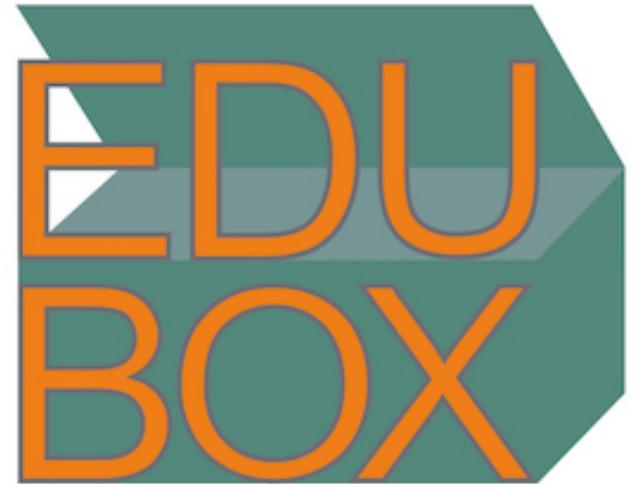

EduBox 01: Culture, a new perspective



[CC BY-SA 4.0](#) „EduBoxes Logo“ Source: [Hans Limo Lechner](#) (2016)

Author: Prof. Dr. Adelheid Iken

Project: EduBoxes for Hamburg Open Online University (www.hoou.de)



INTRODUCTION TO EDUBOX 01

The socio-cultural and economic features of globalisation have a strong influence on the practices of modern organisation and thus business communication and management.

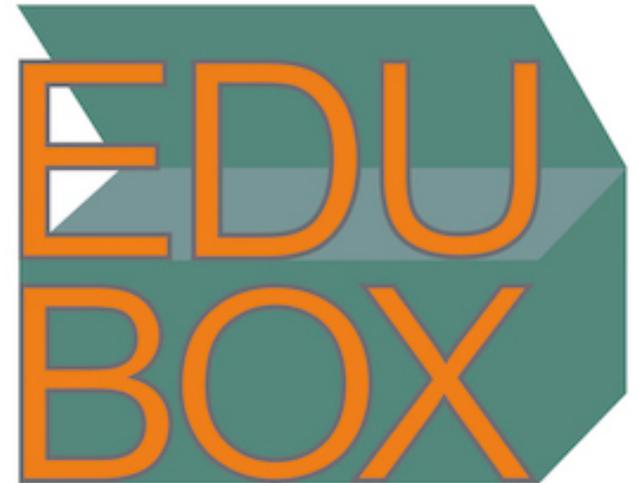
More than ever before, managers and co-workers are networking and communicating at the intersection of diverse cultures. And yet, at the same time, cultures are undergoing rapid change, catalysed by new forms and means of communication.

These rapid changes have required us to review our understanding of culture as well as the tools we use to develop a common basis of understanding. Through these new tools and ways of viewing culture, we open up the possibility of not only solving issues that may arise from cross-cultural encounters but of actively developing synergies that can emerge from such interactions.

And that is precisely the objective of this EduBox.

EduBox 01: Culture, a new perspective

Session 01:
Culture, a critical review



Author: Prof. Dr. Adelheid Iken

Project: EduBoxes for Hamburg Open Online University (www.hoou.de)

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Introduction to Session 01

Culture was and still is a concept commonly applied to social groupings that are geographically distinct from one another. A growing interconnectedness across boundaries, an increase in people's mobility, as well as cultural mixes and adaptations make it necessary to critically review the approaches currently used, and to develop revised concepts, which are able to cater for the growing complexity of intercultural interactions.

The ability to do this is the goal of this session.

LEARNING OUTCOME

-  Students recognise cultural features from the perspective of an open definition of culture.

OBJECTIVES

- At the end of these sessions, students will
 - have critically reviewed definitions of culture and their characteristics
 - be able to show the limitations of a national approach to culture
 - be able to argue why an open definition of culture based on the understanding of multi-collectivity is better able to capture the multi-faceted nature of culture in today's world

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Topics

- Learning outcome
- Objectives
- Lead-in
- Culture, a critical review
 - Culture, some definitions
 - Components of culture
 - Culture, a critical reflection
- Summary and reflection
- Assignment
- Sources

LEAD-IN



Look at the following pictures carefully. Do they have anything to do with culture and if so, what?

LEAD-IN



CC BY-SA 4.0. "New York" Source: Adelheid Iken (2010)

LEAD-IN



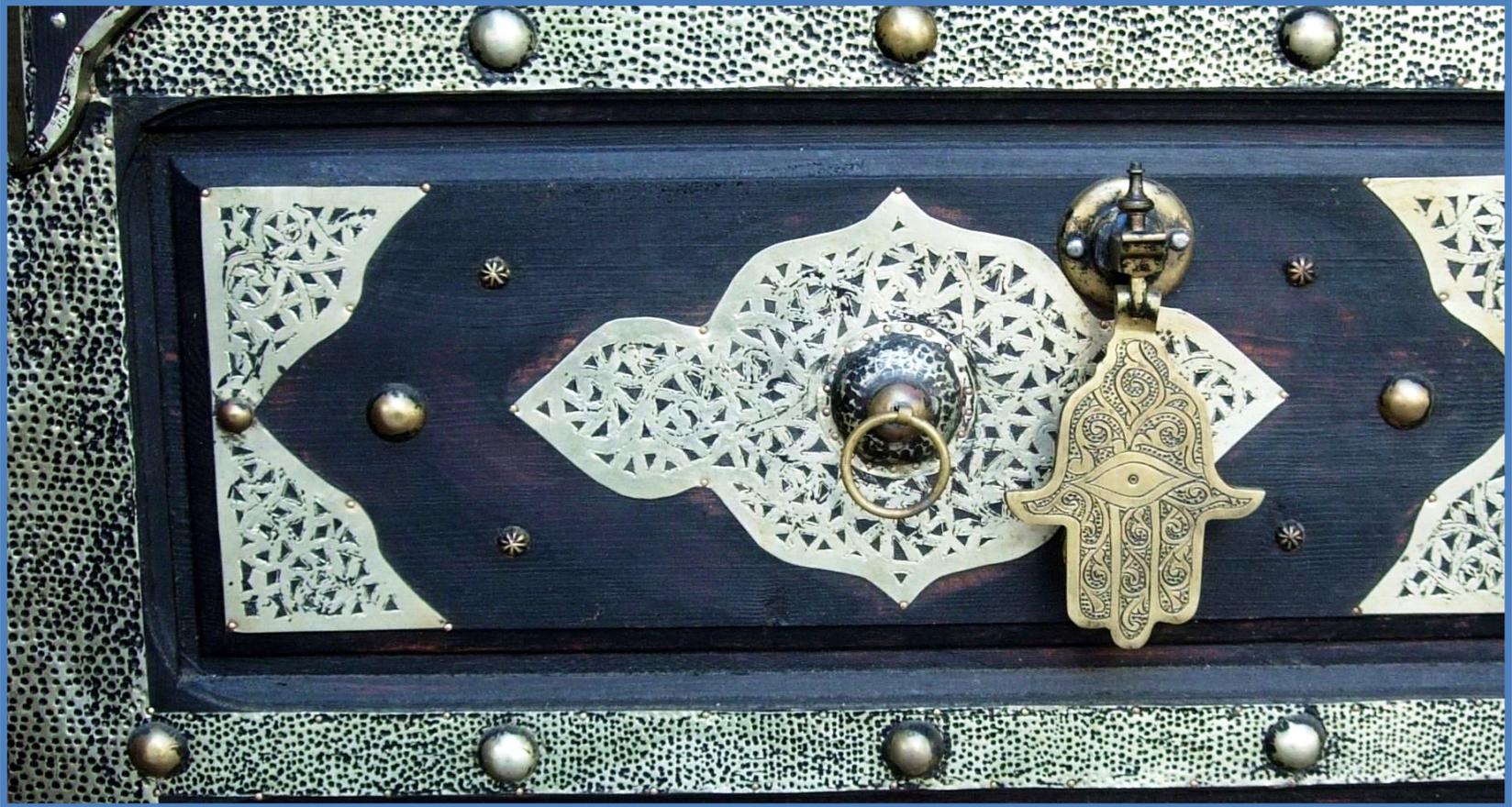
[CC BY-SA 4.0](#), „Hamburg“ Source [Adelheid Iken](#) (2016)

LEAD-IN



[CC BY-SA 4.0](#), „Baltic Sea“ Source [Adelheid Iken](#) (2010)

LEAD-IN



CC BY-SA 4.0 „Paris“ Source: Adelhaid Iken (2009)

LEAD-IN



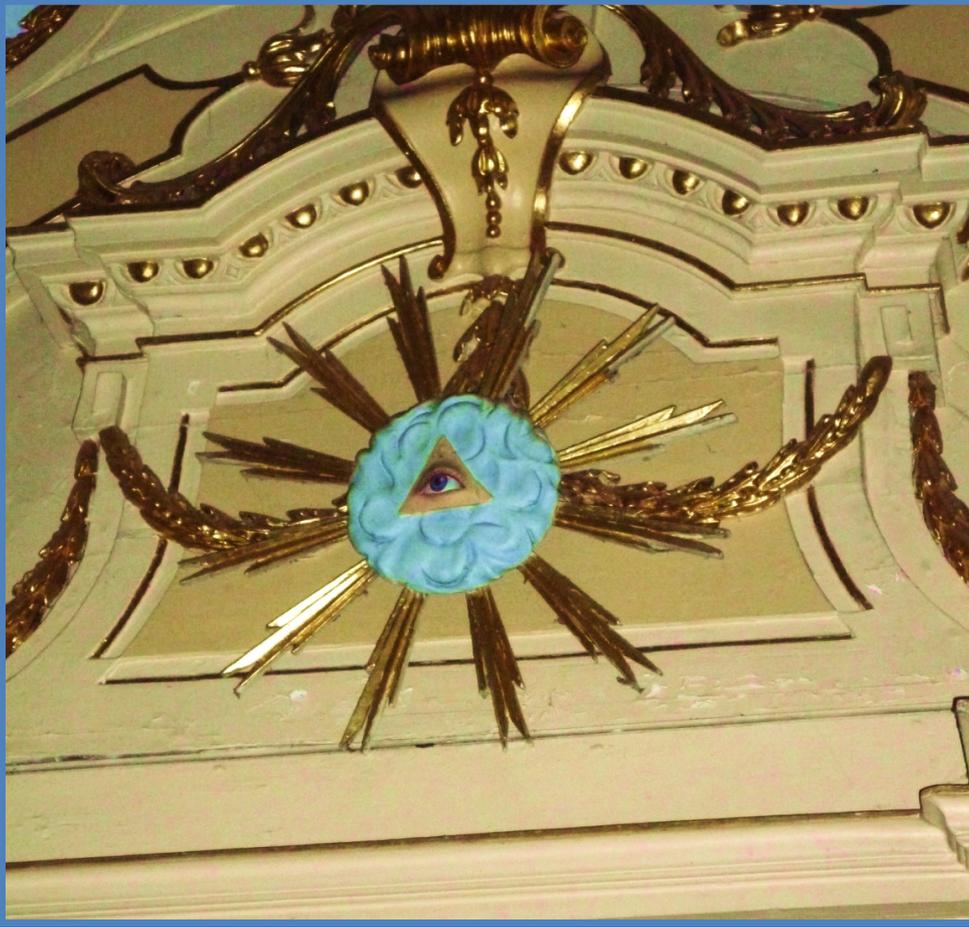
CC BY-SA 4.0, "Israel" Source: Janet Pawelczyk (2014)

LEAD-IN



CC BY-SA 4.0 „Porto – Kebab shop” Source: Adelheid Iken (2015)

LEAD-IN



[CCBY-SA4.0](#), "Ponte de Lima, Portugal" Source: [Adelheid Iken](#) (2015)

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Culture, some definitions



Read the definitions on the worksheet “Definitions of culture” and identify what they have in common and where they differ

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

Definitions of culture

- Culture relates to groups of people
- Culture refers to knowledge and behaviour
- Culture is learned and thus passed on
- Culture is shared

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

- Culture relates to groups of people



CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

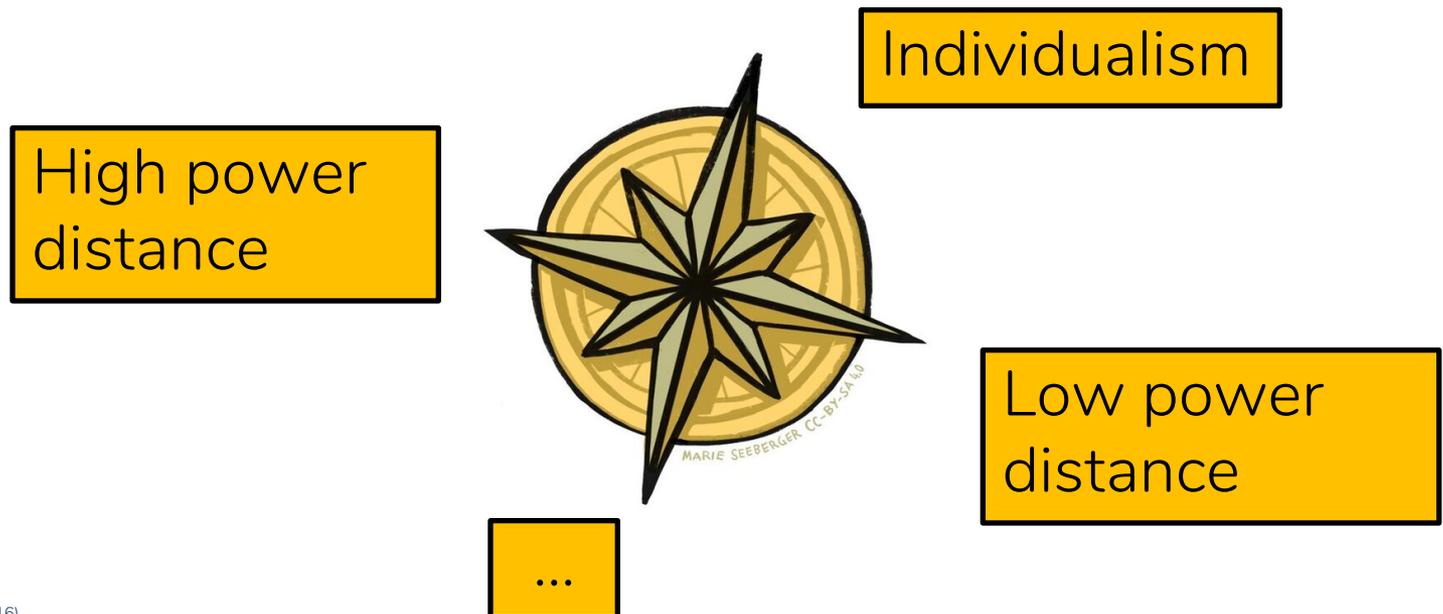
Matrix for the identification and structuring of collectives and sub-collectives

Geographical/Regional/ Areal culture	Professional culture	Personal culture	Localised culture/Culture of the social environment
Supranational culture (e.g. Western Europe)	Business- / Professional culture (e.g. IT-industry, medical staff, specialists)	Family culture (e.g. migration and family history)	Group membership (e.g. Sports club, choir)
National Culture (e.g. Germany, Great Britain)	Corporate/ organisational culture (e.g. BMW,)	Individual cultural orientation (e.g. based on personal biography, age)	Life worlds and lifestyles (e.g. modern, traditional)
Sub-national Culture (e.g. Hamburg, Lower Saxony)	Sub-organisational culture (e.g. Administration, Marketing)		Socio-cultural milieus
Local Culture (e.g. Countryside around Hamburg)			Facebook community
Neighborhood culture (e.g. village community, neighborhood)			

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

- Cultural homogeneity and uniqueness within entities
- Hofstede's approach and value orientations



CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture



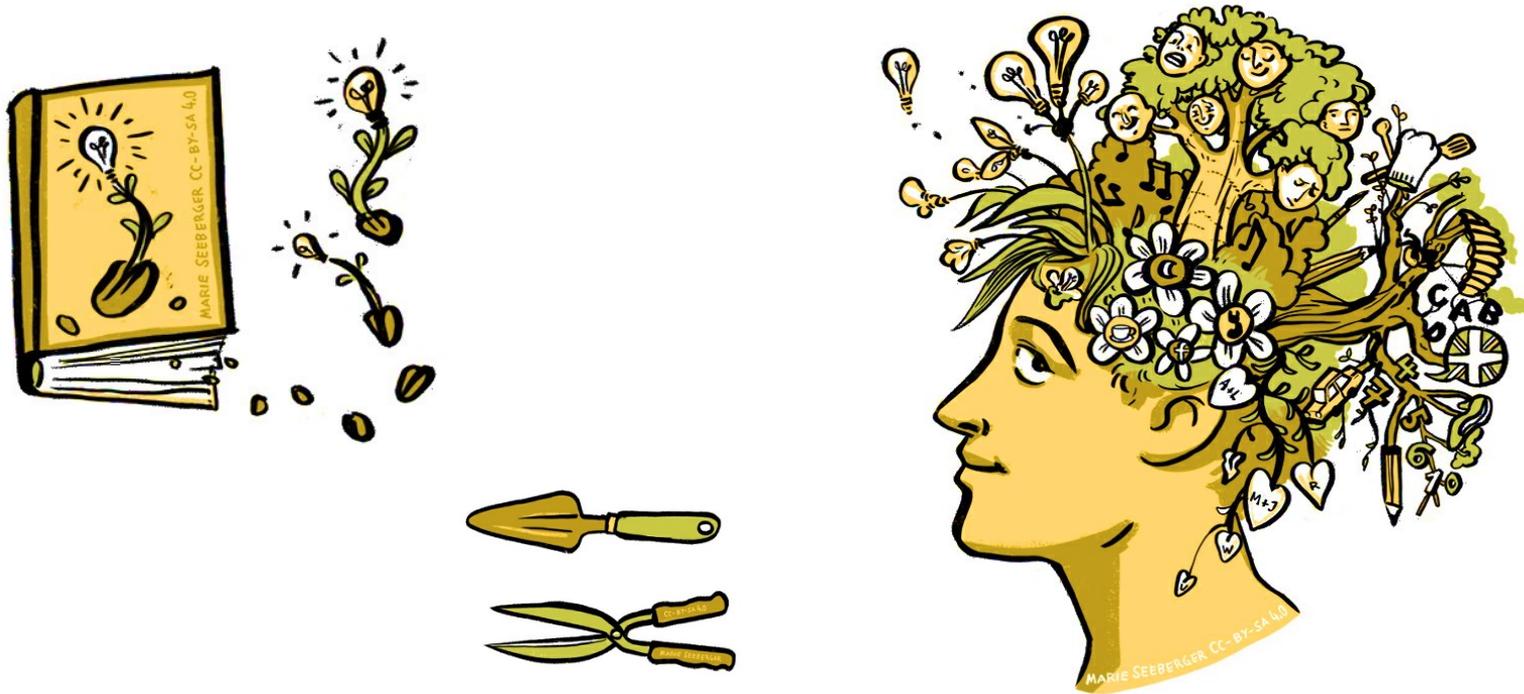
Can cultures be considered homogeneous within entities such as a nation or organisation?

- Think about countries such as Switzerland, Canada, Mongolia. Would you consider them to be homogeneous entities with regard to ethnic, religious and linguistic aspects?
- Think about companies such as Siemens or the Otto group, would you perceive them as having a homogeneous culture?

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

- Culture refers to knowledge and behaviour



CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

- Culture is learned and passed on



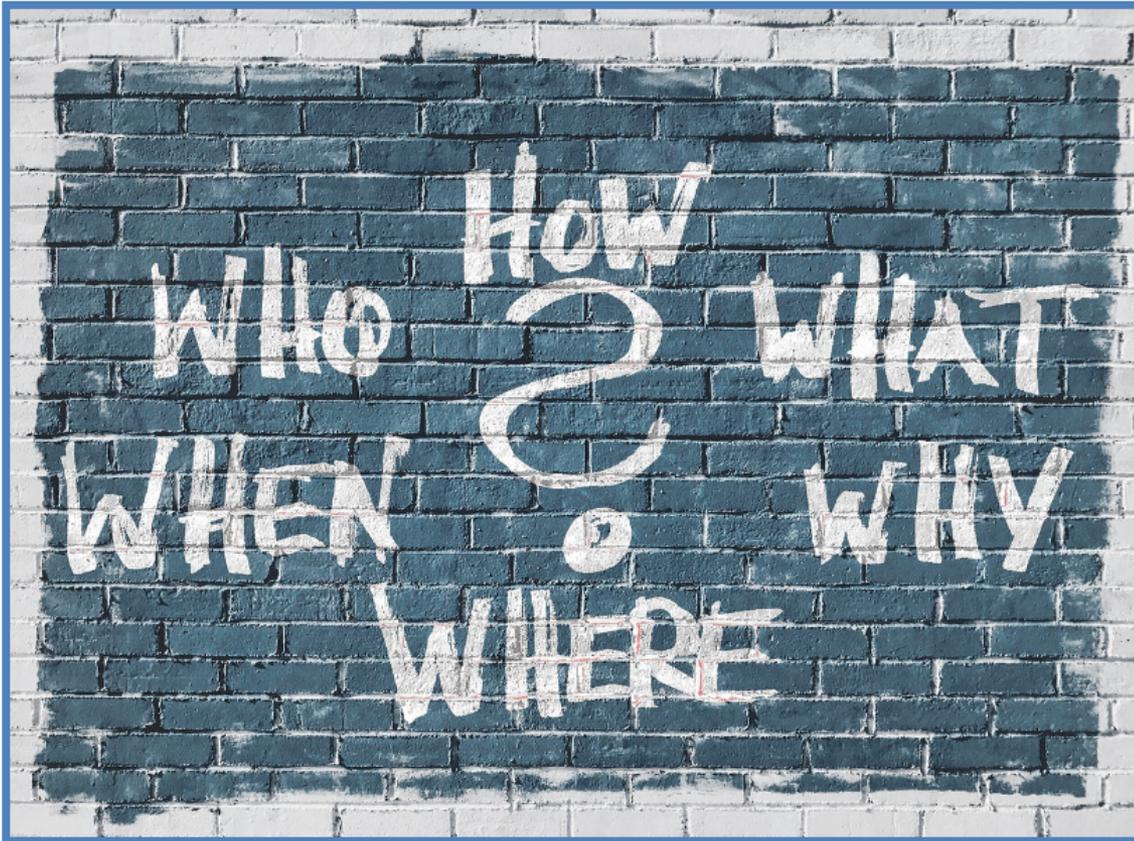
Read the case of socialisation at Disneyland (WS) and answer the following questions:

- How did Disneyland socialise newcomers?
- Why do you think the socialisation process at work in Disneyland was so effective?
- What lessons can other organisations learn from Disneyland's methods?

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

- Culture is shared



[CC0 Source: pixabay](#)

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Components of culture

Sum-up

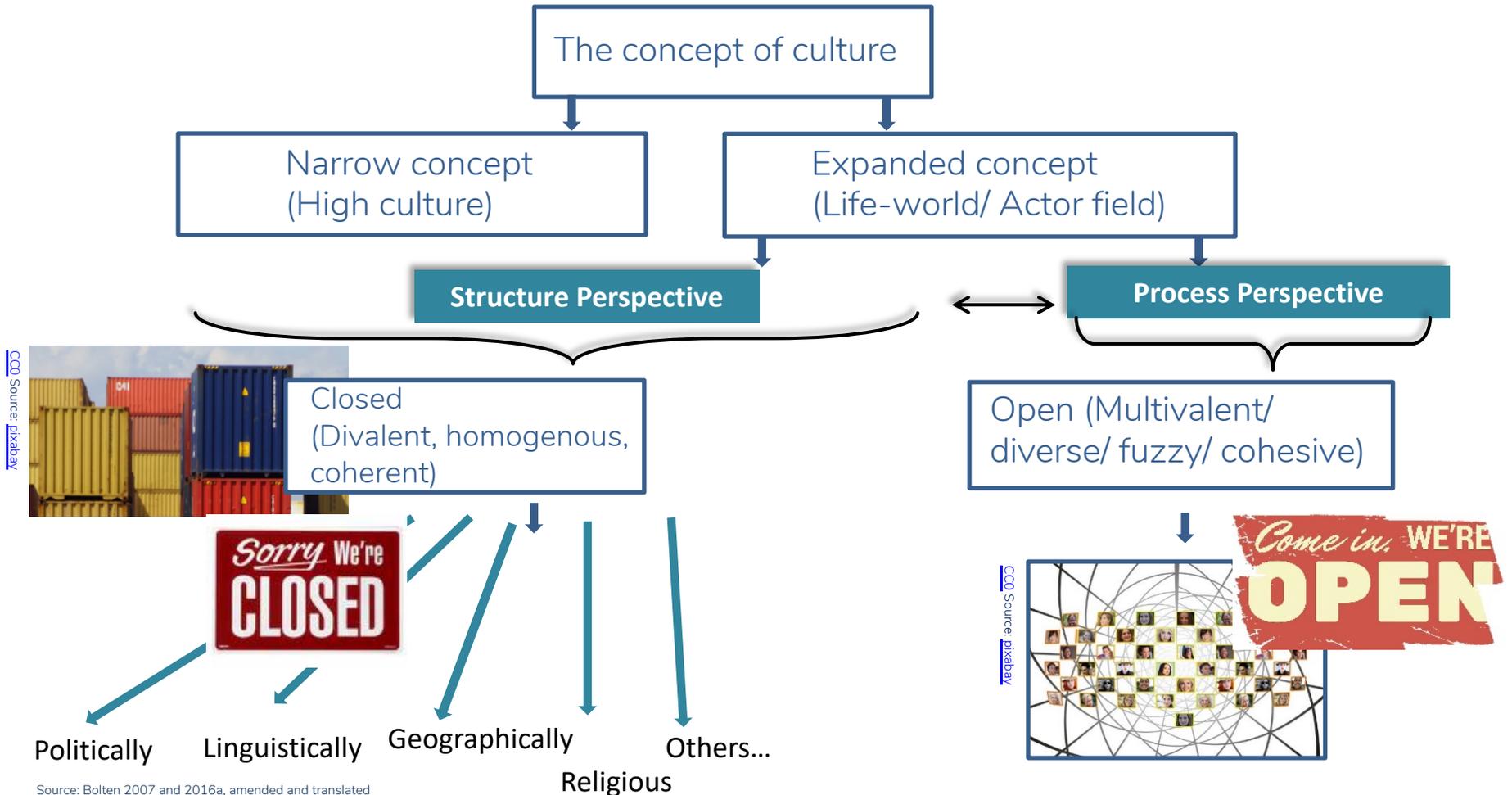


Read the following quote and analyse it considering our discussion about the notion of sharedness:

“Members do not agree upon clear boundaries, cannot identify shared solutions, and do not reconcile contradictory beliefs and multiple identities. Yet these members contend they belong to a culture. They share a common orientation and overarching purpose, face similar problems, and have comparable experiences. However, these shared orientations and purposes accommodate different beliefs and incommensurable technologies, these problems imply different solutions, and these experiences have multiple meanings... Thus, for at least some cultures, to dismiss the ambiguities in favour of strictly what is clear and shared is to exclude some of the most central aspects of members’ cultural experience and to ignore the essence of their cultural community.”
(Meyerson 1991: 131f.)

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Culture, a critical reflection



Source: Boltzen 2007 and 2016a, amended and translated

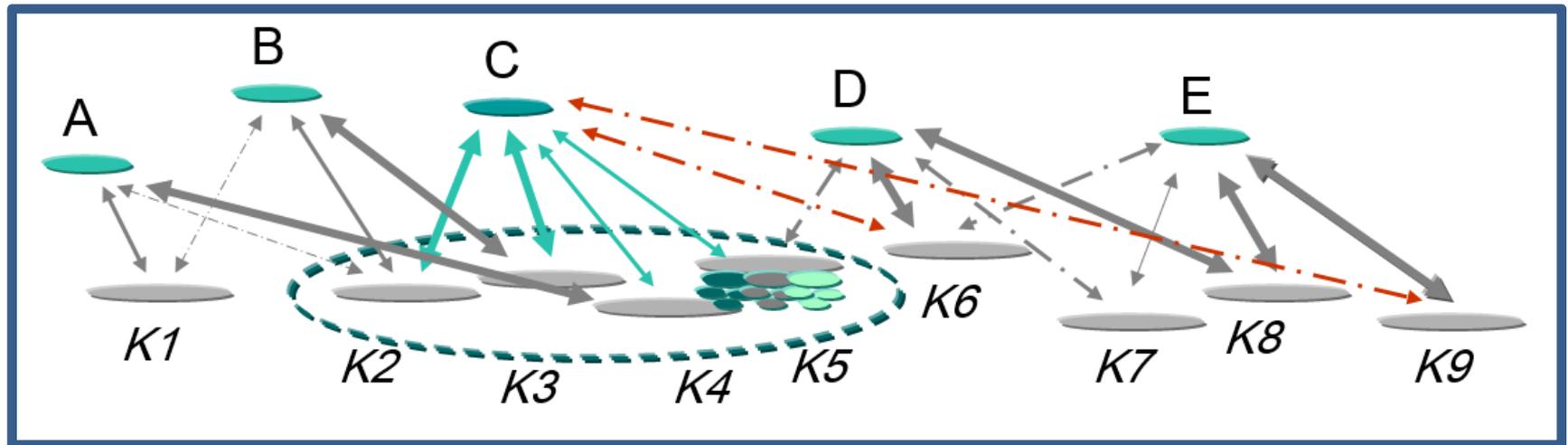
CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Culture, a critical reflection

- Focusing on differences based on national identities tends to simplify and ignore the complexity of culture
- We are members of many different collectives and our culture is thus characterised by 'multi-collectivity'
- These diverse collectives are multi-layered, intertwined and can be considered as heterogeneous networks (e.g. nation, ethnic groups, company, family)
- As such they are characterised by different levels of homogeneity. (cf. Hansen 2009:116)

CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Culture, a critical reflection



CULTURE, A CRITICAL REVIEW

Culture, a critical reflection

- An open definition and concept of culture is not based on binary logic, which defines group A sharply from group B, but as 'fuzzy sets' characterised by diversity and more or less linked by the multirelational nature of their actors (cf. Bolten 2014:100).

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Summary

- Culture refers to groups of people with blurred boundaries who share a certain amount of knowledge and have developed a sense of familiarity and shared code system
- Culture is dynamic and subject to change
- Considering culture in terms of multi-collectivity supports the understanding that a person's identity is linked to their affiliation to multiple groups
- This helps to identify commonalities as well as differences within and across different groups
- From a multi-collective perspective, national identity can be seen as one affiliation among others

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



Look back at the photograph of the Buddha statue and the door of a restaurant from the beginning of the session. Discuss why it provides indications that an open definition of culture is better able to help us understand situations today rather than a closed definition of culture.

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



CCBY-SA4.0 „Hamburg“ Source: Adelheid Iken (2016)

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



CC BY-SA 4.0 „Paris“ Source: Adelheid Iken (2015)

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



- What do you consider to be central elements of culture and why? How would you include them when performing a cultural analysis?
- What do we mean by an open definition of culture based on multi-collectivity and what are the benefits of applying such a definition when working in a multi-national environment?
- How can such a definition help you when meeting people from different cultural backgrounds?
- Do you think that people who meet can 'create' culture? If so, what evidence can you cite?

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



- Look at the worksheet 'Breakfast in Berlin' (WS)
- Was the breakfast you personally enjoy mentioned? Is your preference related to your nationality and thus a closed definition of culture?
- Considering an open definition of culture, does it make sense to talk about a 'German breakfast' or a 'French breakfast'?

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



Rewrite the following short note about French managers considering an open definition of culture

There are US American managers who argue that in Europe, the French are particularly difficult to get along with. One thing they complain about is that the French don't delegate, are particularly sensitive towards hierarchy and status, that they fail to keep their subordinates informed and in fact are highly authoritarian. Another complaint is that French managers don't show responsibility towards their subordinates and generally speaking are not good team players. (cf. Steers, R. 2013:41)

HOME ASSIGNMENT



Read the essay by Dr. Peter Witchalls 'Is national culture still relevant?' In: *interculturejournal* 11 (19): 11-18

<http://www.interculture-journal.com/index.php/icj/article/viewFile/178/280>

- Summarise his arguments and discuss the relevance of these for intercultural encounters

SOURCES

- Bolten, Jürgen 2011. Unscharfe und Mehrwertigkeit: “Interkulturelle Kompetenz” vor dem Hintergrund eines offenen Kulturbegriffs. In: Hoessler, U. & W. Dreyer (Eds.) Perspektiven interkultureller Kompetenz. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, pp. 55-71
- Bolten, Jürgen 2013. Fuzzy Cultures: Konsequenzen eines offenen und mehrwertigen Kulturbegriffs für Konzeptualisierung interkultureller Personalentwicklungsmaßnahmen. In: Mondial: Sietar Journal für interkulturelle Perspektiven, pp. 4-10.
http://www2.uni-jena.de/philosophie/IWK-neu/typo3/fileadmin/publicationen/Bolten_2013_Fuzzy_Cultures.pdf
(14.3.2017)
- Bolten, Jürgen 2014. ‘Kultur’ kommt von colere: Ein Plädoyer für einen holistischen, nicht-linearen Kulturbegriff. In: Jammal, Elias (Ed.) Kultur und Interkulturalität: interdisziplinäre Zugänge. Wiesbaden: Springer, pp. 85-108
- Bolten, Jürgen 2015. Einführung in die Interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunikation. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht (2nd ed.)
- Bolten, Jürgen 2016. Interkulturelle Trainings neu denken. In: *interculture journal* Special issue “(Inter)Kulturalität neu denken! 15 (26), pp.75-92 <http://www.interculture-journal.com/index.php/icj/issue/view/Issue/37/9>
- Bolten, Jürgen 2016a. “Interkulturelle Kompetenz neu denken?! Forthcoming in Polylog, Sonderheft ‘Interkulturelle Kompetenz in der Kritik. Wien. http://www2.uni-jena.de/philosophie/IWK-neu/typo3/fileadmin/team/juergen.bolten/1608Ik_Kompetenz_neu_denken_-_Polylog.pdf
- Brewer, Paul & Sunil Venaik 2013. On the misuse of national cultural dimensions. In: *International marketing Review*, 29(6), pp. 673-683
- Hansen, Klaus P. 2009. Kultur, Kollektivität, Nation. Passau: Stutz
- Meyerson, D. 1991 Acknowledging and uncovering ambiguities in cultures, In: P. Frost et al. (Eds.) *Reframing Organizational Culture*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp.254-70.
- Steers, R. M. et al. 2013. *Managing across cultures – Developing global competencies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Sweeney, Brendan 2002. Hofstede’s Model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith-a failure of analysis. 55(1), pp. 89-118

SOURCES

- Tietmeyer, Elisabeth 2011. Cultural Contacts and Localization in Europe-from the Collections of the Museum of European Cultures. Berlin: National Museums in Berlin
- Tsui, A. et al. 2007. 'Cross-national, cross-cultural organizational behaviour research: advances, gaps, and recommendations'. In: Journal of Management, 33(3); pp. 426-78
- Witchalls, Peter James. 2012 Is national culture still relevant? In: *interculture journal* 11 (19), pp. 11-18
<http://www.interculture-journal.com/index.php/icj/article/viewFile/178/280>
- Zeuschel, Ulrich 2016. "Zoomen" zum Entdecken interkultureller Verständigungspotenziale und -ressourcen In: *interculture journal* 15(26), pp. 92-96 <http://www.interculture-journal.com/index.php/icj/issue/viewIssue/37/9>



Except where otherwise noted, content in this presentation / on this site is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

