

# SIETAR JOURNAL

## Africa

**A continent of  
diverse and  
contrasting  
cultures**



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### Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



SIETAREUROPA



### Impressum

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# SIETAR Journal

## Editor's comments

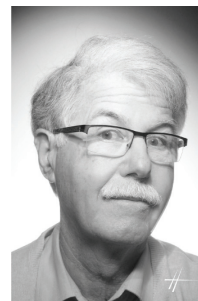
### ***Africa: A Negative Narrative?***

"Africa" in the Western world more often than not evokes images of backward and forever underdeveloped life. These negative narratives were already found in the beginnings of Western Civilisation; Herodotus wrote in the 5th century BC that Africa was not only different, but also more threatening, sinister and dangerous than Greece. And Western writers today continue this line of thought, replacing fact with a sort of "an inescapable dark shadow" that infiltrates and influences our perceptions.

But this one-sided image is often a distortion. Starting on page 9, we're publishing three articles that attempt to deconstruct this traumatic, negative perception and highlight the lively, colorful facets of extraordinary people faced with extraordinary challenges.

One of the most watched TED talks is Ken Robinson's presentation "Do schools kill creativity?" He makes the simple observation that all children are creative, but our school systems consistently educate them out of creativity. Our interviewee, Bastian Küntzel, follows this same line of thinking. He's developed intercultural trainings that provide journeys of unlimited possibilities and self-consciousness. His applied methods touch on the field of neurobiology, global imbalance and even the mind of Donald Trump, making for a highly interesting and non-conventional discussion.

As the world comes to a standstill with the Covid-19 virus,



Milton Bennett gives us his perspective of the crisis (page 18). Starting with the term "weird", he explains the spooky pathologies and incoherent messages of politicians and their followers, suggesting they're fighting to preserve a mythologized past while the post-modern world is moving on to multiculturalism and intercultural relations.

Not to be outdone, our Montreal correspondent, Dan MacLeod, takes a look at the virus from the eyes of animals around a small lake. It's a fable about social behaviour and the continual evolution of our world (page 20). Closely related is a contribution from Bastian Broer, who writes that in midst of a crisis we can culturally (mis)interpret facts and figures, often leading to a skewed reality (page 16).

One last thing. I'm happy to announce two new editors, Kirsten Wächter and Christine Taylor, are now working with me to enhance the readability and attractiveness of the magazine. Our combined efforts will hopefully make this publication a "must" for all interculturalists.

Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



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Interview with

# Bastian Küntzel

## A radically profound interculturalist



**B**ack in 1960, American essayist Paul Goodman published 'Growing Up Absurd', a passionate critique of the American education system that immediately became a "bible" of the New Left counterculture. In it, he wrote that all young people by nature are eager to learn — they want to search for truth and imagination — but are instead forced by an institutional public education system to accept a code of social engineering and learn meaningless activities, leading to mass alienation. In one section, he highlighted the shortcomings of modern schooling by contrasting and analyzing the behavioral patterns of artists.

*"All men are creative but few are artists. Art-making requires a peculiar psychotic disposition. Let me formulate the artistic disposition as follows: it is reacting with one's ideal to the flaw in oneself and in the world, and somehow making that reaction formation solid enough in the medium so that it indeed becomes an improved bit of real world for others. This is an unusual combination of psychological machinery and talents, and those who, having it, go on to appoint themselves to such a thankless vocation, are rarer still."*

Bastian Küntzel in many ways fits the above description. Raised in a rather academic German milieu, he found early in his childhood that his mind just wasn't fit to excel in institutionalized schooling. His teachers found him pleasant and participatory in class, but he never did well in tests. He

was suggested to go to vocational school, which he did and enjoyed. Yet, he knew somehow that there was something in institutionalized education that worked for some, but not for most. He set about trying to understand what it was and then to make his vocation that of nurturing and actualizing the creative potential of people.

His purpose now is to create environments and processes that help people learn something that transcends their comfort zone and makes sense to them and in their world.

**Let's begin our talk by having you describe your early life influences.**

I was born and raised in Lüneburg, a relatively small city in the north of Germany, 60 km south of Hamburg. However, I think the most important influence was my involvement in an international youth exchange organization from the age of 15. It was spending weeks with people from all over the world, doing fun things together. Just simply being with people from all over the globe gave me an intense feeling of "Ah, this is where I belong." It still has a strong impact on me today.

**This sounds like you were destined to be a global citizen.**

I get frustrated sometimes when people say, "Ah, I'm a global citizen" or a "citizen of the world" because it negates some

### Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*He grew up in the small Hanseatic city of Lüneburg, located in northern Germany.*



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of the privileges that you may have been born into. I'm certainly a product of Lüneburg, West Germany, and grew up as a white heterosexual male in a loving and supportive family with all the advantages that come with that. Many other people didn't and don't have that. I have a lot of privilege based on where, when and how I was born and I think that comes with a responsibility of using that privilege. I try to do that, but definitely often fail.

***This brings up the question of family background. Did you grow up in an environment that made you conscious of those privileges?***

Well, I come from a very academic background. Basically, my entire family consists of teachers, writers, artists, authors, researchers, etc. My grandfather and great uncle were professors as was their father, my mother is a teacher and an author, as is my uncle. Academic achievement was considered the norm. But after elementary school I did not go to the *Gymnasium*. I went to a school preparing students for professions, jobs in the office. And that wasn't probably easy for some of my family to accept, even though they never made me feel that.

However, after finishing the professional school, I went to the *Gymnasium*. There the standards were a bit tougher. I was never very good in formal educational structures because I don't react too well to being told what to do without having my interests or needs taken into account. I was

never a rebel, but I also didn't do very well there. I managed to get the *Abitur*, but not with very good grades.

But grades are something that are needed to get to the next thing. They don't have a value in and of themselves. A grade opens doors. If you manage to get to the door and it opens, that's fine.

The best lesson I got from the formal educational system is that it taught me how to navigate a system that wasn't designed for me. That was an incredibly valuable lesson because, as an adult, you have to navigate through many systems that weren't designed for you. I try to avoid those as best as I can, but still, sometimes it's good to know how to wiggle through and know what 'good enough' looks like.

If you learn in school how to make friends and develop support systems with people who are better at something, help them with something you are better at, or how to understand which teacher needs what from you, then that's a pretty good life lesson.

***Did you study immediately after doing your Abitur?***

Not exactly. The law back then required me to do one year either of military service or community service. I didn't want to go into the army, so I was a bus driver for a kindergarten for children with diverse access needs. After my year of service, I went to live in San Jose, Costa Rica, for four months to study Spanish and I took a course in intercultural communications at the university

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*In his early working years, Bastian facilitated workshops in the European youth work field.*



Photo by Alexis Brown on unsplash.com

there. Then I returned to Germany to study intercultural communications and adult education in Chemnitz.

***When you finished your studies, did you have a plan for what you wanted to do?***

Well, I knew that I wanted to try be independent right away. During my last couple of years at university, I was doing occasional freelance work in the European youth work field. Upon graduation, my now-wife and I chose to live in Wrocław because she is Polish and owned a flat there. This gave me a good starting point with little fixed costs and allowed me to start as an independent trainer and facilitator.

***Starting without a job is something a lot of young people might find stressful. Were you afraid?***

I probably couldn't have done what I do today if I didn't have the infrastructure to support me. I might have had the intellect, and talent but, as they say, talent is universal, access to opportunities isn't. I'm very much aware of the opportunities I've had.

It's possible to go into the unknown, the darkness, the chaos, if you have a balance between security and challenge. If you don't have the psychological and physical security to know that it's going to be alright, then the challenge can really put you into the panic zone and immobilize you. Without my part-

ner, my family, my friends in the international youth field who hired me, without all of those people I would not have made it. I still consider it a gift that I can still live on working this way.

***I noticed you used the broader term “trainer and facilitator”, not the label “intercultural”. You didn’t see yourself as an interculturalist?***

In the beginning, when I worked in the international youth work field, interculturalism was always there but the educational activities were not about that. It was about citizenship, access to social rights, justice. It wasn't necessarily about culture as such. It was an intercultural context, within which topics such as human rights would be explored. While I had a formal background in intercultural studies, it only became a major topic when I started to work for corporations. There, culture and interculturalism became not only the process but also the subject.

***Let's turn to your passions. About six months ago, you gave a lively webinar for SIETAR Europa on storytelling. What is it that intrigues you so much about storytelling?***

Storytelling, or story as a phenomenon, is a fascinating thing. I'd venture to say that as soon as humans started to communicate, they told stories. You can visit cave-paintings that are thousands and thousands of years old and you'll see stories that are being told visually. Some of the earliest human writings

## Contents

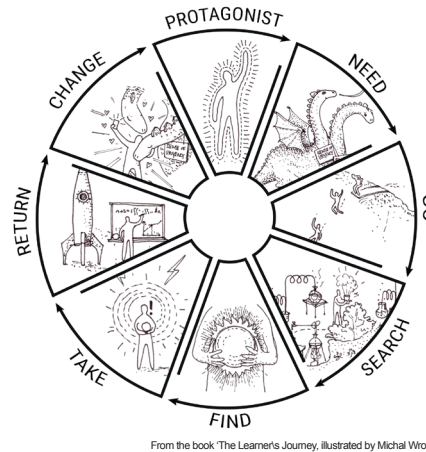
*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*The story circle is a structural tool for film makers and novel writers.*



also tell stories. That's because, as humans, we experience the world around us not as impulses of light and sound that we take in through our senses, but rather as a reality that has a meaning we can make sense of. The world around us makes no sense by itself. We make sense of it by embedding what we experience into a story.

This is why the act of storytelling in a training is so important. Every good trainer essentially does it, it's nothing new. We tell anecdote after anecdote to convey our points, to connect the theory with the model experience. It's an extremely useful tool to convey insight because you detach the inside from its pure theoretical form and connect it to an emotional arch that is a lot easier to relate to. This allows for empathy with another character who has insight on your behalf; you can have the same insight. It works with mirror neurons.

### *Which makes a course more interesting...*

Yes, more interesting, more entertaining, more lively, more memorable. We remember stories better than just a bit of knowledge. However, I think we can utilize this human capacity for experiencing life as a story to a much larger degree.

There's this theory about narrative identity. Essentially, that identity is a story we tell about ourselves as we live life and we categorize different events so that they fit in a larger

story arch. This idea that humans experience life as a story resonates very much with me.

So if we take this idea as a starting point, we can look at different theories for story structures. Joseph Campbell's seminal work *The Hero's Journey*, in which he developed a basic story architecture of 17 steps, is a very well-known approach to understanding stories. A little bit later, Dan Harmon, a Hollywood screenwriter and director, took the 17 steps and reduced them to eight, which are a lot easier to remember for me: you, need, go, search, find, take, return, change.

My first reaction to learning about Harmon's theory was, "Wow, this is so cool!" I can't watch movies or read novels anymore without constantly thinking about the meta-level of where we are in the story circle and how each protagonist's journey is presented.

What I've done over the last couple of years is take these 8 steps and use them as a design or guiding principle for the programme design of a conference or a training. It worked really well for me, so I also then shared it with colleagues and well, now it's become a book called *The Learner's Journey* (see page 23 for a review).

The premise is the following: we can think of a learning experience as a story and the learners as the protagonists who go on a transformational journey. The programme design then be-

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*To heighten awareness, one needs to understand the circular relationship between the brain and the autonomous nervous system.*



comes more intentional, more purposeful if we think, “Okay, in the protagonist phase, how will I make sure the learners know it’s about them, that they’re about to go on a journey, that they can trust me to be their companion on their journey?”

In the need phase, we can imagine “How can I make sure that everyone in this room feels a sense of urgency and necessity to go on this journey with me?” By being very intentional, it helps clarify what we need to achieve in each moment of the learning process. I think good teachers and trainers intuitively run their courses according to these steps. For the rest of us, it’s maybe good to have a framework we can use to help guide us.

***That’s strongly related to the neuropsychology of learning. I take it you integrate it into your trainings.***

I do integrate the little I know about how the brain works into almost all trainings that I run. In the design phase I try to make sure there is a balance in novel and familiar, that I connect to already established neural pathways. The main aspect I try to highlight is we have a certain wiring, a way our neurons are trained to interact with each other that’s been saved over the course of our socialization. In the moment something is happening, there’s not much we can do about the autonomous reactive action potentials that are being transmitted.

***Unless you consciously try to override your tendencies...***

You can override it, but chances are your prefrontal cortex is a lot slower than your amygdala. What’s important is to understand the relationship between the prefrontal cortex, the limbic system and particularly the amygdala, and how your body is connected to all these areas through the autonomous nervous system. When you feel under pressure, you can counteract that state by using your body— that is, sending signals from your body through the autonomous nervous system to signal back to the prefrontal cortex that you’re fine.

That’s why breathing deep, taking a walk in nature, meditation are good for you. They’re not puffy-fluffy activities to feel spiritual, even though they’re often embedded in spiritual rituals, but rather have the biological purpose of calming the body and through that informing your limbic system that you’re not in danger, which then frees resources for the prefrontal cortex. It’s fascinating!

Once we understand all those systems, we’re empowered to make conscious choices about them. We can’t really shy away anymore from making those choices. And if you’re not acting upon it, then that becomes a choice in itself.

When you’re having an amygdala hijack, you may say, “I’m just behaving normally right now. My aggression is fine and justified”. No, your prefrontal cortex is out of the picture now. You’re not thinking, you’re just reacting on a threat-response level. Knowing that requires you to act on that: “I know what’s

## Contents

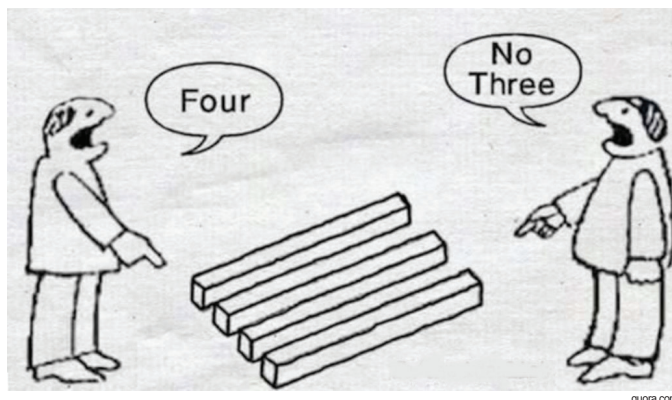
(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat’s experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*We need to be incredibly humble when considering objective and subjective reality.*



happening right now. I need to take a walk to calm down so that my prefrontal cortex can come back on line.”

If you can make the point about how we may think that we’re in charge, but in reality we’re not, or how we may think that perceiving the world in a certain way is objective, but it’s not...All this can ideally lead to the perception, “All right, I’m reacting to something right now but I shouldn’t assume that what I’m reacting to is real for others as well.”

That’s really what I try to point out in intercultural sessions, namely, we have to be incredibly humble about our conclusions. Become more aware that what we’ve experienced is part of experienceable reality and that objective reality is a myth. The idea that you can have an experience in objective reality is always a subjective interpretation of the visual and auditory stimuli. Reality is interpreted reality.

***What you’re saying, essentially, is the more we know, the more we realize how little we know.***

Yes, the more we know about how a system works, the less we probably think we are ever objectively ‘right’ about our observation of that system. This is why we need humility in the intercultural context. And what we particularly need is humility among the powerful. And particularly those who think they’re just as powerful as everyone else but actually are more pow-

erful, but who don’t want to be powerful because it means they carry a higher responsibility for changing the system that they benefit from. That’s a very uncomfortable thing to do. We tend to not address this very much in the intercultural field, but power and power-dynamics and the systemic inequalities of the world today are, I think, hugely important when we want to foster intercultural relations and champion diversity.

Knowing how the brain works and how it influences our perception and we act is just as important as understanding, how systemic racism or white supremacy work. If a well-meaning white person thinks they’re living in an objective reality, and that everybody lives in the same reality, it’s simply not true.

It’s the same thing with understanding how sexism works, how neo-colonialism works, how the global imbalance in international trade works. As soon as you understand a system, you’re empowered to act. But you also lose excuses for staying in the comfort zone by not acting.

To me, it’s all connected with understanding the systems we operate in — on a societal level, on a micro-level, and on the most microscopic level of neurology. If we understand these systems, we can more consciously make choices about them.

***It’s very thought-provoking. But how do you get the powerful to be cognitive of themselves? Let’s say, you’re invit-***

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat’s experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# Bastian Küntzel

## — continued

*SIETAR mirrors all the elements of a dynamic, diverse and colorful organization.*



Photo by Perry Grone on unsplash.com

***ed to the White House and asked to try to help President Trump understand himself. How would you go about it?***

Well, first of all, I'm not sure if I would accept an invitation from the White House, nor do I think I'd ever be invited. The challenge I see with Donald Trump is that he's had a lifetime experience of using his privilege to get away with dishonest acts and not be held accountable for them. He always won because we live in a system that's designed to help rich, white people and not built around seeking justice for white-collar crime. There's very little acknowledgment, I think, that particularly western society is built around amplifying a certain type of monetary success and not built around those, on whose shoulders that success was built.

I always come back to this point. If you want to help someone to learn something, that person needs to have a personal incentive to learn it. To learn things that are going to make life worse for that person is a difficult process. This explains, in part, why many men aren't interested in seeing sexism at work, or many white people in seeing white supremacy at work. It's a lot easier to see their successes as theirs, not as a product of a system built to support them. Coming back to Trump, he has no incentive to learn about doing something for the greater good because for his entire life, he only benefited when he learned something for his personal gain. And he's done very well by this. The world has done

badly by this. So I'm not sure he'd have the openness or the mental capacity to learn something about the others, the incentive to develop empathy — because it would be detrimental to him.

I find his life extremely sad, I see him as a despondent, lonely person. But it's not right the world has to suffer because he's having issues. It's an explanation, but not an excuse. If you strive for that position of power, you need to have dealt with yourself.

***One last question: When did you become involved with SIETAR and what does it represent for you?***

I've known about SIETAR since my student time, but it was only in 2016 that I became a member. At the moment, I'm acting as the VP of SIETAR Poland and SIETAR Europa.

What I particularly like is that this organization is so diverse. You experience this on the SEU Board — the representative of SIETAR Ireland is American, of SIETAR Spain is Senegalese, of SIETAR Italy is originally from Romania. It's a very colorful environment. And it's all volunteers, so every contribution, every involvement is only driven by care. I find it very inspiring.

And this is exactly what I love most about SIETAR — it's a place of community and solidarity, a tribe of interculturalists who understand each other. All this is emotionally an incredibly important thing for me. *Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Managing Cultural Differences in Ghana

*A German expat's experience in Kasoa*

*by Melanie Maria Metzler*

*The author is a Master's student in International Studies at the Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau in Saxony, Germany.*

One of the biggest challenges of the 21st century is that businesspeople, customers, and suppliers must increasingly interact across borders and cultural divides. Even though culture has an enormous impact on management, the topic is still "the most neglected".

The Chinese philosopher Confucius made some perceptive remarks about cultural diversity: "By nature, men are nearly alike; by practice, they get to be wide apart." He's referring to the fact that the human heart is the same all over the world, but our habits, expectations and behavior are shaped by cultural conditioning. That alone makes international cooperation more difficult and challenging than we think. This is especially true with regards to project management as the following case study of German/Ghanaian cooperation makes clear.

This study is based on an interview with a former employee of the *Sparkassenstiftung für internationale Kooperation e.V.* (German Savings Banks Foundation for International Cooperation), who worked from 2010 to 2012 on a development project in Ghana. His major task was to establish a microfinance training center to educate the employees of the 500 small regional banks, as well as the 150 employees of the Association for the Ghana Credit Unions Association. He spoke



about his experiences he made in Oduponkpehe, known as Kasoa, a town near Accra in Ghana, West Africa.

The interview evolved around the following question: "What cultural factors influence leadership and team collaboration in international projects?"

Before he left Germany, the interviewee received an intercultural and interdisciplinary training for eight weeks in Bad Honnef, a suburb of Bonn. In such seminars, future expats were taught that oftentimes the type of leadership a German manager is used to no longer applies. As he explained, the course was multi-faceted, in that it not only explained different Ghanaian customs and traditions, such as religious ceremonies, but also provided strategies for successful collaboration with his foreign colleagues. In all, it helped him get to the heart of cross-cultural issues.

Once in Ghana, he learned that management tools, such as yearly feedback evaluations, didn't have the same meaning as in Germany. For a German, a feedback means there's a real exchange of opinions between a manager and a subordinate. In Ghana, there isn't really an exchange; it's more "when the boss does not say anything, then everything is OK".

Criticism is also a big issue in Ghana. He learned that the proverb "Please say it through flowers" was very important in

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Managing cultural... — continued

*Ghanaian employees expect clear guidelines and usually will not think of ways on how things could be done better.*

Ghana; open criticism would be taken personally and you need to be very carefully what you say to subordinates. In contrast to Germany, first names are used and communication is done at the eye level. Furthermore, the manager has to always stay “cool” when facing obstacles, which happens quite often.

In terms of motivation, a supervisor needs to demonstrate he knows how to do something and then encourage his workers to do the same in return. The secret is that a supervisor must be highly engaged in order for the targeted goals of the project to succeed. Essentially, you take your subordinates’ hand, telling them, “something big can be reached”.

Regional employees in Ghana expect clear and structured guidelines. Employees do what their supervisor tells them, without even thinking about it; they don’t question the actions of their boss. This could be a surprise for German managers, who come from a *Verbesserungsvorschlag* environment, which demands continual suggestions for improvements from its employees. Ghanaians just assume that it’s an instruction to follow, and don’t think of a way on how it could be better done.

Here, it’s important for the German expat manager to en-



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courage workers to question things and to make them think of how things could be improved. Interestingly, international experienced Ghanaians and those who have a master’s degree would rather come up with their own solution. But overall, Ghanaians would rather execute a given task than be creative and think of a solution.

People in Ghana behave and interact rather quietly and unpleasant concerns are less communicated or simply kept in silence. They are not as direct as the Germans. Ghanaian colleagues and subordinates would never disagree directly; rather they would say “Yes, Sir”, but then not do the task, which of course leads often to conflicts.

The language of the project was in English. It should be noted that in Ghana, there are about 42 distinct tribal languages. In kindergarten they speak their tribal language, but from the first grade on, they get taught only in English.

In contrast to Germany, documents play a far less important role in communication. A signed contract doesn’t have as much value as what is said orally. As one Ghanaian supervisor told the interviewee, “Signing a contract doesn’t mean anything to me. What counts is what we agree on orally.” More important is that what is said is confirmed by witnesses. For instance, upon signing a rental contract, you need to

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat’s experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Managing cultural ... — continued

*Religion and spiritual feelings are of great importance in Ghana.*



have bystanders, who, through their prestige and face-saving rituals, will guarantee the enforcement of the contract.

Ghana is considered to be a collectivistic society, far more so than in Germany. As Ghanaians adhere more to the “we-feeling”, it turned out to be a huge advantage for the interviewee to have gone there with his wife and three children. Having a family signaled that he was group-oriented, and it helped him considerably to integrate into the community as well as being accepted as a foreigner.

In Ghana, the use and sharing of someone else’s property is very normal; individual rights are more secondary. And each member of the culture takes responsibility for their fellow members in their group. This applies equally to decision making — the welfare of the group and the employee’s satisfaction has to be kept in good balance.

For Ghanaians, a supreme creator, a God and spiritual beings are of great importance in their thinking. Religion in Ghana plays a major role and most employees in Ghana are either Christians or Muslims. The expat supervisor should respect and keep in mind the cultural backgrounds of his employees, such as the fasting period (Ramadan) of Muslim workers, who make up approximately 20% of the Ghanaian population.

In this context, the interviewee spoke about an unexpected

situation that he wasn’t at all prepared for. One of his workers, a security guard, insisted that a ghost lived in one of the training rooms during the night. Despite their large and intimidating stature (some were almost two meters in height), the security guards were still afraid of the ghost and didn’t want to check buildings alone at night. In Germany this would have been perceived as irrational, but the expat stayed calm and did not reject his worker’s major concern. As the management was unable to find a solution themselves, they scheduled a meeting with the concerned twenty workers to find an appropriate solution. To the surprise of the supervisors, the guards requested to work in pairs when checking buildings at night; this would help them to be less scared when the ghost would show up. The management agreed and hired an additional employee per nightshift and the problem was taken care of, even if it meant slowing down the project’s progress.

In summary, it can be said that the soft factors often determine the success or failure in international project management. Each project needs a well-planned concept that takes into account the needs of all members of the diverse cultures. This is why the development of intercultural awareness and sensitivity is of utmost importance. For, in the final analysis, globalization will be only successful if the topic of intercultural management and collaboration has been addressed correctly.

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## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat’s experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# Djô Aminata

A Support Network for  
FGM Victims

by Amy Mortensen and Teresa Diaz



The *Djô Aminata Association*, founded in Valencia, is on a mission to support victims of female genital mutilation (FGM). The association’s inauguration took place February 6th, 2020 on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

The project came to fruition because the dedicated team of individuals saw a need to raise awareness, visibility, and education to an issue that is a problem both locally and globally. According to UNICEF 2016, more than 200 million women and girls have been mutilated worldwide, and more than 180,000 of those affected immigrate to Europe every year. Public figures report 34 new cases of female genital mutilation in the Valencian community in 2019, including three girls.

Aminata Soucko, a member of SIETAR Spain, is the impetus behind the association, *Djô Aminata* - which means Aminata Network in the Bambara language, her native tongue. Aminata herself, is a victim of FGM, underwent reconstructive surgery in 2013. The association’s main purpose is to assist women and girls in the Valencia region who seek reconstructive surgery. The surgery helps women to recover normal sexual function — which is often painful and burdensome due to mutilation. *Djô Aminata*’s work helps women to rebuild their identity, self-esteem and overall well-being. Empowering women is the main goal.

Aminata herself is an extraordinary example of perseverance and empowerment. She was born in a small town in Mali where mutilation is regularly practiced. She suffered mutilation as an infant. In her culture, a young girl must be mutilated to be considered for marriage. The belief stipulates that “the mutilation of a woman is a way of purifying her.” At age 17, Aminata was forced into a marriage arranged by her family. As a result she had to forego her education: “I always had a vocation for medicine,” she explains.

Aminata’s husband brought her to Spain on October 8, 2008. He was physically and emotionally abusive. He prohibited her from learning Spanish, but she found ways to do so clandestinely. Luckily, she found a supportive teacher who encouraged her to continue with her baccalaureate degree, and she studied despite having to hide her books at the vegetable store next to her home.

After a few years of spousal abuse, Aminata eventually took her daughter and left her husband, asking the Valencian City Council for support. Aminata explains that “I had no money, I had no job, my daughter was one year old and here I had no family, but I got the courage to rebel against all these injustices of forced marriage.” Aminata began cleaning houses to make a living and support herself and her daughter, though she never abandoned her dream of working in the medical field. In 2016 she took a course to

<b>Contents</b> <i>(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)</i>	
Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat’s experience</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

## Djô Aminata ... — continued

*Djô Aminata aims to raise awareness about FGM*



become a community-based health agent, “with the intention of improving the health of those around me.”

In that same year a Reference Unit for the treatment and reconstruction surgery of FGM was created at the Hospital Doctor Peset, the hospital where Aminata had undergone reconstructive surgery. At the time of Aminata’s procedure, the hospital did not yet have a team that could care for patients post-surgery. There was no social worker or sexologist who could oversee her recovery. Aminata had to bear the emotional and physical trauma that accompanied the surgery alone.

Doctors working at the Hospital published the *Protocol of Sanitary Action for FGM in the Valencian Community* in 2016. Two of those doctors are founding members of Djô Aminata. The protocol insists that social support and mediation services be provided for members of the Valencian community affected by FGM. It establishes the role of community-based health agents and outlines the significant role that they can play in administering post-operative care.

*Djô Aminata* aims to serve as social support and mediation as outlined in the Protocol. Aminata herself volunteers as a community-based health agent, and has done so for nearly four years. She acts as an advocate, translator, nurse, and social worker for victims. She explains that she helps women understand that reconstructive surgery “can rebuild the geni-

tal system, and that that will not make them (women) unfaithful or prevent them from having offspring, which is what is taught in my country.” In her role, she also helps women accelerate the recovery process and deal with the accompanying physical and psychological hardships. “Women are scared of the operation, they are afraid to rub when cleaning the wound after the intervention, and I help them with the nursing jobs in their homes,” explains Aminata. Above all, Aminata understands first-hand what the women are going through, and this makes her an invaluable support.

*Djô Aminata* aims to raise awareness about FGM locally and globally, but also to generate funds to assist Aminata in her very important role as community health agent. Valencia lacks public agencies that hire such agents. Therefore, the work supported and promoted by *Djô Aminata* is essential. Securing funds that will allow the association to flourish and that will assist Aminata in continuing her advocacy role is crucial. *Djô Aminata*’s slogan is “We are just as free and authentic as we are complete and unique/Tan libres como auténticas y tan completas como únicas.” Any step toward helping women to live this truth is a step toward eradicating female genital mutilation.

If you would like to support and help Aminata’s fight to eradicate female genital mutilation, please visit their website: [redaminata.org](http://redaminata.org).

### Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor’s Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat’s experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn’t This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can’t Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# 54Lights

## Africa out of the Shadows

*To understand language is to understand thought.*

*by Kondwani Mwase*

A seemingly inescapable shadow looms over conversations about Africa. This shadow infiltrates, informs, and influences our views of the continent and its people. It is a narrative that, when imbued, helps propagate an image of Africa as primitive, backward, and forever underdeveloped. This often starts with the popular term: The Dark Continent.

This term is problematic for two main reasons. First, the complicated connection with the word dark. Second, the continent as a single unit. While neither term is in and of itself negative or incorrect, both are laden. Together, they suggest that the expression Africa is a monolithic black mass.

This perception and a desire to change it inspired me to launch my podcast, *54Lights*. Its mission is to reshape common narratives about Africa through intimate introductions to and conversations with individuals from Africa. The show layers voices, music, and narration to create a listening experience that is, like the "Dark Continent," nuanced. There are, at present, 54 nations within the African continent. That's emblematic of a stark reality; Africa cannot be cast as one black mass or even one uniform color. It is a collection of at least 54 different nation-states which, in turn, represent an even greater number of cultures and subcultures. If you consider the over 210 million members of the African diaspora spread across the globe, the task of uniformly defining these people becomes even more daunting. Light is the opposite of dark. Light speaks to the emotional and the educational spirit. Light illuminates, drives out darkness, and gives hope.



The show aims to change listeners' understanding of Africa and African people by shining a spotlight on ordinary people living extraordinary lives. By doing so, these stories work to deconstruct the social institutions that mislead, misinform, breathe life into racism and, instead, work to give voice to a group of people who are usually spoken for or to. On *54Lights*, African identities are multiple, myriad, and above all, individual. All this, hopefully, casts a new, and more representative, shadow on the African conversation. One that is nuanced, complex, and deep in their texture.

### *About the podcast*

*54Lights* illuminates the African continent. The show aims to reshape how people see African people and societies, using narration and interviews through a myriad of guests - typically with African lineage. Each episode has its own flavour, each is anchored in one ingredient. And while the show casts light on people who seem ordinary, the truth is they are only masquerading as ordinary. Whether they be activists, authors, entrepreneurs or mentors, the line-up is as impressive as it is diverse. To hear the podcasts, click on [www.54lights.com](http://www.54lights.com), or *Spotify*, *iTunes*, *Sticher*, *SoundCloud*.

*The host: My name is Kondwani Mwase. I have (African) stories to tell. I was born in Ethiopia, with parents from Zimbabwe & Malawi. Many would say I am imbued with the cultures of each nation; they are me and I am them. Yet, the claim rings hollow when my Africa remains misunderstood. Africa has forever been identified with little more than famine, poverty, and desolation. I aim to change this narrative. Canada may be home but Africa is my heart.*

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Facts and Figures

## *Are they culturally skewed?*

by Bastian Broer



It's with astonishment on how newscasters around the world have been reporting and commenting on the coronavirus crisis since January 2020.

The efforts to cope with the state of emergency vary from country to country, region to region and of course, culture to culture. While French President Macron and Prime Minister Johnson speak of fighting against an invisible enemy, 16 German federal state prime ministers relentlessly explain that all locking down measures are compliant to the constitution. And D. Trump assures the world that the US will soon be open for business again.

It may not be a big surprise to interculturalists that human reasoning follows different concepts in different countries. After all, truth lies in the eye of the observer. But how about facts and figures? Science is deemed to be a universal matter, 1 plus 1 equals 2 anywhere in the world. And meters are the same all over the world, even though some countries prefer inches and feet.

When global business leaders check performance figures of operations abroad by tipping fingers on their mobile phones, they rely entirely on the objectivity of digits. However, even simple facts and figures contain a cultural grain: How trustworthy are statistical figures in China? How consoling is President Trump's promise that everyone who wants to be

tested can be tested? It's hard to judge without sound cross-cultural knowledge.

The coronavirus crisis proves that the world is still far apart from being a uniform place. Some cultures seem to be less affected by the coronavirus than others. The answer to the question, why Italy is so heavily affected will most probably never be known. There is a bouquet of factors for this massive infection, and one is culture, that is: the way people live. And perhaps, culture is the key factor.

Greeting colleagues and business partners by bowing – as commonly practiced in Far East Asia — is without any doubt a better precaution against the spread of the coronavirus than the Italian way shaking hands, sharing a hug or even exchanging kisses on the cheek. Visitors to Japan notice that herds of Japanese commuters pass through each other at a steady pace without bumping into each other, during rush-hour at Shibuya Station. Japanese are highly trained to do so. They grow up in an environment that teaches them from early childhood not to become a nuisance to others.

Not embracing, but keeping interpersonal distance is seen as proper conduct even between close friends. It is common for Japanese to wear a face mask when having a cold to hinder the contagious disease from spreading. Money is put on a tray at the cashier whenever Japanese pay their purchases in

### Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# Facts and figures...

## — continued

*Can figures meaningfully interpret Japanese social behavior and its influence on the coronavirus crisis?*



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stores the traditional way in cash. Most young Japanese pay by mobile phone or *suica*. That's more convenient and — although completely unintended — also more hygienic.

Japanese define themselves as *きれい好き* *keirei-zuki*, i.e. loving cleanliness. Foreigners all praise the cleanliness of Japanese public places. Many discover that former employees in frequented areas of their company are diligently wiping doorknobs and handrails. Cleaning crews of the Shinkansen high-speed train swiftly sweep every tray and handhold in precisely documented ways when the train makes short stops. And company leaders proclaim that success in business starts with cleaning the toilet every morning. The Japanese feel protected by their outstanding hygiene standards.

If the culture of cleanliness was the only factor influencing the spread of Covid-19, it would be easy to seek refuge from it in a country, like Japan or Singapore. But life is complex. Japanese businesspersons commute in trains so crowded, even working from home doesn't empty them to an extent that forestalls unconscious infections. Even though the normal conduct is in general more suitable to prevent a virus from igniting a pandemic in Japan, space in urban areas is horribly scarce.

In coping with this pandemic, there are also cultural hard factors: remuneration rules for workers confined to their

home, the availability of intensive care units, workers' protection laws, welfare funds, access to clean water, level of digitalization etc. These hard factors sum up to influence appropriate behaviors and setting the playground for feasible solutions. Additionally, countries like the UK, France and the USA have come to realize that their health system have enormous shortcomings, due to a lack of low-tech disposable medical gear, such as masks.

Managers, running a global business, have primarily looked at hard facts, which then translates to ROI. Figures have no meaning by themselves. Figures become meaningful in a given environment. Facts and figures are for the most part a perfect fit to peculiarities of a business culture. They represent values, cultural values.

If we all learn from this crisis that a sound knowledge of cultural values can play a decisive role in mastering challenging situations, businesses and international relations might become a little bit sounder and more sustainable in future. Culture matters. Not always, but definitely in tense cross-cultural circumstances. It pays to consider cultural peculiarities of foreign countries before a crisis arrives.

*Bastian Broer is the director and owner of BCCM, a German intercultural group that provides workshops and seminars in cross-cultural management and multinational team cooperation. More information can be found on his website: <http://www.bccm-web.com/>*

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

*One Perspective of the Covid-19 crisis*

# Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?

*by Milton Bennett*

I am an American currently in Milan, where I arrived from Washington State in the US just a few days before the lockdown started here. Flying from the frying pan into the fire, so to speak, although now the fire is everywhere. The situation is really dire, but despite all the unprecedented conditions of “sheltered in place” and the horrific pictures from the medical front lines, it doesn't feel as weird as it seems it should. In my plentiful free time, I've been wondering why.

So here are some speculations. The first one, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that nothing is weirder than having Donald Trump as the president of the United States. As many commentators have noted, he doesn't just invert reality (our enemies are our friends and vice versa, “I am the victim”, etc.) but he distorts it in the process with constant lies and conspiracy re-tweets.

It is possible that even something as completely alien as shutting down our cities to avoid infection is less weird, since at least the action has a clear goal, there is a logical rationale for doing it, and the rules do not (usually) change on someone's whim. In other words, as an inchoate disrupter of reality, Trump may be more potent than SARS-CoV-2. And we have endured three years of habituation to that weirdness.

Of course, Trump is not the direct cause of reality distur-

tion. A large group of Americans support him as their leader, which is weirder than Trump himself, really. And it's not just in the US. Throughout the world, other leaders with narcissistic pathologies and incoherent messages of hatred are becoming mainstream politicians.

When I look at the pictures of people at their rallies and listen to the spewing of their surrogates, I see... rage. It's as if a portion of humanity is in a constant state of amygdala hijack, to use Daniel Goleman's popular term. In an incident that seems to be mirrored elsewhere, an Italian man is being prosecuted for intentionally coughing on a grocery clerk when he was asked to leave a little more space. It seems that road rage, already increasing before the pandemic, is mutating into virus rage.

So why are hateful and racist leaders being supported by enraged followers? One traditional answer is that a lot of people are angry and frustrated by dwindling opportunities and rampant inequity. Certainly both things are true, and they are both good reasons for anger and support for change, even disruption. But the rage seems over the top of that.

In a book chapter I wrote recently called “An Epistemology of Hate” (in E. Dunbar, A. Blanco, & D. MacPhail (Eds). *The Psychology of Hate Crimes as Domestic Ter-*



Painting by Jessie Willcox Smith

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

## Why doesn't this ... — continued



Jeff Kowalsky/AFP via Getty Images

*People feel existentially threatened by a post-modern world and are fighting to the death to preserve a mythologized past.*

rorism, Praeger, 2017), I speculate that we're nearing the end of a paradigm change. The modern world, with its myth of unending material progress, has largely given way to a post-modern world of cultural relativity — globalization, multiculturalism, and intercultural relations.

But as the end of modernity is becoming clearer, the rear-guard action is becoming fiercer. People who are unwilling or unable to enter the new world are existentially threatened by it, and they are fighting to the death to preserve a

mythologized past. All lies, manipulations, and inhumane actions (including letting millions die to attain "herd immunity" in the current crisis) are justified in the name of survival. They rage at the dying of (their) light, and the rest of the world suffers.

So, yes, it's weird to be living through the worst pandemic in a century, but maybe not as weird as living through the first paradigm change in half a millennium.

### Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



*Il était une fois...*

# Planet

*by Dan MacLeod*

Call it a planet but not yet. A vaporized globule floating in space searching for sunlight. In the form of water and a dark cave. Call it an asteroid in search of life.

Life is a relative term. Turns out eating can also be feeding, and defecating, replicating.

The globule expanded exponentially, compensating for lack of motricity, blossomed like a city. Which, filling, spread offspring, again exponentially.

And so the lake became choked, devolved into a pond. And the animals of the forest were the first to know, after the fish.

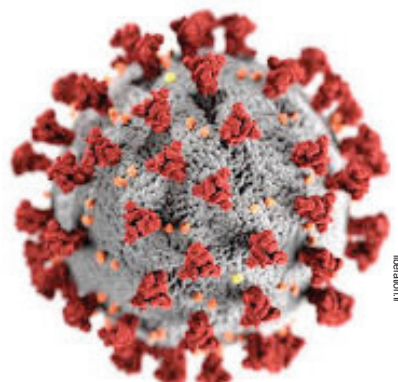
And they wondered at what could be done. *What can be done?* they clamored.

The dead bear said, "Well, you can't eat the fish, that's for sure!" in a post-mortem message to the others.

But the beavers were skeptical, they were eating fish and they were fine (until they weren't but that comes later).

And then the chipmunks, who only came to drink, began getting sick too.

That's when the moose and deer stepped in and said they weren't going to stop drinking, it's just that the chipmunks were too little.



*Call it a planet, call it an asteroid...*

Ironically, the chipmunks, with their little little legs, had to go far far away to find a new source of water if they wanted to survive. Whereas the bigger animals, with their long long legs, didn't have to leave.

Until they did, around when the beavers began getting sick as well.

So then everybody agreed: no fish, no water.

Okay but we still live where we live, we like it, there was only the one bear and, thank God, we have no wolves.

So okay, it means a trot, over to the next lake. So everyone's agreed, it's that or die.

But then, of course, wouldn't you know it?

Yeah, yeah, it was the beavers. After all, they'd put a lot of time and effort into their homes.

They began going back and forth, testing the waters, you could say, until they brought the waters back with them.

So it all happened again a few miles away.

...

And so the planet was a rousing success even if, having no brain, it knew only that it existed, exponentially, a potential universe.

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



# They just can't stop playing

*How gamification became the most essential part of my intercultural training work*

*by Maria Todosiychuk*

Once, at a Gamification for Intercultural Intelligence Training at the SIETAR Europa 2019 Congress with a very diverse audience of interculturalists from 23 countries, a participant from Germany said that using games with German business students and corporate clients is not easy. In Germany, learning through games is not considered an appropriate teaching method. Apparently, an attitude to gamification in education itself is a cross-cultural issue, which should be addressed in a smart way. However, most of our audiences at gamification workshops have always agreed upon the efficiency of edutainment, with business education not being an exception.

I have been designing and conducting intercultural intelligence games since 2009 and I have observed its stunning results on my business students. I would like to share some of my insights with SE Journal readers who may be interested in using gamification in their training and teaching work.

## 1. A game can provide understanding that cannot be reached by a lecture.

One of my recent corporate clients asked me for a training on Chinese business culture after they got stuck in their negotiations, unable to achieve mutual understanding. The Richard Lewis' *CultureActive* assessment revealed that most of the team inclined to the Linear-Active type of culture with a strongly direct communication style and quick-result focus. This finding explained a lot! That meant they would need to make serious efforts to understand what the Asian (Reactive) communication style meant and to develop their own communication style adaptability.



I noticed a long time ago that it was not easy for direct Russians to adapt their communication style aimed at clarity and achieving results. I have been trying a number of exercises to help my students train a skill such as indirect communication style, which is unhabitual and uncomfortable for them, but have never been as satisfied with the results as now.

The "Just Don't Say NO" game is the latest and most successful attempt to achieve the best results of developing adaptability of intercultural communication style. This game is not about just saying NO. It is about the whole range of communication patterns from the most direct to the most indirect ones that can be found around the world. Saying NO is just a very demonstrative communication unit that can be used as a starting point to study a variety of styles. In other words, if you want to see cultural differences, try to say NO in a number of ways that would be appropriate in the USA, England, Italy, France, Middle East, India, China or Japan. So, what exactly is the Just Don't Say NO game? It is a specific technology of training adaptability of communication style, including all the necessary real life examples and a communication style builder. It allows players to feel and try the most unusual and alien styles in a game setting, instead of going through trial and error in real life communication.

## 2. A game can evolve a feeling of intercultural experience that cannot be created with traditional teaching methods.

Especially, a feeling of an experience which one has not had before. For example, the Culture Shock role play simulates intercultural

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# They can't just stop ... — continued



tural negotiation between two contrasting cultures. It provides a very realistic sense of how it feels when you communicate with a culturally different partner, without being aware of their mentality and cultural values. I have been running this game for 10 years so far, and I see that it's been providing a consistent stable learning effect. The intended failure to reach an agreement, along with frustration and irritation that players often experience during the game, bring them to become aware of their behavioral mistakes and to really want to develop their cultural sensitivity.

**3. A game is a smart way to “pack” much more knowledge and ideas than students would be able to process in the same amount in such a short time with more traditional methods of learning.**

A good example of such a game is the Intercultural Minefield. It is a board game, also available in online version, where players “walk” across the “minefield” stepping on cultural “mines”. By solving each case and answering questions, players earn and lose money, which allows them to see how cultural intelligence level is directly proportionate to the bottom line of their business.

Methodologically speaking, this fun game incorporates a vast number of topics that need to be studied within intercultural business communications (etiquette, traditions, business practices, communication styles, values, behaviours and many other), and it covers quite a diverse number of cultures to vividly show cultural differences.

When I conducted the Minefield game online last time, my group asked me not to stop even after we crossed our time line. They were just so eager to learn more by stepping on more and more cultural mines! This is a true example of a learning experience when it is students who want to know more, rather than you trying to get as much as you can into their attention span.

In conclusion, I would like to admit that games do not substitute traditional teaching methods completely. Different types of content and training tasks have their own more suitable methods. But games in education proved themselves to be definitely a very efficient and convenient tool that is well combined with any other training style and can even improve it.

## Acknowledgements

*I would like to express my gratitude to a team, collaboration with which became a source of inspiration for the game “Just Don't Say NO”. Our diverse team of interculturalists, consisting of Grazia Ghellini, Sacha Tanis Hopmans, Darren Chong, Luciele Milani, Katarzyna Grzesik-Harz, Christel Popken, Ivone Milanil and myself, has created a prototype of and conducted the first session of the Saying NO Across Cultures activity for a diverse audience, which was a wonderful and enriching experience. Also, I would like to use this opportunity to thank George Simons and Grazia Ghellini for our synergetic collaboration that I love and value a lot.*

*About the author: Maria Todosiychuk is an international trainer in intercultural intelligence and an edutainment and gamification expert as well as a developer of games that train intercultural skills.*

*More information at: [www.intercultural-intelligence-games.com](http://www.intercultural-intelligence-games.com)*

## Contents

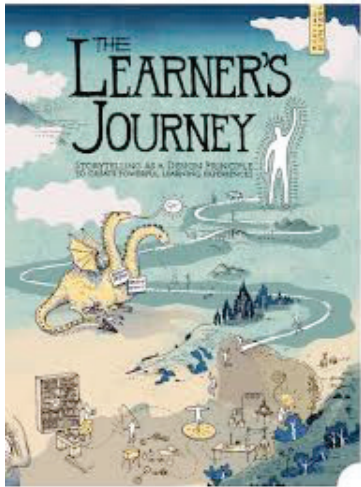
(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Book Review

## The Learner's Journey

by Bastian Küntzel  
Books on Demand, 144 pages  
Euro 16.49



This spring at the SIETAR Europa Congress in Leuven, I met Bastian Küntzel. We got to chatting about “what do you do” and “what do I do” and when I told him about my new idea to develop a method for using story structure to teach, he said, “I just wrote a book about that.” I was flabbergasted and immediately intrigued. Called *The Learner's Journey*, it combines Bastian's adult education expertise with story structure. He'd already sold out all the copies he brought and sent me a copy when he got home to Poland.

*The Learner's Journey* method is based on Dan Harmon's story structure, a Hollywood screenwriter best known for his work on the American sitcom *Community*. His scripts have its origins on a story circle, which is an eight-step cycle that describes the hero's journey. The key principle of the book is that the learner is the hero. The message for the facilitator is that if you want to teach well, you must design the learning experience on the learner's needs; you cannot be the hero.

As a facilitator, it's too easy to put ourselves at the center of attention. You may get top billing, but you play a supporting role. Essentially you are a sort of mentor archetype, like Dumbledore in *Harry Potter*. He shapes and sometimes guides Harry, but often misses the most important learning moments. The hero must experience those moments themselves in order to experience their newly discovered abilities and courage.

I love this approach in *The Learner's Journey*. Its method starts with handing the reins over to the learner. All what the facilitator can do is to provide the environment and exercises for them to have that experience in. We're set designers, as it were.

The book deals with the issues of understanding audiences, situations, stakeholders, needs, and contexts. Understanding your learner in terms of what they need, where they are coming from, and what they will be returning to comes first. From a storytelling perspective, you cannot tell a story well until you've taken your audience into account. You have to understand who they are, what they walked into the room with, and how you want them to leave. If you don't think carefully about these things, your story will be about you and not your audience. It will make you feel good, but not necessarily give them anything.

If you aren't sure how to do this kind of foundation work, Bastian shares useful talking points for your pre-planning meeting with a client.

Once you've sorted your foundation, you're ready to start designing the learning experience. The book moves methodically through all eight stages and describes what the learner should experience and why. It also offers suggestions, methods and activities to facilitate those experienc-

Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# The Learner's Journey ...

## — continued

*The participant in a workshop is essentially being asked to be a hero by taking part in a journey of the unknown.*



es. I learned some new things here, for example *The Spaghetti Marshmallow Challenge* as a warm-up to help participants understand the innovation process. Watch a TED talk by Tom Wujec about why kindergartners are better than business students at this challenge and you'll be eager to try it, too.

One thing that was an eye-opener for me was the idea that orchestration can be part of your planning. For example, if you want to change your learner's mindset, you could alter the venue or room. Moving a group from one space to another or changing their role from audience to speaker can help learners pass from one stage of the learning experience to the next. Even a coffee break can be incorporated into the learning experience plan! This kind of thinking is wonderfully creative.

*The Learner's Journey* also calls for attention to the post-learning experience stage. In other words, how do we ensure that learners have the best chance for turning their lessons learned into transformation when they return to their regular environment? It's natural to feel inspired inside a learning experience, but hard to keep the momentum when you're back home. We easily return to old habits, whether they work or not. The book offers ideas about how we can facilitate learning implementation long after the participants have gone home.

Bastian ends with three concrete examples of applying these methods to create small- and large-scale learning experiences. They are drawn from full-day events. Most of my workshops are between 2-4 hours and it's hard to imagine squeezing all of these stages into that time frame effectively. We often don't even manage a coffee break, so I'd like to see the mini-version, perhaps something that takes into account possibilities for contacting participants before they arrive and doing follow up after they've gone home.

So, there you have it, somebody wrote the book I had wanted to write, and I liked it. It's a nice read, full of useful, applicable information. I've already recommended it to a couple of people and don't plan to stop. Sometimes running into someone who scooped your idea means you can have it all on paper without having to write it yourself! Life can be indeed full of pleasant surprises.

More information on how the book can be ordered can be found on this link: <https://www.incontro-training.org/the-learnersjourney>

*Reviewed by Christine Taylor*

## Contents

*(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasoa</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



## SIETAR Europa Journal

# CALL FOR PAPERS AND ARTICLES



For 11 years, the SIETAR Europa Journal has been sharing inspiring insights and interviews that give readers a behind-the-scenes look into the ever-changing field of interculturalism.

The Journal aims to share and promote the work of academics, researchers, trainers, consultants, and teachers in the intercultural field. We want to know more about you and we want our readers to know more about you.

You are invited to submit your unpublished and original work to the SIETAR Europa Journal.

### Topics of interest include:

Training or teaching experiences  
Academic research, both in-progress and complete  
SIETAR activities  
Training tips and tools  
Online learning

### Submission guidelines

Submit your work as a Word or Write document  
Limit texts to 1300 words  
Include a human perspective

### Process

Articles will be reviewed by the editorial committee, preference given to SIETAR members  
Accepted authors will be notified one month before publication

**Send submissions to:** [communication@sietareu.org](mailto:communication@sietareu.org)

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasao</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

## Mieke Janssen Matthes 1935 - 2020

Mieke was one of the creators and founders of SIETAR Europa and the first President of SIETAR Europa. Mieke was the tireless lead administrator of SIETAR Europa during its first formative years in Haarlem, NL. At the same time, she was Executive Vice President of SIETAR International and for a long time member of the Governing Council of SIETAR International.

A true pillar of the organisation.

She was an inspiration for many Sietarians and other people working in the intercultural field. She was an inspiring and respected lecturer and coach for many children living in 'Otherland'. Author of the 'Anderland' books for children and adults in Dutch, and the English editions: 'Off to Otherland: A read-and-do book for children going to live abroad', 1998, 2002, 2007 and 'Unlocking the secret of Otherland: A story and activity book for children living abroad'. Amsterdam 2006.

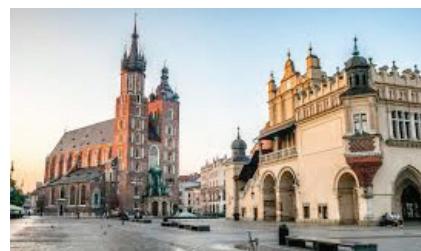
Mieke was honorary member of SIETAR Europa and honorary member of SIETAR NI. She received the SIETAR International Senior Interculturalist Award and she was also the well deserved recipient of the SIETAR Europa Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.

SIETAR Europa is indebted to Mieke's unfaltering wisdom, energy and dedication.



SIETAR POLAND Congress 2020

### ***Identities in the VUCA World***



The theme of this year's congress calls attention to the challenges and opportunities of managing and negotiating identities in today's rapidly changing and unpredictable environments.

By including the acronym 'VUCA' in our conference theme we would like to invite you to join our comprehensive discussions and reflect on the conditions of 'volatility', 'uncertainty', 'complexity' and 'ambiguity', which characterize our modern-day cultures. In particular, we want to explore how people are adapting to the age of change and acceleration and how the demands placed on them by growing inter-connectivity and technological advances affect their personal, business, political and social identities

**Date:** 18th to the 21st of February, 2021

**Where:** Krakow

*For more information, click on <http://sietar.pl/spl-congress-2020/>*

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel <i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	3
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana <i>A German expat's experience in Kasao</i>	10
Djô Aminta <i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	13
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures <i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	16
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27

# Events, workshops, congresses

## SIETAR Europa Webinars

June 15th, Mon. 18.00 - 19.00 CET

Speaker: Lies Wouters "Are you having fun online?"

July 22nd, Wed. - 18.00 - 19.00 CET

Speaker: Gabriela Weglowska "Five secrets from neuroscience to accelerate intercultural learning"

Sept. 15th, Wed 18.00 - 19.00 CET

Speaker: Melissa Hahn "U.S. cultural values and the 2020 Presidential election"

## CCC - Breaks

Jun 4th, Thur, 11:00 Moderators: Chantal Ladas and Gradiola Kapaj: "How does the risk averse culture environment affect the entrepreneurship behaviour in a region?"

Sept 2nd, Wed., 11:00 Moderators: Maria Mihaela Barbieru and Joanna Sell, "How do you handle ethical challenges in the client negotiation process taking into account the cultural perspective?"

## Bath, United Kingdom

8-12 June, 7-11 Sept 2020

**Developing intercultural training skills** This 5-day course is for trainers wishing to learn more about theory and practice of intercultural training.

21-25 September, 2020

**Designing and delivering intercultural training** This is a more advanced course for experienced intercultural trainers who wish to expand their skills. Information at: [www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm](http://www.lts-training.com/ICTTcourse.htm) or contact [adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com](mailto:adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com)

## Krakow, Poland

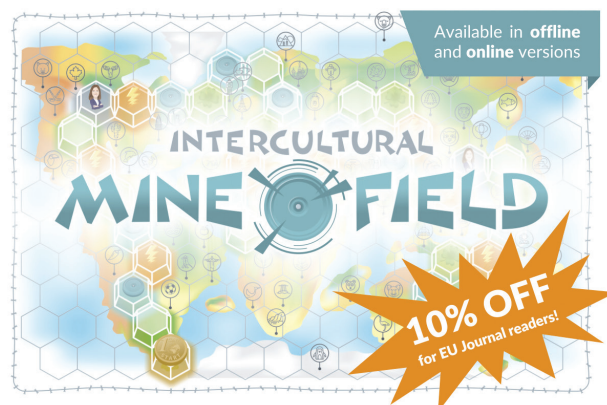
18 - 21 February, 2021

**Identities in the VUCA World** The SIETAR- Poland congress calls attention to the opportunities of managing and negotiating identities in today's rapidly changing world. More info at: <http://sietar.pl/spl-congress-2020/>



INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE GAMES  
by Maria Todosiychuk

For intercultural teachers, trainers,  
business schools and universities



Delivered  
worldwide

Intercultural Minefield is an educational tabletop and online game about the role of intercultural intelligence, cultural risks and opportunities in international business. As players «walk across the intercultural minefield», they step on «cultural mines», solve cases and earn money. They can earn huge amount of money or they can be «blown up» by a cultural mine, lose everything, and have to start from scratch...  
Let them see how intercultural intelligence is related to a bottom line!

Check out this and other games that help you train intercultural skills  
[WWW.INTERCULTURAL-INTELLIGENCE-GAMES.COM](http://WWW.INTERCULTURAL-INTELLIGENCE-GAMES.COM)

## Online Everyday

The SIETAR Europa group, discussing

## Literature and Cultural E-Books Online

on LinkedIn, has now over 8000 members. Plus it offers videos, articles, books, tools for the intercultural profession. To join, click here:  
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2740568>

For more information, contact George Simons at [diversophy@gmail.com](mailto:diversophy@gmail.com)

## Contents

(for quick navigation, click on the desired article)

Editor's Comments	2
Bastian Küntzel	3
<i>A radically profound interculturalist</i>	
Managing Cultural Difference in Ghana	10
<i>A German expat's experience in Kasao</i>	
Djô Aminta	13
<i>A support network for FGM victims</i>	
54 Lights: Africa out of the Shadows	15
Facts and Figures	16
<i>Are they culturally skewed?</i>	
Why Doesn't This Feel Weirder?	18
Planet	20
They Just Can't Stop Playing	21
Book Reviews	23
Events, Workshops, Congresses	27



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