three times		*Selection of terms used twice			

Fig. 4 Most frequently used jargon, discussion “What’s new?”. *Note* Table describing most common jargon terms in the third discussion

secondary jargon use, which can contribute to the heterogeneity of English terms. This variety of secondary jargon could be interpreted as a positive or negative force on the gatekeeper. However, such a judgment would be quite difficult as there are varied levels of English language proficiency as well as the various dialects spoken around the world. The required level of literacy and knowledge would make such judgments subjective and quite difficult to determine an objective evaluation. This type of literacy is unique in that it is a combination of language literacy (English in this case) and cultural studies literacy. Cultural studies professionals could benefit greatly by differentiating between the knowledge and the ability to engage in discussion about said knowledge.

10 Understanding the Use of Jargon

The amount of jargon during the Delphi panel discussions was high. The volume and variety could be interpreted in several different ways. On the one hand, it is possible that current experts may underestimate the amount of specific terminology used in professional discourse. This subconscious estimation could serve as a hindrance for outsiders or new professionals with very little experience in this space to effectively participate. As opposed to overt colonization of knowledge, an underestimation of necessary cultural literacy focused on terminology could serve as an unseen barrier that could hinder, rather than promote, certain discussions or knowledge.

This analysis also highlights the importance of precise terminology. Jargon is not an inherently negative phenomenon. Such practice is expected and necessary in environments where meaning can be interpreted in numerous ways. Developing precise communication has the potential to reduce misunderstandings and even facilitate relationships between people or communities. That being said, examples such as the use of the word ‘commonalities’ during the third discussion suggested varied use. This term was mentioned several times, but had different interpretations depending on the context or on the individual speaking. Such a scenario could function as a negative force for gatekeepers rather than a positive force even between experts. Such scenarios present opportunities for cultural researchers and practitioners to potentially apply concepts within cultural intelligence or even emotional intelligence as a means to extract meaning and adjust during discussion. A universal solution may not be possible, but identification of potentially conflicting meanings and contexts creates opportunity for improvement or further discourse.

From an outsider’s perspective, the variety and volume of different types of jargon used can be overwhelming. It is assumed that cultural researchers and practitioners develop their knowledge of ideas, theories, and vocabulary during their education, training, and with experience. Explicitly identifying these types of common practice could potentially be more beneficial towards opening up the cultural studies community as opposed to traditional gates such as university degree requirements, training requirements, publication requirements, or other metrics commonly used in academic and scientific spaces. From the gatekeeper’s perspective, identifying

common or often discussed jargon can help with disseminating information and could even work towards curriculum development for existing programs. Individuals who are not already educated and who participate in professional spaces can have difficulty with understanding processes, expectations, and the terminology that is regularly used. These form professional cultural expectations from existing experts that non-experts struggle with. For example, members from vulnerable or minoritized communities may find it difficult to discuss with experts when faced with specific theories and concepts they are unfamiliar with. How can someone who cannot participate effectively in professional conversation represent themselves in a professional context? Even when technology makes it easier to access these digital spaces, how can they effectively engage without being excluded? Factors such as digital etiquette, expected terminology, and best practices are often learned and could represent invisible barriers to entry. From an outsider's perspective, an understanding of these terms, theories, and concepts can better inform decision-making and training.

There are some limitations to this analysis. As the analysis was done by a single expert, there is bias in jargon inclusion and exclusion criteria. The basis for the working definition of jargon still leaves room for subjective interpretation. Other experts may consider certain terms to be common knowledge while others may consider several terms to have the same meaning. As with other subjective definitions or interpretations, the goal was to provide a point of comparison. Future inquiries on gatekeeping in cultural studies may yield different results, but this method of analysis was designed to provide a lens to identify gatekeeping within this context.

The panel discussions held during the Delphi conference were also only a single gate within the cultural studies professional space. There are many other events, activities, and means of joining discussions which are not available to all. Within this context, the findings of the deductive analysis only provide one perspective and future studies could provide more insight into other perspectives across the spectrum of cultural studies researchers and practitioners.

11 What to Do with This Jargon?

Jargon itself is neither a positive nor negative factor, but rather a phenomenon that can go both ways. It can be considered a positive factor for professional-to-professional communication that provides a common understanding of meaning. This common meaning could also promote the dissemination of knowledge since researchers and practitioners could more accurately understand the movement of new knowledge that is continually generated. Conversely, outsiders may have the opposite experience where they struggle to understand new knowledge. Such mixed results could possibly occur across the different gates within cultural studies such as the selection of accepted research manuscripts, the evaluation of training programs, and even real-world knowledge applications. With the context of a twenty-first century global tribe, different interpretations and experiences will likely continue to occur. Awareness and

further examination into how gatekeeping manifests itself will be necessary before possible solutions can be addressed in order to make the community more inclusive.

Gatekeeping in a larger sense has also changed on a systems level. Traditionally, this information was restricted in a linear fashion. This process of linear gatekeeping was (and to a certain extent still is) common practice at traditional institutions such as universities, schools, and training academies. As there are generally no set international standards for teaching knowledge in the various fields of cultural studies, the institutions themselves are the gatekeepers. Outsiders would appeal to a gatekeeper to request access to the knowledge, to request to contribute knowledge, or to request to contribute to new knowledge creation. In linear gatekeeping, there is often a group of specific individuals that represent the interests of the group and decide whether to grant access to the outsiders or not. This small group of gatekeepers were traditionally the only means to access the knowledge or resources. For example, admission to a university is a form of linear gatekeeping because admission officials and course coordinators are specific individuals that can grant access to applicants.

In the twenty-first century, however, institutions, resources, and the way that people access these resources are different. Rather than accessing the resources in a linear fashion, a networked approach has become increasingly common. Networked gatekeeping is a type of gatekeeping in which there is not a single group of gatekeepers. Instead, a group can have many gatekeepers since there can be many possible paths to access the resources. This has been facilitated by the proliferation of the internet and digital revolution (Hellmueller, 2016). Although access to some information resources has been made substantially easier, there is still knowledge and participation in knowledge creation that is protected through gatekeeping.

The decentralization of gatekeeping reflects the decentralization and democratization of information that has become a hallmark of modern knowledge. As this follows the same pattern, the value given to knowledge and knowledge creation by the inner group has similarly adapted. Knowledge alone may no longer be the scarce resource that is protected. Instead, it may be participation or validation in activities such as research publications, expert panels, book writing, or professional certification.

As the various fields of cultural studies is one of diversity and inclusivity, it should allow access to information from the global tribe on all levels, and be open to input from groups that fall outside the idea of western philosophy (Jal & Bawane, 2020; St. John, 2012). To this end, journals, conferences, workshops, and other spaces where cultural knowledge is created and generated can evaluate the terminology used. Exchanging knowledge through accessible language that distances itself from the traditional knowledge colonization style could invite more participation and facilitation of knowledge dissemination. Cultural literacy could explicitly include academic, cultural, and scientific jargon towards this goal.

The recognition of jargon is one way to start this process. However, this means that future research inquiries need to be conducted. Gatekeeping must first be better understood across different contexts, particularly across different possible gates. The proliferation of networked gatekeeping has made access easier, but the digital divide has shown this access has not increased equitably. As the field of cultural studies is interdisciplinary, a universal standard would be quite difficult to develop. However,

identifying the entry threshold for certain subspaces or subdisciplines is the first step in reducing the barrier. As the results of this analysis have shown, the use of jargon was much larger than expected even within the context of a single gate.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Literacy as an Access Method: How Terminologies as a Mechanism for Gatekeeping Influences Participation", by Michelle Cummings-Koether and Oscar Blanco

- How can intercultural experts identify jargon that may be inaccessible to non-experts in digital and non-digital spaces?
- How can cultural discourse use accessible language without losing meaning?
- How can the experience of non-experts be incorporated into expert intercultural discourse?
- How can intercultural practitioners systematically identify terminology-based gatekeeping barriers and create more accessible means of both sharing knowledge and contributing to knowledge creation?

Where did this excessive jargon use come from? Is this a general academic issue acting as an external factor influencing the various fields of cultural studies and their potential gatekeepers? Is this the result of several interdisciplinary fields coming together to define the transculturality space? A look at the history of jargon used in this field is just as warranted as looking towards the future to make this space more accessible. Real world applications include the *De-Jargonizer*, which aims to identify and reduce complex jargon use in the sciences (Rakedzon et al., 2017), the accessible language standards created by the government of New Zealand (2020), or the guide for *Leichte Sprache* from the German Bundesministerium für Arbeit and Soziales (2014).

It can be challenging to examine and evaluate the use of discussion terminology in today's world given the volume of knowledge that is constantly being created and discussed. Many of the spaces are no longer physical spaces, but growing digital spaces where people interact with one another across a spectrum of digital tools and technologies. Confidently navigating the twenty-first century as a cultural researcher or practitioner will undoubtedly require some degree of digital and cultural literacy. Yet, these spaces and the people who thrive in these spaces can very easily become gates or even gatekeepers. This has never been easier. Creating a low-threshold and reducing the use of all types of the presented jargon to a yet to be determined minimum will make the field as a whole more inclusive, and that way the community can stand out as a shining beacon of tolerance, inclusivity and openness in the scientific community as a whole.

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Leading in Contexts of Cultural Complexity

Culturally Complex Work Settings: Characteristics and Requirements for Leadership from a Relational Perspective

Sonja A. Sackmann

Abstract This chapter first outlines the major changes that have contributed to the complex business environment and the way in which they have changed our work context. This is followed by discussion of the characteristics of culturally complex work settings and their implications for leadership in such settings. When exploring existing theories of leadership, a relational approach to leadership seems to be most appropriate to make the best use of the requirements and the inherent potential of a culturally diverse workforce in such culturally complex settings while, at the same time, minimizing potential challenges. The characteristics of such a relational leadership approach are explicated from a social constructionist perspective and a comprehensive model for leading in culturally complex work settings is proposed and illustrated with a small case. The proposed relational leadership model may serve leaders as an orientation in understanding and navigating the cultural dynamics involved in culturally complex work settings and the requirements including necessary competencies for enabling positive outcomes. In addition, the model may help researchers in making informed choices regarding their research focus when studying various aspects of culturally complex work settings and leadership in such settings. The chapter closes with four questions to ponder.

1 Introduction

Our world has become increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA), and thus rather unpredictable due to a number of events and developments. Information and communication technology with its respective software and

This research was partially financed by the Estonian Research Council grant PRG1513 "Ethical Organisational Culture: Multi-level Analysis of its Determinants, Practices and Consequences".

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*,
Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_16

the world wide web allow conversations, exchange of information, and easy access to information around the globe. Treaties among economic blocs such as the EU or the USA-Mexico-Canada Agreement have enabled people to move and work in other countries while unstable political situations, wars, and economic difficulties have set in motion waves of refugee movements. Despite these movements of people and labor, the population in Western societies is further aging, leading to a shortage of skilled workers and initiating discussions about raising the official retirement age in several countries. These developments have resulted in a multinational and culturally diverse labor force not only within countries but also within single organizations. Hence, organizations and their leaders need to find ways to integrate and make the best use of such a culturally diverse workforce.

In addition, events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have taken our societies and organizations by surprise and initiated radical shifts in the way we live and work almost overnight thus adding to the volatility, uncertainty, and complexity. While some industries and organizational models and jobs were seriously threatened, others have thrived in this new context. However, all organizations and their leaders have to ask themselves how they can remain viable in the future. This will require a specific kind of leadership that can mitigate uncertain times, handle a culturally diverse workforce, and one that is sensitive to the requirements of the new work and leadership context.

In this chapter, I will first outline the major changes that have contributed to our VUCA environment and outline the characteristics of a culturally complex work context. This will be followed by addressing the related implications for leadership in such a context. When exploring existing theories of leadership, I will argue that culturally complex settings require a relational approach to leadership to make the best use of the inherent potential of a culturally diverse workforce while, at the same time, minimizing potential challenges. I will outline and discuss the characteristics of such a relational approach from a social constructionist perspective and propose a comprehensive model for leading in culturally complex work settings. This model is illustrated with a small case and it may serve leaders as an orientation in understanding and navigating the cultural dynamics involved in culturally complex settings and its requirements for enabling positive outcomes. The model may help researchers in making informed choices regarding their research focus when studying various aspects of culturally complex work settings.

2 The Changed Work Context

Since the beginning of this millennium, we have experienced a number of radical changes that have had profound implications for the way we live and work. Most of these changes originated in the areas of technology, communications, politics, and society. In the context of this paper, I will briefly address those that have impacted work organizations and contributed to a culturally complex work context.

Technological developments in transportation have radically reduced the cost of transportation both for goods and people. This has enabled organizations to operate in different parts of the world regardless of distance and transportation costs. With easy and low-cost transportation, travel has multiplied around the globe[1] creating a mix of people with diverse backgrounds in various parts of the world. The computer and information technology sectors have enabled and accelerated the internationalization processes of organizations and subsequently globalization—thus transforming workplaces, work itself, and the way work is done. With the new IC technologies and their respective software tools, work can now occur twenty-four hours a day around the globe. As a result, new organizational and work arrangements have emerged (e.g., Castells, 2000, Vol. 1; Pauleen, 2003). Work and project team members no longer need to work in the same building, city, region, or even country (Eurofound & the International Labour Office, 2017). Hence, an organization's workforce may no longer be co-located and has become increasingly multinational and multicultural. As a result, leaders will require skills and competences in leading such an increasingly multinational and multicultural workforce that may be dispersed in different geographic regions.

New *communications media*, such as the World Wide Web, and social networking media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Tiktok provide a wealth of instant and real-time information to those who have technical access. These tools have revolutionized a wide range of activities ranging from product-oriented problem-solving (Herz & Banthien, 2002; Moon & Sproul, 2002) to personal marketing (Taylor, 2020), communication (Romenti et al., 2014), and new work arrangements (Spreitzer et al., 2017). The newly available tools have impacted our work realities in many ways as we could experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. During lockdowns, the internet and ICT tools have enabled working from home including online meetings with colleagues, work teams, superiors, and customers. Different versions of hybrid work are likely to stay (Kant, 2022) since most working people now expect it from their employers (Slack & Kantar Public, 2021). With easy access to information and virtual work, power due to one's position and hierarchy have become less important (Schell & Bischof, 2021), while the need for ICT knowledge and skills as well as online communication skills has increased. Technically mediated dialogue among colleagues may occur in real-time or sequentially between people who are located in different parts of the world requiring skills to deal with the potential influence of individuals' multicultural backgrounds and interaction styles. These changes require technically savvy leaders who need to lead virtually and they also challenge traditional models of leadership in co-located work settings.

Our *societies* have experienced many changes during the past decades. The most prominent ones are changes in values, demographics, and migration. Studies of social value changes (Inglehart, 1985, 1997, 2002; Nextpractice, 2016; World Values Survey, 2019) suggest four meta-trends in Western societies: increasing democratization, increasing individualism, increasing ego-centrism, and increasing diversity

[1] The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reduced travel between March 2020 and spring 2021/2022 but it is picking up again.

in values and value sets. Since the economic recovery after WWII, our Western societies have experienced a move toward post-materialistic values while the student revolution of the 1960s as well as the discovery and use of the contraceptive pill marked the beginning of a democratization process in all spheres of our Western societies. These relate to educational and work processes as well as the empowerment of women and younger generations. In addition, our Western multi-option societies (Gross, 1994) are characterized by increasing individualism, heterogeneity, or diversity, also contributing to ambiguity and complexity. Organizations operating in these societies as well as individuals living and working in these societies have to cope with the new realities outlined above. For individuals, these new realities bring with them multiple choices, multiple roles, and inherent role conflicts. For people in leadership positions, these new realities imply having to lead a multicultural workforce composed of individuals of different age and gender, who may have different values, who value their uniqueness, and want to be treated as individuals on an equal footing.

In addition, the sources of potential identification options have multiplied for individuals. At the same time, people have become more aware of and sensitive to potential identification options at different levels. The identification with a nation-state has become only one among other identifications (Phillips & Sackmann, 2015) as evidenced in the political domain, in purchasing habits, and in social movements. Some of the national boundaries that were established by politicians of the victorious allied countries after WW I and WW II have been challenged or even destroyed as ethnic, religious, or regional identities have become stronger and more salient for individuals. Examples exist in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., the former USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia), Asia (the Koreas) and in Western Europe (e.g., Ireland (religious differences), Spain and Belgium (ethnic differences), Italy and Germany (regional differences based on different economic drivers). These examples suggest that personal identifications with a nation-state may only be one among others. Furthermore, extreme weather conditions and resulting catastrophes have made societal members increasingly aware of the environment and their ecological footprint. This has resulted in enhanced regional awareness and identification when purchasing products and services. Social movements such as Fridays for Future, MeToo, or Black Lives Matter have raised awareness and the salience of additional sources of identification such as gender and color. Individuals have to engage and invest efforts in active *identity work* (Bissels et al., 2001; Brown, 2015; Hall, 1996; Watson, 2008), and the question *Who am I?* is no longer a trivial one. As a result, individuals have a set of multiple cultural identifications that are more or less visible and whose salience may change depending on the situation at hand. Hence leaders may no longer rely only on visible signs for their employees' identification such as their function, profession, age, or passports. Instead, leaders need a deeper understanding of their employees' backgrounds with their potentially multiple identifications and they need to be sensitive to the potentially shifting salience of their employees' identifications in the course of an interaction.

Demographic changes in our Western societies have resulted in a shortage of skilled labor, and organizations increasingly trying to tap into their pool of retirees.

The resulting workforce spans a wider age range and is likely to have more diversity in value sets as well as skills, working styles, work experiences and working preferences (Colbert et al., 2016). Furthermore, recent waves of migration have added to more culturally diverse societies and organizations (Bosetti et al., 2012; Hajro et al., 2022). Hence, leaders need to be aware of the potentially different needs and expectations of young, middle-aged, and older employees as well as those with different societal backgrounds.

Taken together, these changes contribute to a VUCA work context that is culturally complex in many respects. It poses multiple challenges for leaders in their endeavors to lead effectively in such culturally complex settings and achieve satisfactory results. The culturally diverse characteristics of the VUCA work context are characterized in the following section.

3 Characteristics of Culturally Complex Work Settings

Given these changes and developments, today's organizations have a multicultural workforce and, at the same time, operate in a multicultural context. The multicultural workforce finds itself in an organization that is influenced by multiple cultures from different levels. To give an example, Brainlab, a software-based medical technology company develops high-technology products and services in the fields of surgery, radiotherapy, medical image sharing, and digitally integrated O.R.s.[2] It is located in 25 countries in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North and South America and employs over 2000 people from 79 countries at 25 offices worldwide. In 2003, the 270 employees at the Munich headquarters came from 26 different nations - "*Multiculti pur*" (Koschik, 2003, p. 24). This cultural diversity has increased with 970 people now working in their new Munich headquarters in 2021. Their leaders believe that through globalization from within they can successfully work with customers from different cultures around the world.

However, as indicated above, national culture is only one of several potential cultures that are present in today's work organizations and that may impact organizational life (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004). From an organization's perspective, it has a culture at the organizational level and it may have several subcultures and trans cutting cultures at the same time (Phillips & Sackmann, 2015; Sackmann, 1997). Potential subcultures may form around organizational entities such as a business unit, department, project, or functional domains, age, as well as hierarchy and organizational tenure (length of service). Additional subcultures may form around gender, profession, generation, ethnicity, and/or religion. Since these latter ones also pertain to the enveloping cultures of an organization, they are known as trans cutting subcultures. Organizations operate in geographical regions and nations, and they may be part of one or several industries. Furthermore, the nations in which they operate may be members of one or several supra-national organizations such as the

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[2] https://www.brainlab.com/about-brainlab/, accessed January 31, 2022.

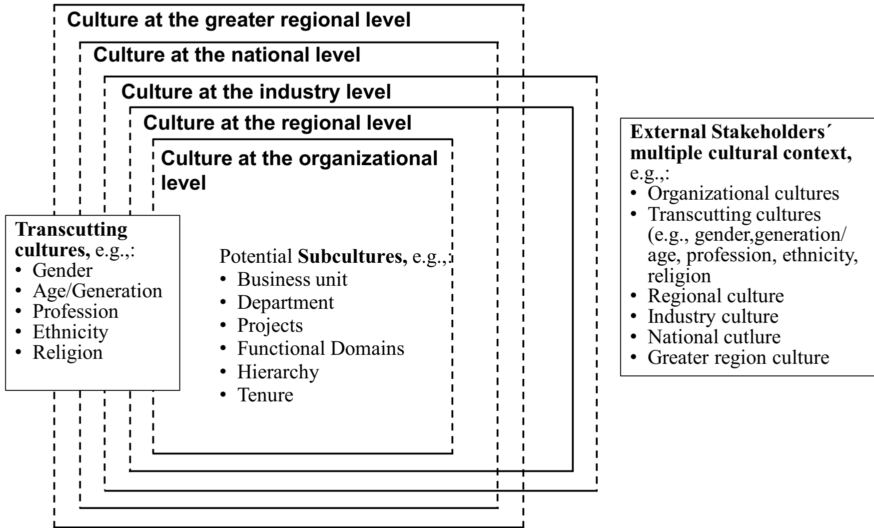

Fig. 1 The multiple cultural context of organizations

EU, WTO, the USMCA,[3] the ABTA,[4] or the CPTTP.[5] Hence, the cultures at the regional, national, industrial, and supra-national levels are likely to have an influence on an organization's cultural context. To give an example: the Mercedes Benz Group is a multinational car manufacturer that originated in the German region of Swabia. Despite the firm's global presence, its current Swedish CEO and its Chinese shareholders, the culture of Mercedes Benz still bears the imprint of the Swabian region, and German culture and, as a car manufacturer, its culture is also influenced by the automotive industry and its relevant trade organizations.

Organizations with their multiple cultural contexts interact with external organizations and stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, shareholders, financial institutions, and the public or parts of society. These groups and organizations bring with them a similarly diverse cultural fabric that shapes their interaction with other partners and organizations. Hence, the resulting cultural context of these organizations in which they interact is rather complex as depicted in Fig. 1. It influences organizations' own cultural context in which leaders need to act, make decisions, relate to, and interact with their partners.

As outlined above, organizational members also bring with them multiple cultures and multiple cultural identities (Fitzsimmens, 2013; Phillips & Sackmann, 2015; Sackmann & Phillips, 2004). Besides their national, bi-national (Brannen & Thomas, 2010), or multinational identifications (Hong & Minbaeva, 2022), individuals are members of several societal groups and thus influenced by their respective cultures.

[3] USMCA: United States-Mexico-Canada (NAFTA successor organization).

[4] ABTA: Asia Business Trade Association.

[5] CPTPP: Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

These become part of the individual's fabric of potential cultural identifications (Gooman et al., 1999; Vora et al., 2019) with various degrees of richness. In addition to nation(s), they may identify with a certain region, their school, university, family, a sports club, their gender, age or generation group, their profession, their work organizations, and its industry, etc. Depending on the personality and the issues at hand in a given situation, one or a few specific cultural identifications may become salient for an individual while others move into the background. Hence, individuals may draw on different cultural identifications during the course of an interaction and thus create an evolving cultural dynamic on the backdrop of the organization's multicultural context.

In their leadership endeavors, leaders need to be aware of these individual fabrics of potential multiple cultural identifications and their changing salience during interactions that take place in an organization's multiple cultural contexts. Hence, it requires a certain kind of leadership and leadership behavior to benefit from this cultural diversity and overcome its associated challenges (Behfar et al., 2006).

4 Implications for Conceptualizing Leadership in Culturally Complex Settings

Leadership is one of the most intensively studied subjects in the field of organizational behavior. In the broadest sense, leadership has been defined as the ability to influence others. Research efforts have resulted in many prescriptive and empirically based leadership theories (Day, 2014; Northouse, 2019). However, none of them can explain all aspects of the multi-faceted phenomenon of leadership. At the beginning of systematic studies, scholars focused on the personality of leaders. They assumed that leaders are born with a specific genetic set-up when compared to others that enables them to lead. This was followed by a wave of research influenced by the behavioral paradigm assuming that leaders are made, hence they can be trained and every person can learn appropriate leadership behavior regardless of their personality and genetic make-up. New leadership theories started to emerge based on a cognitive perspective (Sackmann, 2004; Sims & Lorenzi, 1992). Another stream of leadership theory reintroduced a focus on the leader's personality from different perspectives. Examples are a psychoanalytical perspective (Kets de Vries, 2003), a humanistic perspective (Bennis, 1998), a focus on charisma (Conger & Kanungo, 1998), or a focus on charisma and vision in terms of transformational leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Bass, 1997; House & Shamir, 1993). While these theories are predominantly leader-centered, some researchers turned their focus to the exchange between leaders and subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and consider leadership to be a relational endeavor from either a transaction or a social constructionist point of view (Biedermann, 1995; Dachler & Hosking, 1995). Hence, these scholars introduced a shift from the leader focus to a focus on the interaction between leader and follower(s) and some of the related dynamics. While the relational approach

to leadership and the social constructionist perspective seem highly promising for leading in a culturally complex work setting, none of the extant theories consider a culturally complex leadership context even though the context has been shown to matter in leadership (Kim et al., 2022).

With increasing internationalization and globalization, GLOBE[6] studies were initiated investigating leadership preferences in different nations (Chhokar et al., 2008/2013). Their results reveal similarities and differences in leadership preferences in many countries without, however, addressing the leadership process and its dynamics in multicultural settings. The authors of a recent conceptual review of 44 review studies on leading diverse teams identified several shortcomings in research efforts in the intersection of leadership and diversity[7] (Homan et al., 2020). Despite divergent effects of the same type of leadership on team outcomes, the authors criticize the fact that diversity leadership research is conceptualized primarily as a one-size-fits-all solution regardless of the specific needs of diverse teams. In addition, most research efforts examine leadership styles, behaviors, and leadership abilities in isolation. The authors suggest a more extensive model of leading diverse teams. Given their focus on functional leadership, their model includes characteristics of the leader's behavior, his or her diversity-related competences, and task-focused leadership behaviors.

While these three components are important ingredients for leading culturally diverse teams, Homan et al.'s (2020) proposed model lacks important aspects regarding leadership in a culturally complex context. These relate to a more embracing conceptualization of the culturally complex work setting as outlined above; the inclusion of potential differences between individual team members; a consideration of their potentially multiple cultural identifications and the changing salience as well as related dynamics based on the mutual influences between leader and follower(s) as two—or several—interaction partners in their unfolding interactions. These four aspects are part of a more comprehensive relational leadership model that includes the evolving cultural dynamics in the leadership process as described in the following section.

5 Characteristics of Relational Leadership in the Context of Culturally Complex Work Settings

The relational model of leadership proposed in this paper includes the leader and those who interact with him or her. These interaction partner(s) may be direct reports

[6] GLOBE stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness. It is "a unique large-scale study of cultural practices, leadership ideals, and generalized and interpersonal trust in 150 countries in collaboration with nearly 500 researchers." https://globeproject.com/. Accessed February 1, 2022.

[7] The term diversity is often used synonymously for cultural multiplicity.

or employees[8] in general, colleagues, or external stakeholders. Their interaction with the leader in a specific situation leads to a developing and ongoing process between all people involved in a specific setting and a specific moment in time. Furthermore, the proposed model of relational leadership is based on a constructionist paradigm according to which people mutually create and negotiate their social and cultural reality during the course of their interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Hence, all aspects relevant to the interaction context are filtered through the personal perceptions of all interaction partners involved. These perceptions that influence subsequent actions are guided, and thus also biased, by their personal values, attitudes, prior experiences, motivation, intentions, and expectations.

In the context of this paper, the leadership process and related mutual interactions occur in the complex cultural context as described in the section above. Thus, the leader and interaction partner(s) meet in a culturally charged situation characterized by potentially different sets of multiple (sub-) cultures at different levels. Involved cultures of the interaction context may pertain to the team or project, department, business unit, organization, region, country, etc. In addition, when joining an interaction, the leader and the interaction partner(s) bring with them their set of multiple identifications, only a few of which are, however, salient in the given situation while others are dormant. During the course of their interaction, the salience of cultures involved may change depending on the issues at hand. This changing salience adds to the cultural dynamics that evolve in a specific sequence of interactions.

In addition, all individuals involved in the interaction process bring with them their personal characteristics in terms of personality, prior experiences including those of similar situations, and leadership. They come with their own diverse cultural makeup and a specific level of awareness thereof with their salient cultures. The leader and interaction partner(s) have a certain level of relevant skills and competence in perceiving and understanding the salient cultures involved as well as the aforementioned competencies in dealing with them. In addition, the leader may have more or less experience in handling similarly culturally complex leadership situations.

The interaction partner(s) compare their perceptions of the leader's characteristics with their own prior experiences with leaders and with other leaders they know. This comparison will result in a more or less favorable evaluation at a cognitive and emotional level and influence the interaction partner(s)' reactions to the perceived leader and his or her subsequent leadership behavior in the unfolding interaction process. In addition to the leader's own characteristics, the perceived characteristics and respective (re-)actions of the interaction partner(s) and his/her evaluation thereof influence the leader's subsequent choice of actions in a given culturally complex situation characterized by multiple cultures and their related dynamics. The interaction partners' perception of the chosen leadership behavior is filtered by their prior experiences and comparison with other leaders as well as alternative leadership behavior. The outcome of the interaction partner(s)' perception and evaluation will, in turn,

[8] From a relational perspective, all interaction partners involved may influence each other. This is why I deliberately refrain from using the word *followers* since so-called followers may also influence and thus lead their superior.

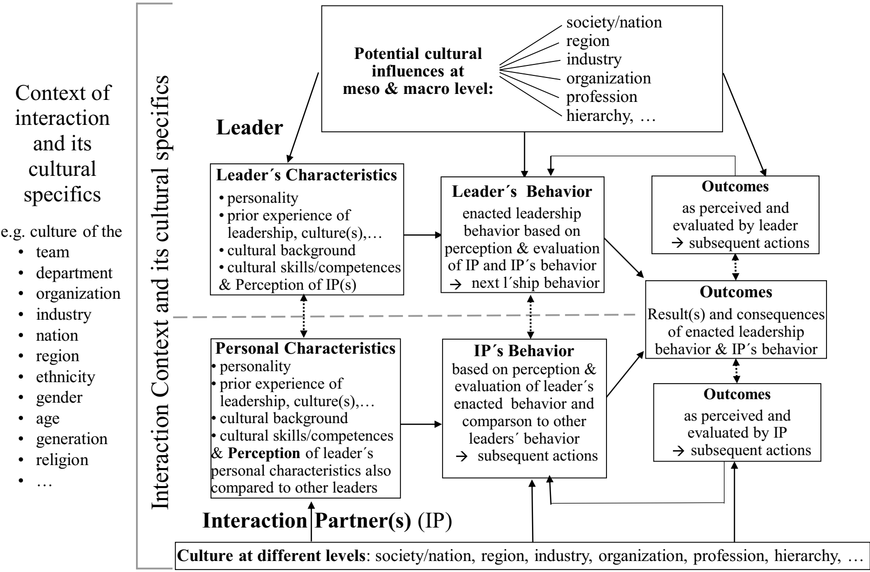

Fig. 2 Relational leadership in culturally complex settings

influence their respective reactions to the leadership behavior and hence their choice of subsequent actions in the situation at hand. Finally, both the leader's and the interaction partner(s)' mutually influenced behavior and actions will lead to certain outcomes and related consequences. Both parties' perceptions of these outcomes and consequences are also influenced by the outcome of their individual comparisons with alternatives and the context of perceived consequences. The outcome of this evaluation process will then influence the leader's and interaction partner(s)' following set of reactions and subsequent behavior, and so on.

Figure 2 depicts one cycle of this relational leadership process as described above. It shows the unfolding interaction processes filtered and influenced by both the leader's and interaction partner(s)'perceptions and related evaluations. The figure also includes the multiple cultures that are potentially involved at the meso and macro-level. The solid arrows indicate the influencing process from the leader's and interaction partner(s) perceptions and evaluations toward their choice of behavior that lead to certain outcomes. The dotted arrows indicate the mutual perceptual influences between the leader and his or her interaction partner(s) as well as their perception and evaluation of the outcomes. These perceptions and evaluations will then influence the next sequence of their interaction thus depicting the evolving dynamics in the interaction process.

The model shown in Fig. 2 may provide practitioners and researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the many issues and processes involved when leadership takes place in a culturally complex setting. As the model shows, it is not only

the setting itself that consists of multiple cultures, the leader and his or her interaction partner(s) also bring with them multiple cultures to their mutual interaction. This mutually influencing interaction process consists of a series of successive steps in which the salience of potentially involved cultures may change as the relation between leader and interaction partner(s) evolves, thus influencing the interaction outcomes.

Depending on the perceptions, evaluations, and subsequent actions taken by all parties involved, the various steps in the evolving dynamics may be compatible and match or they may be incompatible, thus creating a mismatch. In the latter case, resulting misunderstandings may either be resolved during the interaction process or they may crystallize and lead to negative interaction outcomes such as mutual blaming, "bashing," a break-up, and a lack of work results. The following example illustrates a short sequence of such culturally based misunderstandings.

> The leader (Bob) is a white male in his early thirties from Upstate New York, with a degree in electrical engineering. He has worked his way up from a technical position to leading a project team in a multinational firm headquartered in Germany. Thanks to his technical expertise, he is confident about how to solve the issue at hand that is on the agenda in today's team meeting in Boston, USA. Hence, he presents his idea and nevertheless asks whether team members have additional ideas. Rodrigues, whose family had moved from northern Mexico to Texas where he grew up, has recently obtained a bachelor's degree in computer and information systems (CIS). He is excited about discussing the issue at hand and makes several suggestions based on his CIS background. He jumps up and continues explaining his ideas with drawings on the flip chart. While Rodrigues talks, Bob becomes increasingly nervous and impatient since his question was more of a rhetorical nature, given that he had more or less made up his mind and thus was not really interested in further ideas. Once Rodrigues had finished, Bob briefly answered: "Great ideas but I think we need to focus now on the implementation process of what I have proposed as a solution." Rodrigues was startled and tried to initiate a discussion around his ideas. The team member Ralf, from the German headquarters, picked up Rodrigues' invitation for a discussion. The other long-standing team members Susan, Mike and Fred remained silent. Bob quickly intervened and firmly said that he wanted the team to focus on the necessary implementation steps. Rodrigues went back to his place, sat down with his arms crossed in front of his chest and remained silent for the rest of the meeting. His German colleague gave him a pat on the shoulder.

What happened? Bob's leadership behavior clearly demotivated Rodrigues and potentially the other team member as well. The outcomes of this short interaction sequence may be less engagement and initiative by Bob's team members in the future if he does not explain his behavior and resolve the situation with Rodrigues and the other team members. From a multiple culture perspectives, the following cultures and cultural identifications were salient during the interaction process: Bob clearly identified both with the (electrical) engineering profession and his role as a team leader. When joining the meeting, his leadership behavior appeared to Rodrigues

and Ralf to be that of a team player. When confronted with unwanted ideas, Bob's identification with his team leader position became salient and he tried to push the team to move toward his desired results. Additionally, his behavior may also have been influenced by his upbringing on the upper East Coast.

Rodrigues also identified with his profession and his newly acquired degree. Furthermore, he interpreted the question as an invitation for an open discussion among team members at an equal level, regardless of hierarchy or tenure. In addition to having recently obtained his bachelor's degree, his young age, Mexican roots, and Southern upbringing also may have influenced his excitement and eagerness to contribute ideas. When his expectation for an open discussion was not met, he withdrew and was clearly demotivated.

Ralf acted on his perception of a team approach when picking up on the discussion and supporting Rodrigues. He may also have felt empowered by coming from the company's headquarters.

Susan, Mike, and Fred seemed to have acted on their being "good" members of the organization's culture and/or team by staying silent and not intervening.

The short interaction sequence does not give further information about the salience of other potentially existing cultures such as industry, gender, ethnicity, or religion, which did not become relevant in this interaction context. The case shows, however, that a lack of awareness of the cultures involved in an interaction context and a lack of the appropriate skills may quickly lead to misunderstandings and eventually unwanted results.

6 Navigating Effectively in Culturally Complex Work Settings

The many aspects involved in the complex cultural setting outlined above make leadership a challenging task. Depending on the cultural skills and competences of the leader and interaction partner(s), the successive steps between the leader and his or her interaction partner(s) may or may not fit; their actions and reactions may be coordinated or out of sync. Depending on the quality of the evolving relationship, the outcomes of this interaction and mutually influencing leadership process determines the final outcome of a leadership endeavor. In the case of a cultural match, the actions and reactions of the leader and interaction partner(s) are coordinated and lead to productive outcomes. In the case of a cultural mismatch which may occur at different steps in the evolving interaction process, the outcome is suboptimal or worse unless it is resolved in the process. However, the latter requires awareness of the evolved cultural dynamics and the potential cause of cultural mismatch and misunderstanding.

Altogether, it implies that leadership in a complex cultural setting is not a one-directional activity but a mutually influencing and thus relational process that can be compared to navigating together through uncharted territory. For effective outcomes,

the relational leadership process requires both a culturally skilled and competent leader as well as interaction partners with the appropriate cultural skills. First and foremost, it requires perceptual sensitivity by both the leader and the interaction partner(s) to recognize the cultures involved and their potentially changing salience for constructive interaction and positive outcomes. Furthermore, the leader and ideally his or her interaction partners need appropriate cultural competencies in dealing effectively with the salient cultures and unfolding cultural dynamics. These competences may include cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007), a global mindset (Andresen & Bergdolt, 2017), emotional intelligence (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011), interpersonal flexibility (Tracey, 2005), openness to experience (Flynn, 2005), and context-specific cultural knowledge. The latter may include specific knowledge regarding a function, profession, role, age/generation, ethnicity, region, or nation. If leaders are culturally more competent than their interaction partner(s), they may address a culturally mismatching situation and explain the cultural misunderstandings to their interaction partners at a meta-level. Such an explanation may help solve the cultural misunderstanding and prevent a culture clash.

Research reports that culturally experienced leaders contribute to better results in multicultural work settings (Homan et al., 2020). The same can be expected of interaction partners. If all parties involved are sensitive to the salient cultures of the setting, their interaction partners, and the potentially changing salience of cultures involved during their interactions, the chances are high that the cultural diversity they bring to the interaction will produce high-level outcomes. At the same time, they may be able to reduce the conflict potential inherent in such a culturally complex setting that may lead to misunderstandings, emotional strains, and eventually suboptimal results if not recognized in time and properly handled (DiStefano & Maznevski, 2012; Homan et al., 2020). Furthermore, current research suggests that multicultural leaders may cushion involved insecurities for interaction partners (Herzfeldt, 2023).

7 Concluding Remarks

Navigating and leading effectively in the complex cultural work setting outlined above requires attention, cultural sensitivity as well as cultural skills and competencies. The relational leadership model based on a social constructivist paradigm shown in Fig. 2 may serve as an orientation of the inherent issues and dynamics both for leaders and their interaction partners. In addition to the potential cultures involved, the model depicts characteristics of leaders and interaction partner(s) that influence both their perceptions and following actions. It highlights the importance of personal perception that filters the evaluation of enacted behavior on part of the leader and interaction partner(s). The qualities of the leader perceived by interaction partner(s) and those of interaction partner(s) perceived by the leader influence the choice of enacted leadership behavior and subsequent (re-)actions by the interaction partner(s). The quality of the unfolding relationship between the parties involved will eventually influence the results and associated consequences.

For research, the proposed model of relational leadership in culturally complex work settings needs further specifications. Given its complexity, researchers need to be aware of the issues and dynamics involved and then make an informed decision about their focus of research against the backdrop of the proposed framework.

With the changes outlined above, the increasingly multicultural work settings, and individuals' enhanced awareness of their multiple identifications, it is worthwhile both for leaders and interaction partners to invest in acquiring cultural skills and competencies and using them in their multicultural interactions in culturally complex settings.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Culturally Complex Work Settings—Characteristics and Requirements for Leadership from a Relational Perspective," by Sonja A. Sackmann

- Which cultural identifications are part of your identity? Which cultural identifications are important to you in your daily working context?
- What kind of cultural blunder did you encounter recently? Which alternative actions would have resulted when analyzing and understanding this cultural encounter from a differentiated multiple culture perspective?
- How does a multicultural perspective help you in choosing situationally / culturally appropriate behavior in your intercultural encounters?
- When reading the above text, which skills do you want to further develop when navigating/leading in culturally complex work settings?

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Seeking Commonality While Preserving Difference: A Dynamic Balancing Approach for Leading Across Cultures

Yih-Teen Lee and Shawn Quinn

Abstract To foster cross-cultural collaboration, leaders must go beyond describing cultural differences and instead create effective connections among members. We propose a dynamic balancing framework, drawing on the Chinese principle of "seeking commonality while preserving difference," that emphasizes seeking commonality by connecting with universal human values and needs, aligning shared goals and objectives, and fostering shared identity and belonging, while at the same time preserve difference by respecting diverse cultural values, attending contextualized local needs, and validating unique strengths and identities. A case study of a business leader exemplifies this framework. This approach can enhance leadership effectiveness for successful cross-cultural collaborations.

Movement of people across national boundaries, either voluntarily or involuntarily, has become an increasingly common phenomenon since the second half of the twentieth century. Recent advances in technology have further accelerated remote collaboration and allowed people from different cultures to work together toward common goals. Against the backdrop of rising forces of anti-globalization and geopolitical tensions that temporarily keep people apart, the world remains highly connected, and organizations have become increasingly interdependent across countries. There is hence a growing need to make cross-cultural collaboration work. Research into culture and cross-cultural management has generated a rich body of literature documenting cultural differences and their consequences on various aspects of business and management (Andrews & Mead, 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Szkudlarek et al., 2020). The development of cultural dimension models (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004) has also offered a valuable foundation that has guided subsequent research and practical application of cultural knowledge (Kirkman et al., 2006, 2017).

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_17

Despite this, scholars and managers alike have increasingly come to realize that cultural knowledge alone is not sufficient to ensure smooth collaboration across cultures. While mapping cultural differences is usually helpful, the cultural knowledge this produces does not offer much advice on *how* to manage cultural differences. Furthermore, people and national cultures are much more complex than those described in typical cultural models, which tend to portray them as static and homogeneous and defined by geographical boundaries. It is increasingly obvious that individuals are exposed to and shaped by multiple cultural influences, even within the same society (Chao & Moon, 2005; Morris et al., 2015), and that they can switch between different frames of thought and behavior depending on contextual cues (Hong et al., 2000; Morris et al., 2015). Managers need additional tools that can help them perform their role in leading across cultures and meeting business objectives in a globalized context.

Recent scholarly effort has shifted toward understanding the interaction of members in cross-cultural encounters beyond simply describing their cultural differences (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Wieland & Montecinos, 2019). This stream of scholarship goes beyond simply describing cultural differences and has the intention of facilitating an understanding of how best to manage cultural differences. Moreover, it focuses primarily on the relationship among people of different cultures and seeks to improve their interactions in various types of global work. Such effort provides complementary and actionable insights for managers to exercise their influence and shape the nature of interaction for effective collaboration.

Consistent with this new line of research, we propose a dynamic balancing approach for leading across cultures that not only addresses the dynamic and complex nature of culture but also suggests concrete actions for managers with global leadership roles to effectively lead cross-cultural collaboration and harness the benefits of cultural diversity. Dynamic balancing is defined as a mindset and related behavior that involves the conscious balancing of forces in tension, in the function of contextual and temporal needs. Specifically, building on the concept of "seeking commonality while preserving difference" in the Chinese philosophical tradition, we draw on theoretical lenses such as paradox theory and positive scholarship to develop a dynamic balancing approach that embraces the commonality–difference duality in leading global work. We start by introducing the concept of commonality–difference duality and key principles of dynamic balancing. We will then discuss how leaders can engage in specific actions to simultaneously seek commonality and preserve differences in order to facilitate collaboration across cultures. Finally, we will present a brief case study of a global leader and illustrate how he managed cross-cultural collaboration in ways consistent with the dynamic balancing approach.

1 Duality in Leading Across Cultures

1.1 From Knowing to Connecting

To date, most cross-cultural research has tended to focus on identifying and describing differences: how people of different cultures hold different values, self-construal, cognitive frames, and behavioral patterns that would potentially generate misunderstanding and tension for collaboration. From a historical point of view, such emphasis is understandable—in earlier years when cultural differences were less understood, people interpreted differences among civilizations as being symptomatic of different stages of development (both culturally and economically). Instead of recognizing the validity of different cultural forms, managers and companies from more "advanced" economies tended to consider that there was a universal "best way" of organizing and would impose their way of working on people from "less developed" regions because of the "superiority" of their approach (evidenced by their relative economic and geopolitical strength). Studies of international management and cultural differences since the 1960s have taken an important step toward abandoning this cultural imperialist view and allowed for accepting different cultural forms as being equally valid and functional in their own specific socio-cultural contexts. Without properly recognizing and managing cultural differences, tensions, and conflicts may easily ensue when interacting with other cultures.

While understanding cultural differences does facilitate cross-cultural collaboration, it is important to emphasize that such understanding is merely a means to an end. For managers leading operations involving members from different cultures, the primary objective is to effectively align people and coordinate their efforts so as to achieve a common goal. Learning about how cultures may differ often represents a first step toward a much more comprehensive and complex process of intercultural interaction (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Janssens, 1995). In our view, one of the most critical tasks for leaders is to create an effective cross-cultural connection (Shakir & Lee, 2017) among members so that they can foster adequate mutual expectations and develop shared norms to work together. Connecting across cultures can be achieved in three dimensions: *cognitive* connection refers to the establishment of mutual cognitive understanding; *emotional* connection involves fostering positive emotions and relationships among members; *behavioral* connection means the creation of acceptable behavioral norms and expectations for collaboration (Shakir & Lee, 2017).

1.2 The Commonality–Difference Duality

Creating connections often requires people to identify similarities and build on common ground to overcome the dividing forces of difference. If people do not dedicate sufficient effort to identifying commonalities and shared values in intercultural

interaction, they may be stuck in a trap of negativity stemming from differences. Consequently, they would likely take an overly pessimistic view toward cultural differences and miss the opportunity to harness the benefits of diversity (Stahl & Tung, 2015). It is therefore critical to pay simultaneous attention to both commonalities and differences among people when leading across cultures. Accumulating research demonstrates solid evidence of cross-cultural similarities in terms of social inferences (Norenzayan et al., 2002), attitudes toward perceived risk (Weber & Hsee, 1998), emotional appraisal, display, and responses (Matsumoto, 1990; Roseman et al., 1995).

Interestingly, according to the recent publication of Field et al. (2021) based on results from 25, 296 multilevel meta-analyses, cross-cultural models (i.e., Hofstede's dimensions, GLOBE's practices, GLOBE's values, Schwartz's Value Survey, Ronen and Shenkar's cultural clusters, and the United Nations' M49 standard) explain only 5–7% of the variance in findings, and such results did not vary substantially across models. In their words, people may be "more alike than different" (Field et al., 2021, p. 1797). However, the debate is not on whether people are more alike or more different—even if the proportion of cultural differences is much smaller than what people have in common, those seemingly trivial differences may carry significant consequences for the process of interaction and its outcome. Duality refers to the "interdependence of opposites in a both/and relationship that is not mutually exclusive or antagonistic" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 69). To lead across cultures effectively, managers may need to recognize the duality of commonality and differences and develop an adequate mindset and the competence to act accordingly.

Based on the discussion above, and consistent with the Chinese traditional principle of simultaneously "seeking commonality while preserving difference" (求同存異; whose origin can be traced back to the "Record of Music"[1]) in handling differences in collectivity (Lee & Gyamfi, 2022), we propose a dynamic balancing approach for leading across cultures with a more balanced emphasis of both similarities and differences in fostering intercultural collaboration.

2 Basic Principles of Dynamic Balancing

The phenomenon of duality and the related concept of the paradox have attracted scholarly attention since ancient philosophical traditions (e.g., Greek, Chinese, etc.). Recent developments in theories of paradox (Smith & Lewis, 2011) and ambidexterity (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008) resonate with dualistic approaches to thinking, calling people to move beyond linear logic and to be more mindful of the complex interdependency of seemingly opposing forces simultaneously present in a focal event. Akin to popular culture which often employs the idea of good-evil duality

[1] "Record of Music", or樂記 (Yueji) in Chinese, is the 19th chapter of the *Book of Rites*, one of *Five Classics* written before 300 BC. It was one of the classic texts used by Confucius in his education that shaped the foundation of Confucianism.

in crafting the tension in main storylines, we focus on the commonality–difference duality in intercultural interaction and develop a framework of dynamic balancing for leading across cultures.

As discussed earlier, people from different cultures share *both* commonalities and differences. Recognizing the presence of both and performing strategic actions to effectively embrace both elements would allow managers to harness their respective functional utilities in intercultural collaboration. If one overemphasizes differences, one would run the risk of missing the opportunity to create connections among people from different cultures to foster effective collaboration. However, if one merely focuses on commonality without paying sufficient attention to differences, the possibility arises that potentially important differences may be ignored, which may then result in misunderstanding, frustration, and even distrust among collaborators. It is therefore critical for leaders to be mindful of the commonality–difference duality and develop capabilities to handle it in leading across cultures.

We propose three basic principles of dynamic balancing. First, individuals need to *recognize* the prominence of seemingly opposing elements in a wide range of social and organizational phenomena (Putnam et al., 2016; Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Smith & Lewis, 2011), be they dual or paradoxical in nature. For example, scientific research has established that human beings share commonalities and differences *simultaneously* (Field et al., 2021; Kirkman et al., 2006). Adopting a commonality–difference duality lens, the dynamic balancing approach enables managers to develop more sophisticated *mindsets* (e.g., paradoxical mindset, Miron-Spektor et al., 2018) and to identify both commonality and difference in intercultural interactions. In other words, dynamic balancing enables conscious recognition of the truth that commonality and difference are not necessarily incompatible or mutually exclusive in intercultural interactions. Developing such recognition or mindset enables individuals to avoid the trap of seeing only one side of the picture and to develop a more comprehensive understanding of complex dynamics in intercultural interaction.

After cognitively recognizing the commonality–difference duality, the next principle of dynamic balancing is the *enactment* of concrete behaviors to maintain a healthy balance of commonality and difference such that duality is preserved and managed rather than eliminated in a bid to simplify interactions. Sometimes labeled as "integrating" (Cameron et al., 2014), maintaining a healthy balance does not equate to achieving a mathematical average or staying at the mid-point between two opposite ends. It is about remaining mindful of the duality and acting in ways that maintain both forces in adequate co-presence without undermining either side. If one of the forces naturally took a more dominant position (e.g., only seeing differences when first interacting with colleagues of a different culture), managers need to proactively enact the opposite force (e.g., consciously seeking commonality) to counterbalance the situation.

Thirdly, the dynamic balancing process requires constant *dynamic adjustment* because the commonality–difference duality is not static. The relationship among members in intercultural interaction, as in any social connection, is often interdependent and dynamically interrelated, ripe with bi-directional and improvisational mutual influence (Cameron, 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Furthermore, although

individuals are socialized in specific cultural contexts, they are not fully conditioned by culture and can exercise a certain degree of agency (Swidler, 1986), making the nature of interaction less predictable. The need for enacting specific components in the duality may also evolve with time and context. As a result, the key is to activate the dynamics of "balancing" (as a verb) instead of staying in a static state of "balance" (as a noun). This principle underscores the importance of constantly monitoring the situation and adapting the salience of specific components of duality to the needs of the moment, in order to maintain dynamic balancing.

Managers often face dual challenges that require dynamic balancing in leading across cultures. At the same time, they need to create alignment among all team members so that their actions are coordinated toward common goals. Moreover, managers also need to accord each cultural group sufficient autonomy such that the unique contributions of each are fully realized instead of suppressed. We apply the principles of dynamic balancing to "seeking commonality while preserving difference" (求同存異) in intercultural interaction and discuss how this approach can enable managers to more effectively foster collaboration in leading across cultures.

3 Dynamic Balancing in Leading Across Cultures

3.1 Seeking Commonality for Creating Cross-Cultural Connection

We suggest three particularly relevant aspects of commonality for leaders to create cross-cultural connections: universal human values and needs, shared goals and objectives, and shared identity and belonging (coded as SC1 to SC3 below).

Connecting with universal human values **(SC1)**. Whereas cultural differences do exist, human beings also share a large number of universal values and needs. For example, Dahlsgaard et al. (2005) identified six core virtues (i.e., courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence) that recurred consistently across philosophical and religious traditions in China (Confucianism and Taoism), South Asia (Buddhism and Hinduism), and the West (Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Cross-cultural research (Church et al., 2013) has also found that human motivations across cultures share a similar structure; for example, as is the case with the three universal needs depicted in self-determination theory (i.e., needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, trustworthy leader behaviors have been found to consistently trigger trust in followers across 18 countries, although the strength of the link varies as a function of culture (Reiche et al., 2014). In fact, rarely, if ever, does cross-cultural research find fundamentally different values or needs in human beings. According to Sackmann, Romani, and Primecz (2011), it is helpful to differentiate between surface and deep-level culture and move beyond obvious differences to find common ground. Certainly, people still need to be highly mindful of differences, even seemingly minor ones (as

will be discussed in the next section); however, managers can appeal to a broad range of fundamental human values and needs to create effective connections across cultures.

Hence, the first element in seeking commonality is to identify universal values and needs and connect with people from different cultures at the level of these values and needs. Some universal values and needs to connect with people from different cultures include love,[2] caring, and respect. When managers treat members with love, caring, and respect (sometimes with cultural nuances in practical action), they may transcend cultural differences and establish a relational connection with members at a human level. Such connections can serve as a critical resource for people to create mutual understanding about details of differences in later stages of interaction.

Aligning common goals and shared objectives **(SC2)**. For members of different cultures to work together, managers need to establish a clear understanding of common goals and shared objectives so that people are motivated to make a necessary effort toward mutual understanding and adjustment. In other words, managers can create cross-cultural connections and shape correspondence among members by clearly defining common goals and aligning objectives (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). When goals and objectives are aligned among people, they are better positioned to recognize their interdependence and engage in behaviors appropriate for generating jointly desired outcomes (Brannen, 2004; Shenkar et al., 2008).

Even though goals may be strategically aligned, members may still be unaware of potential synergies; or may not adequately perceive their benefits. Managers would therefore need to outline shared goals and objectives explicitly and continually so that collaborators can develop a deeper appreciation of their interdependence and interact toward the achievement of these shared goals (Gittell, 2006). Goal alignment fulfills a critical motivational function for people to connect and collaborate because it can lead to favorable performance outcomes and rewards when shared goals are achieved.

Fostering shared identity and a sense of belonging **(SC3)**. Identity can be both a separator and a unifier. When a strong identity is forged within in-groups, it may create a mentality of us-versus-them in social interaction with out-group members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). At the same time, identity can also be shaped at broader levels of collectivity, becoming more inclusive and uniting people (Arnett, 2002). A shared identity can take shape at the group, organizational, and even global levels. The more salient a shared identity is, the more likely that members from different cultures will think, feel, and act in ways that are consistent with that identity (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001) and develop a stronger sense of belonging among themselves (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002).

A shared identity can also reduce various forms of in-group bias and out-group derogation, and foster strong social bonding and formation of social capital for people from different cultures to collectively perform tasks that require complex coordination (Adler & Kwon, 2002). It may also create a sense of collective psychological

[2] The concept of love may carry a variety of connotation across cultures. Here the idea of love refers to a sense of compassion and altruism toward wider human community beyond romantic love or love in private situations.

ownership among members that unites them to collaborate effectively (Pierce & Jussila, 2010). Managers can hence mobilize universal values, common goals, and shared identity to build a powerful common ground to connect culturally diverse members.

3.2 Preserving Difference for Leveraging Unique Strengths

In addition to the above, we propose three avenues for upholding difference, in balance with the seeking of commonality: diverse cultural values, contextualized local needs, and unique strengths and identities (coded as PD1 to PD3 below).

Respecting diverse cultural values **(PD1)**. In connecting with people through universal human values, managers need to understand and respect the unique values of different cultural groups and their consequent behavioral norms. These cultural differences have been the most researched aspect of cross-cultural interactions, giving rise to cross-cultural comparative studies that documented variations in a wide range of cultural elements such as communication styles (e.g., high vs. low context), the respect of hierarchy (e.g., power distance), the importance of social groups (e.g., collectivism), and time orientation (e.g., linear vs. flexible).

One key to preserving difference is to remain mindful of cultural differences and respect people's uniqueness without being judgmental. Instead of remaining at the descriptive level of understanding cultural differences, we recommend that managers develop interpretive knowledge which offers a deeper explanation about the *why*'s of cultural values and norms, thus achieving more sophisticated cultural sensemaking and more accurate attributions in intercultural interaction (Morris et al., 2014; Osland & Bird, 2000). The key is to identify, recognize, understand, and respect cultural differences without suppressing them during intercultural interaction.

Attending contextualized local needs **(PD2)**. In addition to common goals and shared objectives, different cultural groups may have idiosyncratic needs. Sometimes, the goals of specific cultural groups may also evolve as interactions unfold. In the process of dynamic balancing, managers need to carefully attend to the needs of each cultural group in a contextualized way. Tapping into the "demonstration of concern" facet of trustworthy behavior (Whitener et al., 1998), attending to the idiosyncratic needs of different cultural groups would foster the trust of members toward managers, and facilitate collaboration (Reiche et al., 2014). Having one's idiosyncratic needs fulfilled is also a path to maintaining legitimacy, defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Meeting the idiosyncratic needs of various cultural groups would allow members of different cultures to establish and maintain legitimacy, enabling them to sustain access to support and resources from the broader group even if they deviate from dominant behavioral norms (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999).

Furthermore, contextualized local needs can also manifest themselves in culture-specific forms regarding *how* universal human values are expected to be fulfilled in different cultures. For example, whereas all human beings appreciate autonomy and self-determination, what constitutes the meaning of autonomy may vary as a function of specific cultural factors (e.g., individualism: see Chirkov et al., 2003; independent vs. interdependent self-construal: see Gardner et al., 1999). It is therefore important for managers to be attentive to possible variations and address idiosyncratic needs in fulfilling universal human values.

Validating unique strengths and identities **(PD3)**. The third, and perhaps the most profound, aspect of preserving difference involves validating the uniqueness of qualities and strengths of each cultural group and affirming their unique identities. Validating unique strengths and identities creates the possibility for people of various cultures to associate positive meanings with their culture and identities (i.e., positive distinctiveness, see Jetten et al., 1999), and therefore effectively draw on their cultural backgrounds and mobilize their identity resources to complement skillsets within the group and enhance collaboration (Lee & Gyamfi, 2023). Validating unique strengths also implies that people from each cultural group can be seen as valued contributors to the collaboration. Such affirmation of social worth, often associated with a sense of social acceptance that reduces people's social anxieties, has been found to contribute to the knowledge sharing in organizational settings (Lee Cunningham et al., 2021). Likewise, when people's uniqueness is not recognized or appreciated in intercultural interaction, they may experience identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011), which triggers identity-protection responses such as derogation (i.e., condemning the attitudes of their cultural counterparts) and concealment (i.e., hiding or downplaying the threatened identity in front of their cultural counterparts). These responses tend to generate unfavorable outcomes in cross-cultural collaboration.

Identities are crucial to individuals' existence. When individuals identify strongly with a specific culture, they perceive the world from that cultural group's perspective and act according to the norms of the cultural group. It is not necessary for people to choose one identity (e.g., one's unique cultural identity) over another (e.g., shared identity or global identity). Research has shown that individuals can develop and maintain multiple identities in rather complex structures (Chao & Moon, 2005; Morris et al., 2015; Ramarajan, 2014). Even during acculturation processes, with extensive exposure to host cultures, people still have some degree of freedom to formulate their identity strategies and connect strongly with both home and host identities (Berry, 2001). Individuals who adopt this integration strategy (i.e., identifying strongly with both home and host cultures), tend to enjoy positive cognitive and social outcomes (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Affirming people's unique identities does not necessarily hinder their association with their cultural counterparts. On the contrary, it may allow for self-verification, where people are motivated to be known and understood by others according to their firmly held beliefs and feelings about themselves (Swann, 2011), which enables people to express their ideas more comfortably and enhances performance in collaboration (Swann et al., 2004).

3.3 Dynamic Balancing Toward the Best of Both Worlds

Our dynamic balancing approach emphasizes the need to simultaneously seek commonality while preserving difference in leading across cultures to reap the benefits of diversity. On one hand, seeking commonality *enables* the preservation of difference because people feel sufficiently connected to pursue common goals, and psychologically safe in the presence of difference. On the other hand, preserving difference *legitimizes* seeking commonality because people experience validation and affirmation of their unique values, and all cultural stakeholders are emboldened to contribute toward the construction of a common system of norms and values for collaboration. An imbalanced treatment of these two elements would lead to suboptimal, if not unfavorable, outcomes for cross-cultural collaboration.

While organizations are eager to reap the benefits of diversity at work, meta-analytical results in organizational settings and multicultural teams have revealed that diversity does not directly relate to performance outcomes (Bell et al., 2011; Stahl et al., 2010). This is not surprising because diversity per se is a form of neutral material, with the potential for both positive and negative outcomes. From the lens of dynamic balancing, managers may lose the value of diversity if they: (1) over-emphasize commonality and thus fail to take care of people's idiosyncratic needs in order to solicit their unique strengths, or (2) over-emphasize difference, thus leaving diverse people in a state of disunited chaos. Diversity must be properly managed, and leadership usually plays a critical role in determining how much benefit organizations reap from diversity.

Multiple streams of identity research echo the idea of balancing between commonality and difference. For example, *optimal distinctiveness theory* juxtaposes the need to belong with the need to be unique (see Brewer, 1991) in order to obtain *optimal balance* in differentiating or integrating personal and social identities (Kreiner et al., 2006). Consistently, evidence has suggested that people can develop multiple identities at both cultural and global levels and that a balanced identity configuration (i.e., holding a balanced identity strength toward both home and host cultures) would lead to more favorable outcomes in multicultural work environments (Lee, 2010; Lee et al., 2018).

Sometimes people fall into the trap of imbalance because they are not sufficiently mindful of the existence of differences. For example, the psychic distance paradox is a relevant phenomenon that refers to the fact that operating in psychically close countries may be more challenging than expected because perceived similarity can prevent managers from learning about critical differences (O'Grady & Lane, 1996). The dynamic balancing approach reminds managers to remain vigilant, particularly in the presence of strong similarity (e.g., in countries with close psychic distance), and proactively identify and preserve possible differences within the balancing effort.

We summarize the dynamic balancing framework in Fig. 1, which explains how various elements of concurrently seeking commonality while preserving difference complement and balance one another, leading toward positive outcomes in cross-cultural collaboration.

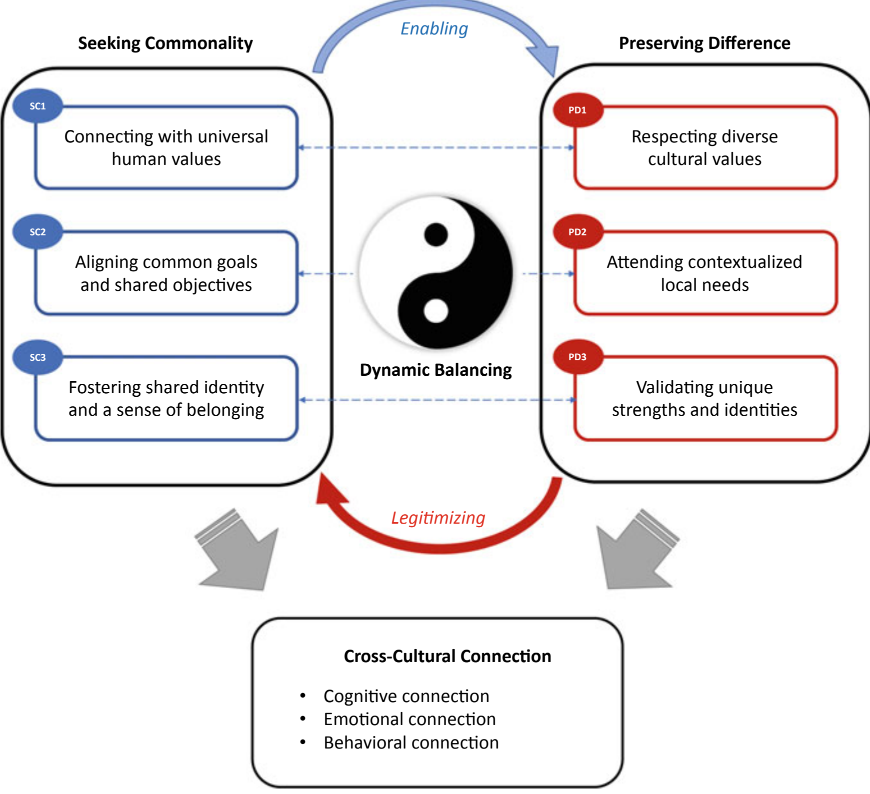

Fig. 1 Dynamic balancing between seeking commonality and preserving difference. *Note.* The blue and red arrows refer to the enabling and legitimizing effects of balancing, and the dotted arrows refer to the conceptual correspondence between elements of balancing. In dynamic balancing, seeking commonality and preserving differences jointly lead to cross-cultural connection. SC1-SC3 refer to the elements of Seeking Commonality, PD1-PD3 refer to the elements of Preserving Difference as described in the main text

4 Leading Across Cultures: The Case of Toshihiko Harada

Below, we present a brief case of Toshihiko Harada (or simply Toshi, as many people call him) to offer some illustrations of how managers may enact dynamic balancing in practice. We utilize the codes SC1 to SC3 and PD1 to PD3 in the text below to refer to specific elements of dynamic balancing as indicated in the previous section. Our intention is not to position this case as best practice of dynamic balancing for all leaders to imitate, but to highlight aspects of Toshi's approach to leading across cultures, and inspire readers to develop their own strategy of dynamic balancing according to their own contexts.

4.1 From Japan to the USA Toward a Leadership Role

A native Japanese, Toshi is a senior executive with an international career spanning over 30 years in global sales and marketing and operational leadership in the automobile industry. He has worked in Japan, the USA, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey, Thailand, India, and China.

Toshi began his career in a sales and marketing function in Japan and obtained an MBA from a leading European business school at the age of 29. However, disappointed by the rigidity of Japanese culture at some point, he decided to move to the USA and pursue an international career. After continuing to perform successfully in his role in sales and marketing in Detroit for about 10 years, Toshi felt the desire to grow and take on a role with further leadership responsibility. He expressed this desire to his CEO, who agreed and subsequently proposed that Toshi get leadership training to take up a leadership role in operations. After completing the Positive Leadership training at the University of Michigan, Toshi was appointed operations manager of a production plant in Missouri but also deputized for the plant manager who was on sick leave at that time.

4.2 A Japanese in a Production Plant in Missouri

When Toshi started his role as operations manager in the production plant in 2009, he found that he was surrounded by about 500 workers, mostly white men, in the middle of nowhere in Missouri. He faced huge challenges connecting with this group of very homogeneous American white male workers and convincing them to follow his leadership as a Japanese expatriate. After some reflection, Toshi decided to be very open and transparent to the workers to foster personal connection. He organized "townhall meetings" with all 500 workers across the three different shifts to introduce himself by sharing his personal lifeline stories. Personal lifeline stories, which Toshi learned about during his positive leadership training, are all the key experiences you have had in your life that shapes who you are today and how you see the world. Toshi explained: "I wanted them to understand who I am, and also express my desire to know them". Toshi's lifeline stories were very profound and authentic and seemed to touch the hearts of the workers (SC1). After these meetings, he arranged individual appointments with those who would like to share their personal stories so as to get to know them better (PD2, PD3).

Furthermore, Toshi promised to remember the first names of all the workers within one month (PD3). He even encouraged workers to test him in due course—if he failed, the worker would get a drink of their choice from the vending machine. To achieve such a goal, he designed a system of cards bearing workers' photographs on one side and their names on the other. He would memorize names associated with the faces each evening as a game. He would also hold monthly one-to-one meetings with all 20 direct reports. Rather than focus solely on work, he would spend time

creating a deep understanding of who they were and their deeper needs, interests and motivations (SC1 & PD3). People quickly felt that their boss knew them, treated them with dignity, and could be trusted. Toshi also developed a habit of writing thank-you cards to at least three workers every night to express his thanks for work well done. Although initially, Toshi felt like a stranger in a place where 99% of workers were local, he was accepted as one of them and was treated warmly within a relatively short time (SC3).

4.3 Building Sustainable Growth in Business and People

Toshi was very transparent about his goals to the workers. He told them openly: "I am here to prove myself in a leadership role. There is a plan for me and I will move on instead of being here forever" (PD2). However, he also made it clear to the workers that he would help them to achieve their goals while he was in the leadership role at the plant. "I will create a future for you", he told them (PD2).

Diversifying client portfolio. Toshi first noticed that the plant worked primarily for two American customers: 85% of their products went to GM and 15% to Ford. This sales structure created an over-reliance on these two customers and could bring much risk in the long term. The small town was dependent on salaries from the plant, and if it were to shut down, the town would have trouble sustaining its needs. He told the workforce he could help prepare them to source work from Japanese automotive companies, which would create a more balanced portfolio and increase the number of available jobs. As a result, Toshi mobilized his network and worked with the local team to bring in orders from Toyota and Honda. In addition, Toshi proactively taught those workers what he knew about working with Japanese companies so that they could continue to serve the clients well even when Toshi had moved on to other positions (SC2 & PD2).

Strengthening safety measures. In the production plant, crossing the street when the plant was in full operation could be dangerous. Toshi soon observed an opportunity to enhance safety culture to protect workers from injury while preparing them for visits from Toyota and Honda. Drawing on his Japanese heritage, Toshi introduced "Pointing and Calling", a simple method that combined eyes, hand, and mouth in three steps, for workers to cross the street with a higher level of safety. Workers were required to look left, right, and straight ahead (eyes), point their fingers in the direction they were looking (hand), and say the words, "Ok-Ok-Go" (mouth) before they started to cross the street. This method looked simplistic, and perhaps a little foolish in the eyes of some local workers, especially when there was no traffic detectable in the immediate vicinity. However, this was a change of old habits toward establishing an accident prevention system and culture which were not sufficiently present in the USA. After Toshi established a connection with the workers, and when they understood his intention to care for their safety, everyone accepted and followed this practice within one month of its introduction (SC2 & PD2).

Enabling personal growth. Over his career prior to the leadership role, Toshi realized that every human being has the desire to be a better person and increase their competence. He decided to help people achieve their goals in his capacity as a leader. He organized developmental workshops for workers to help them grow, which years later evolved into a more structured process. Toshi would ask them three questions: "If you knew you were going to die in 5 years, what would you want to achieve in the next 5 years? In order to achieve your 5-year vision, where would you like to be at the end of the next six months? In order for you to be where you would like to be in 6 months, what can you continue doing, what can you stop doing and what can you start doing?" Toshi asked workers to write down their answers and conducted 10-min coaching sessions with each worker to help them refine their goals and action plans. Then Toshi followed up with regular coaching sessions, sometimes individually, sometimes in teams, to monitor progress and provide feedback. In monthly coaching sessions as a team, Toshi let people share and listen to each other's stories and goals. Generally, people felt inspired and encouraged in listening to each other (SC1 & PD2).

Toshi implemented a similar approach in his later international assignments in countries such as Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, and China. People often responded very positively to his leadership, especially the coaching process he introduced to help people grow. While he was working in Indonesia, the company had been facing a high turnover of local staff. Toshi was able to significantly reduce this turnover when he implemented the coaching process and enabled people to grow both professionally and personally. Local employees also valued the positive work environment he created and wanted to stay with the company. In fact, Toshi enjoyed the coaching aspect of his leadership enough to become a certified coach in 2016.

Some of the staff in the countries Toshi worked in would feel uncomfortable when he invited them to share more personal information (PD1). He would explain that he just wanted to better understand them and to figure out how he could help them succeed and feel supported (SC1). Toshi never forced the employees to share, and would assure them they could share if they ever felt more comfortable doing so. As those employees watched him work with their colleagues, the majority would eventually choose to share their personal experiences with him.

4.4 Leadership Lessons for Dynamic Balancing

We observe a few leadership lessons from Toshi's case that connect well with the dynamic balancing approach, of seeking commonality while preserving difference, discussed in this chapter. Toshi shared his lifeline stories, demonstrating to his colleagues who he was and how he saw the world. Being open and vulnerable, he let people experience him on real and personal terms (SC1). This invited others to share openly in return. He listened to the stories of plant members, learned their names, and had one-to-one meetings with his direct reports where they discussed more than just work (PD3). He was transparent about why he was there and for how

long he planned to stay. He distributed thank-you cards daily and exhibited more of this unique behavior which drew people to him. These small touches helped people feel valued and cared about. Knowing that the plant was the main source of income for the community, Toshi helped not only the workers but also the whole community by diversifying the client portfolio and creating even more business opportunities (SC2 & PD2). With that purpose and vision, along with the caring and connective touches, he invited the employees to do new things that they were willing to follow (such as learning to follow Japanese safety norms when crossing the street).

Toshi was sensitive to others. As he tried to get to know workers, he never forced them to follow his lead, rather allowing people to act when they were ready (PD3). In the meantime, he treated everyone with care, support, and positivity even if they were not ready (SC1). He would eventually win them over and build trust. He was so genuine, real, caring, and positive that people were and are drawn to him (SC3). In his own words: "Leadership is all about communication, asking the right questions and drawing out people's potential". Toshi advises leaders to be themselves as they lead across cultures (PD3). Although this advice flies in the face of the tendency people exhibit to force adaptation to one (dominant) culture in intercultural collaborations, it recognizes that adaptation is only a small piece of the much richer overall picture in the commonality–difference duality. The cultural adaptation perspective restricts the kind of progress that could be achieved by intercultural openness, psychological safety creation, and trust building.

Leaders need to connect with people at cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels. Toshi achieved this by being authentic and true to himself while being transparent and honest about his intentions. He first connected with workers at the "being" level, with openness, respect, and caring. He then aligned common goals (i.e., your success is my success), and developed a sense of belonging with the workers. These actions established the common ground for effective connection. At the same time, Toshi shared who he really was and tried to learn who his colleagues were and what mattered to them. He understood them, cared about them, was sensitive to their needs, while simultaneously being true to himself, thus enacting the principles of preserving difference as discussed earlier. Combining these elements (i.e., SC1 to SC3 and PD1 to PD3, as indicated above) in a balanced manner enabled Toshi to succeed in leading across cultures in multiple countries.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

To lead across cultures effectively, managers need to fulfill multiple, seemingly incompatible, objectives. On the one hand, they need to foster alignment among people for smooth coordination. On the other, they also need to respect differences and leverage the unique strengths of each member. By illuminating the commonality–difference duality in intercultural interaction, we propose a dynamic balancing approach for leading across cultures with the principle of "seeking commonality while preserving difference". We further illustrate how such an approach can be

put into practice with the case of Toshihiko Harada. We propose that while seeking commonality enables preserving difference, the latter legitimizes the former so that both form a complementary and balancing pair. Consistent with ancient Chinese thinking, this approach also resonates with contemporary research in positive scholarship and organizational paradox, which does not see the cultural difference as a problem (but as a potential resource to harness) and favors a balanced treatment of both commonality and difference (Stahl & Tung, 2015).

Dynamic balancing is a relatively novel approach in the domain of leading across cultures. Whereas we believe in its potential to empower managers and scholars alike in their efforts to understand how to effectively lead across cultures, there are still many questions to be answered. For example:

Questions to Ponder

Chapter "Seeking Commonality while Preserving Difference: A Dynamic Balancing Approach for Leading Across Cultures", by Yih-Teen Lee and Shawn Quinn

- What are more concrete behaviors characterized by dynamic balancing?
- Which competences are required for managers to engage in these behaviors of dynamic balancing?
- Moreover, what is the right balance?
- Although it is dynamic and there may not be a static point as the "right balance", at what point should one activate balancing actions?

We hope that these questions can be answered in the coming years with more research effort coupled with practitioner insights.

To conclude, leading across cultures involves much more than mapping cultural differences. Fundamentally, it requires managers to create conditions that allow members from different cultures to cooperate and thrive in the presence of diversity. Everyone's uniqueness can be enriching when people are connected on some common ground. In our view, seeking commonality while preserving difference is the core principle of dynamic balancing in leading across cultures. We hope this chapter offers useful insights for scholars, and managers seeking to build a better world together with culturally diverse collaborators.

Acknowledgements The authors would like to thank John Almandoz, Michael Harris Bond, Nana Yaa A. Gyamfi, Ryan Quinn, Anneloes Raes, Sebastian Reiche, and Sonja Sackmann for their insightful comments and support in the preparation of the paper.

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Two Sides of the Cultural Equation—The Need for Cultural Competence to Deliver Relational Rents from Inter-organization Collaboration

Fons Trompenaars and Peter Woolliams

Abstract Early attempts at inter-organizational collaboration based around EDI (electronic data interchange) were a worthy attempt to derive benefits to both parties. Although some performance and cost-saving advantages have been realized, it has taken time to recognize the origins of many of the challenges that continue to surface. Developing a relational view seeks to go much further than just the technical benefits of EDI data exchange. If the potential outcomes of full inter-organization collaboration can be realized then the opportunities are enormous. Like the "end of the rainbow", the closer we get to work with another organization, the more it seems to move away and more and more challenges pop up. The authors have undertaken longitudinal research on published traditional frameworks and practice across organizations which, although they strive to be objective, are rarely free of cultural bias. They also conclude there are serious shortcomings in how effectively organizations recruit, develop and utilize their people. Organizations are implementing a wide range of policies and programs to identify and eliminate pay inequalities and improve their attractiveness as employers to women and other diverse people; however, a great change has not materialized. A new conceptual framework is proposed centered around Dyer and Singh's (1998) approach to achieve relational rents whereby a synergistic exchange relationship between employees of one organization is able to communicate effectively with another can deliver a win–win for both. The authors emphasize an a priori need for employees to have a cross-cultural capability to recognize differences and respect those differences. The culture gaps give rise to a series of dilemmas that, when reconciled, deliver the relational rents. The findings are underpinned by rigorous fundamental research and consulting practice and reveal the need for employers to identify and reconcile key challenges around the way work needs to be done throughout their organization in partnership with external organizations.

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_18

They describe a series of Apps they have developed as a practical toolkit for exploring this new concept.

1 The New Business Environment

We are living through a period of quantum transformation in the way we work and not just working from home because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Technology is changing the skills that organizations need people for and this is happening at a time of disruption and political and social upheaval. Information growth is polluted with disinformation, especially from social media.

We continue to witness the further development of the autonomous and reflective individual. This is an individual that has a full set of needs, internal and external to the organization. Power is diffused and shared. "In contrast with traditional management, where structures and systems are derived from a pre-defined strategy, the new workplace is seeking to balance what matters for the company (its strategy) and what matters for the individuals (their life strategies)" (Bouchiki & Kimberly, 2001).

2 Origins of Relational Views and Increasing Challenges

The notion that organizations can collaborate in ways more than simply dealing with each other as supplier, distributor, contractor etc., offers attractive opportunities for cost-savings, reliability of delivery and hence adds profitability that Dyer & Singh term "relational rents".

Earlier ideas concerning inter-organization collaboration included EDI (electronic data interchange) that was first introduced to supply chains back in the 1960s, when Ed Guilbert developed a form of electronic communication between shipment supply chains in the US army. Although it took until the early 90s for EDI to find widespread supply chain relationships, EDI was a critical facilitator of early globalization. Rather than relying on slow postal services, EDI enabled instant long-distance communication in an era before the internet.

Today, some of the biggest businesses in the world, including EDI pioneers like Walmart, Volkswagen and Scania harness EDI to deliver benefits such as:

- Lower operating costs
- Increased transaction security
- Faster, streamlined communications
- Removal of manual processes
- And more

EDI has made a huge difference to optimization and visibility across global supply chains largely removing manual processes from communications long before the

advent of the internet. However, it never quite managed to live up to its own expectations, partly because it was ahead of its time.

Companies continue to find themselves constantly facing complications with EDI, including:

- Incompatible protocols and EDI standards that can be difficult, or even completely impossible, to control and navigate between partner organizations systems.
- Increasing and unforeseen costs as companies struggle to implement EDI that still requires training, digitization of data and supply chain wide rollouts.
- Unforeseen and unplanned costs are often under-estimated in collaborating through attempting EDI but as business infrastructure changes ever more rapidly and IT tools become more standardized and cloud-based, organizations have an expectation that EDI will become easier.
- And even more importantly, misunderstandings in the way things are done around their partner organization.

The reality of actually delivering benefits is somewhat different especially when the true relational approach is more than just the transmission of electronic data.

Furthermore, the "problems" are too often seen as just IT-related as major challenges derive from typical factors such as:

- Connecting legacy systems to modern systems
- Increases in data volumes
- Issues of data security and privacy and demands for compliance with rapidly changing standards
- The demand for real-time data exchange
- Rash promises of the benefits of AI

Even if these technical problems could/can be easily managed, it is significant that cultural differences between parties are not even considered even though culture in its many facets transcends everything and is key to achieving a relational view in order to recognize and understand other points of view.

3 Cultural Miscommunication

Culture is about meaning. If you give the same meaning to something as your business partner then you share the same culture. Cultural differences can arise between different nationalities, different ethnicities, different corporate cultures, different generations, genders etc.—and combinations of any of these (and indeed other) factors.

Too often you may have different interpretations of the same thing without realizing.

How do you like your pizza?

One of our Ph.D. students Hashem al Refael from the UAE asked different managers: "Do you like pizza?" and frequently received the reply "only when it's hot".

An apparently simple question with a straightforward answer. But further probing revealed differing meanings in the reply:

- Typical US Americans often meant "when it is spicy",
- Typical Europeans often meant "when it is just out of the oven and hasn't cooled down",
- And Australians often meant "when the weather is hot",
- And from Norway and Sweden respondents often meant "when all my friends are having pizza (as at a party) and it is thus the friendly/sociable thing in which to share".

If differences in meaning can originate in the simple case of liking pizza, it is easy to see how misunderstandings can arise when trying to share data or complex procedures between organizations.

And the following example we found during some of our earlier research is an example of not anticipating that there could even be a problem.

Who else wants salami?

In sequential cultures, in the supermarket customers take a number at the deli counter and wait their turn to be served. This is perceived as "fair" and efficient as customers can continue to browse while waiting (rather than just queuing).

In synchronic cultures such as Italy, the assistant serves the first customer with the first item on their list (salami) and then asks "who else wants salami?" The assistant thinks on the basis of "now I have got the salami, who else shall I serve at the same time?" This is also perceived as efficient. It is certainly "sociable" as the various people being served chat with each other.

XYZ Computers had a successful software house based in the US which had a long-established series of systems in the area of Hotel Guest Management Systems (HGMS). The user system provides a front end to an Oracle database server in each hotel. The existing systems were well de-bugged and had been operating successfully over several years for their major client—a major US hotel chain. All the existing installations were based in either the US, UK or northern Europe.

The US hotel chain sought to develop a relational approach with some 22 existing hotels in major cities in Italy and helped refurbish them to their corporate standards. They were advised by the local XYZ Computers sales office to purchase the XYZ system and the HGMS software as a turnkey solution to seek to achieve added profitability through synergistic benefits.

Although the Check-Out module of the system performed correctly to the original specifications, it proved to be totally unsuitable in practice and the associated poor publicity and hotel guest dissatisfaction was damaging to the corporate image of XYZ Computers. The head of small systems sales in Italy (an Italian) agreed that the system did not meet local needs and was concerned that Olivetti may steal not only this but future hotel business in Italy.

The problem arose because of the way that hotel staff expected to operate the Check-Out system to satisfy customer needs. When checking out guest A, they asked for their room number and compile and print a list of extra charges as an invoice for the guest to verify including drinks, minibar, telephone etc. While Guest A is studying this printed list, the hotel staff expects to be able to serve Guest B at the same time—to retrieve their record and perform some processing with Record A still open. However, the way the system is designed is that all views from the multi-access system are single on a given client because systems transactions were based on a two-phase commit to maintain the referential integrity of the database inherent in the Oracle engine. Querying a customer account, closing the initial query, opening the next etc. was tedious and had a slow response time. So in practice, customers could only be served sequentially. This caused frustration with local guests (Italians etc.) but was acceptable if only American and/or UK guests were in the check-out queue.

4 Culture Defines the Ways Things Are Done Around Organizations

Leading organizations subscribe to the view that people are the most important resource. In a climate in which competition is fierce and rapid changes demand constant innovations, organizations agree that failure to make the best use of their people has serious consequences. These organizations know that any business that fails to ensure that all employees play a full part in the organization cannot hope to optimize productivity, competitiveness and sustainability.

Some protagonists claim employee engagement can be enhanced by adopting a series of hygiene factors—such as decorating restrooms with pop culture and playing rap music and calling everyone by their first names—and these are almost laughable. Similarly, criteria and competencies/competences deemed to be predictors of high and effective performance are also claimed.

However, hardly any attention has been paid to a very much under-researched issue, which is the understanding of their own or partner organization to the employee. The values with which organizations entice scarce human resources are very different today. Mining our extensive knowledge databases on individual and corporate cultures reveals evidence that supports the proposition that potential employees, especially the younger ones—from 20- to 30-year-old generation—have become increasingly inner-directed in the last few years. They dare to express their emotions more, and they feel better working in teams. Moreover, it appears that these younger "born-digital", high-potential employees have a shorter time horizon and have greater self-confidence in their own individual abilities. Their preference has shifted away from the task-oriented "guided-missile" corporates to the person-oriented, "incubator" work environment. Their rationale for career security is based on maintaining a set of personal and transferable competencies. It is their "employability" rating based on their contemporaneous skills profile that drives them, not the old notion of corporate security from an employer of high long-standing regard, or protection

by their trades union. The traditional adage that working for a major corporate will ensure you a job-for-life is no longer true nor an attractor. As early as 2002, Guest (2002) alerted us all to the work-life paradigm yet this challenge has not met with the response it deserves because, all too often, we still approach engagement from the standpoint of "managing human resources" rather than viewing employees as "resourceful humans".

The extreme corporate culture stereotypes (Trompenaars, 1993):

The INCUBATOR is a person-oriented culture characterized by: • a low degree of both centralization and • a low degree of formalization In this corporate culture, the individualization of all related individuals is one of the most important features. The organization exists only to serve the needs of its members; it has no intrinsic values beyond these goals Similar to a clan, this culture is like a leaderless team. The organization is an instrument for the specific needs of the individuals in the organization. Responsibilities and tasks within this type of organization are assigned primarily according to the preference and needs of each member. The structure is loose and flexible and control takes place through persuasion and mutual concern for the needs and values of other members Main characteristics: • Person oriented • Power of the individual • Self-realization • Commitment to oneself • Professional recognition Stereotype examples: (i) Consultancy (ii) Small hi-tech biomedical company (iii) R&D department of a large corporation	The GUIDED MISSILE is a task-oriented culture which has: • a low degree of centralization • a high degree of formalization This rational culture is in its ideal type task- and project-oriented. "Getting the job done" with "the right person in the right place" are favorite expressions Organizational relationships are very results-oriented, based on rational/instrumental considerations and limited to specific functional aspects of the persons involved. Achievement and effectiveness are weighted above the demands of authority, procedures or people. Authority and responsibility are placed where the qualifications are, and they may shift rapidly as the nature of the task changes. Everything in the GUIDED MISSILE culture is subordinated to an all-encompassing goal The management of the organization is predominantly seen as a continuous process of solving problems successfully. The manager is a team leader, the commander of a commando unit, in whose hands absolute authority resides. This task-oriented culture, because of its flexibility and dynamism, is highly adaptive but at the same time is difficult to manage. Decentralized control and management contribute to the shortness of channels of communication. The task-oriented culture is designed for a rapid reaction to extreme changes. Therefore matrix and project types of organizations are favorite designs for the GUIDED MISSILE Main characteristics: • Task orientation • Power of knowledge/expertise • Commitment to [tasks] • Management by Objectives • Performance-related pay Stereotype examples: (i) Car sales, (ii) Market-driven organization

(continued)

(continued)

The FAMILY culture is characterized by: • a high degree of centralization and • a low degree of formalization It generally reflects a highly personalized organization and is predominantly power-oriented. Employees in the "family" seem to interact around the centralized power of father or mother. The power of the organization is based on an autocratic leader who, like a spider in a web, directs the organization. There are not many rules and thus there is little bureaucracy Organizational members tend to want to be as near as to the center as possible, as that is the source of power. Hence the climate inside the organization is highly manipulative and full of intrigues. In this political system, the prime logic of vertical differentiation is the hierarchical differentiation of power and status Main characteristics: • Power orientation • Personal relationships • Entrepreneurial • Affinity/trust • Power of the person Stereotype examples: (i) Small partnership entrepreneurial unit, (ii) main boardroom protagonists of a large organization	The EIFFEL TOWER role-orientated culture is characterized by: • a high degree of formalization together with • a high degree of centralization It is steep, stately and very robust. Control is exercised through systems of rules, legalistic procedures and assigned rights and responsibilities. Bureaucracy and the high degree of formalization make this organization inflexible. Respect for authority is based on the respect for functional position and status. The bureau or desk has "personalized" authority. Focus is on the job, not the job holder In contrast with the highly personalized FAMILY culture, which also has a strong hierarchical structure, members in the EIFFEL TOWER culture are continuously subordinated to universally applicable rules and procedures. Order and predictability are highly valued in the process of managing this kind of organization. Thus, employees tend to be very precise and meticulous; procedures for change tend to be cumbersome, and the role-oriented organization is slow to adapt to change. Duty is also an important concept for an employee in this role-orientated culture. It is a duty one feels within oneself, rather than an obligation one feels toward a concrete individual as in the FAMILY culture Main characteristics: • Role orientation • Power of position/role • Job description/evaluation • Rules and Procedures • Order and predictability Stereotype examples: (i) Government Department, (ii) Life Insurance company

5 The Challenge to Deliver Relational Transactions Between Organizations

The fundamental challenge is for personnel from both parties to fully recognize and understand different points of view, different meanings and different interpretations to manage competing demands that derive from each other's norms and values, and

therefore systems, processes and needs, in order to be able to work together by reconciling differences in order to deliver the relational benefits.

6 Employees Need a Spectrum of Cross-Cultural Capabilities to Deliver. So How Do We Get a Reliable Measure of Cross-Cultural Capability?

When reviewing established published competence/competency assessment models, we found the majority to be not free of cultural bias and stuck in the time warp of focusing on cultural differences rather than on how to assess (and thereby develop) the competence to deal with cultural differences. We had developed our own series of instruments over the last twenty years that have sought to assess different aspects of cultural competence. These have ranged from assessing fundamental awareness, determining cultural orientation and the propensity to reconcile differences, to the competence to realize the business benefits of cultural differences—in the context of both country and corporate cultural frameworks. As individual instruments, they have served their purpose well. However, we have recognized limitations in (earlier versions of) some of our own cross-cultural frameworks and have been searching for solutions that overcome common problems faced by all consultants and researchers in the quest for inter-cultural competence.

Even without the complexity of the cultural context, confusion begins over the use of the term “competence”. It is applied variously to denote the capacity of an individual but also as an element of a job role. The term “competence” has its origins in the research of the McBer Consultancy in the late 1970s in the USA as part of the initiative by the American Management Association to identify the characteristics which distinguish superior from average managerial performance. The work was encapsulated in the seminal book The Competent Manager (Boyatzis, 1982). This has spawned a mass of literature and initiatives in organizational attempts to identify and construct the “competent” manager.

However, the term and its related concepts have become problematic as they have been taken and adapted to different environments. Boyatzis (1982) defined the term as: “an underlying characteristic of a person”. It could be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one’s self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses. However, as Woodruffe (1993) has pointed out, there is a mass of literature attempting to define the terms “motive, trait, skill etc.”. This again opens up the term to a multitude of interpretations. Woodruffe (1993), for example, defines “competency” as: “a set of behavior patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform its tasks and functions with competence”. Others have used the terms skill and competence interchangeably: “Perhaps the most fundamental implication of moving to a skill- or competency-based approach to management concerns the area of work design” (Lawler, 1994). For Rhinesmith: “If mindsets and personal characteristics are the ‘being’ side of global management, then competences are the

'doing' side" (Rhinesmith, 1992). As a basis for management training, needs analysis or organizational review and development, most authors fail to clarify which of these meanings they are ascribing to "competence".

Additionally, we have the challenge of how to design an instrument that covers the spectrum of cultural effects. When we begin to incorporate non-Western types of logic, such as ying-yang or Taoism, we soon realize that we have all been restrictive in basing any profiling on bi-modal dimensions. For example, we were trying to place respondents along a scale with "individualism" at one end and "communitarianism" (collectivism) at the other. But in a multi-cultural environment, a highly individualized leader will agonize over the fact that many subordinates prefer to work with their team. Conversely, the group-oriented leader will fail because of an apparent lack of recognition of the efforts of individuals. Thus we have a dilemma between the seemingly opposing orientations of Individualism or Communitarianism. Similarly, do we find undue criticisms of staff in a business unit or an excess of support? Someone criticized by authorities feels attacked where support is absent or indulged where criticism is withheld. Any instrument that seeks to be free of cultural bias needs to avoid being based on this type of Western Cartesian logic which forces us to say whether something is "either … or".

7 Profiling Inter-culture Competence

With the above in mind, we have recently assembled our ICP (Inter-Cultural Competence Profiler). It is an attempt to describe and measure certain modes of thought, sensitivities, intellectual skills and explanatory capacities which might, in some measure, contribute to the formation of an inter-cultural competence.

We used a range of methods to determine what components of competence this new model should comprise. They include:

- A critical review of extant knowledge of competence frameworks
- Observations of best practice of high-performing leaders (see Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002)
- Inductive analysis of our own cultural databases
- Job analysis of global leaders and senior managers that shows how they have to deal with dilemmas
- Our own THT Academy

Our ICP is a multi-functional instrument that enables a participant to assess their current Inter-Cultural Competence or that of their organization or business unit. Unlike other competence tools, the ICP does not focus on a single basic area of cultural knowledge or behavior but addresses the complete spectrum from cross-cultural awareness through to the business benefits deriving from effective action in multi-cultural situations. It has been developed by combining our earlier frameworks based on our extensive research and intellectual property that originally addressed each area separately. Each component has been subject to rigorous research and

testing with many Ph.D. projects plus extensive application in many client situations across the world. Recently we have confirmed the reliability of the combined integrated instrument with a sample base that has included MBA students as well as senior managers and business leaders from our client base.

Our ICP WebApp is completed online and participants can download and save their own personal profile report as a PDF file for archiving and/or printing.

Additional basic biographical data of the respondent provides more extensive benchmark comparisons across our rapidly evolving ICP database.

Extensive feedback, extended interpretations and theoretical background to the ICP are available in a series of inter-active pages from the web-based ICP support center (Fig. 1).

Participants can explore their own personal profile through these online tutorials that offer further insights, "coaching" advice and suggestions for competence development.

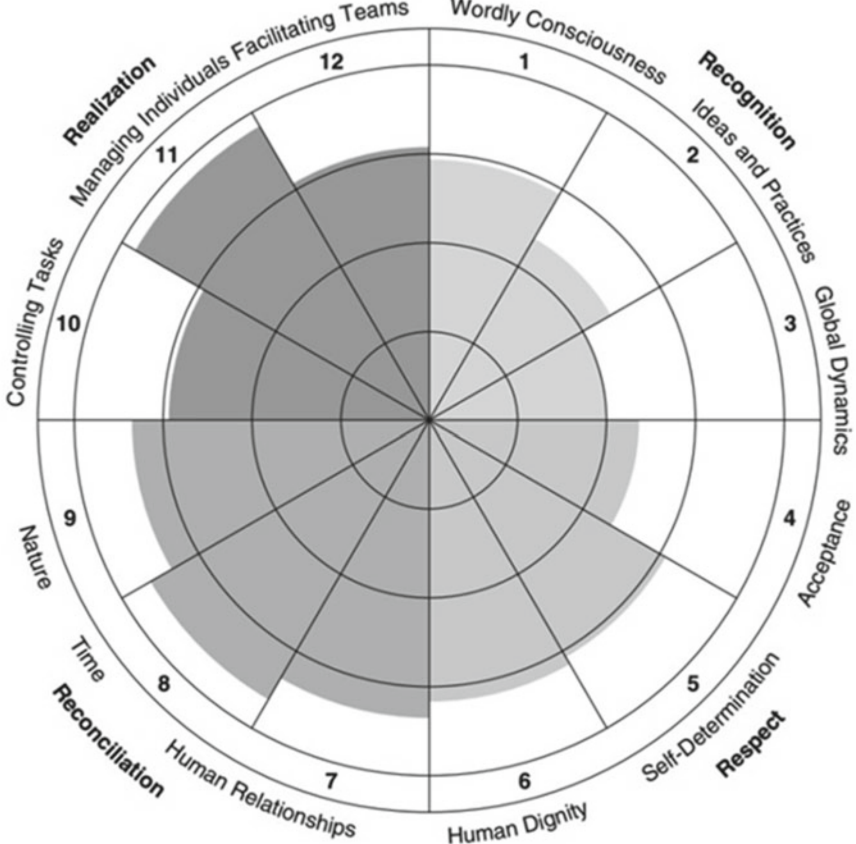

Fig. 1 Four aspects of Intercultural Competence *Source* Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2000

We distinguish four aspects of Inter-cultural Competence (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2000):[1]

1. Recognition: How competent is a person to recognize cultural differences around him or her?
2. Respect: How respectful is a person of those differences?
3. Reconciliation: How competent is a person to reconcile cultural differences?
4. Realization: How competent is a person to realize the necessary actions to implement the reconciliation of cultural differences?

1. Recognition

The first cluster is concerned with the individual's capacity to understand his or her condition in the community and the world and thereby make effective judgments. It includes the respondents' awareness of nations, cultures and civilizations, including their own society and the societies of other peoples. The focus is on how these are all interconnected and how they change and on the individual's responsibility in this process. It defines some key elements of what we call a global consciousness—to flesh out some of the relevant constructs if we are to cope with the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world.

Operationally, it consists partly of modes of thought, skills, etc. But as conceived here, a recognition competence is not a quantum, something you either have or don't have. It is a blend of many things and any given individual may be rich in certain elements and relatively lacking in others. A very crucial part of intercultural awareness as Eileen Sheridan (2005) found in her Delphi-based research is self-awareness.

In this cluster of recognition, we distinguish three main competence areas that take account of the conceptualization developed by Robert G. Hanvey (1976),

(a) Worldly Consciousness that comprises Perspective Consciousness and "State of the Planet" Awareness
(b) Fundamental Cross-cultural Awareness
(c) Global Dynamics that comprises Knowledge of Global Dynamics and Awareness of Human Choices.

The diagnostic questions we have assembled and developed to measure this first cluster are based on many sources such as the ideas developed by Brinkmann and Van der Zee (2002), Rew et al. (2003) and, in particular, by Robert G. Hanvey (2004) in "An Attainable Global Perspective".

[1] The following sections on the four aspects of Intercultural Competence have been published before in the working paper "Cross-Cultural Competence: Assessment and Diagnosis" (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2000).

2. Respect

How respectful is a person of those differences? Respect serves as the basis for our attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral orientation toward people that hold a diversity of values.

In our professional practice, we have focused a significant part of our work on helping people to recognize cultural differences and structure their international experiences. The risk of stopping at the level of awareness and recognition without progressing further is that one might be supported by one's (negative) stereotypes. But respect for these differences is crucial for one's competence to deal with cultural differences.

According to Webster's Dictionary the noun "respect" is defined as the giving of particular attention, high or special regard and expressions of deference. As a verb, to respect is to consider another worthy of esteem, to refrain from obtruding or interfering, to be concerned and to show deference. A composite definition of respect that reflects these characteristics can be presented as follows.

Respect is a basic moral principle and human right that is accountable to the values of human dignity, worthiness, uniqueness of persons and self-determination. As a guiding principle for actions toward others, respect is conveyed through the unconditional acceptance, recognition and acknowledgment of the above values in all persons. Respect is the basis for our attitudinal, cognitive and behavioral orientation toward all persons with different values.

In our model, we have based the three components of respect on the research by Kelly (1987) as they are appropriate for organizing the measurement of respect as an attitude.

These components that form the cluster of respect comprise:

(a) Respect for human dignity and uniqueness of a person from another culture;
(b) Respect for the person's rights to self-determination;
(c) Acceptance of other culture's values.

3. Reconciliation

This third cluster deals with the propensity of a person to deal with the differences of which one is both aware and that one respects. This is close to the creativity a person displays in combining values that are at first sight contradictory (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002). As a competent reconciler, you have to inspire as well as listen. You have to make decisions yourself but also delegate and you need to centralize your organization around local responsibilities. As a competent professional, you need to master your materials and at the same time you need to be passionately at one with the mission of the whole organization. You need to apply your brilliant analytical skills in order to place these contributions in a larger context. You are supposed to have priorities and put them in a meticulous sequence, while

doing many tasks in parallel is in vogue. You have to develop a brilliant strategy and, at the same time, have all the answers to questions in case your strategy misses its goals.

We have identified three levels of reconciliation that are linked to the main constructs that we have used to organize the 7 dimensions of culture:

(a) Reconciling aspects of human relationships

This comprises:

Standard and Adaptation. Do we have to globalize our approach or do we just have to localize? Is it more beneficial for our organization to choose mass production rather than just focus on specialized products? High performers find the solution in the "transnational organization" where the best local practices are globalized on a continuous basis. "Mass customization" is the keyword for reconciling standardized production and specialized adaptations.

Individual Creativity and Team Spirit. This demands the integration of team spirit with individual creativity and a competitive mindset. High performers are able to make an excellent team out of creative individuals. The team is stimulated to support brilliant individuals, while these individuals deploy themselves for the "greater whole". This has been dubbed co-opetition.

Passion and Control. Is a competent person an emotional and passionate person or does he/she control the display of emotions? Here there are two clear types. Passionate people without reason are neurotics, and neutral individuals without emotions are robots. An effective performer regularly checks passion with reason, and if we look at the more neutral people, we see individuals who give a controlled reason, meaning by showing passion once in a while.

Analysis and Synthesis. Is the competent person a detached, analytical person who is able to divide the big picture into ready-to-eat pieces, always opting for shareholder value? Or is it somebody whose behavior puts issues in the big picture and gives priority to the rather vague statement "stakeholder value"? At Shell, Van Lennep's "helicopter view" was introduced as a significant characteristic of a modern leader—the capability to ascend and keep the overview, while being able to zoom in on certain aspects of the matter. This is another significant attribute of the competent reconciler, namely, to know when and where to go in deep. Pure analysis leads to paralysis, and the overuse of synthesis leads to an infinite holism and a lack of action.

Doing and Being. "Getting things done" is an important characteristic of a manager. However, shouldn't we keep the rather vulgar "doing" in balance with "being", as in our private lives? As a reconciler, you have to be yourself as well. From our research, we found that successful reconcilers act the way they really are. They seem to be at one with the business they are undertaking. One of the important causes of stress is that "doing" and "being" are not integrated. Excessive compulsion to perform, when not matching someone's true personality, leads to ineffective behavior.

(b) Reconciling aspects of Time

Sequential and Parallel. Notably, effective reconcilers are able to plan in a rigorous sequential way but, at the same time, have the ability to stimulate parallel processes. This reconciliation, which we know as "synchronize processes to increase the sequential speed"—or "Just In Time" management—is also very effective in integrating the long and short term.

(c) Reconciling the Inner and the Outer worlds

Push and Pull. This final component is the competence to connect the voice of the market with the technology the company has developed and vice versa. This is not simply about technology push or market pull. The competent reconciler knows that the push of technology finally leads to the ultimate niche market: that segment without any clients. If you only choose for the market, the client will not be satisfied.

4. Realization

After one has recognized, respected and reconciled cultural differences, the emphasis shifts to processes in which the resolutions are implemented and rooted in the organization.

Components of this competence are captured in John Adair's Action-centered Leadership model (2004). Competent managers and leaders should have full command of three main areas and should be able to use each of the elements depending on the situation. Being competent in each component delivers results, builds morale, improves quality, develops teams and productivity and is the mark of a successful manager and leader.

The key to nurturing leaders is to ensure your company recognizes excellence at three levels: strategic, operational and team. "It is a common fallacy that all an organization needs is a good strategic leader at the helm", writes Adair.

This fourth cluster comprises:

(a) Achieving the task
(b) Managing the team or group
(c) Managing individuals

Based on the above clusters, the full ICP comprises some 100 questions that are used in different combinations to contribute to the total profile. Ratings are not simply added and averaged for the different scales. In many cases, the sectors are computed from the RMS (root mean square) of competing questions to assess their mutual interaction. This is especially important for assessing the competence to reconcile in cluster 3.

To accommodate different client/participant needs, we have developed several versions. Thus in the 360 version, a participant's own self-assessment scores can be triangulated with peer feedback. This can even be based on additional input from clients, customers or suppliers. The "Organization version" is oriented to an analysis

of the "competence" of the business unit and/or wider organization rather than the individual. In the "Diversity" version, the focus is on diversity and ethnicity rather than country-derived cultures.

Data we have collected has already demonstrated that ICP profiles provide an objective measure for both the individual and/or organization.

Significantly it reveals the identification of the "maturity" stage of the life-cycle phase: Thus, is the client's need "cross-cultural awareness" or "leadership development" or "realizing business benefits", for example? Thus one can identify the relative imperatives for cross-cultural awareness training, the requirement to develop mindset changes and corresponding behavior development for performance, through achieving global business benefits by integrating cultural differences. And of course, "Before" and "After" measurements provide evidence of the impact of any intervention that can be correlated with improved business performance.

As explained, we recognized the limitations of our own cross-cultural instruments that positioned people on bipolar scales of mutually exclusive extremes of 7 dimensions and therefore extended these. As well as the ICP model summarized above, we have also produced an extended version of Belbin's Team Role models, Myers-Briggs' MBTI that we call the Integrated Type Indicator and also the Integrated Scorecard that extends Kaplan/Norton's Balanced Scorecard.

The need for an instrument with both high reliability and validity poses a difficult challenge made by Lord Kelvin in his Lecture to the Institution of Civil Engineers, London, 3 May 1883.

> When you can measure what you are speaking about, you know something about it. But when you cannot measure it, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind.

8 Assessing the Organization Cultures of Partner Organization

We assess both the value systems of each organization seeking to develop their relational collaboration using our online web tool (also available as an App) the Organization Values Profiler (OVP). This provides an input for the employees in the respective "relational teams".

Our OVP is an organizational culture scan based on the degree of formalization and flexibility and on the degree of hierarchy and openness to the environment. It still has our underlying four-quadrant model of corporate culture but further sub-divides each quadrant leading to a full 12-segment model.

The four quadrants represent how the organization orientates itself to four basic processes in terms of task/strategy/mission, role/efficiency/consistency, power/human relations/involvement and person/learning/adaptability. Within each of the sub-segments, we explore specific competing demands that together determine the major orientations (Fig. 2).

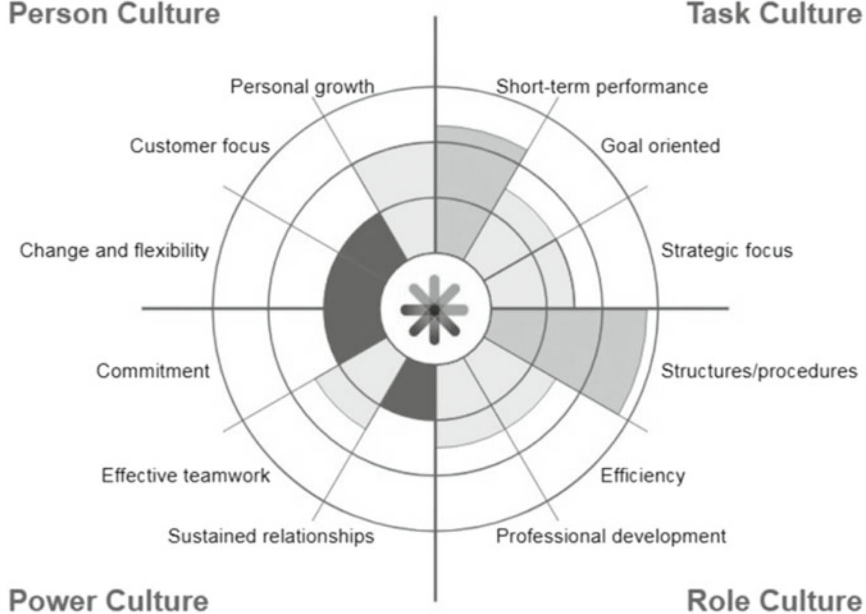

Fig. 2 Example Organization Values Profile *Source* Trompenaars & Woolliams consulting using their own proprietry software, 2023

If one value dominates its opposite, **organizations will find it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain talent** as they are not addressing the value(s) that is(are) subjugated. For example, does the organization encourage people to meet deadlines for short-term results or give priority to a visionary long-term future? Do people take individual responsibility or rather share in teams? etc.

Where opposite sectors are unbalanced indicates where employees describe their workplace as often giving too much emphasis on Value Y rather than its opposite Value X (or emphasizing X rather than Y).

Sectors shown with mean scores are where employees describe common practice where people tend to choose a compromise by alluding only to some aspects of both values.

Where opposite sectors are both large are where employees describe people managing the tensions between these (opposite) competing values.

Of particular importance is that the diagnostic is designed in such a way that it reflects our underlying philosophy that bipolar scales (i.e., more of one meaning less of the other alternative) are fundamentally inappropriate for the type of assessment we are seeking and inhibit the notion of a relational approach. We undertook extensive formal research and field testing to finalize the questions including Cronbach Alpha

reliability analysis and triangulation with face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews.

Respondents can score any sub-component high or low that collectively combine to form the constructs being assessed. In this way, one can score high on all 4 quadrants and all its 12 segments. No longer is an organization of only one stereotype. This reflects our conceptual framework where an integrated organization harnesses the strengths of all extremes and is not restricted to choosing between extreme options.

By using cross-validating questions we have verified whether opposites and contradictions within one corporate culture have been reconciled. So for example we ask respondents to rate statements such as "*there is a clear and overt strategy for the future*" (*Guided Missile*) and "*through our short-term thinking we are quick on our feet*" (*Incubator*). They are validated by a (combination) reconciling question such as "*we are able to meet short-term demands without compromising our long-term vision*" (*Reconciliation*).

In earlier versions of these types of models (and those of other authors), we would have to show a scale between short- and long-term orientations. In this new reconciling framework we can score high or low on both! And a high score on both indicates a more powerful and higher performance culture.

Another example is the tension between task (Guided Missile) and People (Family) orientation which we explore with the contrasting questions: "*there is a lot of team work*" and "*people strive for self-realization*" and the validating question "*we have teams that consist of creative individuals*".

9 Proposed New Relational Framework

So what might make a large organization attractive to a young, ambitious and talented employee who can work effectively across their own and a partner organization?

And how can a self-centered job candidate demonstrate they are the talent needed by an employer? And what is more, how can these demands be fused in an exchange relationship that benefits both—aka to deliver Dyer and Singh's relational rents, which they define as added performance and, ultimately, added profitability through such integrated engagement?

It is apparent that established organizations must make an enormous effort to catch up with the attraction of younger businesses. There is a tension between the image of these companies and the ideals that young talented people have in their heads. The power-oriented, "Family" culture and the role-oriented hierarchical structures of the so-called "Eiffel Tower" culture still dominate in both perception and reality.

The dilemma arises from the tension between corporate image and personal vision. Global companies like Heineken or Shell are still looking for people who are global,

innovative team players; people who think in terms of diversity, who want to learn and who value freedom of choice (to continuously maintain their employability profile). This global corporate mindset thinking appears to be bland ("it's all the same everywhere") and static and does not offer the freedom to develop one's own persona. As a consequence, it is not attractive to the young generation-X people. Young, talented, recently graduated candidates prefer to work locally and have fun. Flexible working with them is a right, essential and motivating.

Global ("one world") thinking creates tensions compared to a contrasting framework, which recognizes and values diversity (many realities). Shell invites people who believe in the equal treatment of men and women and asks people from different ethnic backgrounds to develop into honorable citizens of the world. While apparently laudable, you can imagine the dilemmas that arise between being oriented toward teamwork (stability/tradition) versus innovation. The Japanese experience demonstrates that this is not easy to reconcile. Apart from these dilemmas within Shell's espoused orientation, there is also the dilemma of adhering to the image of a large organization and doubt as to whether these orientations can actually be put into practice.

The UK division of Pfizer is achieving productivity improvement through reconciling the different orientations between (for example) their researchers (who want to do brilliant research) and their committed marketers (who want to satisfy their customer base). The traditional approach to employee engagement based on ideas, productivity incentives, goal setting (productivity goals), increased automation and quality improvement initiatives has mainly failed HR. We had helped them to create the "reconciling organization" in which a strong sense of core values supports an environment in which managers are better able to manage change, overcome crises, focus on corporate longevity, achieve the retention of key/effective personnel, develop motivation and identify and thereby secure higher productivity—through the alignment and integration of opposite orientations.

Developed from our fundamental research and consulting practice, our new approach to employee selection for relational teams that transcends these changes and that can deliver the aspired "relational rents" is to investigate dilemmas that derive from the tensions caused by the value differences between the organizations by employees with a high level of cross-cultural capability.

For example, on the one hand, should we be directing/"hands-on" with staff or, on the other hand, empowering staff to be self-controlling and innovative? The success of a company in delivering relational benefits will depend, among other things, on both the autonomy of its people and on how well the information arising from this autonomy has been centralized and co-ordinated. If you fail to exploit fully centralized information, your scattered but highly self-motivated personnel might as well remain totally independent. If various teams are not free to act on local information, then centralized directives are subtracting, not adding, value and will not deliver relational rents.

Questions to ponder

Chapter "Two Sides of the Cultural Equation," by Fons Trompenaars and Peter Woolliams

- Why do organizations give relatively too little attention to employees' values and more to systems and routine procedures in seeking to work with other organizations?
- How can organizations secure the best from younger "born-digital" employees?
- When a larger organization seeks to work closely with a small innovative organization why do they continue to communicate in big-company mode (meetings, procedures, lawyers, inflexibility)?
- Can organizations ever reach a happy marriage (relational view) or will the wedding always end in divorce?

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A New Narrative of Leadership in the Context of Global Virtual Teams?

Eithne Knappitsch

Abstract Organizations are re-envisioning their workplaces to meet fresh challenges presented by rapid technological innovation, global health issues, geo-political disruption, and related societal shifts. Through this process, organizations are recognizing the increased opportunities that come with working with highly diverse, collaborative, Global Virtual Teams (GVTs) as a means of both remaining competitive and acquiring and retaining global talent. Remote work settings are therefore becoming spaces of significant cultural complexity. This calls for new forms of leadership and a reframing of leadership practices for a highly diverse virtual work context. This chapter investigates a current trend in leadership scholarship towards leadership as a collective and shared phenomenon and discusses its relevance in the context of culturally diverse virtual teams. It seeks to explore whether it is time for a new narrative of leadership in the context of global virtual teams and remote work settings, arguing that global virtual teams and their leadership need to be re-examined using a relational lens. The chapter discusses how leaders and workers in remote work environments are being unmade, made, and remade through dynamic relational processes mediated by technology and embedded wholly or partly in new virtual contexts. It examines whether a relational framework for leadership can meet the multi-layered and increasingly complex demands of culturally diverse GVTs and concludes that a relational view of leadership is well suited to leverage the cultural complexity, harness the potential of virtuality, and co-create shared virtual spaces of collaboration. This work outlines the far-reaching implications that this has for leadership practices in today's virtual team environments.

In today's context of networks transcending borders and boundaries, organizations are operating in fast-changing and uncertain work environments. At the same time, the individuals working in organizations are experiencing increased opportunities

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J. Baumann Montecinos et al. (eds.), *A Relational View on Cultural Complexity*, Relational Economics and Organization Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_19

to collaborate in highly diverse co-located and virtual teams. Companies are re-envisioning their workplaces to meet new health and safety challenges and the uptake of remote work continues to accelerate. Increasingly, as work settings develop more culturally complex contexts, organizations face fresh challenges presented by rapid technological innovation, geo-political disruption, global health issues, and related societal shifts. Gibson and Grushina (2021) argue that GVTs are becoming more ubiquitous and complex and suggest that next generation strategies are needed to 'address nuances of global teamwork, intricate dynamic needs of team members, and deep-seated assumptions and their associated challenges, such as intercultural conflicts and difficulties managing technology preferences' (p. 1). These 'next generation' strategies include aspects of identity-building, cultural-bridging, proactive conflict mitigation, vitality maintenance, and establishing a set of technological repertoires. They also consider the implementation of these strategies to be the difference between high-performing and low-performing Global Virtual Teams.

Understanding how leadership works in virtual teams is of the utmost importance. While pandemic-related virtual teamwork brought with it a very specific set of opportunities and challenges related to global economic and health crises, virtual and remote work was already becoming increasingly popular under the auspices of New Work, with organizations increasingly using dispersed teams as a means of remaining competitive and acquiring talent globally. Global Virtual Teams (GVTs) have come to be considered as spaces of significant cultural complexity. In adopting a relational view of cultural complexity, as is the case here, both individuals and teams, as well as their leaders and the organizations themselves need to be re-examined through a relational lens. Contextuality, experience, and processes of relating, connecting, and belonging in virtual spaces all impact on the daily dynamics of global virtual teamwork and leadership of global virtual teams. The need to connect and build relations is crucial for effective and high-performing GVTs and in the co-creation of new commonalities as a basis for shared (work) practice and communication.

The recent pandemic forced even co-located teams into largely virtual work contexts, creating new shared cultural spaces; these were mediated by virtual interaction, with the additional burden of being enmeshed in crisis. Under such new and unanticipated working conditions, individual employees have suddenly found themselves relational constructs; they have been unmade, made, and remade in dynamic relational processes which have been mediated by technology and embedded in new virtual contexts. Leading GVTs in the light of these conditions comes with its own set of specific requirements. Team members are not only geographically dispersed but also culturally diverse and both work tasks and the work environment have evolved into more dynamic and more complex practices. Leaders of GVTs should ideally promote and support diverse employees in completing their tasks and contributing to the overall effectiveness of the organization, including facilitating shared experiences and contributing to mutual and equitable co-creation of team spaces. The question, however, arises as to which leadership models are most suited to teams operating in such highly complex, fluid, and situation-dependent contexts, where new cultural commonalities are co-created virtually, and relationships are virtually mediated. This chapter aims to answer that question by investigating whether a relational view of

leadership can draw on and leverage this cultural complexity, harness virtuality, and create adequate common third spaces for collaboration and co-creation.

The question this conceptual chapter asks is a fundamental one facing organizations: What leadership models are best suited to respond to current organizational and employee needs? This is particularly relevant considering the significant increase in remote and hybrid work contexts. It is against this background, this chapter suggests, that a new narrative of leadership for remote work and global virtual teams needs to be deliberated. Over recent decades, and increasingly in the past few years, scholars and researchers from a variety of disciplines have devoted significant efforts to analyzing the developments of, and challenges posed by, leading and working in global virtual teams. Muszyńska (2021), in a bibliometric review of research on communication and virtual project teams from 2001 to 2020, clearly identifies two areas of research which need more attention here: trust and leadership in virtual teams. Both concepts are intricately intertwined and should be considered carefully in relation to effective virtual teamwork.

Does the cultural and contextual complexity of global virtual teams in fact demand a shift towards a relational view of leadership? Certainly, it can be argued that the composition and complexity of GVTs require a deep dive beyond traditional leadership models to extend the debate to include relational leadership. Research on leadership, leadership styles, and effectiveness in GVTs is a relatively underexplored topic (Castellano et al., 2021; Liao, 2017), remaining somewhat fragmented and limited. Much research on leadership in management and organizations tends to focus on individual characteristics of leaders in organizations and a clear gap exists in relation to our understanding of leadership effectiveness in virtual teams. This chapter proposes taking a relational view of leadership to bridge this gap.

1 Trend Towards Remote Work

The recent pandemic created a pressure cooker that both accelerated and elevated the role of remote work and, by default, thrust remote teams and leadership in remote work contexts into the foreground of New Work trends. Increasingly, trends towards remote work have been highlighted over the past decade, as have the contextual conditions necessary for teams and organizations to be more agile and effective in keeping up with changing and uncertain times. Organizations excelling at agile work in pre-pandemic times, and those that have embraced the remote aspect of agile teamwork, are among those now experiencing significant levels of success.

Amid the changing processes of workplaces and dynamics of working through global crises, employee needs have also changed. Employees are experiencing a shift not only in their work choices but also in their lifestyle choices, as work and life values and motivations become intrinsically intertwined. The focus is shifting towards work-life integration, with greater emphasis on personal health and well-being. Employers are thus being forced to reconsider the models they use to promote employee experience. Additionally, the combined drive of digitalization, inclusion

and diversity, and sustainability is impacting how the global workforce makes its choices. Global talents are showing a tendency to consciously select their employers based on how inclusive, people-centered, and sustainable the organization is; this not only increases the pressures of the competition for talent but also has clear implications for the leaders inside the organizations and their relations with their teams.

Forward-looking organizations are questioning more traditional and slow-moving hierarchical systems, which function on the basis of compartmentalized expertise and are too narrowly focused to yield organizational transformation or achieve meaningful results in fast-paced and extremely volatile contexts. Organizations are demanding leadership that is more sensitive to their 'people' and to the specific context(s) in which they increasingly find themselves: hybrid, diverse, dispersed, and remote. They are looking to these leaders to help them survive and to remain operational in precarious new environments. This disrupts conventional leadership models as organizations seek to reinvent and transform, effectively responding to the demands of a rapidly changing context, as well as the changing needs of employees. Leadership development has similarly evolved, embodying this view of leadership as a means of supporting the collective development of organizations (Harvard Business Publishing, 2016). There are clear indications that leadership development should be implemented beyond the C-suite, as employees are increasingly expected to be involved in decision-making relevant to corporate strategy and culture (Harvard Business Review, 2022). Here employees not only need technical and communication skills but also effective relational skills. This new reality of teams involved in highly collaborative processes, with stakeholders jointly sharing decision-making and operating in non-hierarchical networks, has not yet been effectively explored. Leadership research needs to examine this move beyond traditional systems with a leader-centric focus and consider developments towards a more elevated view of 'followers', reflecting the new dynamics of effective, resilient, and flexible organizations. Leadership, as such, needs to be re-conceptualized as an achievement of the collective, mirroring current societal shifts.

The question this conceptual chapter asks is a fundamental one facing organizations: What leadership models are best suited to respond to current organizational and employee needs? Today's work environment suggests there is a clear need for a new narrative of leadership, particularly in the context of leading remote and hybrid teams. This chapter continues by examining whether a relational framework for leadership can meet today's multi-layered and increasingly complex demands. It advocates a relational approach to leadership for global virtual teams to replace the idea that leadership is a result of the actions of an individual who alone is considered responsible for a team's results. This approach involves looking beyond individual leaders and to 'how' leadership is enacted in the emergent and existing relations of team members, team tasks, and organization. It requires a rethinking of leader-team dynamics and revisiting of cultural diversity from a relational perspective.

2 Global Virtual Team Context

As remote work becomes ever more popular and necessary, organizational teams are becoming increasingly virtual (Fernandez & Jawadi, 2015). Before the pandemic, virtual teams were considered as teams with members from different cultural and national backgrounds, as researchers used a dichotomous distinction of virtual versus face-to-face teams (Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017). The Covid-19 pandemic meant that virtual work structures changed to include also virtual teams from within the same locations, and effective virtual leaders became a 'lifebuoy for many struggling businesses' (Bekirogullari & Thanbusamy, 2020, p. 3217). It essentially accelerated a process that was already happening in business culture.

Virtual teams can be defined in a variety of ways but are most commonly defined by their degree of virtuality. Cohen and Gibson (2003) consider virtuality as a continuum and identify three key characteristics of virtual teams: (1) A collection of individuals working on tasks that demand some degree of interdependence and mutual accountability in achieving a common goal, as an intact social unit; (2) The individuals are geographically dispersed; and (3) The team members rely predominantly on technology for both communication and to complete their tasks (p. 4). Virtuality contexts are differentiated ranging from low to high, or slightly to extremely virtual (Cohen & Gibson, 2003). In low virtuality contexts team members' spatial separation is low. The team is primarily co-located, and/or experiences a low degree of technology dependency because interaction takes place primarily in person (Purvanova et al., 2020). Many SMEs whose employees are returning to partly flexible post-pandemic work conditions are considered to have a low degree of virtuality. In medium virtuality contexts or partially virtual teams, intermediate degrees of geographic dispersion are common, with some members dispersed and others co-located. Here a moderate degree of technology is used as members combine both in-person and technology-based communication. Ledwith and Ludden (2016) suggest that in medium virtuality teams, members are generally spread across fewer than four locations and spend up to 50% of their time engaging in in-person interaction. In high virtuality contexts, on the other hand, team members are typically based in multiple locations and/or experience a high degree of technology dependency. Team members are often spread across more than four locations and experience large time differences between locations (Ledwith & Ludden, 2016).

In this chapter, we focus on GVTs, which typically fall into the category of high virtuality teams, dispersed across time and space and experiencing a high degree of cultural diversity and technological dependence. Much literature pertaining to high virtuality teams continues to suggest that geographical dispersion leads to both temporal and cultural misunderstandings (Shen et al., 2015; Tenzer et al., 2014), which makes leading virtual teams effectively a significant challenge. The contexts in which global virtual teams work and the fields in which they operate both play a key role in the distinct team phases of GVTs, as do the related leadership behaviors (Graça & Passos, 2015). Horila and Siitonen (2020) conducted a qualitative and interpretative study investigating change processes related to leadership in virtual

teams as occurring over time. Here they focused on what might be considered as ‘typical’ virtual workplace teams, ones that have both a history and anticipated future in an organization. The three teams chosen varied in terms of the length of time they had been working together. One team had members who had been collaborating for two years, another for several years, and the third team had some members who had been working together for over 15 years. In keeping with the concept of relational leadership here, all three teams emphasized the development and maintaining of relationships, describing these as quite close to and inseparable from leadership. Relationship building was seen to occur mainly at the beginning of the teamwork, while the benefits of strong relationships were described as increased trust, ease of problem-solving and a general willingness to share leadership.

Shared leadership is undoubtedly becoming an increasingly common practice in virtual teams. Horila and Siitonen’s (2020) work provides an interesting backdrop to the discussion of shared leadership in virtual teams and offers further evidence of the relational turn in GVTs. All teams studied experienced a shift towards some form of shared leadership over time. The findings also indicate that the relational dimension of leadership may become more complex when dealing with close relations over many years. The authors identify, for example, a number of challenges faced by long-standing teams, including the difficulty in distinguishing leadership from other team-related interactions and a tendency to become used to ineffective patterns of leadership over time. This perhaps explains why Bergman et al. (2014), for example, challenge the idea that group members mostly need support and other socially oriented leadership behaviors in initial team phases. Hollenbeck et al. (2012) argue that temporal stability in teams may have other negative implications, such as an increase in groupthink and reduced creativity. The conclusion that both the relational challenges and necessity of solving them do increase with time (Bergman et al., 2014; Horila & Siitonen, 2020) provides a valuable insight for leaders of global virtual teams, especially in relation to team phases and the duration of the teamwork.

While there are many advantages of working in virtual teams, such as access to global talent, quick response times, and shorter development times (Muszyńska, 2021), there are also many communication and non-communication-related challenges. Key concerns related to the effectiveness of virtual teamwork include trust, commitment, and motivation—all of which are essential for the performance of virtual teams. Communication, role clarity and interpersonal dynamics are also considered important. In addition to relationship building, Lin et al. (2008) point towards cohesion, trust, communication, and coordination as important indicators of virtual team performance. Muszyńska (2021) holds that a combination of poor knowledge sharing as well as misunderstandings and misinterpretations can prove problematic for virtual teamwork. While in the past research indicated that some of the issues facing remote teams relate to low work commitment, role uncertainty, and social and psychological isolation (O’Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994), more and more research is showing that challenges have progressed to include the difficulty of achieving satisfactory work-life balance, difficulty focusing on work, struggling

with the allotted time and task assigned, as well as productivity and support from team leaders (Aseervatham & Priya, 2020).

Leaders of GVTs undoubtedly face a specific set of leadership tasks and challenges relating to the increased use of technology, including greater demand in terms of time and dedication, as well as recognition of the fact that team members have more power and decision-making capabilities. In this context, it then becomes interesting to review both self-leadership and shared leadership in GVTs from a relational perspective. While it is often assumed that leaders of virtual work structures should apply leadership approaches used for conventional co-located work structures, it is argued here that the virtual aspect of teamwork brings significant interpersonal, situational, and contextual specificities that demand particular attention.

Typical work conditions in GVTs include:

- Increased use of electronic communication tools and technology-mediated communication
- Reduction of face-to-face communication
- Leaders and team members are geographically dispersed
- Autonomy and personal responsibility of team members is increased
- Hierarchy is reduced and shared leadership commonplace
- Self-leadership becomes important in the entire team process
- Potential for blurred work-life boundaries.

Virtual teams experience many of the work-related dynamics that conventional teams experience but also face additional challenges based on a lack of physical interaction. The lack of synergies that often emerge in both formal and informal face-to-face interaction and trust-building, as well as the lack of spontaneous or predictable social interaction can also prove problematic. The wider implications of leading teams where employees are distributed in time and space are particularly relevant for GVT leadership, as are new trends emphasizing the importance of employee experience.

2.1 Employee Experience in GVTs

Employee Experience (EX) has been trending as a new people management concept in recent years. Many globally operating companies are making new efforts to track employee experience in the workplace, and increasingly view this as a key element in guaranteeing employee 'happiness'. Bridger and Gannaway (2021) claim that the impact of EX largely depends on how well organizations create inclusive environments where employees control their own experience, feel connected to their team, have the possibility to grow, and can create impact. In relation to GVTs, virtual employee experience is considered to bring benefits such as improved employee performance, engagement, motivation, and should contribute to a sense of belonging, purpose, achievement, professional development, and happiness. This has clear implications for leadership in the virtual context and is reflected, for example, in the shift in leadership performance appraisal to incorporate aspects of working

climate, team climate, and team performance. The role of the leader is considered essential in co-creating a working environment and atmosphere that is conducive to a positive employee experience. If the appropriate conditions are not in place, it can lead to a breakdown in virtual teams where employee experiences are not satisfied. Negative employee experience can ultimately be damaging for organizations in terms of employee satisfaction, engagement and motivation, and organizational reputation.

Employee experience is becoming increasingly important because, as Morgan (2017) suggests, those companies focusing more on enhancing and improving overall experience and related employee engagement, are often recognized and ranked as the top employers, contributing to overall company success. Research from Shaik and Makhecha (2019) shows, for example, employee engagement in virtual teams can lead directly to improved 'cultural intellect', improved non-verbal and verbal communication, use of technological tools, and increased trust between the team and the team leaders. Having a keen interest in improving interpersonal development is given as a driver behind improving overall effectiveness in GVTs. These developments provide evidence of a clear shift in relational dynamics within organizations and in how employees are now perceived and managed within global organizations—away from the notion of 'Human Resources' and towards more appropriate and future-oriented 'People and Culture' or 'People, Culture and Values' departments, seeing the employee at the heart of the organization. Itam and Ghosh (2020) define EX as the emotional feelings and perceptions employees develop in relation to their work environment and organization, while Bersin et al. (2017) suggest employee experience is a holistic perspective involving all aspects of life at work, and including continual feedback, action, and monitoring. They identify the factors that contribute to a positive EX as meaningful work, with supportive management providing clear vision, an uplifting and culturally diverse workspace, growth opportunities, as well as a leader that can be trusted. Exemplifying a relational turn in leadership, leaders are seen to play a fundamental role in employee experience and in facilitating organizations' relationships with their employees.

3 A Shift Towards Relational Leadership?

Traditionally leadership has been viewed in the context of individual leaders and their followers. Most leadership scholarship has focused on individual leaders and the influence they exert on followers in achieving shared goals (Drath et al., 2008). Relational leadership is a leadership perspective that emerges from the interplay of connections between leaders and their organizations (Hosking, 2006). Taking a relational view of leadership requires seeing both leaders and followers as 'relational' beings involved in mutually constituting each other as leaders and followers in a dynamic relationship. This view of leadership draws attention to processes and contexts that connect actors in leadership relationships and elevates the role of leadership in intentionally enhancing relations among individuals or organizations.

The relational turn in leadership scholarship has been reflected as a shift of attention away from the leader and/or follower towards 'reciprocal relationship' (Shamir et al., 2007). This posits a clear transition away from the individual leader and a move closer to shared or distributed forms of leadership (Mehra et al., 2006), as well as relational and processual practices (Ospina & Foldy 2010; Quick, 2014). A relational view of leadership and organization involves viewing both as social constructions emerging from intricate connections and interdependent relations of organizations and their employees, while in global virtual teams this takes on an added dimension of virtually mediated processes. Uhl-Bien (2006) describes this as 'a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (e.g., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, and ideologies) are constructed and produced' (p. 655).

Relational views of leadership do not focus on identifying certain characteristics or behaviors of leaders but focus instead on the communication processes that make relational realities. They underpin the importance of leadership in improving relationships among individuals and/or organizations, as can be seen in the case of employee experience. Leadership becomes a social reality and cannot be separated from context. This allows for leadership to be seen beyond its traditional focus on manager-subordinate, as an iterative process engaging partners and embedded in context. As such it becomes non-hierarchical, addresses various forms of relationships, focuses on relational dynamics, and is seen as a dynamic process. Tourish (2014) considers relational leadership as a mutual accomplishment of leadership between multiple actors and argues that leadership research has evolved from looking at leaders and their subordinates to considering leadership as a complex phenomenon involving mutual influence. Similarly, research on leadership communication has evolved from its use of linear communication models to much more complex understandings of meaning-making and interaction (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Both aspects point to leadership as a social process co-constructed by multiple social actors. Leadership literature is undoubtedly showing a clear trend towards viewing leadership as a collective phenomenon, becoming more about the development of relations in teams, networks, and organizations. This points to an increasing tendency to shift from a leader-centric focus and instead offer an elevated view of 'followers'.

What exactly does it mean to emphasize the 'relationship' and idea of 'relationality' in leadership? The major challenge here is that it inverts the predominant thinking and understanding of leadership, as associated with individuals, rationality, and independence, and moves it into the space of contextuality; the individual is instead seen as a contextual and relational being involved in relationships with other contextual, relational beings. The world of practice shows us that relationality and relational solutions are necessary to deal with current organizational challenges in rapidly innovating technological environments. They also reflect current societal trends. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, increasingly complex social and work environments, characterized by uncertainty, globalization, interdependence, and diversity, require the collaboration and participation of all employees in transforming organizations and societies. This in turn results in

increasing emphasis being placed on participation and the need to consider relational elements of leadership & organizational practice.

Developments towards a relational view of leadership also require organizations to move from a traditional assessment of leaders and leadership based on individual competencies or performance to also reflect collective concerns like working climate, team climate, and team performance, as outlined in the discussion on employee experience. Hence, leadership, as suggested by Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), should involve shared and co-created and reflexive practices. Several researchers provide evidence of how leadership and the meanings created in leadership processes are constructed and re-constructed in the continuous interactions of all relationships and are embedded in the contexts of those relationships, including team, organization, culture, and time (Fitzsimons et al., 2011; Horila & Siitonen, 2020; Uhl-Bien, 2006). This view emphasizes interactions and relations in meaning-making (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). At a practical level, this points to how social influence is produced through the processes of communication, for example, in the negotiation of leadership roles and coordination of team meetings (Horila & Siitonen, 2020). In a remote work environment this requires adopting collective learning techniques and processes. Leadership in remote contexts can be developed through a range of collective learning techniques and processes including real-time interactions, forms of joint reflection, collective action, and collective strategies. Ultimately it is about collective responsibility for the work of the team. This basic view of leadership as fundamentally collective means that leaders are made in (leadership) processes and are not the makers of (leadership) processes.

The collective, or the team, is critical to this view of leadership. This concept is reflected in the Keith Ferazzi et al. (2022) concept of co-elevated teams. In their book 'Competing in the New World of Work' he suggests that the pandemic forced companies into 'a new standard of highly collaborative behaviors' that became particularly evident in high-performing co-elevating teams. The co-elevation concept coined by Ferazzi and team points to the fact that this co-elevating teamwork involves the team contributing to creating results that raise their combined capabilities as individuals. Much like the concept of synergy, he describes co-elevating teamwork as going beyond cooperation and creating 'a dynamic of constant and unbounded co-creation' (Ferazzi et al., 2022, p. 23). These co-elevated teams can be seen in the context of relational leadership in that the interdependent members share accountability for each other's results, support and help each other and share responsibility for achieving the team's objectives. The proliferation of new tools and platforms available for virtual and blended collaboration also shapes the necessary conditions for remote teamwork to move beyond cooperation and become truly co-creative (Ferazzi et al., 2022, p. 23).

4 Leadership in Virtual Work Environments

Evidence from organizational practice would suggest there is a deep-seated assumption that the virtual work environment requires similar leadership approaches to non-virtual structures, with minimal leadership development training focusing on the specific dynamics of leading virtual teams. As face-to-face interaction is reduced and asynchronous communication is increased in virtual teams, traditional forms of leadership pose several challenges for leaders of virtual teams (Hertel et al., 2005). Location of the leader, spatial distance within the team, and asynchronous workflows all impact the effectiveness of the leader-follower or team relationship and pose specific challenges for virtual teams. It is worth noting, however, that Horila and Siitonen (2020) in their recent research did not find clear evidence to support these arguments and suggest being cautious when assuming difficulties and challenges purely because a team operates in a virtual environment. Digital natives, for example, may in fact be more at ease leading digital teams than co-located teams, due to a high degree of familiarity with the tools and mechanisms available for working in the virtual context. On the other hand, high familiarity does not also guarantee the effective use of digital tools in the context of team collaboration. In this chapter, the focus is not on whether it is more or less challenging to lead global virtual teams, but rather to consider the situational and contextual aspects of virtual teams relevant for team effectiveness and team leadership.

As discussed above, current trends in leadership scholarship are leaning more towards leadership as a collective and shared phenomenon. McCauley and Palus (2021) cite Denis et al. (2012) in suggesting that 'the relational notion that individual leaders are not the fundamental source of leadership, and that leadership is an emergent property of interactions among people working together for collective outcomes' (p. 2) is one of the most disruptive collective leadership ideas. It is useful here in the context of collective leadership practices to take a closer look at the concept of shared leadership, which is considered particularly relevant for GVTs.

4.1 Shared Leadership

Shared leadership involves team members sharing the roles traditionally considered the responsibility of a leader, whereby the influence in guiding, structuring, and facilitating activities and relations in a team is distributed among team members. Shared leadership involves team members sharing responsibilities, mutually influencing, and guiding each other, as well as making collective decisions (Batirlik et al., 2022). It can be enabled by team leaders or can essentially supplement formal leadership. It refers to a sort of self-directed and organic, ongoing, mutual influencing process,

and contributes to the performance of distributed virtual teams (Houghton et al., 2003; Muethel & Hoegl, 2010; Pearce, 2004). Fitzsimons et al. (2011) argue that shared and distributed forms of leadership are particularly useful for organizations struggling with increasing competition, rapidly developing technology, and dynamic changes in the economy. It is also found by some scholars to be especially valuable for GVTs as communication within the team may be impacted by team members collaborating across spatial, technological, temporal, and cultural boundaries (Nordbäck & Espinosa, 2019). This idea is supported by Chamakiotis et al. (2021), who suggest that in GVTs characterized by high levels of cultural diversity, there is a stronger likelihood that shared leadership and alternative styles of leadership will be more effective. One possible explanation here might be the fact that high levels of diversity necessitate a process of conscious and mutual adaptation in identifying shared norms of interaction. Nordbäck and Espinosa (2019) in their investigation of shared leadership in virtual teams found that it has more impact on team effectiveness when it is coordinated both behaviorally and implicitly. Here, behavioral leadership coordination refers to the explicit actions taken to coordinate leadership activities within a team. They also find that the higher the degree of shared leadership, the higher the need for behavior leadership coordination as the risk of an upsurge in uncoordinated actions increases. The notion of shared leadership being coordinated implicitly is particularly interesting in the context of relational leadership among culturally diverse and dispersed team members as it suggests that team members share common perceptions and cognitive schemas about who has leadership of what. Nordbäck and Espinosa (2019), however, point out that with a mix of national cultures in a GVT, it is unlikely that they will share the same leadership expectations. This calls into question the potential effectiveness of shared leadership in teams with high national cultural diversity unless explicitly and effectively managed. It can thus be argued that while shared leadership may be effective in culturally diverse teams, it is likely to demand a high level of transcultural competence.

Shared leadership, as such, clearly requires a specific repertoire of behaviors, such as continuous reflection, anticipation of information needs, and initiating a team's social influence, which, as indicated by Muethel and Hoegl (2010), in turn, all impact on the team's overall performance. They argue that the more dispersed a team is, the more difficult it is for the leader to exert direct influence on team members. According to Kanawattanachai and Yoo (2002), some 50% of virtual teams are unable to meet either their strategic or operational goals because of the leader's lack of ability to manage the dispersed team members. However, considering current trends towards co-creative and highly collaborative virtual workspaces as well as the recent proliferation of tools and technologies to enhance communication in virtual teams, this figure is unlikely to be anywhere near as high today. Hoegl and Muethel (2007) suggest that with the reduced effectiveness of vertical leaders, it becomes almost a necessity for the team members to become a source of leadership in GVTs, as a form of shared leadership. Castellano et al. (2021) claim that shared leadership, including the vision and culture of shared leadership, positively contributes to the performance of virtual R&D teams. Continuous reflection on the relating process between team

tasks and changes in context, information needs, and social influence is imperative to shared leadership (Hoegl & Muethel, 2007). A further characteristic of virtual work contexts, closely related to shared leadership, is that they typically embrace autonomous decision-making or extended decision latitudes, which is assumed to demand greater empowerment of employees and require more control behavior on the part of employees. This, by necessity, demands greater self-leadership.

4.2 Self-leadership

Self-leadership can be seen to influence motivational processes in contexts where team members are isolated both from the team leader and from the other team members. Andressen et al. (2012) found that self-leadership has a higher influence on motivation in virtual work structures than in co-located work structures, with virtual teams often considered to consist of more proactive and empowered members.

As self-leadership, motivation, and work environment all become increasingly important in research and evidence on effectiveness in a virtual or remote work environment, it is important to also integrate these ideas into more comprehensive models of leadership. Some research suggests that self-leadership has a higher influence on motivation in virtual workspaces compared with co-located work (Andressen et al., 2011), and also merits consideration in relation to employee experience. While self-leadership refers to autonomous work, it does not automatically negate the role of a supervisor or the value of implicit or explicit coordination of tasks. Self-led workers tend to think independently and develop their own ideas, but work environment and organizational structure are key to leveraging the benefits of self-leadership. While communication styles, personalities, and behaviors that positively contribute to work performance and affective commitment are considered as general success factors for leadership, in a virtual context, the overall work environment is found to have a significant impact on leadership and its process. Work environment then, as previously argued in relation to leader performance appraisal, plays an increasingly significant role in leadership processes. Andressen et al. (2011) suggest that self-leadership deserves more attention as it 'provides possibility to overcome the decreased influence of a leader because of the lack of face-to-face interaction and the increase in asynchronous communication'(p. 2, see also Hertel et al., 2005). As an additional aspect of the virtual work environment, Hertel et al. (2005) also points to important factors such as the increased autonomy and personal responsibility associated with self-leadership. This illustrates again the need to examine the changing relationship between leaders, followers, and context in virtual work environments and employee experience. The role of individual self-leadership as part of the team process and team effectiveness remains largely unexplored, as does self-leadership in the context of a relational turn in leadership. Self-leadership is certainly deserving of consideration as a factor in the relating processes of virtual teams.

5 Practical Implications of a Relational Turn in Leadership

In this chapter, it has been argued that a relational approach to leadership in virtual teams, taking the formal and informal relations between people, processes, and practices into consideration, is more time appropriate than traditional approaches focusing on the individuals and their positions. The specific nature of GVTs, the technology-mediated communication, languages, cultures, and distance between team members, as well as the dynamic interdependencies and employee experience produce a range of distinct leadership and team implications. To leverage the potential of high-performing individuals and teams in remote work environments, organizations need to rethink how they view their people and their leaders. They need to reconsider how to implement leadership to encourage the development of common co-creative virtual workspaces. And at the same time, organizations need to focus on creating a positive employee experience to retain talent. This has critical implications for both leadership development within organizations as well as for the recruitment, retention, and development of employees.

As organizations continue to become more mobile, flexible, and distributed, People and Culture Management needs to consider which competencies are most desirable for their leaders and employees, and how they can best help employees develop these competencies. Selection processes need to consider how leaders can become more effective in their empowerment of team members and contribute to employee experience, allowing for proactivity among the team, trust-building, tolerance of ambiguity, and shared leadership processes. The leader must be seen as a participant in these dynamic relational processes that are mediated by technology and embedded in virtual contexts. Evidence presented here suggests the leaders of virtual teams may need to be more available and more involved, and more aware of employee experience. They need to promote a shared sense of responsibility and nurture a common commitment to each other's success—valuing peer-to-peer support and accountability, while at the same time guaranteeing a positive individual employee experience within the organization. Organizational training approaches for work in remote and hybrid contexts need to be reassessed to meet current workplace demands, focusing on self-leadership, shared leadership practices, well-being leadership, and compassionate and empathetic leadership. Considering the specifics and dynamics of virtual teams, several responsibilities for leaders of GVTs can be identified. Chamakiotis et al. (2021) state, for example, that team leaders should be aware of four key aspects when relating to their teams: digital well-being; engagement, trust, and relationship building; work-life boundaries; and creative performance and innovation.

Ford et al. (2017) identify several organizational strategies that can be used to build effective virtual teams and which directly relate to the key needs of virtual leadership outlined by Chamakiotis et al. (2021), including building organizational trust, developing technological cues, team structuring and team mission, creating structures for support and socio-emotional care, as well as overall team composition and collaboration. Leaders of GVTs should be willing to engage in shared leadership practices that

contribute to team-level psychological health. Here, research leads us to believe that virtual leadership as a process is participative and co-creative and ultimately should lead to a co-elevation of teams (see Ferazzi et al., 2022). Beyond team dynamics and considering changing global dynamics, leaders are increasingly involved in a collaboration to help reinvent their organizations and are responsible for connecting people across the organization to tackle challenges together. The virtual leader should be an effective communicator, showing an astute ability to listen empathetically and actively facilitate and manage both synchronous and asynchronous communication, identifying and promoting a common communication style. They must be able to effectively engage with the complexity of the virtual environment, exhibiting tolerance of ambiguity and openness. Trust-building activities are key to effective GVTs, so it is a leader's job to facilitate the finding of shared team goals and norms of interaction, as well as effectively facilitate interactions between team members. Strong relationships, despite the remoteness of individuals, are key to long-term relationship building and creating a sense of connection and ideally inclusiveness. Leaders must develop the communicative and technological skills to capture mindshare or collaborative crowdsourcing in a virtual setting, being inclusive of everyone in the team, and must develop techniques that help motivate team members, contributing to both self-leadership and effective autonomous work capabilities. In fostering their role as relational leaders, ideally, virtual leaders should have a low appetite for status and hierarchy, but clearly show their dedication to the team.

5.1 Creating a Common GVT Culture

As indicated above, there are several factors impacting GVT effectiveness and performance, including the question of trust, commitment, motivation, communication, culture, and structure effects. In the context of this chapter, how leaders can impact the development of effective global virtual teams and how the cultural complexity of these teams can best be leveraged is of particular interest. In adopting a relational view of cultural complexity, as is the case throughout this book, it has been argued that it is not only the leaders and the organizations that need to be re-examined taking a new relational lens but also the individuals and teams.

In creating a common and shared GVT culture, leaders of virtual teams need to ask themselves the following questions:

– How can new cultural commonalities be developed in GVTs through the team members' interactions and relating to co-create the sort of shared space that will best allow for continuous learning from each other?
– Which team processes, social interactions, and relating processes contribute to effective and successful GVTs?
– How can a leader contribute to the co-creating of new commonalities among team members, while recognizing and preserving the differences that co-exist?

– How can a leader engage effectively with team members who have varying degrees of familiarity with the virtual team context and are diverse in themselves and in their experience of the complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity of the virtual work context?

In answering these questions, the value of co-creating a collaborative common space becomes extremely important. The practical implications are manifold and involve thinking about how a leader can contribute to a safe psychological space, trust-building, multilingual management, group dynamics, conflict management, and consensus building, while addressing multiple multi-layered cultural and situational contexts. This involves moving beyond simple collaboration and requires new practices of co-creation, reflecting the shift to co-elevating team competencies (Ferazzi et al., 2022) and should ideally foster an environment whereby all team members engage in co-coaching and collaborative learning practices. This requires new forms of training with a focus on relational dynamics. Relational leadership requires that leaders do not see themselves as the core of the team, but as participants involved in a reciprocal relationship.

Leaders of GVTs need to test, filter, and adopt appropriate technological tools and platforms to facilitate virtual collaboration and foster a culture of inclusion and mutual and continual learning among their teams. They can start by:

– recognizing that everyone is the leader
– valuing shared and self-leadership
– initially finding commonalities as a basis for relationship building,
– guaranteeing diversity is understood, valued, and leveraged,
– using smaller groups (using breakout rooms) for collaboration,
– effectively managing and reducing meetings
– making use of shared virtual workspaces and asynchronous collaboration tools,
– consciously taking the time for personal and professional check-in sessions at virtual encounters
– serving, sharing (being authentic and vulnerable), and caring (showing empathy and compassion)
– considering team phase and duration of team relating processes
– ensuring appropriate training is available for virtual employees
– conduct team alignment audits at regular intervals
– effectively managing multilingual contexts.

Gibson and Grushina (2021) suggest establishing a set of technological repertoires and adopting ‘next generation’ strategies to move GVTs forward, while Ferazzi et al. (2022) recommend that virtual teams co-create an explicit social contract in the form of a virtual team contract for collaboration within the virtual team. Both can be used in co-creating a common team culture. Developing a social contract for GVTs requires the team to discuss the desirable features of team behavior (sharing common and differing preferences for workplace behavior and communication), agree to support each other, and hold each other accountable for successfully maintaining those behaviors. The process of defining a social contract contributes to a conscious co-creation

of a 'third space', identifying new social interaction norms for the team and organization. This is a process that can be conducted at regular intervals, as teams and contexts change it is necessary to 're-contract' for a shared team culture. This can also be used as a means of establishing trusting relationships, as it provides an opportunity for team members to get to know each other and begin to develop a team relationship. Hakonen and Lipponen (2009) show clear evidence that mutual trust and trustworthiness among team members have a positive impact on virtual teams, while Yusof and Zakaria (2012) emphasize the fact that trust development in virtual teams depends on the cultural backgrounds of the members. In co-creating a social contract, the team has the opportunity to gain insights into the cultures and values of their teammates. As interpersonal communication is a critical component of teamwork, there are strong recommendations for teams to establish their own communication patterns and rules, keeping in mind the transcultural aspect of communication styles. When co-creating these common 'third' spaces, agreeing on social contracts, or implementing shared accountability for virtual teamwork, it is important to consider the potential impact of tendencies towards more collectivist or individualistic cultural preferences, as well as formal and informal communication processes. Cultural commonalities and differences are highly relevant, as it is extremely unlikely that virtual teams of dispersed individuals with different backgrounds and experiences will share the same understandings of teamwork, team interaction, norms, of organizational or team cultures. These collaborative practices, such as developing a social contract, establishing a communication plan and selecting a repertoire of technological tools to use as a team, are incredibly valuable in establishing and solidifying team relations. They are a key component in the explicit coordination of shared leadership, which is hugely valuable considering the cultural and contextual complexity of GVTs.

Lippert and Dulewicz (2017) in their empirical research on team performance and high-performing teams suggest members of high-performing teams are more likely to be more benevolent, core competent, have more integrity, and show more risk aversion. They also suggest that team member commitment is important for GVT performance and found evidence that high-performing team members were more likely to consider their work as valuable to the organization and for their own careers as well as in supporting each other. Leaders can support this commitment by initiating virtually mediated personal and professional conversations with employees. Zaccaro and Bader (2003) suggest that by sharing social and personal information with team members, leaders can develop high-quality relations. Lippert and Dulewicz (2017) state that opportunities for shared experiences in virtual teams must be designed in a way that contributes to building cognitive trust as well as affective trust. This points to the fact that individuals in virtual teams need to feel a mutual sense of reliability, dependability, and competence. A particularly interesting finding from the transcultural communication perspective is the fact that high-performing virtual teams are more likely to communicate in a direct and precise manner, communicate based on true intentions, clarify ambiguous information, and use rational argumentation. As these are interactional behaviors that may not be valued in the same way by all members (and certainly not by all cultural groups), it is important to consider how to embed these appropriately in a social contract or communication plan depending on

the individuals involved. The findings of Lippert and Dulewicz, while based on the results of 122 teams from a large international telecoms company, operating across 21 countries, clearly represent a specific communication style preference often dominant in international business studies. No studies were found to alternatively show that an indirect and circular style of communication in GVTs could also generate similar synergy or 'co-elevation' among high-performing teams. It would be interesting to investigate the potential of GVTs to become 'high-performing' in contexts where an indirect and circular communication style is the common style shared, and adapted to, by the team members.

Fundamentally, team members should be aware of their own and others' cultural preferences, work styles, and communication styles and should carefully consider what the 'commonality' is and how it might impact virtual teamwork and interactions. The success factors for high-performing virtual teams suggested here are valuable for managers and the leaders of GVTs as they point to potential areas of development for teams as well as areas relevant to team selection. Activities designed to develop both affective and cognitive trust are important, and, in particular, activities that enhance interaction, communication, and empathy and foster peer support should prove particularly valuable for GVTs. GVTs should consider consciously establishing co-created and reflexive practices to facilitate enduring collective learning.

6 Conclusion and Outlook

This aim of this chapter is to enrich the discussion of a relational turn in the leadership of GVTs. Having entered a new era of leadership, leaders are being forced to reconsider their modus operandi. The leaders who are succeeding and thriving under these conditions seem to be those who have been able to overthrow the shackles and constraints of more traditional concepts of leadership and have learned to rapidly transform and learn new competencies. These are leaders who can effectively lead their teams virtually and co-create common and inclusive spaces of collaboration with empathy. They are highly skilled at facilitating relational processes mediated by technology and, in doing so, leverage the diversity of their teams. They are open to change and have developed the competencies necessary to facilitate and encourage better group relations, communication, conflict management, and collaboration in highly complex and ambiguous contexts. These include the mindset, heartset, skillset and toolset to harness self-awareness and self-reflection within the organization, to facilitate collective learning, contribute to relating processes within the team, and to promote organizational effectiveness and well-being, while at the same time contributing to its anti-fragility.

Understanding leadership in global virtual teams is critical as more and more organizations are using culturally diverse, dispersed teams to remain flexible and

agile while reducing costs, to share knowledge and information efficiently, and to acquire talent. Eberly et al. (2013) argued that increased virtuality in teamwork and higher degrees of technology-based communication has led to the need for entirely new skills required for leadership. This is in keeping with the findings of this chapter illustrating that leading virtual teams requires specific skills and is different than leading co-located teams. Further research, however, is needed to explore whether the challenges of virtuality in team leadership are as significant as is often assumed by a common narrative. It is important to keep in mind the risks suggested by Endres and Weibler (2016), who argue that by taking a processual relational view of leadership there is also a risk of diluting leadership and viewing different types of mutual processes as 'leadership'. Here they point towards the risks of seeing leadership everywhere. This also highlights a need for further study on 'leadership' and 'teamwork' and the boundaries between the two, over time. More research is also needed on what leadership processes are most effective in GVTs, which would ultimately lead to a better understanding of the dynamics of global virtual workspaces. Research going beyond the American or 'Western' context, which currently dominates research in the field (Muszyńska, 2021) would be of great value, providing alternative contexts for investigation and frames of analysis. As global virtual teams tend to operate using English as their working language, the current trend is for most research into GVTs to also be conducted through this frame, neglecting the question of multilingual dynamics. Furthering this aspect of research would certainly have positive implications in achieving greater understanding of the dynamics of effective global virtual teamwork at a truly global scale.

Despite the current limitations of research on leadership in virtual teams, it has become clear that the common story of leadership needs to be renegotiated and retold to reflect the dynamic developments and constant changes currently experienced by organizations. Hence, this chapter calls for a new narrative of relational leadership in the context of GVTs. It seems the necessary drivers for leadership to take this developmental leap forward are those future-oriented organizations seeking that are ready to innovate leadership in a way that allows it to best respond to today's rapidly changing strategic contexts. These are the organizations that have managed to harness the winds of recent storms to propel themselves and their people to success; organizations that have applied 'next generation' strategies and made effective use of culturally diverse, remote, virtual contexts to thrive together. These organizations are effectively adapting emerging (New Work) theories to rapidly changing strategic challenges and, at the same time, are reconstructing leadership as a more complex and comprehensive practice. A relational lens of leadership is appropriate in exactly these circumstances. It supports the co-creation of a common shared virtual space in which leader and team relate through reciprocal relations and mutual accomplishments with each other, with their tasks and the organization.

Questions to ponder

Chapter 'A New Narrative of Leadership in the Context of Global Virtual Teams?', by Eithne Knappitsch

- Is a relational approach to leadership an appropriate lens through which to view leadership in relation to Global Virtual teams? What are the potential risks and benefits?
- Gibson and Grushina (2021) suggest that GVTs need 'next generation' strategies to address the specificities of global teamwork, needs of team members, and related challenges. What do you consider to be the 'next generation' strategies needed by high-performing GVTs? How can these strategies reflect a relational view of cultural dynamics?
- If organizations are demanding leadership that is more sensitive to their 'people' and to the specific hybrid, diverse, dispersed, and remote contexts their employees are working in, how can organizations best design leadership development models to help leaders develop the required competencies?
- If, as Horila and Siitonen (2020) suggest, the relational dimension in leadership becomes more complex in teams working together over many years, how can this be counteracted by effective leadership practices?
- How can organizations assess leaders and leadership processes when taking a relational view of leadership? What practices might organizations introduce to review leadership and team performance moving away from the more traditional means of performance appraisal?
- How can new cultural commonalities be developed in GVTs through the team members' interactions and relating to co-create the sort of shared space that will best allow for collective and continuous learning from each other? How can a leader contribute to the co-creating of new commonalities among team members, while recognizing and preserving the differences that co-exist?

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