Canadian

and

American

Mindsets

A Tale of Two Nations
... so culturally far apart

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In 1776, the 13 American colonies declared independence from England with *E pluribus unum* as their motto: “out of many, one”. Today the phrase appears on U.S. currency and signifies that one people has emerged from myriad races, religions, languages and ancestries, the “melting pot”. But if you listen to Donald Trump, the American way of life is now being destroyed by illegal immigrants and the solution is to deport all 11 million of them. Our reporter in Montreal, Dan MacLeod, gives us his take on why a sizable minority of Americans are buying into this polarizing rhetoric. (from page 13)

Canada evolved differently. Founded as a union of distinct English and French populations, the art of coexisting was key; courtesy, modesty and cooperation are at the heart of the Canadian mindset. The country has become famous for social inclusiveness, dynamic multicultural exchange and, more recently, for its new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, a leader for the twenty-first century. (from page 10)

Our interviewee is Pari Narmazie, the newly-elected president of SIETAR Europa. Raised in Iran, she exemplifies the Persian way of perceiving the world and interacting with others. Those who’ve studied the millennial history of the country say its people have a unique understanding of time, symbiosis and nature which allows for differences and interdependency — “good thoughts, good words, good deeds.” (from page 3)

Last but not least, a short report on SIETAR Deutschland’s forum in Bonn last month, which showcased a number of fascinating presentations on culture, conflict and cooperation. (from page 19)
Pari Narmazie

An interview with SIETAR Europa’s new President

If you look at Iranian society, you’ll find that only about 50% of Iranians are of Persian origin. The other half consists of Kurds, Armenians, Turkmen, Arabs and nomadic groups. Each has its own language, but all also speak Farsi and most say they’re proud to be Iranian. One can’t help but be startled by the absence of specific ethnic conflict.

It appears there’s something in Iranian culture that allows people to transcend differences. The Iranian mindset seeks commonality, understands interdependency and generally doesn’t tolerate discrimination against minorities. This attitude is rooted in empire, a history of dynasties beginning with Cyrus the Great (576 – 530 BC), who demanded respect for the customs and religions of the lands Persia conquered, high-principled edicts which were later mentioned in the Old Testament.

Dr. Pari Namazie, the newly-elected president of SIETAR Europa, is a product of this cultural background but she also lived through the Islamic Revolution — a chaotic period in a region already teeming with armed conflicts and religious fanaticism — as a teenager. She quickly learned that survival meant developing strong bonds among friends and family. Despite the many hardships she endured, including leaving Iran, she’s still very proud to be Persian.

During the interview, I couldn’t help noting her overwhelming need to understand opposing views and traditions, as if she were on a lifelong journey for the insight to resolve differences. Only by bridging cultural barriers can people find similarities, ultimately allowing everyone to move forward in harmony.

Tell us how your life began.
I was born in Calcutta. My mother was Anglo-Indian and my father Iranian. My mother explained her background as a bit of a cocktail — British, American and some Portuguese, within the three generations who lived in India they had no Indian blood. My father was born in Iraq and raised in Iraq, India and Iran.

When I was four, my parents decided to move to Iran. It was the early ’70s, the oil-boom years leading to Iran’s modernization. My brother and I went to one of the American schools in Tehran and I grew up thinking all Iranians were like myself, that everyone spoke English. It took the Revolution for me to realize that the main language was Persian.

That was in 1978 and it had a profound impact on me. Our school closed, many of our American teachers were accused of being spies and almost all my friends left Iran. Those who stayed were sent to a conversion school, a
Pari Narmazie
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The Iranian revolution of 1978 had a profound impact on the life of Pari Narmazie.

A one-year immersion in Persian to help us integrate. I must have been thirteen or fourteen.

A funny but painful story. Following the Islamic Revolution, compulsory hijab was introduced to women’s clothing (men also sometimes tell us they had some form of “hijab” introduced into their dress code). The Iranian hijab is either in the form of a chador (a cloth cut in a large semi-circle covering your whole body) or a knee length coat worn over pants with a head scarf. Head scarfs range from a tight-face fit (called the “maghnae”) to a loose do-it-yourself.

I still remember the first day I wore hijab. I was walking back home from school, the boys I used to play with in my neighborhood, past me on their motorbike, stopped, turned around, stared at me and burst out laughing. I felt so small and uncomfortable, we were suddenly different and divided, this cloth separated me from them. We’d grown up together and it suddenly felt like such a division between us.

When the revolution came, we suddenly had Islamic values imposed on us. I remember early days of the Islamic republic, where so much was unknown and unclear. In the Iranian school, we were asked if we prayed, if we were Islamic. Children would sometimes inadvertently betray their families for not being religious. Suddenly you’re in a society where you’re forced to lie, I was suddenly introduced to this concept of survival — of living a double life. You have to know where the line is. What side of yourself you show to whom, where and when. That was a major awakening for me. I understood that truth has many shades.

Going from a Western experience of life to suddenly becoming more Islamic made me question what Islam and what religion was. We grew up liberal, with Islam and Christianity. My father was Moslem and came from a rather religious background; his father was a professor of theology and a very learned man. My mother was a practicing Christian, we became very flexible and secular in our approach to religion.

You come from a Christian-Moslem family. What religion were you raised in?
My father wanted us to grow up with his religion, but seeing him pray and fast during Ramadan was the only Islamic education we received from him. My mother was a practicing Christian who went to church every Friday — in Iran, the weekend is Thursday, Friday. I remember there was a blind man on the way to church and she’d give him money every week without fail. He sensed my mother and would smile at her as she approached and say “Merci Kh-
Pari Namazie  — continued

After the revolution, women in Iran are now required to wear a scarf, the hijab, and are not allowed to mix with the opposite sex in public. This idea of charity and looking after those in need was the religion I learnt. That actions count, not being forced to do something but rather believing and living it.

How was your experience in Iranian schools? I was in Iranian schools for five years, during my teenage years. It was the biggest culture shock of my life. I came from an environment where we called our teachers by their first names. We were encouraged to ask questions, to challenge, to speak out and also have fun. Suddenly I found myself in an environment where you did not speak unless spoken to, where you were known by your family name, where you memorize and repeat. For the first time in my life I was surrounded by people who came from different backgrounds and social classes, I didn’t know who to trust or what their motives were. And, then we also had the newly introduced hijab and a newly formed Islamic republic and a country at war with Iraq at the time.

Schools were segregated and so was society to a large extent. Boys and girls were not allowed to mix freely. We had an Islamic (moral) police introduced, they patrolled streets to make sure women were in proper Islamic dress, and no immoral behavior was taking place. If boys and girls were caught together, they could go to prison, be whipped, your family would have to pay a fine. Again, you lived a double life — outside the house and inside the house. It was confusing for me but it taught me how to deal with risk and uncertainty.

Becoming an Islamic country meant we had to abide by Islamic rules, legislation and practices. For us at school, apart from segregation, hijab, introduction of Arabic and religious studies, it also meant we had to say “namaz” or pray. We were taught prayer at home, but in a different way and with the belief that it came from the heart, I didn’t know how to pray in Islam, nor in Arabic. The harshest thing was being forced to do this, every day at a certain time, with the sense that if you do, you are a better person and closer to God. I never felt this was a religion I wanted to be part of.

In my first year in high school, I had a religion teacher, a very interesting woman who’d just come back from the U.S. and spoke fluent English. When I told her that I was struggling with the language, she said “Why don’t you write it in English?” Suddenly, instead of getting Cs, I was getting As because I could express myself. I think that was the first person I ever met who was a religious role model for me. She was kind, funny, Islamic or religious and very authentic. When she talked to us, we listened and she heard us.

Through all these experiences at the time, we did not see...
Islam in a kind, compassionate way. There was anger, condemnation, fear, betrayal — a lot of phenomena that come with major revolutions. I never saw much compassion. Sadly, that distanced me from Islam for years and once again I thought all Muslims were like the ones I knew in Iran. Only after leaving Iran was I able to question things and see Islam and my identity more objectively.

After graduating from high school, where did you study?

I was 18 when I went to England. Interestingly, I didn’t want to leave Iran after graduation. I was extremely proud to live in Iran and loved my country, we had a very special life there. Through all its challenges of growing up in post-revolutionary Iran, we made strong friendships, we were survivors, defiant, resistant. It was my mother who insisted that I study abroad. My mother used to work but after the revolution was forced to become a housewife, like many other professional women at that time. It was her way of making sure I was independent.

I studied my A levels in Cambridge. It took me a long time to undo some of unconscious fears I grew up with. In Iran, the Islamic patrol cars were Nissans. Whenever I saw a Nissan car in England, I'd put my hand on my head and think, “Oh my God, where’s my scarf? What wait a minute, I’m not in Iran.”

It was also the first time I met Muslims outside Iran and that was a major, major shock for me. One of my friends, I think from Nigeria, wished me for the holy month of Ramadan. When I looked confused, he asked if I was fasting? I said no. He was shocked and I was also shocked. He was shocked, probably expecting Iranians from the Islamic Republic of Iran to be “proper” Muslims and I was shocked to find a Muslim who actually practiced Islam, I thought all Muslims were pretentious like the ones I knew in Iran. It was then that I saw the religion Islam, as a global religion, a belief, a way of life and not as tool for control. That was a major wake up call for me.

After doing my A-levels, I went to the University of Leicester, doing biology, marketing and computer studies. In the second year, I transferred to Middlesex University’s Business School in London and finished with a business degree.

What happened after that?

There was a very strong pull in me to go back to Iran. We had many family upheavals at the time, and I felt a strong need to be there for my family. I had also met my future husband at university, an Iranian. Without his support, returning would have been a very difficult process.

I went back to a country I loved and still love. I knew I had changed and it felt like I was the square cube trying to push
myself into the circle shape, I don’t think I ever felt more misplaced in my life. My family was broken and in turmoil, the country I loved was distant to me. I felt more alien in my home than I did when I lived abroad.

The stabilizing factor at the time was my husband Bijan. But he came with new challenges. He comes from a close knit, loving and traditional family and even though I consider myself Iranian, it was a form of Iranian I had never encountered. Their love, warmth, support of one another was the most beautiful form of family love I have ever seen, but it was also one of the most overpowering. It was amazing and scary at the same time. My introduction to traditional Iran came from his family and it was one of the hardest challenges in my life, trying to keep my own identity, my own roots, and not be suffocated by this other culture. In SIETAR terms we often talk about “otherness”, and I often find it amusing that the otherness for me was actually my own culture.

When we came back to Iran, we both worked for various companies. After several months, we decided to start our own and in 1993, we started our first management consultancy (we now have a group of consulting firms). It was a prosperous time in Iran, foreign companies were entering the market and we understood their needs and how to provide international practices. We quickly grew and were able to attract extremely good talent from abroad. At one time, we had over 50 employees and offered a one stop consulting services in economic, market entry, legal, communication, public affairs, political understanding as well as human resources.

A lot of these companies would ask, “How do I work with my Iranian colleagues?” Gradually, this became my area of expertise. I started offering intercultural training or awareness programs, asking questions like “Why do Iranians drive like this?”, “Why do they always try to cut corners on things?”, “Why can’t Iranians plan long term?”, “Why do they manage differently?”

I was part of this intercultural journey, as the first few years of living in Iran, I found I referred to Iranians as “those Iranians”. One day, unconsciously I found I was saying “we Iranians”. I felt proud that finally I had bridged that divide and that I belonged to this diverse society.

This led me to do a research PhD at Middlesex University on all these areas of interest, including cross cultural management, management in developing countries, management of joint-ventures, transferability, standardization and localization. The end product was a thesis on the transferability of HRM policies and practices in international joint ventures in Iran. This also helped in my work as an intercultural consultant to organizations.
Pari Narmazie
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About that time, when I was on this cultural quest, I met a British diplomat’s wife and told her about my studies and questions I was addressing. She said, “You should go to SIETAR!” She was a member and talked about Vincent Merk, President of SIETAR Europa at the time. Shortly afterward, I went to my first SIETAR congress in Vienna, Austria. That was in 2002.

What was your reaction when you met Sietarians in Vienna?
I was so moved after my first SIETAR congress, I felt I was finally home. I found a group of people who had the same questions I did, on identity, on understanding the pulls and pushes in groups, in societies, in organizations. It gave me answers to why I felt so different. I found people who related to me and who I could relate to. When I told them some of my experiences, they said “Oh, this is the ‘other culture’. I still remember the discussions I had with people in my first SIETAR.

SIETAR provides an environment to explore, examine identity, why we are the way we are. People care about you and your development, what’s happening in your life. It combines the personal, what we’re going through, with the professional, how we can explore and explain this to our stakeholders and the communities we work with. It still feels like I’m coming home when I come to SIETAR events and it is filled with very loving friends. It’s like a thanksgiving weekend, or in Persian terms I would compare it to our Shabe Yalda festival (the longest night celebration), where friends gather and discuss, share, debate, joke, tell stories, recite poetry and eat a lot.

A “personal” organization seems so important to you...
Yes, because SIETAR provided amazing support to my family when my husband was imprisoned in Iran. In 2009 when we had the re-election of the hard-liner President Ahmadinejad. People believed it was an unfair election, and there was a wave of “silent protests” in the streets. The government didn’t expect this sort of turmoil, they thought it was some sort of conspiracy. They cracked down severely — people were arrested and disappeared. You’d hear that their bodies weren’t returned to their families.

My husband was a well-known authority on Iranian issues. Returning to Tehran from an international conference, he was taken away by plain-clothes guards at the airport. We didn’t know where he was, it was terrifying. In fact, he was in prison, where he stayed for three months. You start questioning the whole system, what you read in the news, what’s true and untrue. And you realize how fragile and volatile not only life is, but your existence is.

A number of individuals at SIETAR took an active role in...
informing people of my husband’s arbitrary arrest, helping in any way they could. It was this friendship that I found so precious.

He was accused of espionage and given a five-year prison sentence. While he was out on bail, we decided that he would leave the country. Again one of the more painful decisions in our life. We believed we had a role to play in the development of our country, we never thought we would be forced to leave. We settled in Vienna and my husband and I started our sixth consulting company, focusing not only on Iran but also the Middle East region.

We have also started an NGO which works as a bridge between Iranians, the Iranian diaspora and Europe. Uniting the Iranian diaspora is a great challenge but also a great source of joy for me. I divide my time between our consulting firms, our non-profit, a touch of academia, plus SIETAR Europa.

You’ve been through so much. Most people don’t experience one tenth of what you’ve gone through. Now that you’re president of SIETAR Europa, what do you hope to achieve?

I am very happy to be involved with SIETAR. I’ve been a Board member since 2012. I guess until you are a Board member you really don’t know how SIETAR is run, the questions and challenges each national SIETAR has but also how to continue, sustain and develop this organization. It has been a great learning experience for me.

My objective in this role is to make sure each national SIETAR is listened to, acknowledged, and we as SIETAR Europa respond to these different points of view and reach a consensus. Also I believe we need to build a stronger foundation within the structure of SIETAR Europa, that is part of listening to the national SIETARs.

We need to move forward, especially given what we’re seeing in Europe at the moment. There are the many different crises, not only the migrant and refugee issue, also what’s happening in the Middle East. It’s overwhelming the influence this is having in Europe. What’s SIETAR’s role in this? How do we as an organization respond to these global uncertainties?

The experiences I had dealing with uncertainties in Iran were profound, teaching me the meaning of survival. I sense that many Western organizations find it difficult to understand. This uncertainty process is strongly related to how we get different communities to open up and build trust, work on issues of identity, examine common values. To not focus on the differences, but on what our strengths are. What are the similarities that bring us together? That’s still an ongoing journey for me. Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt
Justin Trudeau

The multicultural Prime Minister

by Patrick Schmidt and Dan MacLeod

Last October, Canada voted overwhelming to throw out the increasingly devious and divisive Conservative government of Stephen Harper... despite the fact that two other parties naturally split the center-left electorate. The reason is Justin Trudeau and what he did was reunite the country, right and left, coast-to-coast.

Mr. Trudeau — a 44-year-old, movie-star handsome, 6-foot-2 snowboarder, yoga practitioner and self-proclaimed feminist — has already achieved international rock-star status with his boyish smile and youthful idealism. One headline sums it up, “Hunky Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the JFK Jr. of Canada”.

In fact, he’s the son of Pierre Trudeau, “the father of modern Canada”, who was Prime Minister for over fifteen years.

Canada is defined by its Nordic culture: great spaces, hard winters and the need for people to help each other survive against nature. There’s a humility that comes of it, a “niceness” so unusual it’s the standard American joke about Canadians — how they’re too polite.

And there are other reasons. The English-French divide; also the fact that the two built the country together and have co-existed fairly peacefully for over 250 years. And, of course, there’s the fact of living upstairs from the huge party that is the U.S. Fun to visit but a bit hectic. Nice to be able to go back home where things are quieter.

Like the U.S., Canada is a collection of identities from around the world but, instead of the “melting pot”, the mindset is multicultural exchange and pointedly inclusive social policies. Canada has a tenth the population of the U.S. but a hundred times less racial tension. And everyone has free health insurance. A lot of Canadians own guns but they use them for hunting, they don’t carry them around in day-to-day life. The Canadian military is known around the world for their work as U.N. “peace-keepers”.

It’s the country that gave us maple syrup, ice hockey, snowmobiles and snow-blowers. A laid-back place where French has official-language status in every province, no matter how small the francophone population. And this attitude has paved the way for all cultures to have their own places in the national experience.

Canada was invaded twice by the U.S. — during wars with England — yet there were no real repercussions, no prolonged enmity. It was as if the people felt it had little to do with them, it was something between the U.S. and England. In the 149 years since Canada became a sovereign state, the U.S. has been its closest ally and biggest business part-
ner and the two share the longest undefended border in the world.

But the best example of what evolved into the “laid-back” Canadian psyche can be found in Québec. The English won the war in 1763 but had the good sense to leave the former French colony its legal system, churches, schools and newspapers. When the Americans invited French Canadians to join them in fighting the British in 1776, the latter weren’t interested.

The fact that Quebecers were allowed to keep their language had a profound effect on later generations. Today, nearly a quarter of Canadians are bilingual and that translates into an intrinsic openness toward other cultures and an extremely positive image on the world stage.

Immigration since the ’60s, coupled with a higher birth rate among immigrants, has changed the face of urban Canada. In Montreal, “allophones” (first language other than French or English) outnumber anglophones; in the city’s public schools, they outnumber even francophones. Canada’s “two solitudes” are no longer alone and the French-English conflict which nearly split up the country 20 years ago now seems almost parochial.

History is being left behind. Toronto resembles Boston or New York in its ethnic make-up and Vancouver’s Asian demographic is comparable to San Francisco’s. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has all but erased the border. But Canadians run no danger of becoming Americans; they’ve been remaining politely apart for over two centuries now.

Which brings us back to Justin Trudeau, the pure product of a culture where modesty and openness are part of the national DNA. When he was sworn in as Prime Minister, he took the bus to the ceremony, then walked around outside afterward, carrying his kids and mixing in with the crowd. He also introduced a stunningly diverse cabinet: two Native people, three Sikhs, two disabled persons and male-female parity.

For most Canadians, Trudeau and his ministers symbolize the “real” Canada, rooted in kindness and decency at home and abroad. Universal health care, official bilingualism, multiculturalism, international activism for peace and third-world development.

Justin Trudeau represents the Liberal tradition of Lester B. Pearson, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his work in defusing the Suez Canal Crisis and was Prime Minister from 1963-1968. Of Pierre Trudeau himself, who es-
Established national bilingualism and repatriated the country’s Constitution from England.

As Trudeau fils said last November, “We know in our bones that Canada was built by people from all corners of the world, who worship every faith, who belong to every culture, who speak every language.”

Still, a certain portion of older, white anglophones in the West resent multicultural liberalism. During the election, the Conservatives portrayed Trudeau as a rich young dandy who smoked marijuana and traveled to hot vacation spots.

In fact, Trudeau, a former teacher, had to work hard to get his start in politics, running for Parliament in a working-class, multi-ethnic district of Montreal which political experts gave him little chance of winning. He went out and met the people, was a tireless campaigner, and pulled off an upset.

But the event that put him on the map was a boxing match four years ago. Trudeau, an amateur boxer, offered to fight three rounds to raise money for cancer. Other people have done charity boxing (comedian Ricky Gervais, for example). What was insane about this was Trudeau offered to fight anyone the Conservatives could come up with.

They came up with a 37-year-old senator named Patrick “Brass Knuckles” Brazeau. He’d grown up on a tough Native reserve (reservation, in the U.S.) and served in the army. He had a black belt in karate. He was four inches shorter but massive and tattooed — he looked like a professional bodyguard. Trudeau, on the other hand, looked like an accountant. Brazeau was a three-to-one favorite among the bookies.

He launched an all-out assault from the opening bell and kept it up for the entire first round, charging at Trudeau, cornering him and clubbing away with jabs and hooks. Trudeau took the blows on his arms, protected his face, backed away as best he could, looking startled at times but mostly quietly determined. He knew Brazeau could knock him out with just one of those bombs.

He managed to not get killed in the first round and Brazeau had nothing left for the second, Trudeau methodically destroyed him after that. Nothing flashy, no bombs or no bull-rushes, just patient boxing. The Canadian way.

Brazeau was dazed and bleeding when the referee stopped the fight in the middle of the third round.
Why Trump?
(Bonobos)

by Dan MacLeod

What’s with all the frustration out there? Why the politics of anger and hatred? And not just in America.

Why Les Pen (three of them now)? What if the economic miracle of France — of Western Europe — had come to pass and things had continued to expand, like the universe? What if the deuxième génération hadn’t run into the 1980s? They’d be weaving themselves into the fabric of society instead of raising a third generation of “Arabes” in the same housing-towers they grew up in.

What if American Business hadn’t co-opted the American Dream? Hadn’t supplanted Kennedy’s Space Age optimism and European Union synergy? What if the American and European economies had continued to deepen and widen, to grow democratically within and ripple outward across the planet?

When people integrate — and are integrated — they bring a changing of allegiances. Italians in America were spat on in the early 1900s but their sons fought Mussolini in World War Two. And when Kennedy was elected President in 1960, the Irish Republic gained a new sense of itself on the world stage or, as my Boston-Irish granny might have said, “The folks in the Old Country grew an inch!”

Writing about gangs and drugs on Chicago’s West Side in 1989, I was struck by the fact that Pulaski Station was now in the middle of a black ghetto — the Poles who’d built the neighborhood had moved on. That’s what people did, wave after wave of them. Move on, move up.

And then they didn’t. Upward mobility flat-lined. The Statue-of-Liberty building of America which began with the Irish Potato Famine in the 1840s and reached its apogee in the 1960s with Kennedy’s global-communion Peace Corps, it all stopped with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Just when “African-Americans” came into being — literally. Only fifteen years earlier, when they still couldn’t vote in the South, they’d called themselves Negroes. Now they were claiming their heritage like all the other hyphenated-Americans. They were about to melt into the pot like everyone else when everything came to a screeching halt. It was like waiting in line to get into the club except suddenly they were tossing everybody out. Beginning with working-class whites, as globalization shut down local plants and mills and factories.

The Reagan-Thatcher “conservative revolution” used the socio — to get to the economic. The culture war (against academics, atheists, civil rights activists, feminists, homosexuals) won the elections but the first order of business was business: vertiginous tax-drops for the wealthy, massive cuts to social programs, waves of public-sector lay-offs, defunding of scientists, deregulation of industry, deregulation of business and finance and an all-out war on unions.
Why Trump… — continued

The Reagan-Thatcher philosophy was to roll back social advances to advance the cause of the top 1%.

This has essentially been the business model since, no matter who gets elected, and now it's like 1928 again (the top .1% of U.S. families worth as much as the bottom 90%; the top 1% of the population owning 35% of the country, etc.).

... But what if Reagan hadn't been elected? No Reagan, no Trump? What if Jimmy Carter had been allowed to continue his human-rights approach to foreign policy. Imagine it had somehow become the international norm — Israel and Palestine might have solved their differences.

What if we’d managed to turn the domestic economy toward more equal sharing. And the drop in social costs (prison, welfare, health care) had been given time to show. And new revenues created, perhaps by America acting more European.


What if, by now, America, having continued to evolve, expand, exponentially re-invent itself and generate growth, was a true Land of Plenty, like in the folk songs.

What if the country, instead of threatening to deport millions of Latinos who’ve been living there for decades, was so proud of their national role that Cinco de mayo was about to become a U.S. holiday.

What if, instead of filling America's prisons, black men had decent jobs and fair futures, just that. If, instead of being evicted from millions of apartments across the country each year, black women had at least a stable roof over their kids' heads.

If there weren't millions of dispossessed white people in post-industrial America. If there weren't more guns than people in the country, and as many gun-massacres as there were days last year. Would the Fear and Loathing still work?

In 2007, bonobos were all the rage. “Where chimpanzees fight and murder, bonobos are peacemakers,” a PBS documentary began, and the New York Times described them as “humane”. The fact that they French-kissed, often copulated face-to-face and sometimes engaged in oral sex made them poster-children for anthropomorphic fundraising by conservationists.

Because they live in nearly-inaccessible rain forests in the war-
Why Trump…
— continued

“Thats it, Donald, tell it like it is about those Mexican rapists!”

Problem is when people feel the system’s rigged against them. That’s why Bernie Sanders, among the young and idealistic. And Donald Trump? What is it people see in an arrogant, indecently rich, proudly manipulative, spiteful bully? He’s their cartoonish superhero, the answer to frustrations, small and large, envy, misplaced or valid. Feelings of injustice and powerlessness in an increasingly distant, virtually anonymous world. And the existential fears too, unfathomably-rapid change coupled with economic decline while aging.

In the meantime, a cosmetically-comical man with the emotional maturity of a 13-year-old is running for President and he gets away with name-calling, makes fun of people nobody likes, promises to kill people everybody hates and even kill their families, kind of like the Mafia except it’s the U.S. government — cool!

It’s on the tv news but it’s like a video-game, Virtual Politics. Scream as loud as you want, you don’t have to answer for anything you say. It’s a chance to revisit the jeers and tears of Junior High decades later, laugh at your buddy Donald’s jokes about ugly girls and menstruation and people going-to-the-bathroom and handicapped people and colored people in general and Muslims in particular and Latinos, especially Mexicans, and, basically, foreigners, and also Americans who don’t applaud the right speeches.
Constructive Interculturality

Ideas for cooperation in international organizations such as ‘Alleo’

by Christoph Barmeyer / Eric Davoine

This article is the shorten version of a study done by Professor Christoph Barmeyer and Professor Eric Davoine on how two international train companies, Deutsche Bahn (DB) and the Société Nationale de Chemins de fer Français (SNCF) created the highly successful joint-venture Alleo.

Intercultural Management is about dealing with cultural differences in organizations and their impact on the labor and management behavior. The focus is on intercultural situations, such as communication, cooperation processes between departments and hierarchical levels, as well as indoors and external relations of organizations. Many of these intercultural interaction situations are characterized as problematic: expectations and targets are not met, leading often to personal frustrations and negative financial results.

Using a case study of Alleo GmbH, a joint venture between Deutsche Bahn and SNCF, we wish to show how culturally and institutionally different systems and labor practices can be interculturally merged. In addition we have examined the success factors that promote intercultural organizational learning.

Alleo — a bi-cultural organization

Based on the strategic objectives of the German DB and the French SNCF, the joint-venture Alleo GmbH was founded in 2007 to offer high-speed rail connections for passengers between Germany and France. The two organizations share all costs and revenues equally, mirroring the same strategic structure of the German-French TV station ‘ARTE’. It is clear from the beginning that the two systems require some harmonization and standardization, done through mutual negotiations as well as learning adaption processes.

Alleo is not explicitly a market brand, but is an indirect result of DB and SNCF, TGV and ICE.

— The name refer to the highly symbolic cooperation of the joint-venture. “All” are the first three letters of ‘alliance’ as well as the French word “Allemagne’. Not to forget the English expression ‘all together’, which refers to the highly symbolic cooperation of Europe’s largest train companies.

— ‘eo’ comes from Latin and means ‘I go’, expressing dynamism and progress.

Theoretical Framework

Internationally active organizations find themselves in a continuous process of searching for ideas, solutions, decisions and goal achievements. Not only the different institutional and cultural systems and contexts must be considered, but also cultural expectations, perspectives, beliefs and skills of the specialists and managers.

All employees, whether working alone or in teams, will consciously or unconsciously seek a constant balance and compensation for different positions. Implied is that there are unspoken,
Constructive interculturality...
— continued

established “successful” strategies that will prevail. That each culture believes it has the “right way”, intercultural collaboration is made more difficult.

One way to overcome this is to examine the findings of intercultural management research. Brannen and Salk did an empirical study on German-Japanese joint-ventures, and concluded that “when people of different cultural backgrounds interact, a recombination and modification of cultural traits create a ‘new negotiated’ culture. What is important is not simple what is ‘transferred’, but what has been recreated or agreed upon. The results and consequences of intercultural interactions can not be predicted or determined, but the continuous communication, i.e dialectic learning and knowledge acquisition, results in a new culture.”

Constructive intercultural management makes innovation relevant for both groups. This means that cultural differences in intercultural processes are accepted; they are not viewed as taboos or ethnocentric, rather as a potential enhancement for working processes and results.

Results
To carry out cross-border rail traffic, processes and procedures are newly worked out. Specialists and management personnel involved in the joint-venture stress that intensive dialogues are important, as well as the partner’s attitude toward issues and problems: “We talk a lot with one another. In my team, we have regular discussions every two weeks. Additionally, I have one-to-one talks once a week. When we sit down together, the focus is on what each cooperation partner is doing. This is a sort of benchmarking and best practices.”

At the same time it becomes clear that a reciprocal intercultural negotiation between strong and equal partners is a tough process. “The pattern is quite clear when you want to reach something, there’s always a give and take. When we want something from our SNCF partner, then there will be a counter-claim: ‘Look, we have something on our side that needs to be changed’.”

What is interesting is how complex the negotiation process is, due to the size and bureaucracy of SNCF and DB. “Usually a partner makes a proposal and we discuss it. When the proposal is made in their own organization, it encounters resistance. We ask ourselves then: how will we be able to find a solution.”

Collective intercultural learning takes on a special role in the development of new solutions and work practices. Again and again, discovering the other person’s methods and solutions is in the foreground of the learning process as well as the subsequent acceptance and integration, often through modification and adaptation, in one’s own working process. This means adaptation learning (single-loop) as well as reflexive learning (double-loop).
Constructive interculturality...
— continued

Success factors for organizational intercultural learning
Numerous factors have had an effect on Alleo as a learning, bi-national interface company with newly negotiated labor practices and products. From the many possible factors, we have found seven that have continuously contributed to the success of an international joint-venture. First of all, balance and reciprocity play a decisive role on the strategic and operational levels. Another important factor is the interface employee, who is often bicultural, such as the Saarland or Lorraine employee. They make sure that culturally sensitive decisions are carefully carried out. What is also crucial is high motivation, i.e. a willingness to make the joint venture work. Another point to consider is to have personnel who possess multiple language skills, which leads to less misunderstandings. Furthermore, intercultural competence needs to be developed so that cultural differences can be quickly and objectively recognized. And lastly, an established institutionalization of bi-cultural cooperation contributes immensely to an effective working group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success factor</th>
<th>Effect and Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance and reciprocity: binomial</td>
<td>— Supportive of symmetry of interests through expressed “diplomatic” activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Common use of central resources and knowledge through recourse to the respective (national) social network</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Leads to steering of trust-building and intercultural work in the Alleo organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interface employee</td>
<td>— Communication function through the intake of different views</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Careful preparation of cultural sensitive decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>— Higher commitment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Inner drive and energy to find new solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple language skills</td>
<td>— Internalizing different perspectives through knowledge and understanding of different social systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Working efficiently</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Reduction of language misunderstandings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural competence</td>
<td>— Appropriate behavior through cognitive and emotional understanding of the other culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural development of personnel</td>
<td>— Developed intercultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Increased repertoire of knowledge and behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>— Mutual trust-building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutionalization</td>
<td>— Improved and established common accepted procedures and work methods: “best practices”</td>
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With the theme “Culture, Conflict, Cooperation”, SIETAR Deutschland’s Forum 2016 welcomed some 200 interculturalists to the Gustav Stresemann-Institute in Bonn from February 18-20. The catalogue promised two highly-reputed keynote speakers and an impressive range of workshops and presentations. It didn’t disappoint — participants were treated to a series of profound yet practical learning experiences. As one elderly Sietarian spontaneously exclaimed, “This is the best conference I’ve seen in a long time!”

The forum was dedicated to today’s conflicts and challenges, especially the current refugee crisis. To handle the wide range of topics, it was divided into five tracks: Society and Politics; Cultural Changes in International Organizations; Chances and Risks in Diversity; Conflict and Cooperation Management; and Reflections on different Approaches to Religion, Ethics and Psychology. A wide variety of cooperation models and methods of conflict-resolution were presented from the perspective of different disciplines and cultures.

The last session of the Society and Politics track was exceptionally informative. "When the war is over...” examined efforts to bring people back together after a long conflict. Ljiljana Simic showed how art is being used in the former Yugoslavia as a medium for hope. The provocative video “Looking for an E.U. husband” also provided for a lively discussion. Then Andrea Cohen talked about the role of communication in Jewish-German reconciliation and how “intense listening” to victims creates a bond, leading three participants to share similar experiences.

Finally, students Johan Krause and Hendrik Stang spoke of reconciliation in Rwanda, where over a million people were massacred in the space of three months in 1994. Twenty-one years later, the Tutsi and Hutu tribes are learning how to live together through an enforced government program but the two young men, who worked for the Red Cross there, questioned whether it would last.

The final keynote, “Micro- and Macro conflicts — what vicious cycles do to us and what we can do about it” was the highlight of the forum and ended with a standing ovation. In his presentation, Dr. Friedrich Glasl showed that all conflicts, whether on the personal or the state level, can be traced to the way our brains react to crisis. His model of escalation showed how the crisis in Ukraine got out of control, with the major parties now trying to find a face-saving solution. Applying his insights to one’s own intercultural encounters made for a fitting finale to an extraordinary conference.
Book Review

Ugliness: A Cultural History

By Gretchen E. Henderson
Reaktion Books, 224 pages
Euro 24 —

This treatment of the topic of ugliness by Gretchen Henderson is as hard to read as the topic is to seize. It needs to be read slowly, as one is overwhelmed by the plethora of materials and examples brought into the discussion. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, ugliness lives in all the senses. It is hard to recognize and accept the overall penetration and integration of our sensory and emotional response to the threat of what is outside the pale of acceptance, of what is different and possibly threatening to our self-image and social structures, what creates uncertainty in how we value or seek to protect ourselves.

Henderson frames ugliness squarely in the realm of culture, in the sense that it is a construction constantly under reconstruction, as the discourse with which we create our worlds is ever in motion. The problem is that ugliness is not an abstract concept or thing in itself. Rather our cultural storytelling makes ugliness a mobile attribution to be laid on the people and the things in our lives. It is created by mental processes, unconsciously and consciously, moving from within and entering from without.

Ugliness can be attributed to our malformation, deformation, and re-formation, as human beings exit from the womb, come back from the war, leave the beauty parlor, and rise from the tomb, this last in faith, superstition, fantasy and literature. Ugliness interacts with and informs our perceptions of race, ethnicity, social class, and inferiority. It fuels exclusion, colonization, and even genocide. In other words, our willingness to construct ugliness and our desire to remove or exterminate it can be the expression of our ugliness.

I remember looking at newspaper cartoons from the middle of the 19th century in the USA where Irish immigrants were depicted, not only with monkeylike features, but with darkened skin. Growth in familiarity may to alleviate some forms of ugliness, but our fascination with the ugly, the monstrous, the deformed continues in cinema, art, architecture, and is a full sensory experience.

In short this book can be of interest to interculturalists and particularly to those interested in what is now being labeled as "unconscious bias". It calls into question some of the dangers of how we evaluate others in essentialist dimensional frameworks of thought. If further motivates us to develop the kind of habits, tools, coaching and interventions that could help us come to grips with and reduce automated or inculcated dissociation or disgust about others different from us.

Reviewed by George Simons
Book Review

Intercultural Communication: Globalization and Social Justice

by Kathryn S. Sorrells  
Published by SAGE Publications, Inc.,  
U.S. $ 62 —, 336 pages

This textbook is a watershed in intercultural studies and practice. Not only is it up-to-date with rich examples and commentary taken from contemporary events, but most importantly it gives us paradigms and perceptual frameworks with which to understand ourselves and others at the various levels in which culture both creates us and is expressed by us. "Putting it all together" could well be an appropriate subtitle for the volume.

From the point of view of how we discover and identify culture, the author offers a key set of three perspectives or levels from which we can examine it. The author describes these as the

- micro (the cultural orientations to behavior, which we carry),
- meso (how these play out given group's thinking, histories and identities), and the
- macro (the power of political and economic factors and how these are spread by media discourse can live in are socially constructed realities)

These frames, or as she also calls them “entry points”, allow us to examine ourselves fully from a cultural perspective. Much of what we have called intercultural work has been created at the micro perspective, and unfortunately seems to have often stalled there. What Sorrells provides us with in this book spends some but little time there; rather she helps us to understand missing elements, (e.g., body bias, the cultural influence of artifacts and space) as well as the larger contexts and dynamics in which this micro level is both shaped and plays itself out.

Sorrells has come under criticism both from students and outsiders for heavy emphasis on social justice, which this reader feels is unwarranted, as it seems to be the elephant in the room – a taboo too large to recognize and deal with. The fundamentalism of many interculturalists seems to have borrowed the US street caution, “Don’t talk about religion or politics – it’s bad for business.” At best we attend to address these things among trusted friends, to preach to the choir, or insinuate in Facebook forays.

Thus, we ignore the essential cultural nature of the economy, the political system, and the role of media as cultural intermediaries, despite the fact that they influence everything we think, feel, and do. While we draw stipends from our intercultural businesses, without this broader perspective we are likely to be the crew occupationally assigned to “rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.”

Despite the proclivity of some readers to focus on Sorrells
preoccupation with race, gender, and other social issues as a rant rather than a remedy, it is important to note her presentation of a comprehensive Intercultural Praxis Model early on.

This enables the reader and user to intelligently organize and deal with what follows. Exercises and activities found at the end of each chapter consistently help call on this model as an agenda for exploring in personal and group experience what has been examined and highlighted in the chapter.

Nor is Sorrells hesitant to deal with globalization, despite its complexity, as a process that both sees culture as a resource and uses it as a commodity. All the more reason for globalization to be carefully examined, deservedly finding its way into the subtitle of the book. One of the other gratifying aspects of this volume is the author’s frequent return to the historical roots of the ideas, movements, and cultural framing that we take for granted.

Readers may be surprised by the author’s frequent discussion of hip-hop culture as an example or a model of cultural construction and its dynamics. This culture is set in and evolving from the larger cultural forces that, as we have mentioned, are likely to be ignored. Using the hip-hop culture provides a somewhat manageable stage on which to view a set of cultural dynamics in their full sociopolitical setting.

The primary target readership for this textbook is found in the classrooms of US academic institutions, and thus the lion’s share of stories and examples are set in the USA or pointing to its involvement internationally and are inevitably influenced by that cultural environment.

However, it is important to remember that US classrooms are peopled by diversity both domestic and international interacting with each other. Nonetheless, I strongly recommend the book to those teaching and training in non-US contexts, with the suggestion that they do their own work in similarly examining and presenting the stories and dynamics of their own national or regional culture.

Quoting one of the illustrations of the book, a young woman protesting heightened restrictions on the headscarf in France holds a placard reading, “The veil covering your eyes is more dangerous than the one covering my hair.” She could well be speaking to us as interculturalists reluctant to enter the larger frames in which to view culture in our everyday work.

Reviewed by George Simons
Events, workshops, congresses

SIETAR Europa Webinars
March 9, 2016 at 19:00-20:00 CET
Sylvie Tournaire: “Geopolitics China: Quietly moving its pawns on the international chessboard”
April 21, 2016 at 16:00-17:00 CET
Lothar Katz: “Cultural Dimensions – What Are They Good For, Anyway?”
June 27, 2016 at 17:00-18:00 CET
Fredrik Fogelberg: “Leading global remote teams”
July 21, 2016 at 19:00-20:00 CET
Mai Lam Nguyen-Conan: “Le nouveau Français” identity evolution of the French representation in marketing and communication”

Bath, United Kingdom
March 14-18 & June 27 - July 1 2016
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

Winterthur, Switzerland
7 - 9 June, 2016
Interactive Training Strategies This workshop, conducted by Thiagi, practices what it preaches. It helps you design and conduct 24 different types of effective training games, simulations, and activities.

Iasi, Romania
May 12 -14, 2016
Intercultural Management and Global Leadership, New Challenges for Eastern Europe The conference will bring together scholars and practitioners in order to support the dialogue between theory and practice in intercultural management and global leadership, with special attention to the new and important challenges of globalization for Eastern European countries. More information at info@csesm.warter.ro

Milan, Italy
16 - 18 May, 2016
Sustainable Intercultural Development Milton Bennett will focus on long-term goals intercultural development, namely limit the effects of ethnocentric perception and behavior, resolve issues of unity/diversity and authenticity/adaptation, and integrate intercultural competence into the identity of individuals and organizations. More information at idri@idrinstitute.org

Krakow, Poland
March 18 - 20, 2016
Training of Intercultural Trainers (TOIT) Young Sietar is hosting its 4th Training of Intercultural Trainers (TOIT) in Kraków, Poland, with support from SIETAR Poland, offering a variety of learning opportunities. For more information, please click on www.youngsietartoit.org

Online Everyday
The SIETAR Europa group, discussing “Cultural Competence on line?” 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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