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Intercultural Training
Systemic Training Approach
in CULTURE PILOTS

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Content

Intercultural Training

What does "intercultural" in training settings refer to?

1. Mixed groups – Groups with people from different nations and cultures

2. Intercultural topics are treated

3. The intercultural dimension is consciously approached

4. Reflection of own and different concepts of culture

5. Reflection on own and others belief systems, cultural imprints, values, social and cultural actions, experiences, communication styles, etc.

6. Open attitude towards cultural diversity

7. Intercultural competence is applied and generated

The dimension CULTURE in Culture Pilots

In the project "Culture Pilots" as its title already announces culture and interculturality are central topics: cultural diversity, cultural imprint and conditioning, cultural identity, cultural values, cultural differences and similarities, intercultural understanding and dialog, etc.

For the work in intercultural training settings and for the development of intercultural competence it is crucial to be conscious of and reflect on ones own and others concepts of culture, ways of seeing, perceiving and interpreting the world (cosmovision), own and others cultural imprint and conditioning, etc.

This approach allows an awareness of culture as a historical and social construct that is socially negotiated and agreed and that can be changed at any time (it is not something given by nature). This assumption is the starting point.

Trainers, coaches and participants of the Culture Pilots project are invited to become aware of the construction of culture and therefore to reflect on different concepts of culture and their own culture and to agree upon a

common idea / concept of culture as a common base and starting point for the Culture Pilots training process.

Culture and its construction are central themes for the whole Culture Pilots project: in processes of dealing with the individual understanding of culture and identity on the part of the Culture Pilots as well as on the part of the visitors of the city tours and all other people involved in the project:

On the part of the **Culture Pilots** (women) the engagement with culture and biography work leads to:

- an in depth understanding and a reinterpretation of their own life and cultural identities, a sourcing for resources and competences in their own biography and the possibility of a better and more positive presentation on the labor market.

- an important foundation for the development of the city tours.

The **visitors and other people involved** are confronted by the culture pilots in the city tours and personal encounters with their own and foreign ideas of culture, promoting social understanding, an intercultural dialogue and the awareness of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe.

What is culture? Different concepts of culture

In order to get an awareness of the construction of culture it is useful to become familiar with a couple of different concepts of culture and the way the concept of culture changed in the history.

When culture changes also definitions and concepts - made up from different people - transform. This change of the definition does not happen by chance but in accordance with the historical developments of a society. Therefore each historical epoch has produced its own understanding of culture claiming that it is the true one.

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Different concepts / notions of culture over the time (examples):

Normative notion of culture
The roots of the notion of culture that aims at **excluding** the other/the foreigner can be traced back to the old Roman and Greek. Already in the ancient world it has been recognized that different peoples cultivate different lifestyles. **The Greek and the Romans founded the normative notion of culture exclusively entitling themselves as cultured and identify anything else as barbarism.** This normative notion of culture also justified the - in the middle ages established distinction - of social levels/classes: the nobleness possessing culture and the people without culture.

Culture as a superior intellectual and spiritual development
In the 18th and 19th century **culture was equalized with a higher intellectual and spiritual development**. This understanding of culture lead to a differenciation between so called "civilized culture people" and "primitive nature people". On the background of the colonial expansion at the time this understanding of culture legitimized the european colonization, the proselytization and the subjugation of entire peoples.

Substantial or essential notion of culture
Johann Gottfried Herder (1744 – 1803) founded on the background of the French Revolution and the ideas of rationality, freedom and equality a theory of culture that didn't award culture to the nobleness anymore but to the ordinary people. Herder understands culture as **"lifestyle of people", as expression of the "peoples soul" and the "peoples essence/nature"**. Herder understood cultures as **"globes"** or also **"islands"**, as **self-contained, concluded unities** according to the territorial and linguistic compass of a nation or people. As culture in this case refers to clearly outlined groups like tribes, peoples or nations, this understanding of culture is denominated nowadays as substantial and essential notion of culture. A concept of culture we can still find in many heads.

Definition of culture of the Cultural Anthropology
Also the Anglo-Saxon cultural anthropology directed by the British anthropologist Tylor denominated culture and civilization as a complex whole

thing which compasses "the knowledge, the belief, the art, the ethics, the norms, the customs and all other capacities, habits and practices that a human being as a member of society adopts.

Holistic definition of culture
Cultural US anthropologists, in order to delimitate from this rather idealistic notion of culture during the first half of the 20th century searched for a notion of culture which was in accordance with this young immigration country. The holistic notion of culture was molded. Instead of the colonial thinking the idea of the national idea was in the center. The point of departure was the understanding, that each people and culture dispose of goods that deserve protection and have to have a guarantee of the right of self-determination by the sovereign national state. In this understanding nation, culture and assimilation compose a unity. Cultures and nations were seen as identical entities, as something holistically concluded / self-contained.

In the second half of the 20th century the nation lost somewhat of it's character of founding identities. This led to a certain differentiation of the cultural concept engaged in whole nations. Now **instead of exclusively national ones more ethical, linguistic and religious affiliations** were adopted.

The progressive **globalisation** with its contradictory trends, the **homogenisation** on the one hand and the **differentiation** on the other hand, was also reflected in the cultural debate.
Homogenisation is stamped by global communication and orientation systems, English as a world language, worldwide valid codes and social systems, which are dominated by the western economy whose rules and norms are controlled and lead to a universality of the claims and expectations of quality of life and increasingly similar life styles.

At the same time differentiation and group formation processes take place which are desinguished by an assertion of national, cultural, religious or individual independence.

The emphasis of an individual life style with an own value system, the identity as a man or woman, non-white or white, as a nation, religion, language or ethnic member – all together attempts of differentiation in a world which is dominated stronger and stronger by a prevailing economic system and its

culture.

Today, as opposed to the holistic approaches which stress the holistic and uniformity of cultures, it is more a matter of explaining the differences and common characteristics of people. Therefore other differentiations in the cultural understanding are needed. With the names "creolisation" and "hybridisation" ethnologists currently try to give consideration to the mixtures and permeabilities of cultures which are based more on bond and connection and less on autonomy and demarcation of different cultures.

Nowadays in the scientific debate and in everyday practice primarily two cultural understandings are present which are interpreted **statically or dynamically** depending on the position.

The **group-related cultural concept** which refers to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliations;
„One understands by cultures a system of values, norms, symbols, techniques and sign uses which a group of people has internalized by social learning processes and distinguishes this group from others (Alex Sutter, Hand-out IK, university of Lucerne, in 2002)".
Not the person as an acting being but the person formed by a certain culture stands in the centre (static cultural concept).

The **action-related cultural concept** which puts the **single individual in the centre**;
„One understands by culture collective standards of sign uses, norms, values, technologies which an individual has internalized in different social contexts to interpret the world, to communicate with others and to act specifically (Alex Sutter, Hand-out IK, university of Lucerne, in 2002)".

With the action-related cultural concept the person stands in the center as a cultural and acting being (dynamic cultural concept). It is assumed that people go through different bigger and smaller sociocultural contexts in the course of their lives and internalize in each case elements of the valid values and norms. These are processed in quite different ways according to very proper own personality and individual life biography, therefore it comes to multi-layered identities and loyalties, so-called „multiple– identities", and to the most different common characteristics (similarities) and differences in today's social

diversity.

Proposed working hypothesis and concept of culture in the Culture Pilots training program

The „dynamic cultural concept"
Culture is a very complex and multi-layered term presented by several hundred definitions and has changed over and over again in history.

The dynamic cultural concept describes culture as it follows:
Culture is an orientation system, value/worth system and action system, constantly in movement, without firm borders and must be defined over and over again anew or creates itself perpetually anew. All members of a society contribute to the cultural system, regardless of status or position – whether locals or immigrated, boy or old person, women or men, high-powered or marginalized.

The „dynamic cultural concept" distinguishes itself by the fact that it understands culture as something not concluded, not static, but as a „system constantly being in movement".

For its historical understanding and its process-like approach the dynamic cultural concept does not fall in static cultural comparisons. It acts on the assumption that every person is able of change and developable. It allows a critical look at the own and the unknown/strange, moves away from a mystifying, culturally justified behaviour and action-manner of the people. Also the interaction between the single individual and the collective interpretation patterns of the society in which it lives becomes tangible with a dynamic cultural understanding. Processes of development and processes of integration which take place by mutual influencing of different values become initiateable with it and liveable.

3 characteristics that define culture according to Borelli (1986, page 8-36) are:

- Culture can not be held in a certain extent or limit.

- It is historical-social experience because it demostrates the procedural character in everything exsiting, the possibility of becoming aware in/by thinking, the intelectual processing of social experiences and therefore is historically superable.

- It is intelectual-experience and due to its procedural character intellectually superable.

Systemic mindset/attitude in intercultural training settings

Systemic mindset: **Problem-solution where the problem is created within the person / participant**

Attitude of the trainer / coach: Help the participant to find his/her own solution to his/her own person

Training – systemic approach
Supervision for a process   Process orientation in intercultural training settings (biographical work, resource- and strength orientated empowerment work), accompaniment of personal development processes, dynamic or process orientated concept of culture for Culture Pilots training
Emphasis on experiences of the participants   Intercultural experiences when reflected lead to intercultural competence; every intercultural encounter is unique and subjective. We can learn from our own and the experiences of others.
Focused on relationships   The main focus of intercultural training and development of intercultural competence is on the way we relate to each other and communicate with other people. Are our relationships successful and pleasant or frustrating or even full of conflict? How do we relate?
Reflecting process   In intercultural training settings a most important aspect is the ability and the willingness of reflecting on (e.g.) your own biography, your ideas on culture and cultural imprints, cultural differences and common grounds (that unify), your own

and others behavior, values and belief system, etc. This is the starting point for developing intercultural competence. Reflecting on something and becoming aware/conscious is a never-ending process.

Broadening of the behavioral spectrum of the participants

Using the systemic approach in intercultural training settings promotes broadening the behavioral spectrum of participants preparing them especially for mastering intercultural encounters and communication. Increasing the behavioral spectrum means passing through a process of reflecting proper and foreign behaviors and thinking patterns and adopting them where it makes sense.

Trainer and participants create the process together

In intercultural training settings (culturally diverse groups) the participants can be excellent co-trainers. When creating the process together and through the active participation of all the participants a very broad knowledge can be generated for example when it is about getting to know different cultural standards, values, behaviors, etc from people from different nations and the needs of the participants can be met.

No hierarchy

This is especially important in intercultural training settings both for working with people from different nations where there is hierarchy for example between women an man (sometimes difficult to accept the authority of a female trainer) and for the attitude that participants take between themselves in and outside the training setting in intercultural encounters

Voluntariness required

Voluntariness is crucial for the resource and process orientated work in intercultural training settings. If people are being obliged to attend the training this has to be made transparent and there has to be done some motivation work before starting the process work. Personal development processes - as they go deep into

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the personality and biography of a person - only and exclusively work and can happen when the person is free in its decisions.

Exercise:

How can the constructivist perspective be successfully applied in intercultural training settings, what does the following mean for intercultural encounters?

Constructivist Perspective

The world is what you think it is
Helps us to get an awareness of the construction of our own world and reality and the one of another person. So we can understand that the own way of seeing the world is as subjective as another persons way of seeing it. This helps us to be more tolerant with the view on the world of others.

There is no „right" or „wrong", there is just appropriate or not appropriate
If there is no right or wrong we can avoid a lot of (intercultural) conflicts. We can talk about whether a behaviour or attitude etc. is appropriate or not. This opens our minds and hearts. It makes a difference in the communication whether you tell someone that something he did or said is not appropriate in this very situation or whether it is wrong.

What is right is defined from every person referring to her/his own experiences, beliefs and goals
We can not decide wheter something is right or wrong, we can only tell if something is appropriate and useful in a determined social and cultural context and situation.

There is no objective or impartial truth - the truth is created in the eye of the observer
This means that we can create our own truth and change our own truth or view of the world just like others. This also means that our truth is not necessarily true for others, and it also means that somebody elses truth does not nessesarily hold true for myself. So we need to be careful with claiming the truth and develop acceptance and tolerance for someone elses truth even

when it is different to our own.

There will never be two people who experience the same (in the same way and at the same time)
As the way we exprecience things and situation depends on our individual interpretation patterns and previous experiences even if two persons are living the exact same situation it doesn't mean that they experience the same thing in the same way at the same time.

We need to go behind terms and words – translation work: what is meant with the words, otherwise it leads to disappointment
Even with words there is a possibility of missunderstanding. Sometimes we just create different pictures in our minds for the same word or have different connotations and associations. So we need to try and translate not only in words but also with gestures, mimic, feelings, or explain a concept with other words.

Competence-, resource-oriented and biography work

Why is there a focus on biography work as a tool in the Culture pilots project, why is it important to work with biographies?

There are two main aspects and many side aspects to why there is a main focus on biography work as a tool in the Culture Pilots project:

First many immigrants experience themselves and their personal migration background in a deficit orientated way, same as the public does; the immigrants don't speak the language (well), their qualification often are not recognized on the labor market, migration is often perceived as a failure or break down in personal live, the lack of promoters and possibilities and/or traumatic and dramatic circumstances have led to a burying of resources, competences and potentials or these simply have never been activated. Therefore in the Culture pilots training biography work is used for making potentials and competences accessible and transparent and for refreshing and brushing up existing key competences.

Therefore systemic open questions can be used (e.g. When did I acquire which competences in my life. What did I love doing as a child, as an adolescent, as an adult? Etc.). The immigrants experience their own biographies and their own cultural background as a source of strength and resources and learn to re-interpret it partly.

This competence orientated approach changes the self-perception, strengthens the self confidence and self-worth and therefore opens up new perspectives and rooms for actions. These are for example a better presentation in the working world. A person who is aware of her or his competences has clear goals and is able to articulate them has the possibility to defend its competences and skills in society and in the working world. Migration is no longer experienced as a deficit but as an experience that can provide resources. In this process the self-concept and the self-confidence of the immigrants themselves chances and a strengthening of the personality can take place.

Biography work is also an important tool for establishing the competence-records in the Culture Pilots project.

The second main aspect for using biography work in Culture Pilots is for developing the city tours. The main theme of the city tours were the personal histories out of personal biographies from the immigrants. By reflecting on their own biography, culture, history, etc. the Culture Pilots developed the contents and themes which they present in the tours they offer.

Examples for backgrounds conveyed to the visitors are:

Why did the persons immigrate? Where and how did they arrive in the host country?

How and where occurs their everyday life?

What barriers do they have to overcome in the host country?

What is their approach to the culture of the host country and how do they experience traditions?

How do they experience / live their own culture in the host country?

The questions give examples of dealing with processes of understanding of culture and identity on the part of the culture pilots and on the part of the visitors.

By conveying individual and subjective points of views, life experiences and insights in their individual environment the Culture Pilots can touch on a very personal, human level, deconstruct beliefs, ideas, judgments and prejudices and promote the creation of new ideas and attitudes. With their tours the Culture Pilots created an opportunity for guests and visitors to plunge into their subjective word and intercultural life styles and to ask open questions that can be discussed. A direct intercultural contact and dialog between people from different cultures was established which is of great value for integration processes in society.

My story is important – I am important - Who could possibly be interested in my story?

A very intense and essential and sometimes even life changing experience for the Culture Pilots (immigrants) is that they and their stories are important.

A frequent question asked by the immigrants during the application process of the Culture Pilots training program was: who could possibly be interested in my personal story? I am not important enough.

Nevertheless, in the original Culture Pilots project the immigrants themselves are the center. The resource and process orientated approach of the training program puts the immigrants themselves right in the center. Their stories, their lives, their potentials, qualification and skills, their experiences, their failures, their traumas, their paths, etc. are most important. By digging in the biographies they come in touch with their essence, potentials, competences, and resources and last but not least vital force.

This undertaking is not always normal for the immigrants and is also not always easy. Especially immigrants often have a great challenge to assure their own and their families survival and economic existence. Additionally they are often

seen as "second class people" in society. Their own history and qualifications seem to be of no value on the labor market. Processes of downgrading and decreasing the self worth and confidence have long taken place. They as a person are usually not seen as important.

To put themselves and their experiences in the center can have a great impact on the participants. On the on hand it is the way to get in touch with themselves, their power and self esteem , their potentials and competences again, on the other hand blockages can be triggered that need to be attended.

The biography work helps the immigrants to define their current position in life, to establish a connection between the past and the future, to integrate everything they learned in the past into their present lives. I helps them to understand the value of their experiences and their ways and to be able to use them as resources.

The biographical and very personal and individual focus in the tours of the Culture Pilots facilitated very personal and deeply human intercultural contacts between the Culture Pilots and the visitors of the tours. One of the big achievements of Culture Pilots was the creation of a direct intercultural dialogue and the increase of an awareness of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe that promotes integration.

How to work with the biography?

Competence and biography work is mainly based on asking and answering open systemic questions in group and individual settings, on reflecting and talking and on writing and painting. A systemic, valuing, self-responsible and solution-orientated attitude is the base for biography and competence work.

It is very important that that in this work a resource and solution orientated attitude is taken. This means that we totally respect and value the problem, instead of getting stuck in a problematic description of a situation we immediately seek for resources we can take out of the situation and focus our attention on the creation of a solution, the present moment and the future.

A biography is like a treasure box, to plunge in it a valuable adventure to get in

touch with ones own competences, potentials, dreams, goals, essence and personal power. By reflecting on ones own biography we also get a deeper understanding of ourselves and our cultural conditioning and can change things where it is useful.

A key aspect in biography work is the creation of a space / room of confidence. It has to be clear that in this room anything can be said and expressed (dreams, failures, successes, deficits, feelings, emotions, thoughts, easy and difficult situations, etc.) and participants have to be absolutely sure that anything they say and anything that happens in this space will stay in the space and not be told to anybody outside the space. It is the trainers and coaches most important task to "hold or carry the space" for positive developments. This is invisible but most necessary work. It means that coaches and trainers are aware of the processes they initiate in their trainings and coachings in individuals and groups and are alert to what is going on in their participants lives during the training process and if needed are there for them. In these personal development processes many personal and professional themes can be dealt with that have not found a "room" before but are important to be dealt with.

As participants usually have experienced a lack of attention and are needy, it is recommended to the trainers and coaches to find a balance between being there for the participants and delimit themselves as it is usually never enough what they can give. The forum on the Culture Pilots homepage can be a very helpful space and tool for trainers and coaches to exchange experiences and recommendations concerning the process work in the Culture Pilots project.

Attention:

The personal biographies are the starting point for the development of the competences and the contents of the tours. At the same time it is the responsibility and target of the trainer to encourage the participants to respect their own limits so they don't get the feeling they have to reveal something deeply personal they don't want to. It is important to accompany the participants to set their own scopes / limits and to decide totally freely what they want to talk about and what they want to keep to themselves.

Systemic training attitude:

The trainer gives impulses and accompanies a process and is the moderator of the learning process and helps to activate potentials. The trainer is not the expert, every participant is the expert for her/his own life and personal development process. The trainer is full of respect for every participant and his/her process.

Biography work and cultural identity

When we reflect on our own history we come across culture and cultural imprints and are invited to deal with our cultural identity. By reflecting on our own biography and culture we can learn to identify and understand the roots of our own cultural belief systems, values, behaviours, conditioning, the way we resolve problems, etc. and decide wether they are still useful or not for what we have to deal with at the present moment. We can adopt new belief systems, values, behaviours, ways of resolving problems if we decide to and modify our cultural identity.

Exercise:

If I would present somthing of my life and personal history in a guided tour, what would I present?

When was the first time in my life that I realized that there are people with different cultures? That I was different? How was it? What happened to me? How did I react and how did I feel?

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From intercultural experiences to intercultural competences

Intercultural competence – the key competence in the 21st century?

(compare: Thesis by the Bertelsmann Stiftung based on the models of interculural competence by Dr. Darla K. Dearndorff)

Thesis 1: The ability to deal constructively with Cultural Diversity is of growing importance

In Europe, as in other global regions, awareness is increasing of the potential for conflict – as well as the opportunities for gain – inherent in cultural diversity as experienced in both professional and private settings. Given the process of pluralization that has resulted from globalization, the ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity we know in our societies will increase, as will contacts between people of different cultural and social values. Thus, in coming years, the ability to deal constructively on an interpersonal level with cultural diversity and the multitude of attitudes and values will not only become a key qualification required of business executives working in international settings, it will also be required generally of each individual as a key factor for ensuring that cultural diversity can be experienced positively and productively. The term "intercultural competence" has emerged from these processes, a concept whose meaning and implications have yet to be fully defined.

Thesis 2: A definition of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on specific attitudes, intercultural knowledge, skills and reflection.

Following Dr. Darla K. Deardorff this definition goes beyond common models and includes four dimensions of intercultural competence, which are necessary, although far from sufficient: a) attitudes (motivation), b) intercultural knowledge and skills and in addition c) an ability to reflect the frame of reference – as the internal outcome of intercultural competence – as well as d) constructive interaction as the external outcome of intercultural competence.

Additional exploration of these dimensions is required (Theses 6 to 9).

Thesis 3: No intercultural competence without a sociopolitical framework

Intercultural competence refers to the interaction of individuals, and not systems such as corporate or national cultures. Yet every interpersonal encounter takes place within a framework that is defined by the predispositions and norms present in the given system. If the system framework includes hierarchical relationships, for example, or demands assimilation in accordance with certain preconceptions of identity, or gives rise to conflicts relating to distribution or recognition, then even the interaction of interculturally adept actors can be quite difficult; it can even devolve into expressions of collective violence. In a culturally diverse or even conflict- ridden environment, influencing this framework is an issue for corporate management (in a business setting) or is a general sociopolitical responsibility; in no way, however, is it the object of intercultural competence. Yet it must be noted that sociopolitical policies give rise to a framework conducive to intercultural competence when they lead to notions of identity and a basic understanding of social equality that include all members of society and cease promulgating the idea of a culturally homogenous group. **Ultimately, this framework exists when those actors involved in intercultural situations meet – or can meet – at "eye level".**

Thesis 4: Intercultural Competence is based on a process-oriented definition of culture

In particular, the lively discussion about what defines intercultural competence has resulted from changing notions of culture and the difficulties these changes pose. Intercultural competence refers to the real world in which we live and act, the world we have created together and continue to re-create. To that extent, it con only be defined by employing the "expanded" idea of culture that became prevalent in the 1970´s – in contrast to previous, narrower ideas of "the arts" - and according to which culture must be understood within the overall context of human interaction (Bolten 2004). By fixating on what was assumed to be an integrated, almost static whole of locality, group and culture, initially the expanded idea remained unexamined: culture was considered (and still is considered by many) to be the way of life of a certain group of people in a specific setting, people who – because of their culture – consider themselves members of the same group and who – because of their culture – are different
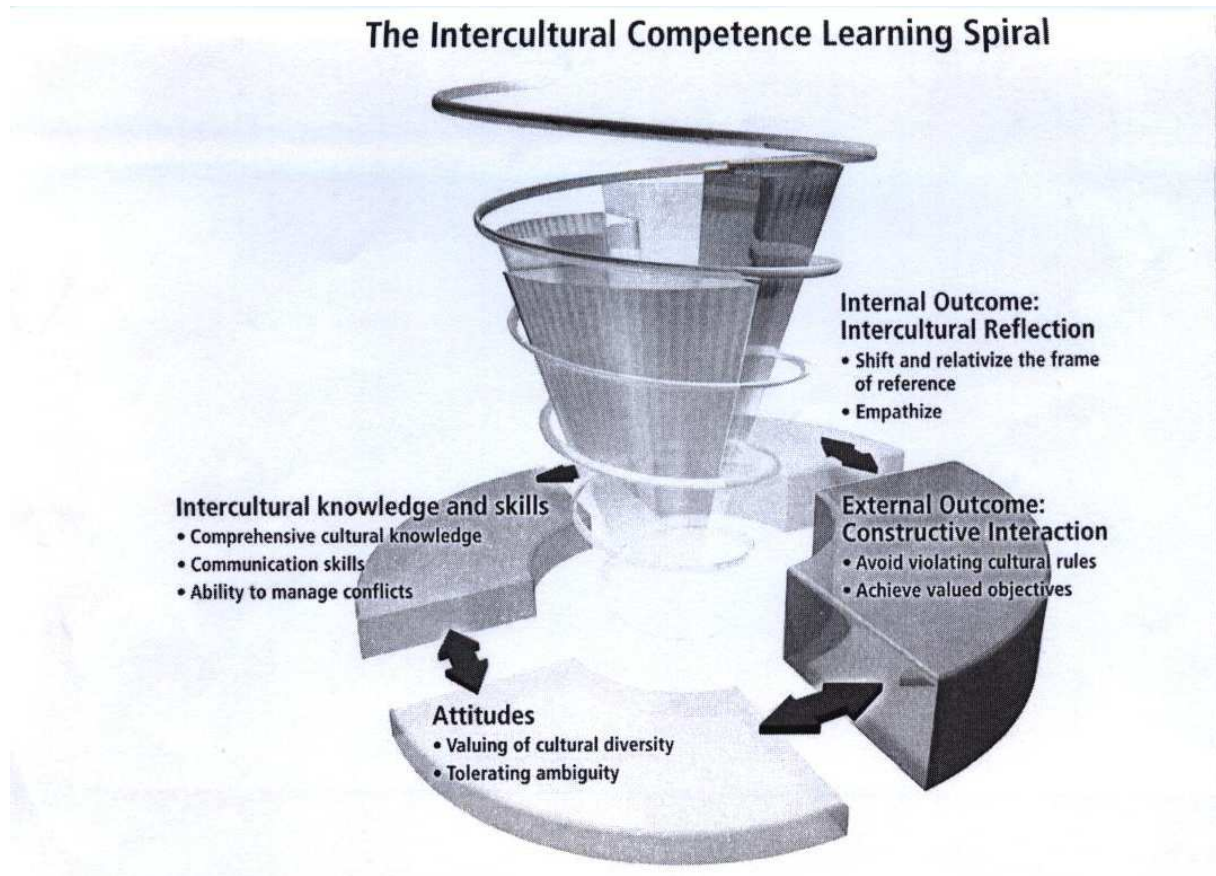
from other groups and localities. This notion is often depicted as a global map with different discrete cultural groups, or as a mosaic, whose pieces are individual cultures.

Since Ulf Hannerz formulated the ideas of "culture as a flux" and "culture as creolization", sociologists in the 1990´s have increasingly relinquished the viewpoint that culture can be understood as a closed, island-like entity, since globalization has shown the previous notion – that locality, group and culture exist as one unit – to be false. **Globalized markets for goods and financial services, global media structures and migrant flows have led to an exponential increase in the processes of cultural exchange. In the course of such contacts, numerous traditional forms of life have disappeared. Local cultures are changing and are combining with others in new and unusual ways**. The boundaries between what is known and what is foreign are becoming increasingly blurred. Social forms around the globe have become culturally heterogeneous. What once was foreign can now be found nextdoor. We live with immigrants and emigrants, with their languages, religions, attitudes -all of which have become part of local communities across the globe. The changed, process-oriented conception of culture therefore tries to accommodate the contradictions, the intermixing and the new diversity, which is based more on relationships than autonomy. **"Culture is perceived not as a static, hermetically sealed system, but as a current of meanings that continually dissolves old relationships while establishing new ones" (Zukrigl and Breidenbach 2003). Newly advanced by academia, this procedural understanding of culture as a dynamic flow and ongoing process of negotiation between norms, values and lifestyles (see Schönhuth 2005) also leads to a dynamic conception of intercultural competence that is, as a result of its dynamism, difficult to communicate.**

Thesis 5: Intercultural Competence develops dynamically

Intercultural competence is neither a static state nor the direct result of one discrete learning experience. Language ability and explicit (i.e. learnable) knowledge of cultural characteristics alone do not suffice for intercultural competence. Nor is intercultural competence acquired by visiting a foreign country or ad hoc through further education. If the assumption is correct that culture is constantly in flux, then individuals must learn and master the ability to deal with ongoing processes. The development of intercultural competence

is thus complex and multidimensional and, depending on the intercultural situation, can take on a variety of forms. The acquisition of intercultural competence is a continual, dynamic process, one that moves through diverse dimensions while developing and enriching itself in an upward spiral (see graphic).

The Intercultural Competence Learning Spiral

Internal Outcome: Intercultural Reflection
• Shift and relativize the frame of reference
• Empathize

Intercultural knowledge and skills
• Comprehensive cultural knowledge
• Communication skills
• Ability to manage conflicts

External Outcome: Constructive Interaction
• Avoid violating cultural rules
• Achieve valued objectives

Attitudes
• Valuing of cultural diversity
• Tolerating ambiguity

(by Dr. Darla K. Dearndorff)

In this process, the definition (Thesis 2) presented here can be divided up into **four key competences: attitudes, intercultural knowledge and skills, an ability to reflect on intercultural issues as an internal outcome, and an ability to interact constructively as external outcome of intercultural competence.** The more dimensions achieved and the more often they are passed through, the higher the degree of intercultural competence. It can be assumed that all four dimensions influences each other: every instance intercultural interaction returns to re-impact the actors´ attitudes, knowledge, skills and reflection. It also seems possible that a more in-dept study of culturally specific background knowledge – of India's caste system, for example – could increase reflection on

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non-egalitarian societies and, as a result, improve the appropriate and effective interaction with Hindus in India. **The learning spiral makes clear that the acquisition of intercultural competence requires lifelong learning and is part of ongoing personal development**.

Thesis 6: External Outcome: Constructive interaction – achievements of valued objectives avoiding violating cultural rules

Intercultural competence as understood here leads to communication among those actors participating in intercultural situations that is appropriate and effective and thus, constructive. Appropriate communication means that key "cultural" rules valued by participating actors are not violated. Effective communication means that the actors actually achieve their valued objectives. Such constructive interaction presupposes that each of the participating actors has certain attitudes, knowledge, skills and reflection abilities, described below.

Thesis 7: Attitudes – Valuing cultural diversity and tolerating ambiguity

The point of departure for intercultural competence is a fundamentally positive attitude towards intercultural situations. For the intercultural competence **learning process**, this positive motivation is at least as decisive as the cultural content that is to be learned. One of the attitudes beneficial to intercultural learning is therefore a general openness for and appreciation of cultural diversity and an ability to encounter and deal with individuals from foreign cultures in an open, curious and unprejudiced manner (i.e. Withholding judgment). This openness and appreciation of cultural diversity can be promoted through cultural education or language learning. A cultural blindness for foreign languages and/or cultural backgrounds can, conversely, lead to a wide range of uncertainties, which may result in conflict escalation. A key factor in intercultural competence is, ultimately, when any uncertainties arise, that participants remain open to unknown situations and that they continually reflect on these experiences (known as tolerating ambiguity).

Tesis 8: Intercultural knowledge and skills – comprehensive cultural knowledge, communication and conflict management skills

The specialized competencies for taking action in an intercultural context are complementary: **a comprehensive cultural knowledge and specific skills to communicate and enter into dialogue.**

Comprehensive knowledge about one's own culture and foreign culture influencing the interaction is important for behavior that is interculturally competent. This is less a matter of speaking a foreign language well, which might prove helpful at best. Much more, the **key elements of comprehensive cultural knowledge** are, depending on context: **an understanding of others world views; an understanding of the role and impact one's culture has on behavior and communication as well as historical and religious contexts; and a sociolinguistic awareness of the relation between language and meaning in a social context.** It is important to remember that the relevant cultural knowledge differs in each intercultural context and, as global knowledge, is **potentially unlimited**, i.e. Too extensive to always be known or learnable in the intercultural context. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the US-based specialists queried by Dr. Deardorff as part of her intercultural study attach much **more importance to certain behavior- related (conative) communication skills** than to knowledge-related (cognitive) elements. According to the specialists, to the degree that comprehensive cultural knowledge cannot be definitely known, **process-oriented skills grow in importance, skills that make it possible to acquire and process knowledge about one's own as well as foreign cultures.**

Foremost among such core skills – which make it possible to continually increase overall cultural knowledge – **are to listen, to observe and to interpret, as well as the ability to analyze, to evaluate and to relate cultural elements**. An additional central aspect of intercultural competence is that from culture to culture, each has developed its unique patterns of managing differences and resolving conflicts (Augsburger 1992, 22). Conflict management is, according to this perspective, a further building block for intercultural competence. This also includes instruments for conflict resolution that avail themselves of third parties, i.e. Mediation.

Thesis 9: Internal outcome: Intercultural reflection – relativizing frame of reference and an ability to feel empathy

In addition, intercultural competence **presupposes an ability to change perspective, i.e. To shift, expand or relativize one's own frame of reference.** Intercultural competence requires that actors be able to **adapt flexibly to new intercultural situations, i.e. New communication styles, lifestyles, norms and value sets**. This **means, on the one hand, that one's own cultural, religious or**

ethnocentric world view is not seen as absolute, but is reflected upon and an ethnorelative view is adopted. On the other, this reflection can lead to a new, affective evaluation of foreign communications styles, lifestyles, norms and value sets. New elements can then be adapted emotionally and rejection or fear of the unknown reduced. This is the prerequisite for developing empathy and for taking what is cognitively recognized as foreign behavior into one's own behavioral repertoire.

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