EduBox01\_S2\_WS\_Biographical notes

**Worksheet (WS)** Biographical notes

Read the personal biography and illustrate the ‘cultural’ journey of the student on a piece of paper

Consider the notion of multi-collectivity and analyse the type of collectives the student may belong to or perceive that he/she belongs to.

Argue why considering multi-collectivity is better able to help us understand the student’s cultural background than simply acknowledging that the student is from Germany.

Even in my childhood, I started to travel and my parents took me to various places all over Europe, Canada and the U.S. However, since I was still very young, my memories of these journeys are limited. However, ever since this time I have been aware of the fact that there is something else except my own way of life and the German culture. I was curious to travel and to see various places, and from my point of view today, I guess that these journeys have also been important to my further personal development as it fostered my open-mindedness and curiosity.

Since my aunt is from Afghanistan, I was also able to experience parts of the Afghan culture and the way of living. There I recognized cultural differences mainly in the forms of communication, food and daily life. For example, I remember that many of my Afghan family members have a completely different time management system, which is in line with a polychronic way of life. In particular, they are often less organized and structured in comparison to my German relatives or to myself. Being late is part of daily life and not considered as something negative. Another difference, which comes to my mind, is the way of communicating and discussing issues. On the one hand, we can observe the very calm and preconceived style of conversations with some of my German relatives, and on the other hand we perceive the very active, loud and lively discussion with some of my Afghan relatives.

I started to have significant intercultural experiences myself when I was 18 and decided to go to Australia for 2 months. There I stayed in a little town close to Melbourne with a host-family and went to high school. The aim of this trip was mainly to improve my English skills and to increase my independence. When I think back to my trip to Australia I still remember the very easy-going and relaxed way of living and the laid-back atmosphere around the people I met there. Moreover, I recognized that some of the Australian teenagers were more independent and less reliant on their parents than many of my friends at home were at this stage.

After finishing my A-Levels, I went abroad again and the first thing I did was participate in a language course. I chose New York City since I had been fascinated by the city for a long time. Having finished my language class, I was lucky to be offered an internship placement at the Turkish denim label Mavi Jeans. In New York, I stayed with a host family again. What I liked the most about New York was the mix of cultures. Although New York is in the United States it felt like a city on its own and for me it is not comparable to any other place in the States. Being a foreigner in New York felt like something natural and very common since it is a city of immigrants from all over the world.

The language school was a special experience for me as it was a contact point for many different nations and cultures from all over the world. There I met a girl from South Korea with whom I am still in touch today. My friendship with her was for me the first close experience with an Asian culture. What was impressive to me was the fact that generally speaking, the Asian pupils established a community for themselves and it was unusual for them to have a friendship with someone from Europe. However, my friend from South Korea was different and was interested in meeting people; she was open- minded and curious about the German culture.

Some clichés would argue that the Americans are superficial, but for me the general American way made it easy to socialize and to feel comfortable right away. From the beginning, I felt welcomed and most people were interested in my background. I adapted very fast to the American way of life and appreciated the open manner there. It was also interesting to observe that the more I improved my language skills and I got used to the American way of small talk and communication, the easier it was to adapt to the American culture.

During my studies, I did an internship at Mavi Jeans again. This time I worked for Mavi at the German head office in Frankfurt. From the beginning, it felt as if it was one Turkish family and once you are a member of this community, you can achieve almost everything. The “we” consciousness was very strong from the beginning and I really appreciated the helpfulness and the reliability of the Turkish culture that I experienced here. Again, the different concept of time management was evident in the German and Turkish culture. Even if my Turkish colleagues were very reliable, in general you could not count on them being on time or achieving goals within a given period.

As a conclusion, one can summarize that all these travels and intercultural meetings made me very open-minded. Another result may be that I feel increasingly flexible, with an ability to adapt to new situations and to handle uncertain and new circumstances more easily.