

# CONFERENCE REPORT ABOUT INTERCULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION

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PRESENTED BY AGNES DILLIEN OF KHK GEEL

## HOW TO DEAL WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

### 1) INTRODUCTION

Cultural differences not so easy ...:

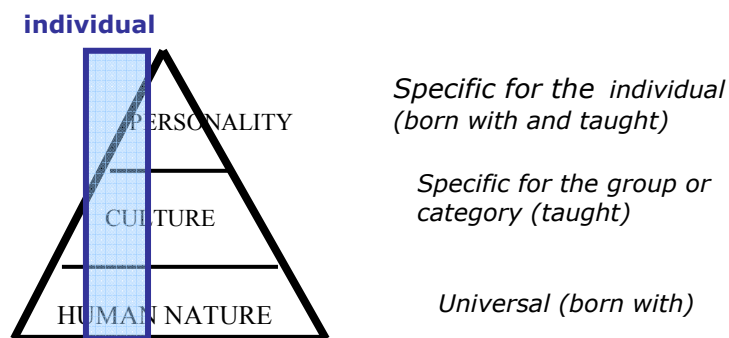
- Diversity in our society
- Economical and political changes
- Changes in personal lifestyle
- Etc ...

**Stereotypes:**

- Politicians are dishonest
- Women are emotional
- Blacks are good dancers

### 2) WHAT IS CULTURE?

Habits, rules and norms which lead a person in his actions, his thoughts and feelings



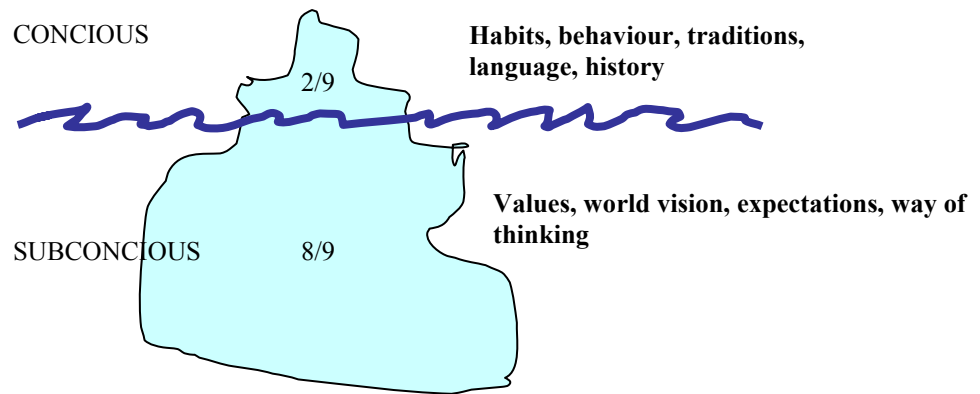
### 3) DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF CULTURE

**Intercultural reflections:**

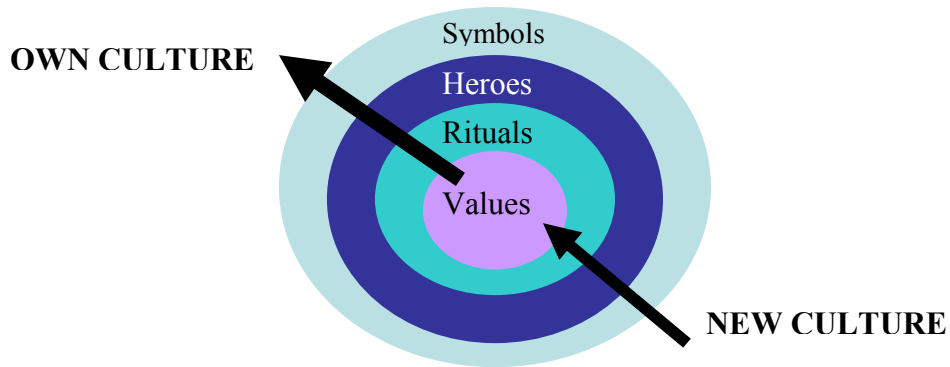


“What sets the world in motion is the interplay of differences, their attractions and repulsions. Life is plurality, death is uniformity. By suppressing differences and peculiarities, by eliminating different civilisations and cultures, progress weakens life and favours death.”

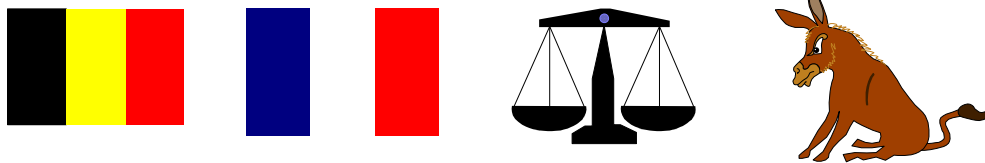
### Culture as an iceberg:



### Culture of the onion:



### Symbols:



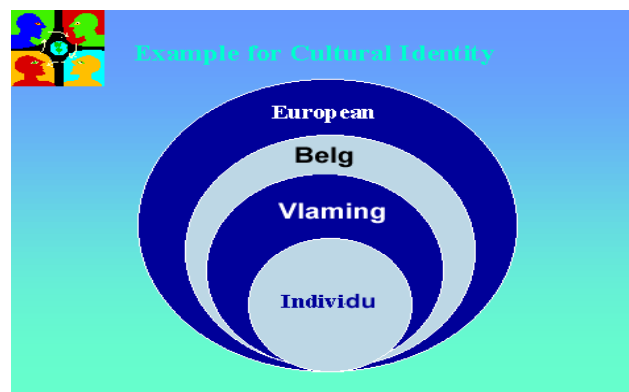
### Rituals:



### Unique personality:

- Education
- Sex
- Gender
- Black / white
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Age
- Heritage
- Profession
- Family
- Physical / mental condition
- Social - economic
- Urban - rural
- Religion

### 4) CULTURAL IDENTITY



Difference of background

### 5) HOW TO DEAL WITH CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Reference frame and means of communication

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Problems when sender and receiver come from a different culture

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**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Cultural differences have no connection with country borders

### Key components of a culture:

- Time
- Space
- Context of the communication
- Cultural dimensions: hierarchy, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity

### Time orientation, monochronic or polychronic?

**Polychronic** time systems are characterised by the simultaneous occurrence of many things and many people.

Human transactions are more important than holding to schedules. Mediterranean people are polychronic in their time flexibility. They have less segmentations of functions and people.

In the **monochronic** time system time is seen in a linear way, from the past into the future, and therefore it is segmented, making it possible to do only one thing at a time.

### Hall: cultural interfacing:

Hall defines 4 basic principles of interfacing

- The higher the context of either the culture or the industry, the more difficult the interface
- The greater the complexity of the elements, the more difficult the interface
- The greater the cultural distance, the more difficult the interface
- The greater the number of levels in the system, the more difficult the interface

### Hofstede's principles: hard and software of the culture:

- Hofstede defines culture as hardware and software
- The software of the culture represents the values and practices, which are in general unconscious
- The hardware of the culture is everything that can be seen, can be heard, can be touched, clothes, eating, greeting rituals.... (Geert Hofstede)

Hofstede identifies 4 dimensions of intercultural communication:

#### 1- Power distance:

- Degree of acceptance of the inequality of distribution of power between humans
- Depending on the culture, some people are regarded as superior to others because of their social status, their gender, age, education, birth .....

#### 2- Uncertainty avoidance:

- Hofstede defines uncertainty avoidance as how a culture will adapt to and cope with uncertainty, or the extent to which the culture feels threatened by ambiguous, uncertain situations and tries to avoid them by **creating more structures**

### 3- Individualism – collectivism:

- Indicator that shows to which extent individual autonomy is regarded as favourable or unfavourable, the degree to which the culture relies on the self or on the group. There is a strong correlation between the power distance indicator and the individualism – collectivism indicator

### 4- Masculinity – femininity:

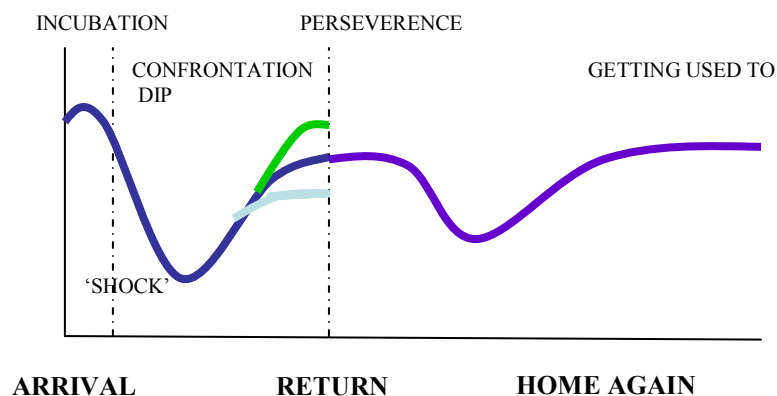
- This dimension indicates the degree to which a culture values achievement and assertiveness, or nurturance and social support

### Three steps on how to deal with intercultural differences:

1. Getting to know your own culture-bound norms and values.
2. Getting to know the culture-bound norms and values of the other.
3. Learning to live with the differences

### Culture shock

#### ...and reverse culture shock



### The “SPRING DAY” students:

Sabrina BOULOGNE

Laetitia LILLIG

Claire FORGEROU

**DU CEI**