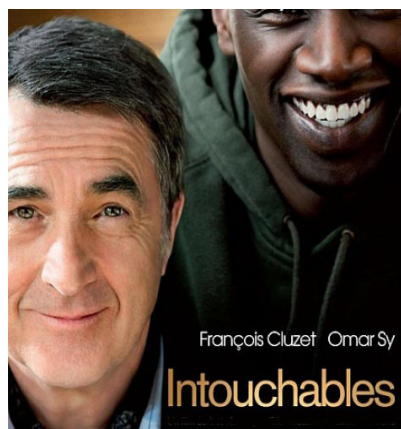
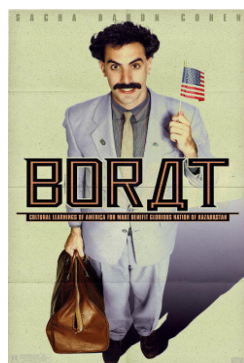


SIETAR JOURNAL



FRAMING 'THE OTHER' IN MEDIA

THE ROLE OF STEREOTYPING
IN TV AND FILMS



MR. BEAN



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SIETAR Journal

Editorial

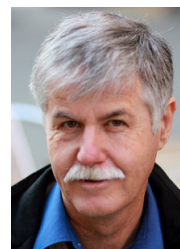
The consequences of framing “the other”

Cultural stereotypes can be both useful and harmful in intercultural communications. A stereotype is normally defined as a thought that is generally shared about specific types of individuals or certain ways of doing things. These thoughts may or may not accurately reflect reality, which is the main point of our feature article, *Framing “the other” in media* by Ljiljana Simic.

She explores how stereotypes are used in the media — in this case, television and film — and their impact on multicultural society. By analyzing how words and images actively construct our understanding of cultural differences, she questions whether the media helps us reduce prejudice and encourage tolerance. Research strongly shows that viewers tend not to be “free” to critically evaluate the stereotypes presented. Read more on page 8.

This issue’s interviewee is Christine Wirths, ardent interculturalist and founder and director of one of Germany’s top consultancy and training organizations in the field. Read about the unique early-life experiences that shaped her character and led to a philosophy about how trainers should facilitate their courses. Begins on page 3.

At the SIETAR Deutschland Forum in Jena last October, Professor Dr. Jürgen Bolten gave an outstanding keynote speech, *The Dune Model — How to Describe Cultures*.



We’ve reprinted it here—a stimulating read, from page 11.

Dan MacLeod, our American reporter in Montreal, examines social communication and excommunication, loners and the reality of the virtual in the wake of the killing of two Canadian soldiers in October of this year. Starts on page 14...

Again we’re approaching the holiday season and the Board of Directors of SIETAR Europa wish you all the best of year-end festivities and a great start to 2015!

Patrick Schmidt,
Editor-in-chief

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Christine Wirths

An interview with an exceptional intercultural entrepreneur

One of the characteristics that makes Germany unique is its passion for doing things in a cooperative way. The preposition 'mit' (with) is used in countless expressions — *mitmachen*, *Mitarbeiter*, *Mitbestimmung* — and points to a spirit of teamwork which permeates all levels of society. As *Time Magazine* puts it, Germans are brilliant organizers and planners who like complexity and are good at integrating elements, including people, into systems.

Christine Wirths, founder and director of CultureWaves, exemplifies this mindset. Her patiently diligent and inclusive approach helps explain why her company is one of Germany's top intercultural consultancy and training organizations. In her presence you can't help but feel a certain 'force tranquille', shades of Angela Merkel — quiet, discreet but highly determined. These qualities have also been evident at SIETAR Deutschland, to which she's devoted a lot of time and energy, including six years as a board member. All this and a family too!

Her style of success made me want to know more about how she came to be who she is, her journey from a small German town to the pinnacle of intercultural management and communication.

What were the early events in your life that led to your becoming an intercultural entrepreneur?



I was born and raised in Remscheid, a small city in the Bergisches Land (Country of Berg) in North Rhine-Westphalia about 40 km east of Cologne. Looking back, my parents were very important in my upbringing, especially in teaching me respect for others.

My father's family had always been open-minded toward different cultures and were social outcasts under the Nazis in the 1930s. It might sound weird but shortly after the war broke out, my father found himself in the navy and served in Norway, Tunisia and Italy. His mother thought he might be safer with the navy and far away than staying with a political system and regime he and his father did not support at home. When he came back to Remscheid in 1945, he was confronted with a bombed-out town — 80 percent of the houses in the city had been destroyed. He went into the construction business and was one of the first to build houses for the guest-workers who were arriving from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and later Poland. He became a respected man in my hometown, helping foreigners adapt to Germany without any, what we would call today, "intercultural training".

The year my father was sent to war, my mother was born. As a teenager, she had after the war early international contacts as a member of the *Schaumberger Märchensinger*, internationally known as the *Obernkirchen Children's Choir*

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Christine Wirths

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It was working at the European Council that Christine Wirths received her first experiences in intercultural team work.



and famous for the song “The Happy Wanderer”. She travelled extensively as a child, including to Great Britain, Canada and the U.S. These experiences as a sort of a young ambassador of Germany really widened her horizons. My own interest in intercultural encounters was very much encouraged by my parents’ many foreign contacts. Their cosmopolitan outlook helped me become independent and have the faith to go my own way. At the same time, there was always an inherent respect for roots, my family, my environment.

At the age of 20, wanting to improve my English, I lived and worked as an au-pair with a family in London. The mother was half-Chinese, half-German-Jewish, the father an ex-colonial Brit who grew up in Kenia, and they had two children--a very multicultural family. And they’d seen the world, had lived in Jamaica and Guyana. This one-year stay in England was my first intercultural experience and I was utterly fascinated.

Not long afterward, I lived in Strasbourg for over a year, studying at the university, then working in the public relations department for the *European Council*. I helped organize an international fair on how the Council should present itself to the public. It was my first exposure to a multi-cultural project team, in this case French and Scottish. I was in my early twenties and could see there were

differences in working styles that led to confusion, misunderstandings to put it carefully. Worst of all, I had no explanation, no intercultural training, no literature as to why it was happening. You could say that I was in a ‘cultural no man’s land’.

I returned to Germany and began studying International Cultural and Business Studies at the University of Passau, with more work experience back in France, Belgium and the U.S. It was in Chicago that a marketing manager gave me a small book and told me to read it — *Understanding Cultural Differences* by Edward T. Hall. This was a real eye-opener on why people might behave differently and I changed my thesis from European institutions to intercultural management.

But during your studies, weren’t you exposed to the works of Edward Hall or Geert Hofstede?

At that time, there were no lectures or seminars on intercultural communications — it simply was not taught. Only through my own personal initiative did I learn about them and, even then, I had to convince my tutor to allow me to reference their works in my thesis. This was back in 1994. Of course, today it’s completely different.

So you learned to become an interculturalist without any guidance.

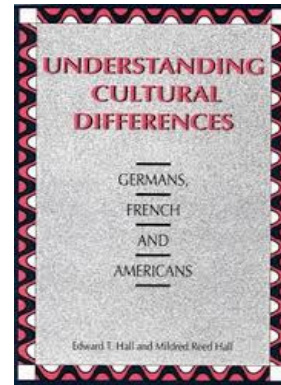
Not quite. Another event changed my outlook: I attended

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Christine Wirths

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*Upon reading 'Understanding Cultural Differences',
Christine Wirths finally found cultural explanations
on why people might behave differently*



my first SIETAR conference in Ingolstadt in 1994. Here was this amazing learning environment, a community of people who'd lived abroad or came from bi- or multicultural families. Young and old, people from other countries, different professional groups...it was fascinating, the way they welcomed everyone. I learned so much that I said, "This is it, I want to become a professional interculturalist."

I finished my studies and started working in adult education. There were very few companies looking for intercultural trainers. Likewise, there weren't many trainers focused on that type of work. So, for two years, I did communication trainings and a few intercultural trainings on a free-lance basis.

Then luck struck, a contract with German Air Navigation Services (*DFS Deutsche Flugsicherung*) that lasted two and half years. I was brought in as part of the human resources development and personnel strategic planning team, interviewing all the managers working internationally. I made training suggestions, interviewed and selected trainers, designed and evaluated programs.

During those years I was also doing intercultural training for two other international companies and, in 1999, they asked me to incorporate because they wanted to deal with one supplier. This was a big surprise and, at 32, I felt it was a

bit early to become an entrepreneur. But my clients pushed me. "We need you with a strong team of professional interculturalists. We're looking for a company - a partner who can support us." With their trust and confidence, I created CultureWaves.

Quite interesting. Let's now talk about SIETAR Deutschland. It organized a forum in Jena last October which included your one-day pre-conference workshop, "How to deal with difficult situations in intercultural trainings". What were some of the issues you discussed?

Well first of all I would like to say that I designed and facilitated this workshop together with my colleague Alexander Scheitza. Thanks to SIETAR we met in 2002. Although we share many experiences in the commercial sector, it added value to the design and created synergies during the workshop that Alex could also bring in his experiences from the nonprofit sector and public administration institutions such as police and municipalities.

A key criteria to set up such workshops is that a thorough needs-analysis should be carried out before training begins. As professionals, it's in our interest that a workshop be practical, applicable to the participants' different requirements. I kind of lead into the subject by thanking them for doing the needs-analysis and pointing out that

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Christine Wirths

— *continued*

"Our job is to help people reduce their need to categorize and to simplify."



they're about to invest one or two days of their precious time. They don't know exactly what skills I'm going at. By discussing their needs, I try to build a bridge, show respect for their experience. I also explain which expectations may not fulfill.

If you don't do this properly, participants might feel the course isn't relevant. You sometimes have people who think they know it all, who say "I've lived in three countries and speak three languages, so what do you want to tell me?" It's important to take them seriously, integrate them and give them opportunities to reflect on their rich background. If you ignore them, you get into trouble.

At the same time, this means showing respect for people who have less experience, or different perspectives, different levels of knowledge. It can be extremely challenging at times. But with a good mix of diversity, as trainers, we can use that potential to its fullest.

Personally, I enjoy the challenge when people are difficult at the beginning; you help them calm down and support the workshop. I've sometimes had people who were a bit arrogant. I feel it's my responsibility to ask certain questions that make them think. I've become more courageous in the last few years about confronting people who are culturally less aware and making them understand the

way their attitudes might impact on people.

Another important issue concerns difficulties people can have with certain learning and teaching styles. Some participants are not interested in feedback, self-reflection activities and group work with the meta-plan method. Others expect me to just give input and direct advise. What is important here is changing perspectives through different strategies and learning methods.

Finally, we intercultural professionals should continue to challenge ourselves. Many of our fellow trainers work alone a lot. Ironically, they encourage feedback from their participants but don't really question themselves. I think we should work harder by always asking ourselves if we're working in a mindful and effective way: "Is this exercise appropriate for this specific target group?"

In your opinion, what's the greatest challenge that interculturalists have in their trainings?

I think we have to help individuals, teams and organizations not only to create intercultural sensitivity and awareness, but also to take responsibility for what it really means to integrate people. I feel we can do more to help people avoid serious problems, and that it's important to remember they're often not due to different national cultures. We have to be careful here. In our work, some people have no interest in the reasons why people might have

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Christine Wirths

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SIETAR has a real family character, bringing together people who have lived abroad or come from bi- or multicultural families.



certain preferences, or in trying to understand others. Our job is to help people reduce their need to categorize, make them take a closer look at other ways of seeing our world. We give orientation by showing that people need to differentiate, that they need to be careful and refrain from simplification.

You've been very involved with SIETAR Deutschland. Could you tell us a little more about that?

Yes, it's a wonderful organization that gave me a lot in terms of intercultural knowledge, networking opportunities and experience. As I mentioned before, I was at the first SIETAR Deutschland congress in Ingolstadt in 1993 and what I remember most was it had a very welcoming feeling. Most the people were much older, more experienced, but I never had the feeling of being left out.

When the first regional group was founded in Rhein-Main, I was happy to take part in setting it up. It was very enjoyable, meeting new people and exchanging ideas. Later, I served on the Board of SIETAR Deutschland for six years, three as President, and I've been on the Advisory Board since 2012.

What I really like most about SIETAR is that people from so many different professional backgrounds, who've had so many different experiences, can join. And it's an association that makes things happen. Take the SIETAR Deutschland Forum in Jena last October — it was amaz-

ing to meet the array of people who came, to discuss, to challenge each other. I see it as a great organization for anybody who is interested in the field.

Many feel that SIETAR has a real family character. What brings the majority of people together is that they've lived abroad or come from bi- or multicultural families. We all share that fascination for dealing with people from different cultures. To connect with people who've had these experiences is great. And it's why the organization is unique and so diverse in its outlook.

I hope more national SIETARs develop in the years to come — it's a learning group. And we've become more professional over the years but we still have organizational challenges. Also, we need to remember that Board members serve on a voluntary basis.

I'm looking forward to the next SIETAR Europa congress in Valencia in May, 2015. Like past congresses, it can give us a certain platform to explore, create alternatives, synergies. We need to build more alliances. We can be successful only if we collaborate with other partners, network with teams — that's my key message.

Well Christine, on the behalf of SIETAR Europa, I would like to thank you for this enriching interview.

It's been my pleasure.

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Framing 'The Other' in media

— the role and place of stereotyping in TV and films

by Ljiljana Simic

Do these American women represent unhealthy notions of beauty?



We all stereotype. There is no stereotype free person in the world. The question is - what do we do with stereotypes? Are we able to understand their role and place in our lives through the impact of media? How do they shape our opinions?

We can argue that stereotypes appear as descriptions of the world, but, lacking qualification (analysis of cultural dimensions) and quantification (cultural diversity in TV serials and films <http://vimeo.com/52917906>), they are not. They have their place and role and certainly durability within the media. The goal of this article is to document and analyze their place and impact.

Research on stereotypes about cultural differences has long been a political question of correctness and at the same time the fight against social prejudice. Some consequences of this premise are:

- stereotypes are neither true nor false;
- stereotypes are also present in personal relationships and self-understanding;
- how free we are to make a critical evaluation of the stereotypes presence in TV/film and the role they might play in construction of our diverse identities.

People are also taking an active part in creating the media landscape themselves simply by capturing an images and uploading it onto social networks. Therefore, responsibility is shared.

It seems essential to realize those multiple effects the media have on us. The questions we need to ask:

Can media help individuals get rid of their prejudices and negative attitudes toward cultural minorities?

Can they enable people to develop tolerance and prevent them from participating in the ethnic and cultural tensions in society?

Very often people only see one side of the stereotypes - so called entertainment, humorous side. It is quite limited aspect of their complex, contradictory nature. This remark leads to two important criteria in defining a stereotype: the analysis level and the generality level. The analysis level addresses the question of - Who holds the stereotype belief? and the generality level addresses the question of - Who the stereotype belief refers to?

The hypothesis of this article is that stereotyping encourages divisiveness by accentuating our differences at the expense of similarities that tie us together. To make my point, I will use examples taken from TV serials and films.

TV research data and diversity issue

In an analysis of more than 1,000 television shows that aired

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Framing 'the other' ...

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A blonde, white Red Riding Hood lost in a forest of faceless Muslim women. This is how 'Homeland's creators have chosen to represent their show in the fourth season.



on 67 cable and broadcast networks during the 2011/12, UCLA researchers studied racial diversity in the media broadcasting. They found that more viewers were drawn to shows with ethnically diverse lead cast members and scenario writers than to shows which reflected less diversity.

However, ethnic minorities and women remain underrepresented on cable and broadcast programs as lead actors, scenario writers and show creators. It was related to the relationship between the issue of diversity among cast members and scenario writers.

The report showed that Caucasian males directed 73% of all episodes; Caucasian females directed 11% of all episodes; minority males directed 13% of all episodes and minority females directed 4% of all episodes.

We can notice this tendency in the popular TV series 'Grey's Anatomy', a drama about the personal and professional lives of five surgical interns in a hospital. Even in the diverse ensemble casts, the main love story — Derek and Meredith relationship — deals with only one race. Almost the same goes for Kate and Jack/Sawyer in the series 'Lost'.

Another popular TV series has been the political thriller *Homeland*. According to Dr. Jack Shaheen, Arabs are portrayed as 'bombers, belly dancers or billionaires' in this

show. Iraqi prisoners, Muslim-American professors, Palestinian extremists, Shiite Lebanese Hezbollah and Sunni Al Qaeda are all somehow linked in a grand pan-Islamic plot to attack American soil.

Some countries express strong disagreement with it. The Lebanese are unhappy with their portrayal in the Middle East. And the Israelis also express dissatisfaction about how their main cities, being filmed, are made to represent Beirut. By ignoring the very real differences within the Muslim world, *Homeland* tends to be between insensitivity and unrealism.

Homeland is certainly not the first stereotype and cultural diversity insensitive television show in American pop culture. It chose to perpetuate decades of old images of Muslims, instead of providing a refreshing new narrative.

The 2006 prize-winning, comedy-drama film *The Devil Doesn't Always Wear Prada* is a story about powerful fashion magazine she-editor presented as demanding and 'hell on heels' for the others. Women are portrayed as wearing lots of make-up, high heels and starving in order to be "pretty" — all transmitting the message of unrealistic and unhealthy notions of beauty and the need to attract a man. By paying close attention to the characters' portrayals, it can highlight important representations of social order of one culture, either national, organizational or professional.

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Framing 'the other' ...

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When you juxtapose the movie trailer 'March of the Penguins' with the video clip 'March of the Emperor', you will understand the power of framing 'the other'.



Stereotypes are sensitive issues often dealing with 'political correctness' and excellent territory for possible multiple interpretations. However, it is hard to draw a precise line between the notion of 'basic assumptions' and 'values' as most are indirectly and are frequently not questioned. Media actively shapes and constructs our understanding of cultural differences. Therefore the media responsibility is enormous in any cultural policy. Much of what audiences know and care is based on the images, symbols and narratives in TV, film and other media.

Future steps in our research as interculturalists

Interesting future steps could include comparative studies of films and its remake through the lenses of stereotypes. Analyzing these differences could reveal the underlying cultural stereotypes upon which the original movie and how its remake are built. It seems more interesting to underscore the cultural differences which come out when two versions of the same story are juxtaposed.

The best examples that come to mind are the French and American film interpretations of *LOL (Laughing out Loud)* or *Trois hommes et un couffin / Three Men and a Baby*. Looking at the different versions, we can observe storyline and relationship that appears. What is different? What has been added, removed or changed in the both version?

But if you wish to now experience a short version of film juxtaposition, look at the short video 'March of the Emperor' produced by the French T.V. channel Canal + (www.youtube.com/watch?v=9M5ej-mCtZl). It playfully re-enacts the movie trailer 'March of the Penguins' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7tWNwhSocE).

Instead of using penguins, the French clip employs men, all dressed as Napoleon-like emperors. It's funny, paradoxical and above all, it's the power of the story, our imagination and what framing 'the other' can generate.



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The Dune Model — How to Describe Cultures

by Professor Dr. Jürgen Bolten

This article first appeared in the AFS Intercultural Link news magazine

The editors kindly gave us permission to reprint it.

Can one describe “cultures” in an intellectually authoritative, universal manner that may be seen as objective? Presumably not – **perceptions of cultural fields are always perspective-dependent.**

This is seen clearly in an example provided by Benoit Mandelbrot, used within a text concerning fractal geometry: A Spanish encyclopedia once claimed that the length of the common border between Spain and Portugal was 616 miles, while a Portuguese encyclopedia believed it to be 758 miles. “How long is it then? A useless question.” (Mandelbrot/Hudson 2007, p. 188). The question is, indeed, useless as an inexhaustible array of perspectives and measurement criteria exist that would lead to a multicity of varying results. This is true also, according to Mandelbrot, in relation to the measurement of a length of coast; differing results would follow were one to measure at low and high tides, while various measurements would also accrue were cliff faces or rock formations to be taken into account (Mandelbrot 1967).

This conclusion is also applicable to the describing of cultural fields of agency; the closer one zooms upon such a field, the more differentiated and multifaceted the relationship networks (local culture, group culture, couple culture etc.) will be deemed to be, the further one zooms away the more undifferentiated and homogenous such a field will appear (organizational culture, ethnic culture, national culture etc.).

One can, logically enough, not speak of a “correct” or “false”




perspective; every perspective retains a certain level of validity, and only through their interaction may the multi-layered nature of cultural fields of agency become transparent (see also Appadurai 1996, p. 31ff). One would avoid, thus, a loss of orientation (“One cannot see the forest for the trees”), as well as the danger of overgeneralization and stereotyping (one sees a homogenous area of forest, but cannot recognize the individual trees any longer).

In the practice of cultural description and in intercultural trainings, the homogenizing “forest” perspective dominates. Orientation and structure is given through the use of a number of supposedly explanatory binary oppositions; e.g. mono-chronological/poly-chronological; individualist/collectivist. If one zooms closer to the cultural field of agency (the capacity of entities to act in a culture), one instantly sees the questionable nature of such clear-cut certainty (“Culture X is collectivist”). It may be discovered, for example, that a dissimilar understanding of “collective” exists within the field of agency from the one imposed upon it from outside, or that the agents, depending on context, may act both in a collective and individualist manner. Such clearly presented binary (explanatory) logic proves factually, thus, to be instead an element of a more highly complex multivalent logic, one with many interpretations. **Cultures cannot be clearly bordered; their edges appear, rather, as a confluence of diverse transcultural networks. Cultures are inherently uneven, or fuzzy.**

This differentiated perspective will initially unsettle or alienate the

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The Structure of the Dune Model of Culture *translated by Fergal Lenehan*


	rule type	regulated by	collective binding / degree of conventionalization
“Shifting Sands”: changeability, low level of stability	top level: <i>can</i>	“young” conventionalization, context specific “unwritten” agreements, group specific rules (e.g. greetings)	minor, individually negotiable (strongly context dependent), high process dynamic
	middle level: <i>should</i>	rules of thumb, guidelines, “styles”, generally valid behavioral rules, sustainable traditionalized group conventions, rituals	relatively high, at core longer-term validity
	bottom level: <i>have to</i>	norms, laws, prohibitions, natural environment conditions	very high, codified (generalizable), distinctive structure, low process dynamic, “natural”

person viewing the culture (the “endurance” of such alienation represents, of course, a key characteristic of intercultural competence). In a manner similar to the zoom function of Google Earth, it is undoubtedly also valid, when describing cultural fields of agency, to zoom away at times to reacquire orientation.

One should, at least, then know that the woods actually consist of various types of tree and that blanket judgments or stereotyping should not be engaged upon. On the other hand, when zooming in again, one would be less inclined to lose oneself within unknown parts of the field of agency, as one would then also be conscious of the variety of interconnections with other network areas.

An integrated method of continuous zooming in and out when describing cultures is helpful; in order to do justice to a culture as a structure, and as a process.

Regarding the structural viewpoint, a culture’s mainstream, its “core”, may indeed be validly viewed as “individualistic”. The fact that this structure is also simultaneously fuzzy, and constantly transforms itself via a series of change processes, must also be taken into account to the very same extent.

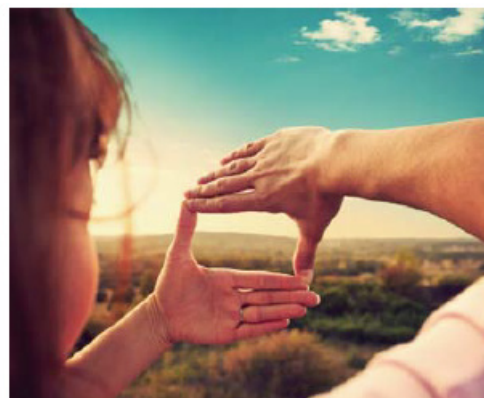
Visually, an approach that integrates perspectives may be seen as analogous to the formation of a sand dune: Behavioral rules that are practiced within a field of agency by a large number of agents – due to formalized laws or due to traditionalized rules of interaction that have been continuously practiced – retain binding force functions and appear to the socialized agents, usually in an unquestioned manner, as “normal” and plausible. They constitute, in conjunction with natural environmental elements, the foundation or core of a cultural field of agency. As we are dealing here with, at times, traditionalized rules of action that may be centuries old, the transformational dynamic in this area may indeed be minor. The further away from the core that one views the foundation – in the sense of the dune metaphor – and examines the areas that are structurally less consolidated, the more multiple, competitive, questionable and, thus, unbinding do the rules of action appear. There exist, accordingly, a variety of temporal “can rules” (see table above); perhaps “fashionable” for shorter periods and smaller fields of agency, but which are not, largely, structurally creative in a long-term, sustainable manner. They may be, metaphorically, “blown away” relatively quickly or they may become lost within the foundation via a long process of filtering and sedimentation because, according to “broad-based opinion”, they lack relevance and/or plausibility.

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The Dune Model ...

— continued

Views of culture are subjective and dependent on the context and perspective.



In order to appropriately describe a cultural field of agency, **it is important to vary the perspective, through the use of valid sources** (from legal texts to texts dealing with belief principles to trend reports), so that the entire spectrum of both process-oriented and structure-oriented aspects can be taken into account. By zooming to and from these diverse expanses,

interconnections between the various areas within the field of agency should become transparent. One has to bear in mind that every observable cultural field of agency is bordered only for the purposes of better and more pragmatic 'knowability'. It is, in fact, an arbitrary intersection within an infinitely networked field of action. In this sense, it is a fuzzy dune.

AFSers and Dunes...

The dune model of culture stresses the importance of understanding that views of culture are subjective and dependent on the context and perspective. More nuanced differences within a cultural group may be more apparent and visible to the members of that group than to those outside of it. This is not to say that any one perspective or the other is right or wrong. Both have a degree of correctness: Some generalizations can be made for certain cultural groups, just as there are many differences within the cultural groups. **However, the key characteristic of intercultural competence lies in the ability to shift between these two perspectives and to see things both on detailed and generalized levels.** Cultural informants are highly valuable in this process of moving between viewpoints: They can provide valuable insights and interpretations which may not be immediately apparent.

The dune model has direct implications for the work of AFS volunteers and staff. When preparing students and families for their intercultural experience, providing culture general information or the "zoomed out" view of culture will be most beneficial. On the other hand, dealing with the "zoomed in" view and the particulars of daily interactions between cultures becomes topical during the exchange. Shifting between these two ways of viewing during the monthly check-in points and orientations provides quality support to the participants of AFS intercultural exchanges.

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Reporter's Sketchbook

...an American in Montreal

Loups-garous

(Werewolves)

by Dan MacLeod

Far from the madding crowd. But men, like wolves, are social animals and, alone, alienated, they themselves go mad.

On October 20, Martin Couture-Rouleau drove his car into two Canadian soldiers outside a shopping mall in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, killing one and injuring the other, before being shot to death by local police. Two days later, in Ottawa, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau shot and killed a soldier standing ceremonial guard at a war monument, then stormed Parliament (armed with a hunting rifle, not an automatic weapon); he was only yards from caucus rooms where the prime minister and minority-party leaders were holding their weekly meetings when he was shot to death in turn.

Lone wolves. Not affiliated with ISIS or Al Qaeda or anybody; not even "real" Muslims, basically two French-Canadians who didn't fit in*.

Lone wolves is a war-on-terrorism term, these were loners, losers. Estranged from their families and friends, socially isolated and, in the silence of rejection, embracers of alternative beliefs, *muezzin* calls from afar, *jihad*.

In both cases, they adopted Islam as a reaction, conversion was like a party-membership requirement on the way to becoming fighters for the Revolution. And that's the point, any

* Although his father came from Libya, Zehaf-Bibeau was raised in French and attended Catholic school.



revolution would have done — they wanted to burn down the school where they'd been bullied, the society from which they'd been outcast.

--

Friend of a friend. 1980. Studying to be a barber, living in a halfway-house for newly-released prisoners, had to be in every night at a certain time, go to barber school every morning, not drink or do drugs. Nice guy, intelligent, engaging. Smallish, only in his thirties but balding, didn't look like a criminal at all. What he'd done?

He was turned away from a nightclub for being too drunk, a couple of bouncers threw him down some stairs. He came back with a can of gasoline, doused the entrance, the stairs, lit a match, couple of dozen people died, it was in all the papers, this was that guy.

Nice, intelligent, engaging. A bit nervous, now that I thought about it, a bit intense at times, kind of paranoid.

--

In 1999, I wrote a piece about for the "culture divide" issue of *The WorldPaper*, a Boston-based international newsmagazine. I foresaw a society of deafness, where like-minded people endlessly talked only to themselves on an ever-increasing number of increasingly narrow-minded internet forums.

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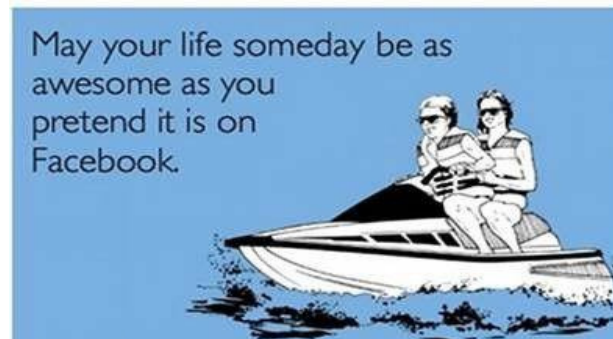
Loups-garous ...

— continued

This has happened everywhere, especially in the U.S. since 9/11. The violence of reactionary web-discourse heightens the venom-level of anti-government populism spouted by the talking heads at Fox News (sic), not to mention right-wing radio stars like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck. The resulting Republican base is such that Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal, with an eye toward the 2016 presidency, recently did an about-face on the question of evolution. After giving a speech exhorting Republicans to “stop being the stupid party” in the face of science (a trial balloon that exploded on launch), he was questioned on his belief in creationism. “I’m not a evolutionary biologist,” he said. “I know what my church taught me.”

As Stephen Colbert quickly pointed on the Comedy Network, Jindal actually majored in biology at an Ivy League school, graduating with honors. He won a Rhodes scholarship to study political science at Oxford and went on to run Louisiana’s state university network. The irony is that Jindal is one of the few “ethnics” in the Republican constellation — his brown skin is accepted. Being an academic is not.

The virtual medium, in addition to affecting its own message, has come to transform the public realm. Anonymous screamers tap away on keyboards and are quoted on tv. Photoshopped stock turns an all-white crowd multi-ethnic in political campaign literature. Anonymous accusations become a way of bypassing the judicial system. In public health,



cross-border pharmaceuticals provide a booming market for counterfeit and out-of-date drugs. In education, bogus “institutions” like Trump University — and too many *bible colleges* to mention — sell on-line “diplomas” to the ignorant; at the same time, fictive diplomas from real schools and plagiarized term-papers have never been so ubiquitous.

The often make-believe world of the internet overlaps what we still think of as the real world in ways we’re only now beginning to grasp. Who could foresee that an apocalyptic call for death and destruction from Dark Age fanatics in Syria would find resonance in the heads of two middle-class French-Canadians half a world away?

The virtual affects the real, it can also replace it. Loners never have to be alone, faceless friends abound on Facebook. People are free to live out fantasies and the fact that other people believe in them makes them real. *Fakebook friends* exchanging fairy tales. The kid who can’t skate makes believe he scored the winning goal and gets real applause — a pair of hands clapping — from a person he’ll never meet.

Other fantasies include the violent overthrow of Western Civilization by a rag-tag band of “rag-heads” who send a message a thousand years old: *the enemy of my enemy...*

A way to fight back against the society that rejected you,

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Loups-garous ...

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excluded you, reduced you to silence and the status of detritus. Fear, humiliation and scars, rage and the need for revenge, far outweigh minor problems like geography, language, ethnicity, religion.

The enemy of my enemy is, perhaps foremost, a way to find friends. To latch on to a “holy cause” is to be automatically accepted into a group that needs soldiers, brothers-in-arms.

--

My father, who has been on the planet 80 years this month, is upset. First there was 9/11, then wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and, just over a year ago, terror in our hometown — the Boston Marathon bombing. Now there's ISIS. He thinks Couture-Rouleau and Zehaf-Bibeau were operatives, part of some kind of network.

I tell him they were social rejects who'd found inclusion, search my mind for an analogy and come up with people who'd bombed abortion clinics and assassinated doctors in the '80s. “They weren't representatives or lobbyists, they were marginals who became zealots and it wasn't about religion.”

The next day, on tv, a psychologist talked about the Canadian killings and the attraction of becoming part of something bigger than yourself. Already suicidal, you became a martyr



It's not dog-eat-dog,
it's dog-won't-return-
dog's-phone-call.

Woody Allen

to whatever cause. “Like the people who killed abortion doctors in the '80s...”

--

Back in those same '80s, Woody Allen famously said “It's not dog-eat-dog, it's dog-won't-return-dog's-phone-call.” I found it amazing he'd know, given his status, but that phrase defined the future and I knew it at the time.

I first published in 1978, an op-ed piece for the *Boston Globe*. A second piece, submitted to the sports editor, was rejected but he sent a note with suggestions for next time: professional feedback that made me feel like part of the journalistic club. He wrote the letter himself, on a bang-bang *Royal*. A secretary typed my address on the envelope, on an electric typewriter, and sent it to the mailroom to be stamped and put on a truck, then on a plane. A lot of effort to communicate.

Today an answer is as easy as the push of a send-button and very few words are required. “No, but think of us again” or even “Sorry, no” would make a real difference but silence is the new norm — *ne pas donner suite*, as we say in French.

Just as wealth has become concentrated, so has social contact. More and more people are floss on the mill, left to the winds. Silence is deafening, especially to the mute. The winds are now planetary.

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Book Review

Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth

by Riza Aslan

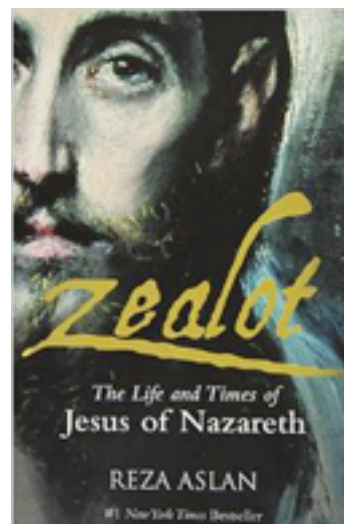
£ 14.95, 318 pages

Published by Westbourne Press

In a most charming and incisive TED presentation, Chimamanda Adichie reminded her listeners of “The Danger of a Single-Story.” This is nowhere more true than in the cultural identity narratives created by religion and reactions to them. If one were to take an overview of these reactions we might come up with rough categories like:

1. *Those whose faith is part and parcel of their full culture and daily existence, an unquestioned identity narrative. “It’s life.”*
2. *Those who consciously choose, commit to and practice a religion or spirituality inherited or chosen. “I believe... I practice...”*
3. *Those who have religion in their inherited identity narrative but for whom it rarely invades every day life in a conscious way. “I’m not a practicing...”*
4. *Those who are aware of it, but have no sense of belonging to it. “I know it’s there, but I’m not involved in it.”*
5. *Those who consciously reject any specific religious belief with a contrary belief system (atheism) about the nonexistence of a god and irrelevance of religion and either passively or militantly resist it. “There’s no compelling evidence.” Or, “It’s a pack of lies.”*
6. *Those who proclaim they cannot or do not know about the existence of a god or the validity of a religious belief system (agnosticism). “I dunno’.”*

Both commitment and resistance stemming from one or more



of the positions stated above have complicated the hard work of the search for the historical Jesus. Aslan’s book takes us to a new level, perhaps a new perspective to add to the existing ones. This perspective is made by the most powerful unified presentation that I’ve seen to date, both scholarly and readable (even the endnotes are compelling) of the social, cultural, political, economic and religious context that Jesus was born into, how it evolved during his short life, and in which he carried out his activity. It is a context of military occupation, repression and oppression, social inequality, religious and financial elitism, popular and revolutionary movements, messiahs, gurus, magicians and charlatans. It is credible to the reader not only because of the historical evidence provided, but because it could be a description of times much like our own, testimony to the fact that human behavior has not changed a lot, if any. In other words Aslan’s detailed contextual account gives us a much better sense of the historical Jesus than we are likely to come by elsewhere.

Jesus is not the sole subject of Aslan’s presentation. Rather, Jesus can be understood neither historically nor in his influence on history without a close look at the other figures both contemporary and subsequent. Thus there is incisive treatment of such characters as James the brother of Jesus, Paul the “Apostle to the Gentiles” and those Roman and Jewish figures who were actors in the context and affected the course of how the identity of Jesus was perceived and developed in subsequent generations and centuries.

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Zealot ... — continued

*In defining past events, should we accept
Napoleon's definition: "History is a set of
lies that we all agree on."?*



Is the Jesus of history less credible than the Jesus of faith? If history can show accretions and shifts, even the contradictions that have gone into the documents and built traditions of Christianity from the very outset, what then do we make of the Jesus of faith? Should we assume a naked scientific bias and declare that it is all poppycock? Or, should we be cynical about the historians like Napoleon who insisted that, "History is a set of lies that we all agree on," perhaps echoing Voltaire's view of history as, "the pack of lies we play on the dead." Or, should we take a "true believer" perspective and dismiss the historians as somehow depraved and lost in the past, deprived of meaningful faith? Is there a peaceful, even enriching coexistence possible between the two?

Perhaps the life story of the author, revealed in the opening pages of the book, provides a clue as to how we manage not just a religious identity, but the many cultural identities we bear that vacillate between data and aspiration. Born into a dispossessed Muslim heritage, Aslan became what one would describe as a "true believer" in a rather fundamentalist Christianity. When the logic of this was no longer tenable, he abandoned it, but later renewed his research into the meaning of this Jesus, who shaped so much of history, to discover how he himself and the Jesus of his research were shaped by history. In other words, our identity will, throughout a lifetime, travel like rivers merged from many streams. Our identity waters may become dammed up by contradictions in places and may

cut paths through unfamiliar places to arrive at the sea of our current if not ultimate meaning and destination. Aslan's closing line is both personal and reassuring: "... Jesus of Nazareth – Jesus the man – is every bit as compelling, charismatic, and praiseworthy as is Jesus the Christ. He is, in short, someone worth believing in."

Aslan's Jesus-in-context will provide relief and new perspectives to many readers. It may appear blasphemous to others. Yet here, in both the author's story and the story he tells of Jesus, it seems to me that we have a clue into how we both develop and live out our cultural identities, religious ones as well as the many others we carry with us or enter into. Frederick Douglass (US Abolitionist, 1818-1895) insightfully remarked, "We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present." This is what both religious believers and historical researchers attempt to do while as practitioners they bear a common human propensity for deviations into dogmatism, possessiveness, power, pied pipers and dictators, corrupt practice and the dismissal or repression of others. Neither religious belief nor scientific assertions relieve the itch for fleeing complexity.

Inevitably we are all, at our best, both believers and searchers. Whether searching for the truth in tradition or claiming that tradition is truth, we continue to build our identity narratives, inevitably shaped by the contexts we are immersed in.

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Zealot ... — continued

*There can be a rich co-existence
between history and faith.*



Conflict about these things can lead to further enlightenment as well deteriorate into violent jihad, crusades, and genocide. Both science and faith have shown their capacity for creating tools that can be used in either direction.

Aslan thus confirmed for me that there can be a rich co-existence if not intermarriage between history and faith. In the case of Jesus, this belief led me to create a Christmas message last year for my friends, wedding both history and tradition, as I take meaning and inspiration from them. It read as follows:

“Do you know this guy? He’s having a birthday soon and a lot of my friends are marking it. If you are making merry, enjoy the celebration and think a bit about the kind of guy he was...

- He had impressive ancestry, but was born under suspicious circumstances into a small-town, working class family.
- Lived in an occupied country, run by an insecure, ruthless puppet governor.
- Was a child refugee in a foreign country, yet became a precocious student.
- Followed an activist who was jailed and executed.
- Achieved insight through meditation, discipline and self-denial.
- Refused to be tempted by consumerism, lived on the road, advocated simple lifestyle.
- Went by foot or used inexpensive, shared transportation.
- Loved and admired by his friends, he could attract a crowd and hold their attention.

- Demonstrated how sharing creates abundance, had a healing touch.
- Protested the abuse of women, loved his buddies, was good with kids.
- Partied with disreputable riff-raff, unflagging advocate of poor folk and the down and out.
- Told great stories, delegated well to his team, calmed turbulent waters.
- Prized humility, revolution and peacemaking, probity, transparency and generosity.
- Respected tradition and decried its perversion and corruption.
- Fished up enough money to pay his taxes.
- Overcame ethnic bias, accepted and assisted outsiders and foreigners.
- Opposed oppressive legislation and legalism, saddle burr of the rich and powerful.
- Blew the whistle on hypocrisy, upset the high and mighty. Could hold his own in an argument.
- Betrayed by a trusted friend for hard cash, condemned by a kangaroo court, tortured and executed as a political prisoner.
- Down for the count of three, he made a comeback and lives on in those who share his spirit.”

Aslan’s book does not explain in any great detail why the movement initiated by Jesus of Nazareth succeeded in his times and why Christian identity narratives persistently morphed their way into the present, while those of so many Messianic and revolutionary activists before, during and after Jesus’ life were short-lived and disappeared. This is another book, no doubt, but I want to read it when it is written.

Reviewed by George Simons

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Book Review

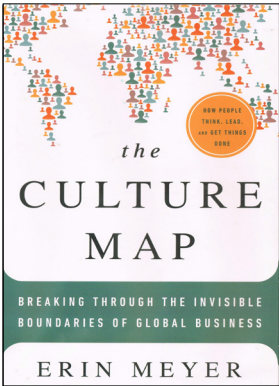
The Culture Map

By Erin Meyer
\$26.99, 228 pages
Published by Public Affairs Publishing

Twenty years ago, when the intercultural field was still in its infancy, there were few good books to enlighten the international business professional about the skills required for navigating cultural clashes. What was out there was either academic treatises nobody could understand or dilettantish drivel by so-called experts whose goal was to promote themselves. My, how times have changed... Today, countless works combine conceptual models with remarkable practical applications offering clear, practical advice on dealing with cross-cultural interaction. Books like *The Culture Map*.

Drawing on research-based frameworks as well as her own experiences, author Erin Meyer does a splendid job of painting realistic, absorbing (and sometimes funny) stories on what can happen when people from different backgrounds are expected to work together harmoniously. Her mode of expression is distinctly American, a sort of a pragmatic, "get things done" style, in which she maps out eight-dimensional scales which illustrate how cultures vary along a continuum from one extreme to its opposite. The scales are communicating (low- vs. high-context), evaluating (direct vs. indirect negative feedback), persuading (principles-first vs. applications-first), leading (egalitarian vs. hierarchical), deciding (consensual vs. top-down), trusting (task-based vs. relationship-based), disagreeing (confrontational vs. avoids confrontation) and scheduling (linear-time vs. flexible-time).

To demonstrate how these contrasting dimensions play out, she



takes a real situation between an Israeli executive working in a manufacturing plant in Russia. The culture map quickly tells you that the two cultures differ in three of the dimensions: persuading, leading and deciding. Some may claim it's too simple but it's actually an eye-opener for the non-worldly businessperson. Acquiring a new, more sophisticated understanding of cultural difference generates alternative experiences in the mind, laying the groundwork for consciousness-shifting. In short, the contrasts furnish an easy-to-understand baseline to work from.

I was particularly impressed by chapter five, a discussion on German and American decision-making styles. Americans perceive German organizations as hierarchical, given the formal distance between bosses and subordinates and the formality of titles. But German culture is consensual, decisions take time, everyone is consulted. And once one's been made, implementation is rapid-everyone has completely bought in and the decision is binding. Germans, on the other hand, consider American companies hierarchical because management style is more top-down. Decisions tend to be made fast and early, usually by one person, the boss. But Americans are flexible; if new information arrives, strategies change. Meyer points out that either of these systems can work... as long as long as everyone understands the rules of the game.

These contrasts are described in a style both straightforward and careful to be fair. All in all, this book is an excellent read for the global thinker.

Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt

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From the President

Livingstone Thompson, PhD

You can get involved. Let us know what skills you have to support the work of one of our working committees. supporting the efforts of the Board:

- (1) Communications,
- (2) Grants & Projects,
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- (5) Publication & Research,
- (6) Next Congress;

for further details see our website

[www.sietareu.org/what-is-sietar/committees]

What about a SIETAR EU summer school? What recommendations would you give the Board?

VISION 2025

Strategy Report to Support the
Creation of a Strategic Vision for SIETAR Europa

Nationals SIETARs are reminded to send feedback to the SIETAR EU Vision Document by January 31, 2015.

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Birth of SIETAR Switzerland



by Marianna Pogosyan

There is a place, 2.5 hours south of Zurich's bustling Bahnhofstrasse, 4 hours west of Lake Geneva's serene shores, 3.5 hours away from Bern's UNESCO World Heritage old town, and a nudge past Gotthard's tunnel walls, where the road zigzags along the rugged edges of turquoise water and the sun shines in Italian. Here, the pizza is molto buono, the palm trees are tall, and the sky is soaring cobalt - a color almost forgotten come winter to the rest of Switzerland. Yet, it's all Switzerland. It is all the Confoederatio Helvetica- a luminous melting pot of Germanic and Romance languages, cultures and cuisines, traditions and temperaments, all sharing the same backdrop of breathtaking Alpine peaks.

It is here, in the very heart of Europe, at the seat of countless international organizations, universities and multinationals, where in the lingering last days of summer, the latest SIETAR association was founded. As with all new beginnings, the birth of SIETAR Switzerland comes with hope and anticipation. Hope, to provide a virtual home, a formal platform for an ever-expanding network of professionals – coaches, researchers, consultants, psychologists, scholars and others passionate about using their expertise for furthering the intercultural field.

Multilingualism and multiculturalism are in the very essence of Switzerland's reality. As a country with one of the largest foreign populations in Europe, Switzerland must not only sustain its inter-cultural relations but also leverage its diverse intra-cultural context for the continued maintenance of its economic wealth and world-famous living standards. Now more than ever, there is a need for skilled professionals who can facilitate communication by mediating between worldviews and synthesizing cultural differences for a common good. In the coming months and years, SIETAR Switzerland is looking forward to welcoming many interculturalists to its home, where knowledge can be shared, intercultural awareness can be raised, best practices can be established, research can be discussed and new colleagues can be met over a few treats from the nearby Chocolaterie.

www.SIETAR-CH.org | welcome@sietar-ch.org
The Board
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Marianna Pogosyan | Angela Weinberger |Christa Uehlinger



Initiators — September 2014

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Refreshing the Cultural Paradigm: Sharing Stories, Theories and Next Practices

Valencia, Spain
21-23 May 2015

This congress welcomes all those whose life and work puts them at the interface of cultures, from the perspectives of economy, society, and education with the aim of reshaping intercultural discourse, questioning our current cultural paradigms and exploring new thinking to help us navigate complexity in our emerging global world. Thus our congress title mirrorsthis need.

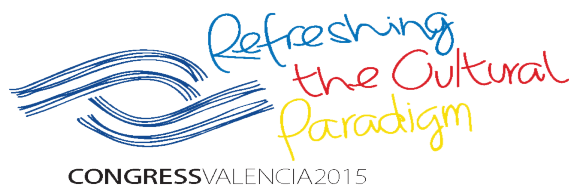
With an aim to re-examine our cultural dimensions, understandings and paradigms, we invite submissions that question, explore and refresh our cultural paradigms and theories, share new methods and best practices. We invite those engaged in business, training and research (including independent consultants, education, organisations) shaping European public sphere (NGO's, governmental organisations and institutions) as well as media and arts to share contributions from all disciplines and fields that deal with intercultural issues.

The location, Valencia, Spain, has been chosen as a strong, visible example of the mixing of the cultural heritage and modern technology. Its exposure to the Mediterranean shores and its historical mixture represents the potential of cultural synergies.

This is an exciting opportunity for researchers, practitioners and individuals at the interface of cultures in media, the arts, government and NGO's, particularly in the European context, to exchange ideas shaping our intercultural world. Click on the link below for further details.

To register as a participant: www.sietareu.org

For any further queries, write to: valencia2015@sietareu.org



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Events, workshops, congresses

Bath, U.K.

2-16 Jan. 2015

Developing Intercultural Training Skills This 5-day course is for those, wanting to develop their knowledge and skills to design — deliver intercultural training into their current courses.

23-27 March 2015

Designing and delivering intercultural training. This 5-day course is a follow up to the above course, also suitable for trainers who already have experience in the intercultural field. Courses in 2015 may be eligible for EU funding under the new Erasmus+ programme. More information at www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm or contact adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com

Milan, Italy

25-27 Feb, 2-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10 March 2015

1. *Constructivist Foundations of Intercultural Communication*, 2. *Engaging Diversity & Constructing Inclusion*, 3. *Sustainable Intercultural Development*, 4. *Embodied Culture*, 5. *Internal Intercultural Consulting*. Milton Bennett, Andrés Tapia, Lee Knefelkamp, Ida Castiglioni, and Diane Hofner Saphiere expound on the different aspects of the intercultural field. 15% discount for SIETAR

members. More information at <http://www.idrinstitute.org/>

Valencia, Spain

18 -19 May, 2015

Thiagi's Tools for Intercultural Training This is a pre-conference workshop of the SIETAR Europa congress. Participants learn to facilitate, analyze, and improve Thiagi's Tools that work in the intercultural field. The activities include simulations, games, and other types of training activities created by Thiagi. More information at info@diversityandinclusion.net

Valencia, Spain

21 -23 May, 2015

Refreshing the Cultural Paradigm This congress welcomes all those whose life and work puts them at the interface of cultures, from the perspectives of economy, society, and education with the aim of reshaping intercultural discourse, questioning our current cultural paradigms and exploring new thinking to help us navigate complexity in our emerging global world. Thus our congress title mirrors this need. More information at <http://www.sietareu.org/>

Winterthur, Switzerland

1 - 3 June, 2015

Interactive Training Strategies This workshop, conducted by Thiagi, practices what it preaches. Participants learn new principles and procedures and apply them to creating and conducting different types of learning activities that meet their training objectives, audiences, and needs. More information at info@diversityandinclusion.net

Karlsruhe, Germany

4 - 15 August, 2015

Summer Academy on Intercultural Experience This learning event approaches relevant topics in intercultural management, communication and training and is intended to develop applied solutions for the problems in business and society. More information at <http://http://www.summeracademy-karlsruhe.org/>

Online Everyday

The SIETAR Europa group, discussing

"Can we actually educate leaders in Global Leadership Competence?"

on LinkedIn, has now over 8000 members. Plus it offers videos, articles, books, tools for the intercultural profession.

For more information, contact George Simons at diversophy@gmail.com

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