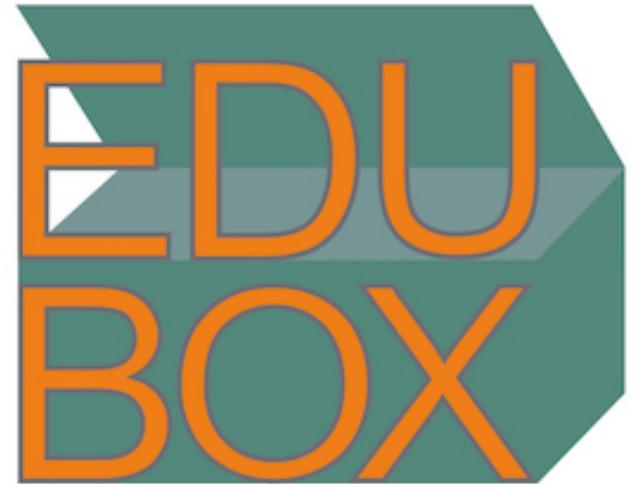

EduBox 01: Culture, a new perspective



[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.

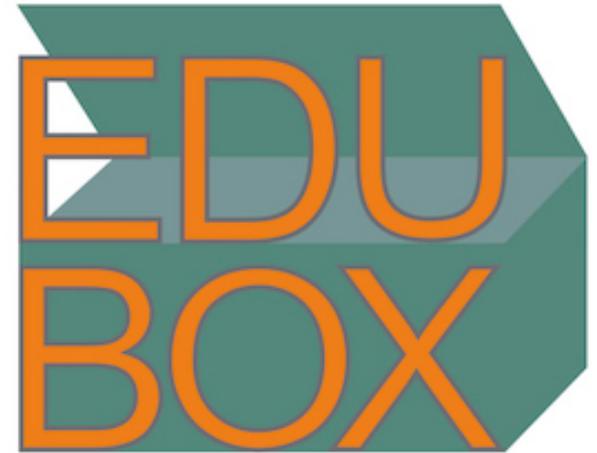
More than ever before, managers and co-workers are networking and communicating at the intersection of diverse cultures. And yet, at the same time, cultures are undergoing rapid change, catalysed by new forms and means of communication.

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 06:
Synergy is not for free –
Utilizing diversity in pluricultural
teams



Author: Ulrich Zeuschel osb international systemic consulting Hamburg
Project: EduBoxes for Hamburg Open Online University (www.hooou.de)



SYNERGY IS NOT FOR FREE

Introduction to Session 06

In today's globalised business environments, working in pluricultural teams within and across countries is a common occurrence. Working in such teams is a challenge but also an opportunity. The reason for this is that if managed well, the diversity of team members offers untapped resources for successful collaboration. Thus, working together has the potential to be not only an enriching experience but one in which synergy can be achieved through diversity.

The aim of this session is therefore to illustrate the the potentials inherent in pluricultural teams and how these can be used to create synergies.

LEARNING OUTCOME

-  Students identify areas of potential synergy in pluricultural teams

OBJECTIVES

- 
- At the end of these sessions, students will be able to
- name potential benefits and risks of pluricultural teams
 - discuss common fallacies regarding pluricultural team work
 - apply a variety of tools to identify potential synergies in pluricultural teams, and
 - identify potentials for synergies in case examples of different team constellations

SYNERGY IS NOT FOR FREE

Topics

- Learning outcome
 - Objectives
 - Lead-in
 - Culture
 - Attempt at a definition
 - Culture as a process
 - Multicultural teams, potential benefits and risks
 - Developing synergies
 - Virtual third culture
 - Mapping – Bridging – Integrating
 - Patterns of intercultural collaboration
 - Areas of potential synergies
 - Recommendations for team-building
 - Recommendations for process management
 - Bibliography
-

LEAD-IN



- What are specific characteristics of pluricultural teams?



CC0 Source: pixabay

CULTURE

Attempt at a definition

Culture is an orientation system of learned values, beliefs, knowledge, and behaviours shared by a specified group of interacting people.



CULTURE

Culture as a process

- Culture is generated by interaction – on the basis of established (habitual/ learned/conventionalized) behavioural patterns and perceptions of reality.
- One's own cultural orientation may only be experienced in contrast to another's orientation.
- Our cultural identities are derived from memberships of various cultural groups.
- Identity is dynamic:
 - It changes and develops as a social construct,
 - it aims at establishing coherence and consistency,
 - depending on the situational context, specific cultural identities become salient – sometimes by conscious assessment of context, sometimes unconsciously, but always as a result of comparison with others.

D. Baecker: „Culture is an observation formula for potential differences.“

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF MULTICULTURAL TEAMS*

Integration model

Alignment of auto-cultural and group identities

Cultural diversity fosters **increased creativity**:

- Larger number of high-quality ideas
- Less danger of „groupthink“
- More differentiated perspectives

Potential benefits of increased creativity:

- ✓ Better problem definition
- ✓ More alternatives
- ✓ Better compromises
- ✓ More adequate decisions

Cultural diversity causes **decreased team cohesion**:

- Distrust
- Communication problems
- Stress

Potential disadvantages of decreased team cohesion:

- ✗ Lack of consensus-building capability
- ✗ Frictional loss in working procedures
- ✗ Unfeasible ideas
- ✗ Diffusion of shared goals

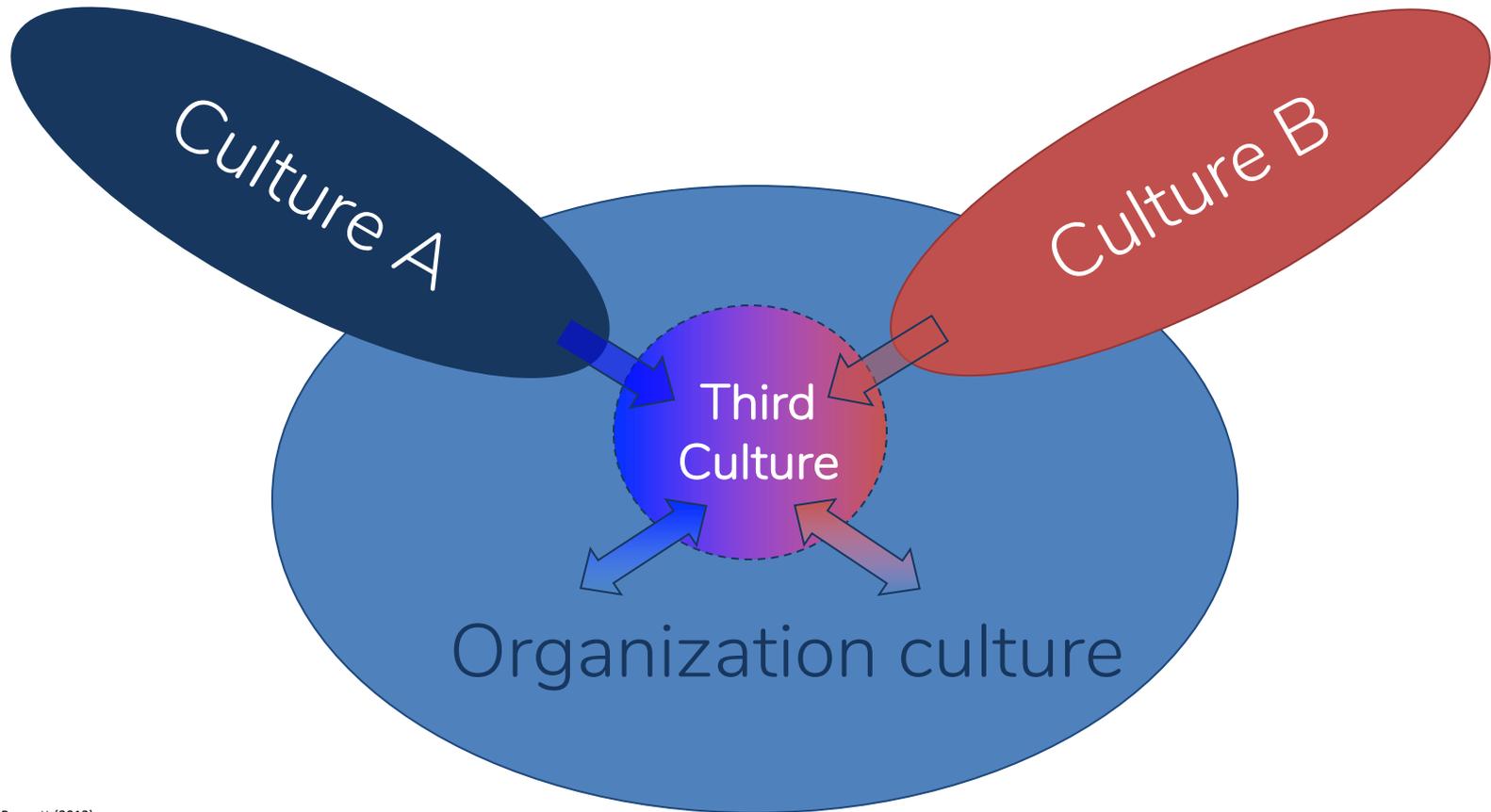
* cf. Adler (2002)

** Argote & McGrath (1993)

Diversity-Consensus-Dilemma**

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Virtual Third Culture* through mutual adaptation

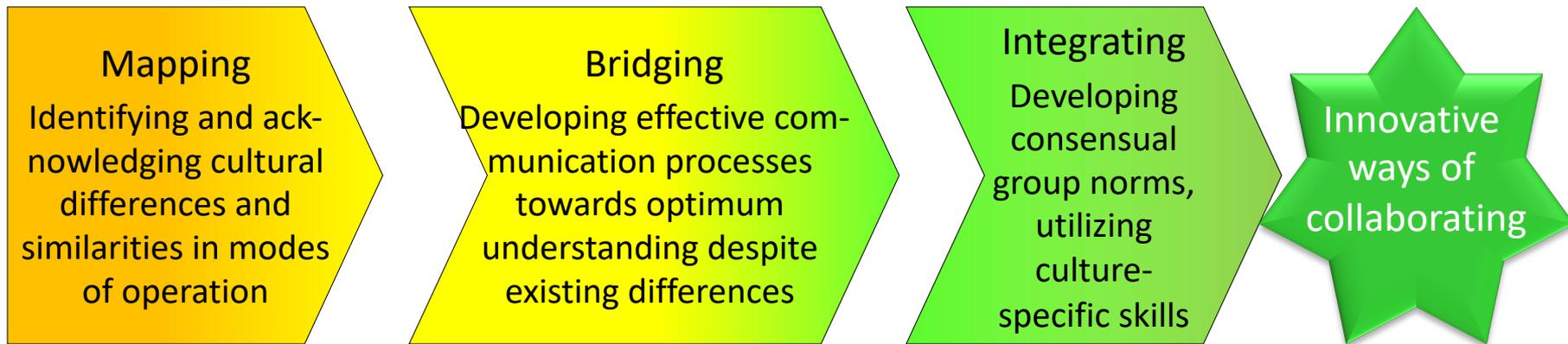


*Milton Bennett (2013)

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Mapping-Bridging-Integrating

Mapping- Bridging- Integrating: A meta-model* for intercultural team-building



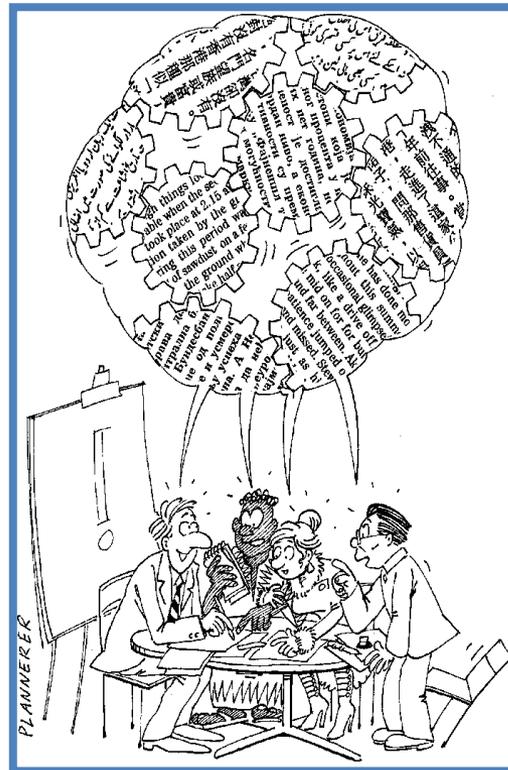
(* DiStefano & Maznevski 2000)

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

The driving proposition of intercultural synergy



Steps ...



... on the way ...



... towards synergy

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Fallacies in intercultural teamwork

- (1) Culture-related differences are negligible
 - ✘ „We all share the same professional background“
 - ✘ „Our project task is the foremost priority“

- (2) Differences in behavior and attitude are to be endured
 - ✘ „We need to be tolerant“ (esp. as interculturalists)
 - ✘ „We don't want to **wake** sleeping dogs“

- (3) Collaboration processes and group climate are incidental
 - ✘ „We don't have time for that“
 - ✘ „Who needs that ‚psycho‘-stuff ...?“

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Intercultural synergy

What is favorable in culturally diverse teams?

- ✓ Variety of perspectives
 - Assessment of the situation
 - Understanding of the task
 - Approaches to and methods of problem solving
- ✓ Change of perspectives
 - Awareness of personal assumptions and habits
 - Broadening of cognitive patterns (e.g. verbal meanings)
 - Awareness of relativity of values

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

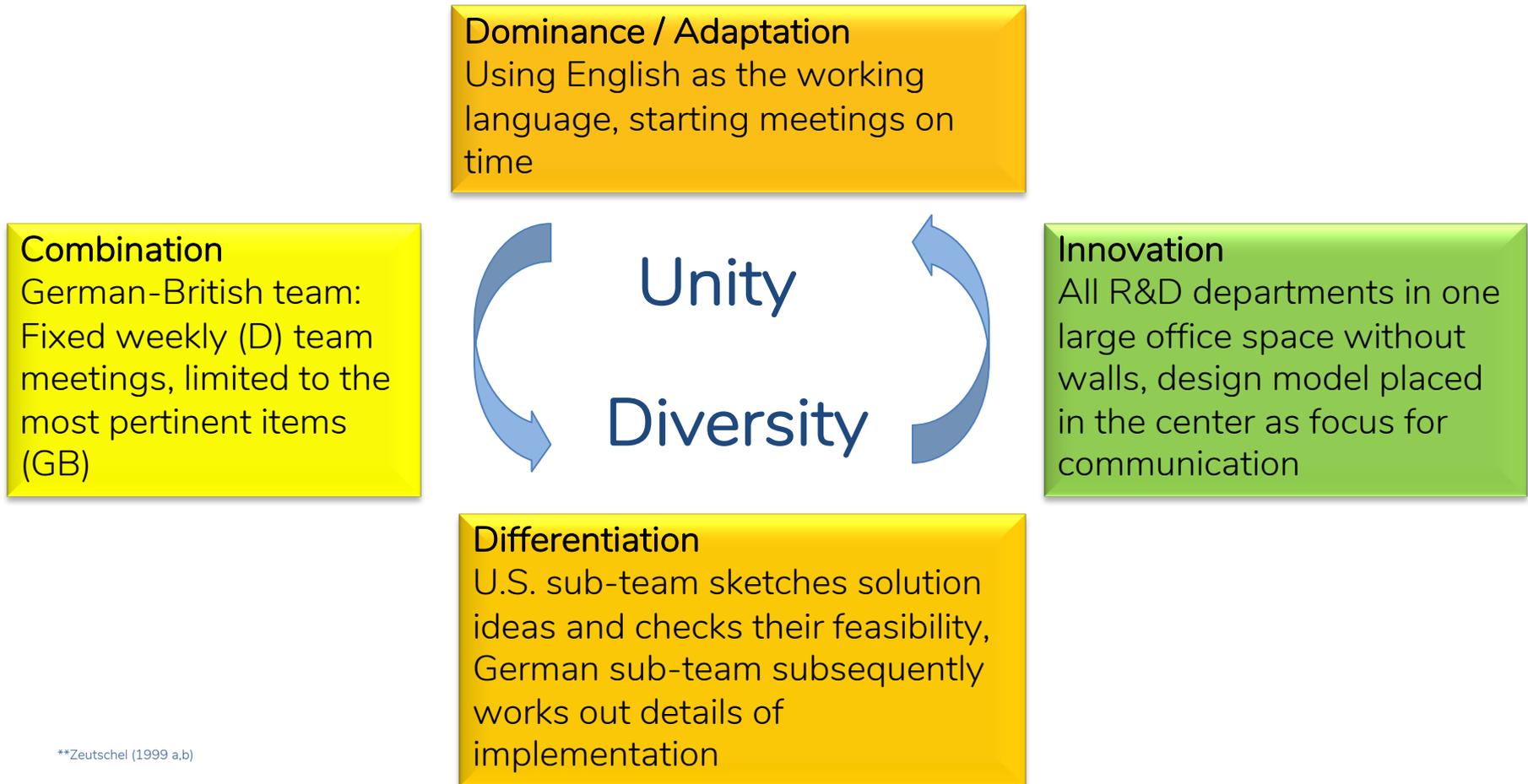
Intercultural synergy

What is favourable in culturally diverse teams?

- ✓ Change of activity regulation
 - Different interaction stimuli
 - Fewer sanctions from home culture
 - Trying out of new behavior repertoire
- ✓ Task as a “common denominator”
 - Reduced complexity of orientation (IMC = International Micro-Culture)
 - Common goal
 - Pressure to succeed

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Patterns of intercultural collaboration



**Zeutschel (1999 a,b)

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Intercultural team development: Four stages

Acknowledging cultural differences as

... existing

Dominance / Adaptation



... valuable

Differentiation



... useful
for oneself

Combination



... offering
degrees of freedom

Innovation

☛ Pitfalls & “Dead Ends”

- ☑ Productive features
- ☛ “Halo”-effect
- ☛ Reactance
- ☑ negotiated by consensus
- ☑ limited to definite areas
- ☑ mutually applicable

- ☛ Disruptive competition
- ☛ Contact avoidance (>stereotyping)
- ☑ deliberately **initiated**
- ☑ temporally limited
- ☑ geared to mutual supplementation

- ☛ Forced settlement
- ☛ “Technical bargaining”
- ☑ negotiated by consensus
- ☑ geared to superordinate common goal
- ☑ encompassing

- ☛ Highly idiosyncratic team culture
- ☛ Neglecting external relations (> “splendid isolation”)
- ☑ transcending cultural differences
- ☑ continually adapting to task requirements and social needs (“learning organization”)

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Problem solving approaches Germany/US



Task orientation:
Arguments, intention to convince



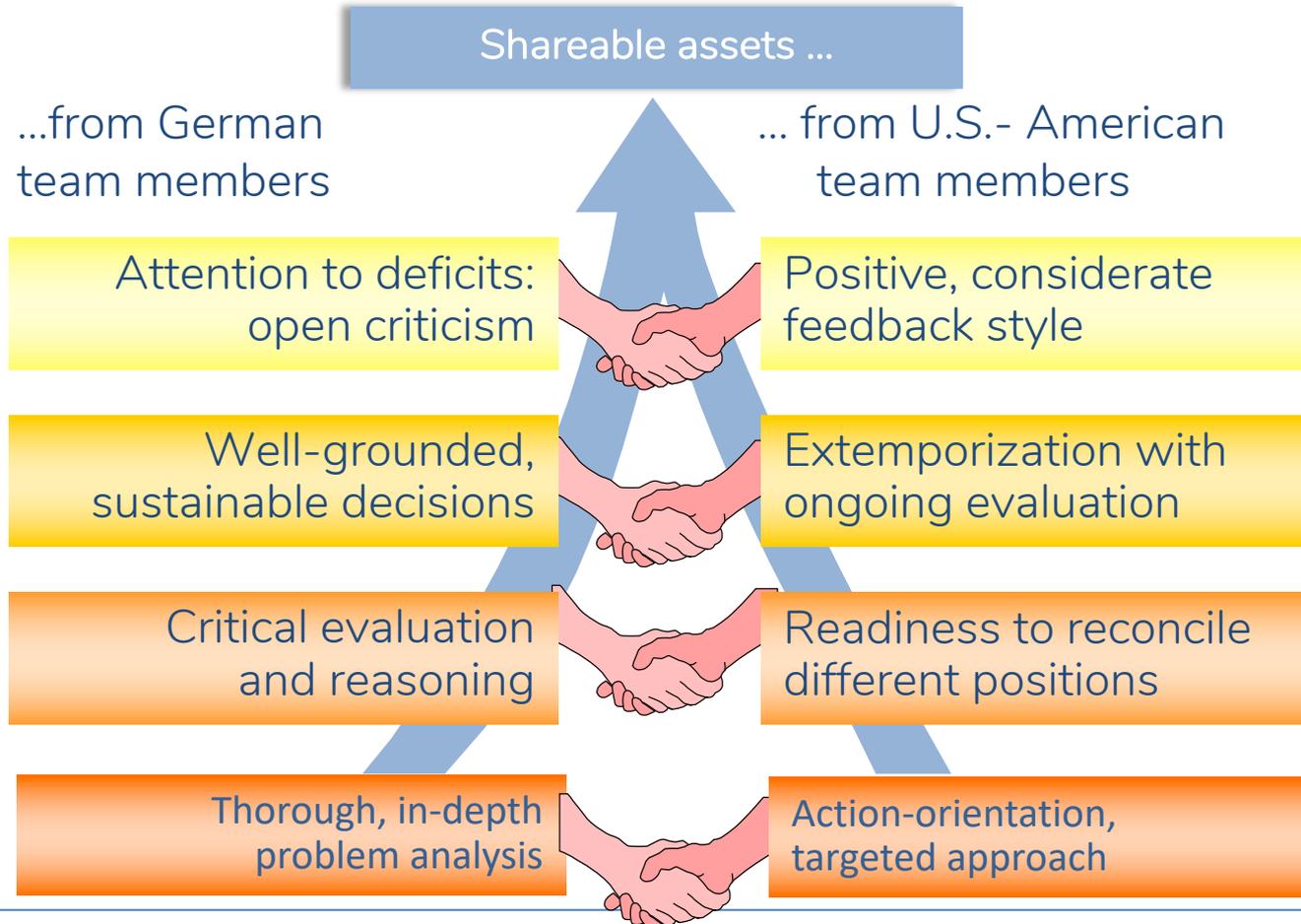
Process orientation:
Proposals, readiness to compromise

Cartoons by [Lisa Planer](#)

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

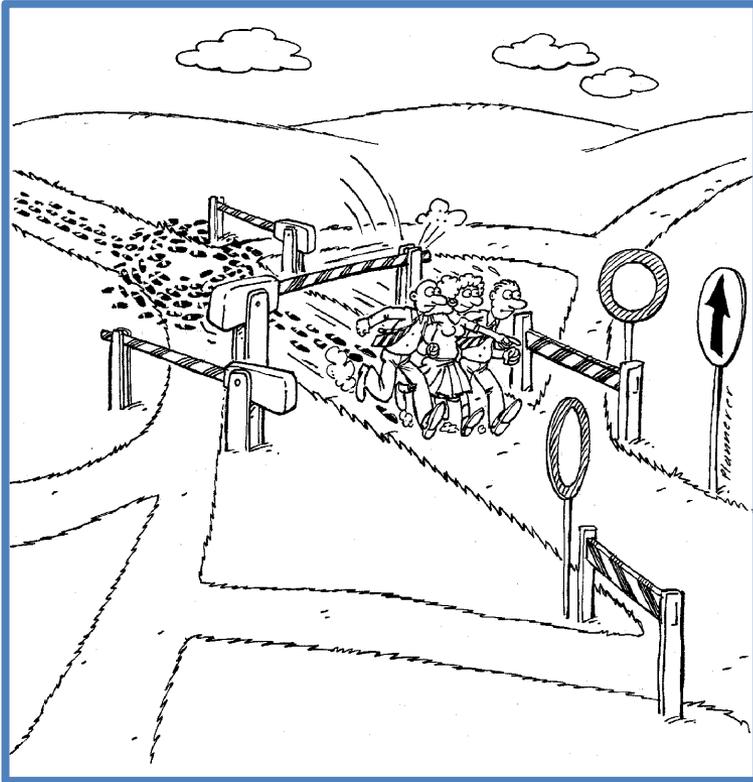
Potential synergy in German/US collaboration

Areas of potential synergy in German/U.S.-American team collaboration

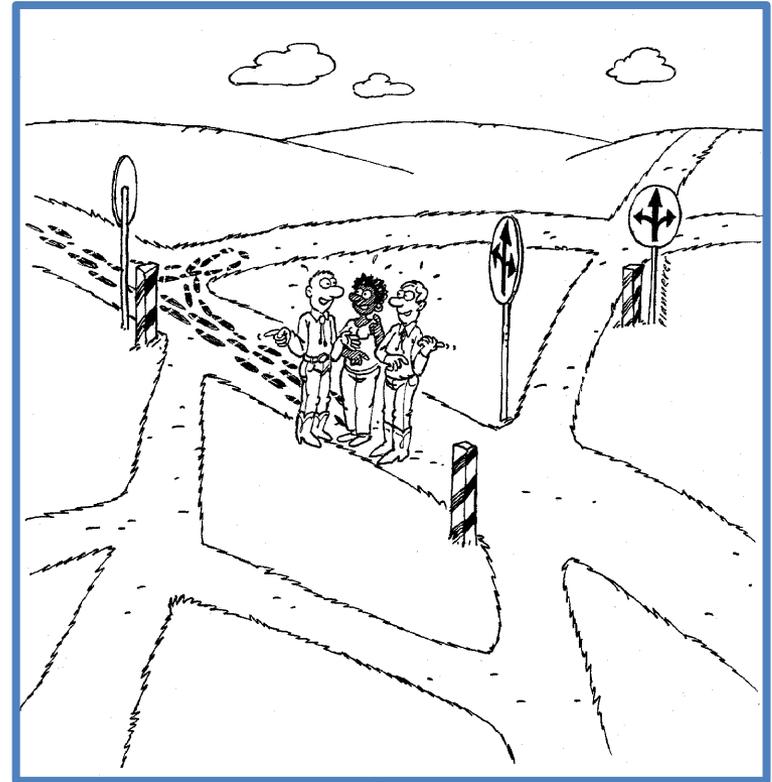


DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Decision making in German/US work groups



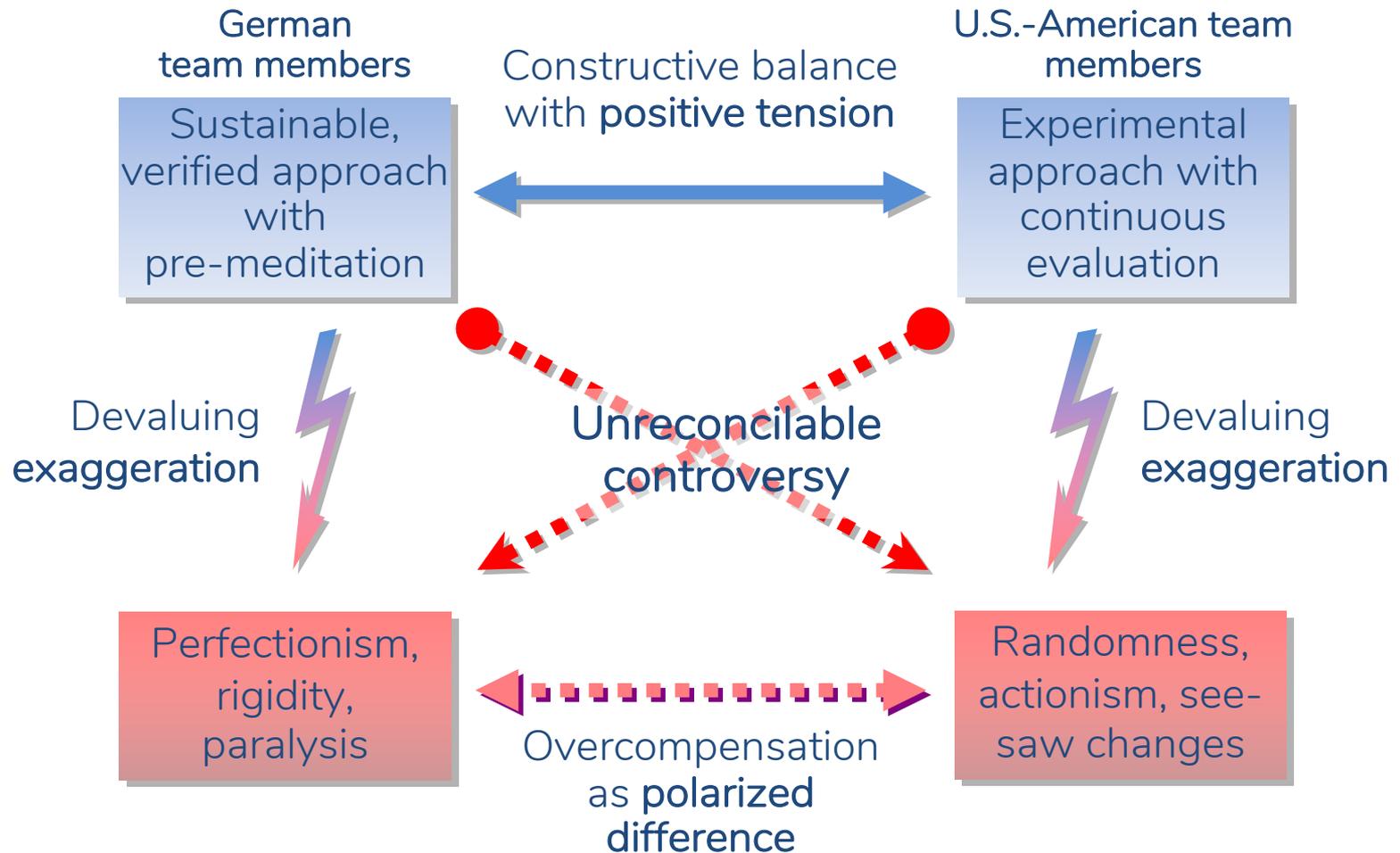
“Finally – we found the royal route!”



“Let’s check our options again!”

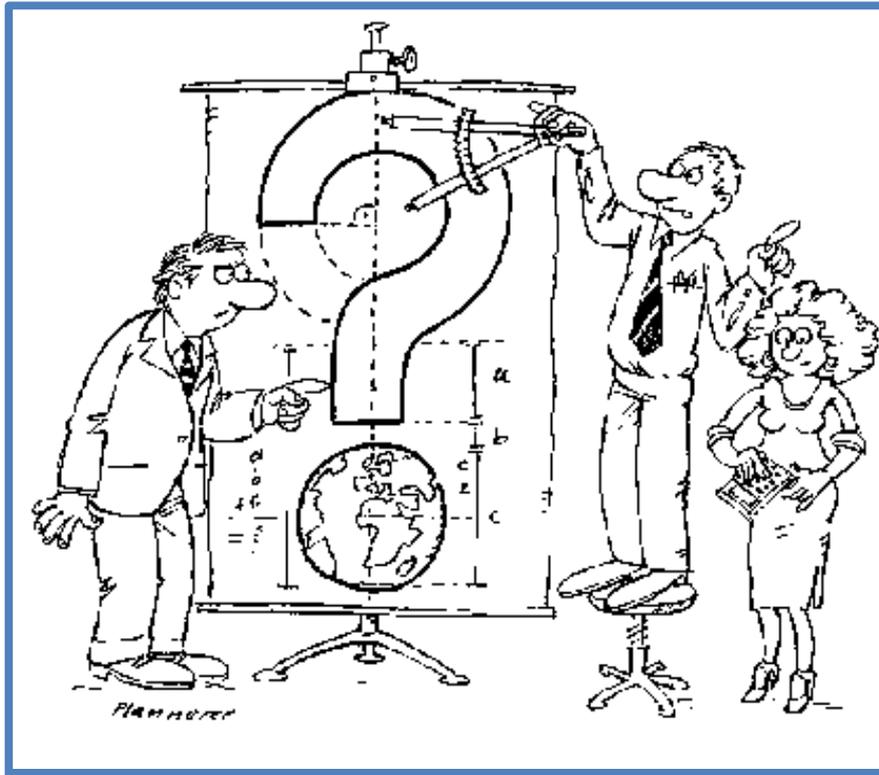
DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Value square on “decision making”



DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Problem solving approaches Germany/Indonesia



To know “What keeps the world together at its core”



To know “What makes the world go ‘round”

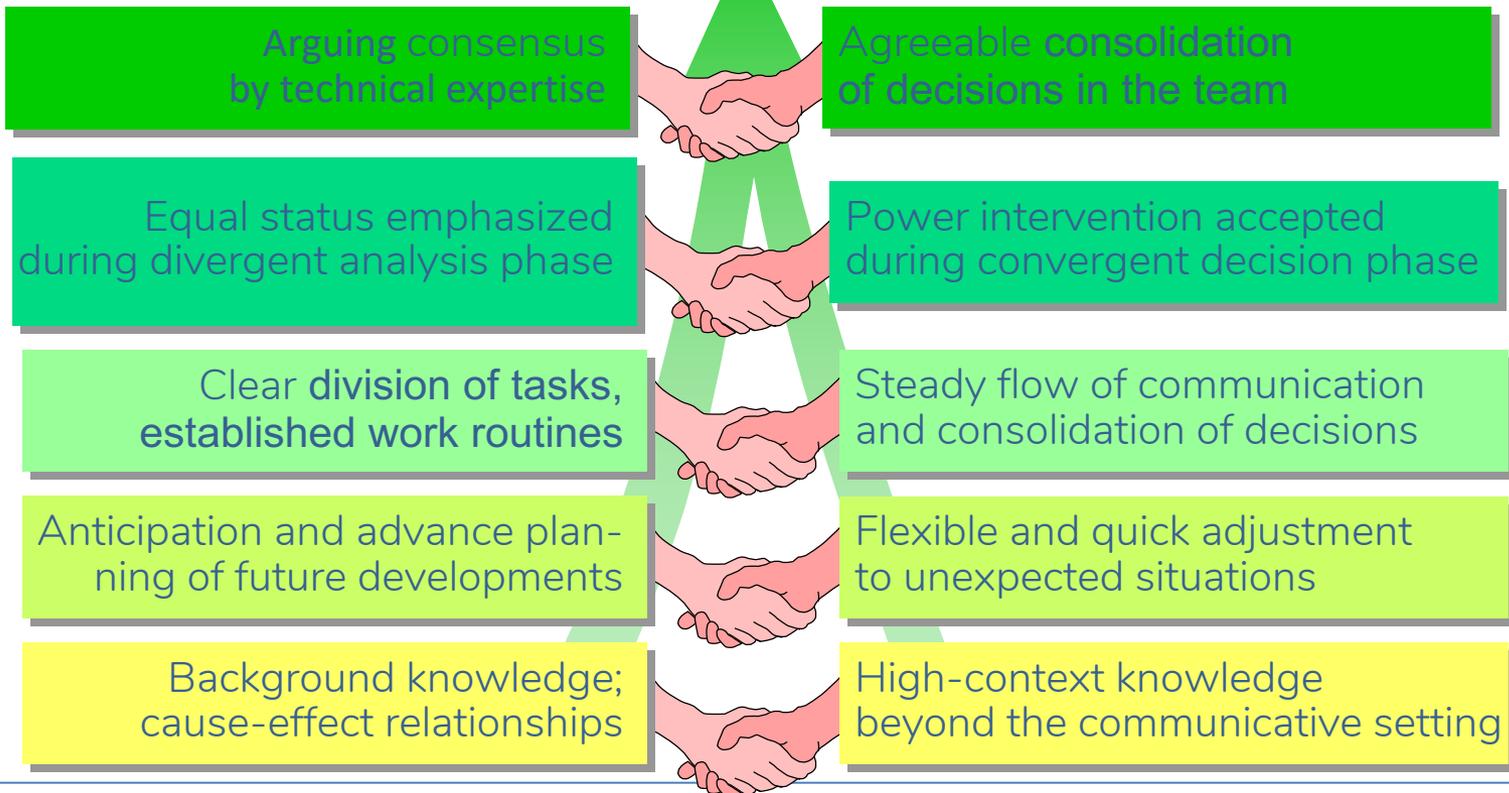
DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Potential synergy in German/Indonesian collaboration

Shareable assets ...

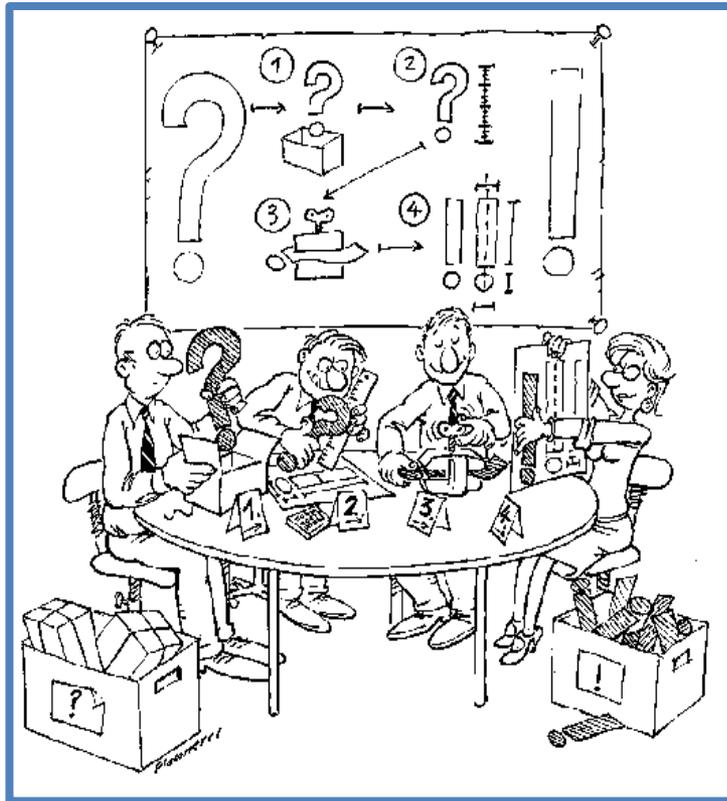
...from German team members

... from Indonesian team members

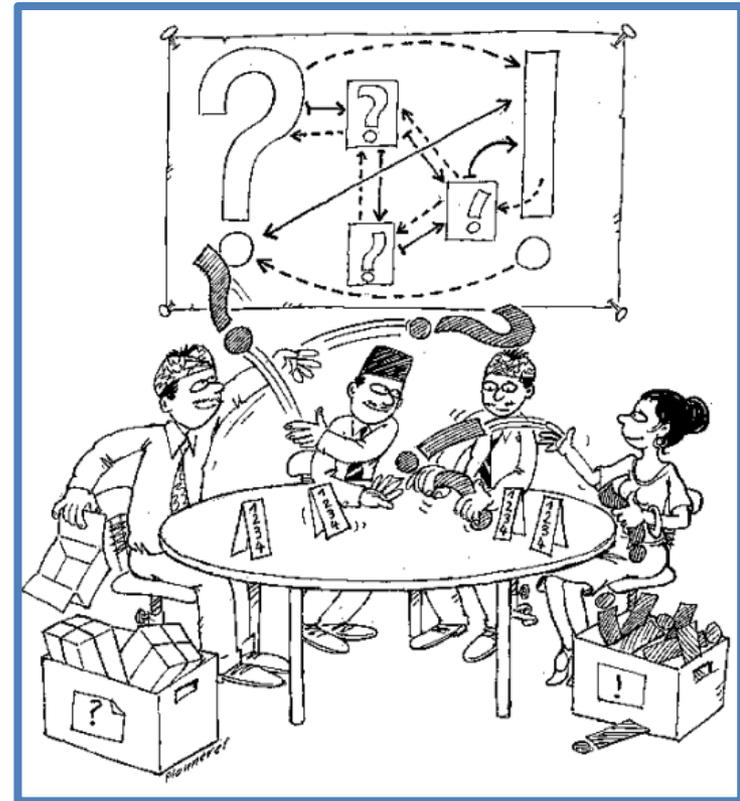


DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Workflow organization in German/Indonesian teams



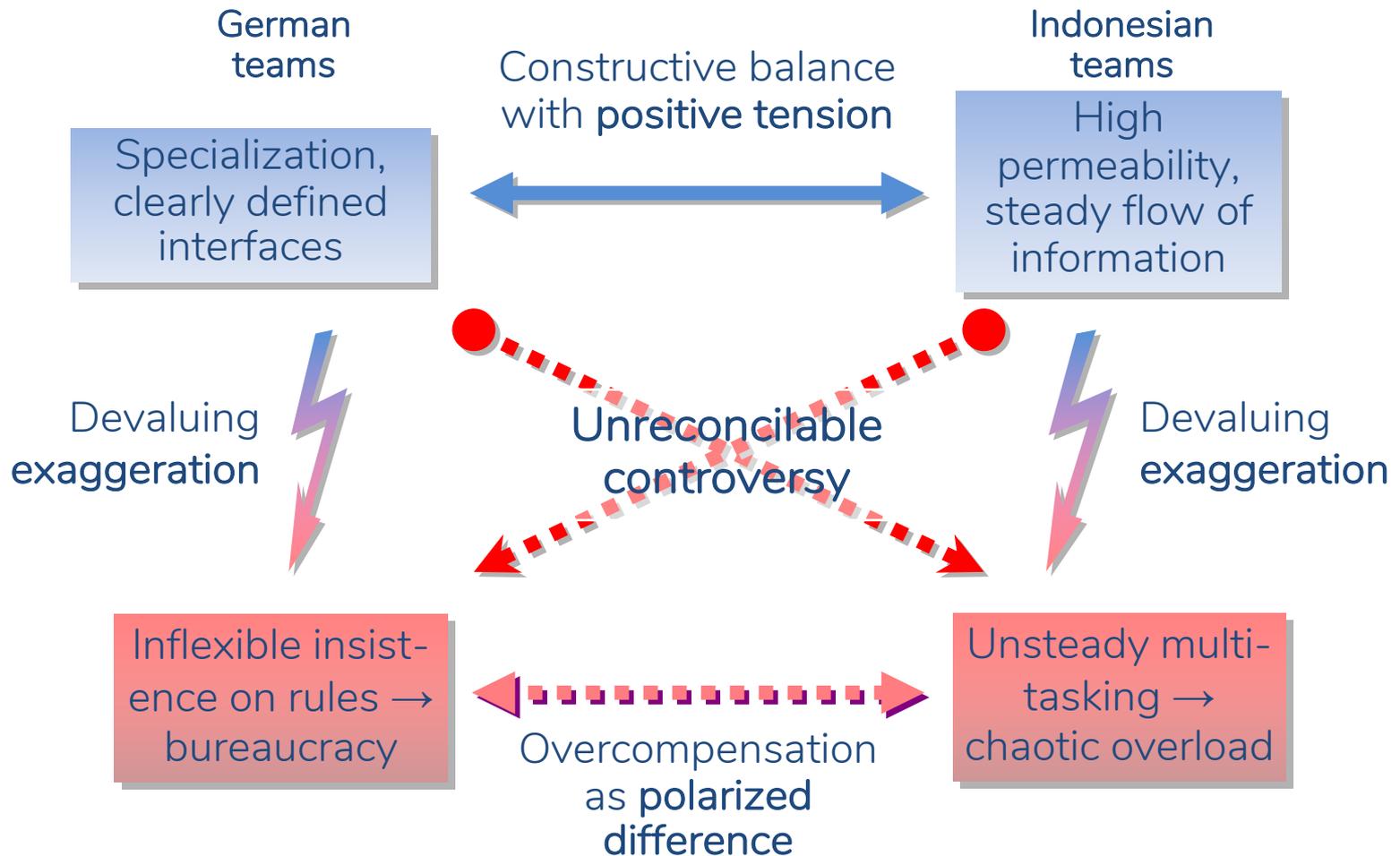
The way to the goal ...



... the goal on the way

DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

Value square on “decision making”



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEAM-BUILDING

- Take time before starting on the team task to get to know each other socially, and in different environments than the working context, if possible.
- Show an active interest in the backgrounds of other team members as well as their specialties (e.g. expertise, skills, and strengths), identify and emphasize commonalities.
- Treat the working language very flexibly so that all team members are able to participate as fully as possible.
- Take stock of team members' expertise at the outset – subject and technical knowledge as well as procedural and methodical skills, utilize them purposefully and with verification, monitor regularly.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- Identify and allocate task-specific responsibilities and processes – also, a “libero” without operative functions may be helpful as an observer and coordinator, as well as brief, but regular exchanges of superordinate information and developments.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of task allocation in terms of motivation and competence regularly and before stress and frustration set in – but maintain trust in the task completion in the meantime.
- Visualize central terms and data visibly for all, not only as background information, but as a focus of collective attention.
- Acknowledge success and positive results and celebrate them together.

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Summary

- Team development is a task which requires resources, skills and tools.
- However, the payback of investing in this way are that teams can use their potentials to develop synergies needed in order to be efficient and effective.

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Reflection



Read the recommendations for team building and process management and in teams discuss what the basic requirements are in order to put these into practice.

ASSIGNMENT



- Read the text by Ulrich Zeutschel ‘Pluricultural workgroups’ translated by Peter Witchalls and originally published as ‘Plurikulturelle Arbeitsgruppen’. In: S. Stumpf & A. Thomas (eds.). 2003 Teamarbeit und Teamentwicklung, pp. 461-475. Göttingen: Hogrefe
- Highlight and discuss different strategies of actions how to generate an added value from pluricultural team-work considering the investment of time and other resources.
- Think about how you could apply the proposed strategies of action in your own team.
- What would be added challenges in virtual teams?

ASSIGNMENT



- Read the text by Barmeyer, Christoph and Eric Davoine 'Konstruktive Interkulturalität' https://www.phil.uni-passau.de/fileadmin/dokumente/lehrstuehle/barmeyer/Zeitungartikel_pdf/144._BarmeyerDavoineAlleoZfO.2015_.pdf (retrieved 10.11.2018) and highlight how synergies were being created as part of the joint venture and discuss strategies of actions how to be successful in doing so.

ASSIGNMENT



- Read the case study developed by Prof. Javier Montiel 'Team building' and carry out the tasks as outlined
- Discuss the results in class

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SOURCES



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