

# SIETAR JOURNAL

“The Limits  
of my Language  
are the Limits  
of my World”

A provocative essay  
on the interlocking nature  
of language and thought  
(page 4)

guanxi

savoir-vivre

la dolce vita

machismo

Ordnung muß sein

time is money

sayonara

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SIETAREUROPA

## Impressum

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# SIETAR Journal

## Editorial

### A new name and look for SIETAR-Europa's newsletter

The comments we've received about the evolution of the newsletter over the past year have indeed been positive and we, the writing staff, are grateful. Your positive resonance encouraged us to work even harder and has translated into more feature stories, in-depth analyses, interviews.

Essentially we've outgrown our initial "newsletter" format—something that was planned from the start. And readers have noticed, and suggested we call a cat a cat...or in this case, a journal!

Well, we've taken your advice: Welcome to the new *SIETAR Journal*. As you've already seen, our cover-page gives the edition a newsier feel. The lead article is about the interplay of language and thought (pg. 4), an important concept to master when developing intercultural skills. Language is not only a communication tool, it's a system which allows us to organize perception and subsequent thinking.

Almost unknown five years ago, the topic has caught fire even among the general public. A recent *Wall Street Journal* piece on how language affects both perception and behavior resulted in a nearly record-breaking amount of

mail from readers. We hope you'll enjoy our series of articles on the subject.

In coming editions we'll expand on various subjects, such as tips for making your intercultural workshops more interesting. Want to learn to conduct the "building a tower" exercise using spaghetti and marshmallows? Take a look at Page 15! (Speaking from experience, the absolute silliness of the materials does wonders for group-learning.)

On a personal note, a change in my life. At the last SIETAR-Europa Board meeting in Lille, a new President was elected and it was your humble editor-in-chief. I'm honored by the trust the Board has given me and hope I will be able to reward their confidence by making SIETAR a stronger and more invigorating organization.



Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief



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# Perihan Ügeöz

## An interview with one of Turkey's most dynamic interculturalists



Istanbul is an intriguing metropolis of kaleidoscopic contrasts between ancient and modern and East and West. In fact, the city straddles the edges of Europe and Asia, a veritable bridge linking the continents.

Perihan Ügeöz, herself, personifies the on-going dialogue of Orient with Occident. She grew up in a cosmopolitan neighborhood of Armenians, Jews, Greeks and Turks, and vividly remembers playing with classmates from all these cultural backgrounds, something which marked her profoundly in terms of tolerance.

At the age of 11, she joined her parents--part of the first wave of Turkish "guest workers"--in Königslütter, near Helmstedt, Germany. Going to school in German obviously meant redefining her identity, the quintessential *third-culture kid*.\*

As a young woman, Ügeöz spent two years perfecting her English in the U.K. Her next stop was Berlin, where she worked as a secretary while completing her *Abitur* at night. Finally, although accepted in medicine, she opted to study adult education at the *Freie Universität* in Berlin. Her reasoning was simple: "Education is the key to changing people's outlooks".

\* TCK: Children who spend a significant period of their developmental years in a culture outside their parents' "passport country".

Not afraid to touch on controversial issues, her doctoral thesis predicted that public education would be partially privatized in the years to come--a far-fetched concept in the early '80s.

After teaching at the *Freie Universität* for over a decade, she returned to Istanbul in 1999. Today she works as a trainer and consultant in intercultural communications and human resource management.

Ügeöz joined SIETAR Europa in 2003 and has been a Board member since 2009, representing direct members.

**With your multi-cultural background, how do you help people in Turkey to become more open to the outside world?**

Turkey is eager to learn from the West and imports all these theories, which don't necessarily match our cultural patterns. What I try to do is readapt these ideas, mostly from the United States, to the Turkish mentality. My goal is to make Turks aware of how we're culturally conditioned and equip them to understand others.

**When we examine communication styles, we find that Germans are direct, extremely low-context, task-oriented. Turks are just the opposite — high-context, relationship-oriented people, concerned with saving**

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# Perihan Ügeöz

## *A dynamic interculturalist*

— continued



*Istanbul, a city of exotic contrasts*

### **face. How do you reconcile this?**

The first premise is to become aware of these differences. Awareness is the key to intercultural communication. German culture is characterized as being disciplined and straight-forward. In Turkey, being direct can be a sign of rudeness. But there are also contexts where directness is a sign of courage.

The many years I spent in Prussia made me impatient with the lack of discipline among Turks. They appear to beat around the bush, to be unable to get to the point — they have a very loose connection to work-related matters.

The trick is to become conscious of these patterns and learn how they affect your perception. Which also means being conscious of your counterpart's cultural perceptions.

When you successfully mix the two, it adds to the overall creativity and adds value to the interaction. That's why I think Istanbul's going to become more and more important in West-East relations. It's right in the center!

### **I note that you're quite active in Turkish politics...**

Yes, I'm very much for a forward-looking, secular state,

as laid out by the founder of the modern Republic, Kemal Atatürk. This, however, is becoming more difficult to maintain.

When Turkey began to heavily industrialize in the '80s, the majority of citizens experienced social change as too rapid, a threat. Their fear has led to the return of the classic patriarchal family and a reliance on religion.

Exploiting people's uncertainty, the conservative government has just won an important referendum which, in my opinion, will allow them to diminish judiciary independence.

Perceptions are important in politics. Politicians can bring out the best or the worst in people. Unfortunately, there seems to be a trend toward the negative in the last 10 years and it doesn't contribute to a healthy atmosphere in today's global world.

### **If there anything you're hoping for SIETAR to accomplish?**

Yes, my deepest wish is for SIETAR to hold a congress here in Istanbul. Many claim it's too chaotic but it's a beautiful city and the perfect bridge between East and West.

*Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

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# “The Limits of my Language are the Limits of my World”

by Patrick Schmidt

Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein provides the line I use to introduce the interlocking nature of language and thought and it always leads to a lively discussion. A well-turned phrase transmits the tenets of thought far more effectively than any lecture.

The question of how language shapes the way we think goes back at least a dozen centuries--Charlemagne’s “To have a second language is to have a second soul.”

Far more recently, Russian linguist Roman Jakobson pointed out that “languages differ essentially in what they must convey, not in what they may convey.” The power of a mother tongue is not that it allows thought but that it forces it!

*“I talked to my neighbor last night.”*

Think about it: if I were speaking French or German, I’d have to choose *voisin* or *voisine*, *Nachbar* or *Nachbarin*. Gender-based tongues make for more specific images, while anglophones aren’t required to consider the sexes of people they refer to.

Language is not only a communication tool, it’s a system which allows us to organize perception and subsequent thinking. The American linguist Benjamin Whorf posited that

we act in certain ways because our mental patterns are shaped by how we speak.

How we express ourselves on a day-to-day basis reflects what we decide is critical to survival and adaptation. Americans act quickly because their mind-set tells them “time is money” while *la dolce vita* leaves Italians smiling... when they’re not waving their arms in argument.

Even saying **No** is relative, as demonstrated by a Hong Kong journalist’s delightful piece of satire:

## CHINESE EDITOR’S REJECTION LETTER

“We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, however, it would then be impossible for us to publish any work of a lower standard. And it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal. We are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition and to beg you one thousand times to overlook our short-sighted timidity.”

Regardless of ethnicity, my students are always amused when they read this but there is a difference. Europeans and Americans could never imagine writing anything even

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# “The limits of ...”

— *continued*



“The Tower of Babel”, painted by the Dutch 16th century painter Pieter Bruegel

approaching that sort of approach...Whereas the Chinese, Japanese and Indian members of my workshops flatly state say that they could (and would).

Westerners and Asians may share a common experience when confronted with the mechanisms of rejection and face-saving but each experiences “a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions that has to be organized by our mind -- and this means mostly by the linguistic system of our mind” (*Whorf*).

Because saving face is so deeply embedded in their mental pathways, the Chinese possess a formidable array of honorific expressions. And it’s a rhetoric for which the West has no patience.

People from different cultures don’t think alike--that we know. What we understand less is the degree to which the language in which we learn to survive acts as a continual translator of reality.

Words define the constructs which cause friction when we attempt to understand foreign values or new ways. Language defines our nature.

The story of the ‘Tower of Babel’ recounts the efforts of united humanity metaphorically attempting to achieve a godlike status. God is not amused and His answer strikes

a universal chord. One tongue becomes a thousand--the mind-numbing cacophony of man-as-monkey--and the tower is no more.

The story is obviously a mirror (as befit the parables of those biblical times) representing the war-or-peace choice tribes have when dealing with one another.

Every person on the planet may well be connected on an existential level, it all goes back to families, clans, tribes and nations. We’re each condemned to perceive our own realities and to express what we feel in a very specific way... which is often only vaguely understood by “outsiders”.

Taking a dynamic *other* perspective necessitates a leap of consciousness. Back-and-forth communication is problematic at best amidst a “clash of differing realities.”

And so we’re led back to the most fundamental questions of intercultural studies. How do we become to be the way we are? What makes us think the way we do? How can we relate to people from outside our tribe in a more relevant way?

The answers are found in the language we speak.

*This article is adapted from the author’s book “In Search of Intercultural Understanding”, published by Meridian World Press .*

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# “The opposite may also be true...”

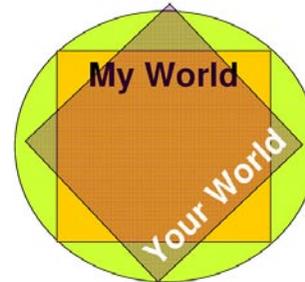
*Intercultural differences — as presented by Devdutt Pattanaik and Derek Sivers at TED India*

*by Axel Wendelberger*

Handling the ever increasing speed of change and its totality that we are facing today can be at times very challenging. It leaves us in need of explanations — more than ever before. Ten years into the new millennium, we cannot deny the possibility that the transformations we are experiencing might be the deepest since the Neolithic Revolution of about 10 000 years ago (the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture). In order to keep pace we have to make sense of it all. We need to understand our own position in relation to the processes of globalization, climate change, conflicts, and the resulting cultural changes.

The TED conferences are places for visionary people to meet and “share ideas that matter”. In November 2009, TEDIndia took place in the old city of Mysore in the South of India. Devdutt Pattanaik and Derek Sivers presented their views on intercultural differences. Devdutt Pattanaik, Indian mythologist, author, and *Chief Belief Officer* with a corporation in Mumbai, talked about fundamental concepts, deeply rooted in culture and tradition. Derek Sivers, American musician, entrepreneur, minimalist and globetrotter, showed how misleading cultural biases can be. Easterner and Westerner both arrived at the same conclusion: “The opposite may also be true...”

(Links to the videos are provided at the end of this article.)



**Devdutt Pattanaik:**

*East vs. West — The myths that mystify*

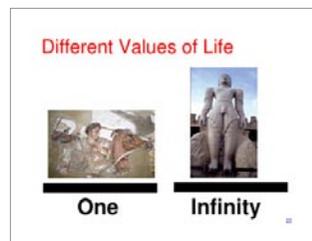
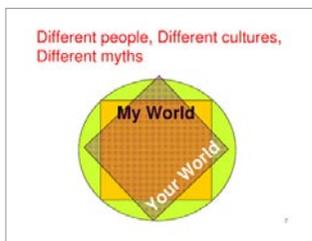
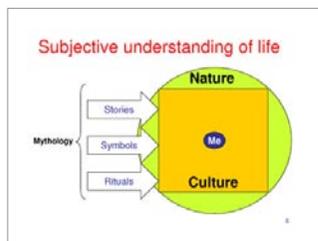


Devdutt Pattanaik explains basic differences between East and West by telling wonderful stories about mythical figures from both worlds. He tells the story of the two Indian gods Ganesha and Kartikeya and their race three

times around the world. Kartikeya surrounded the whole world whereas Ganesha surrounded just his parents, claiming victory: “You went around *the* world, I went around *my* world. What matters more?” *The* world is logical and fact-based, *my* world is emotional and based on belief.

Another story tells what happened when Alexander the Great met a Gymnosophist (a naked wise man) at the banks of the river Indus in 326 B.C. They asked each other what they were doing. The Gymnosophist said, “I’m experiencing nothingness.” Alexander said, “I’m conquering the world.” And both laughed thinking the other was a fool. Having grown up in the Greek culture, with stories about heroes such as Achilles, Theseus, and Jason, Alexander had only one lifetime to achieve all glory. In the eastern cultures nothing lasts forever, not even death. To them life is an endless

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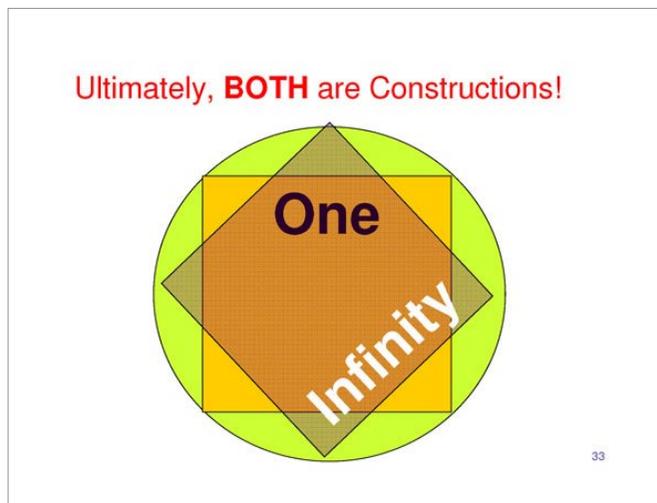


Different people, different cultures, different myths — life is always being understood on a subjective level. Intercultural communication is not only about understanding differences. It is also about accepting and utilizing them.

chain of reincarnations until “you get the point of it all”. Two different ways — which is the right one?

Devdutt Pattanaik is a great storyteller. Presenting in front of an international audience, he uses examples from both worlds to make everybody comfortable and perceptive. He raises his audience’s expectations — and delivers. Highly complex topics such as philosophical matters, religion, and business strategies are embedded in colorful stories that make us understand and remember.

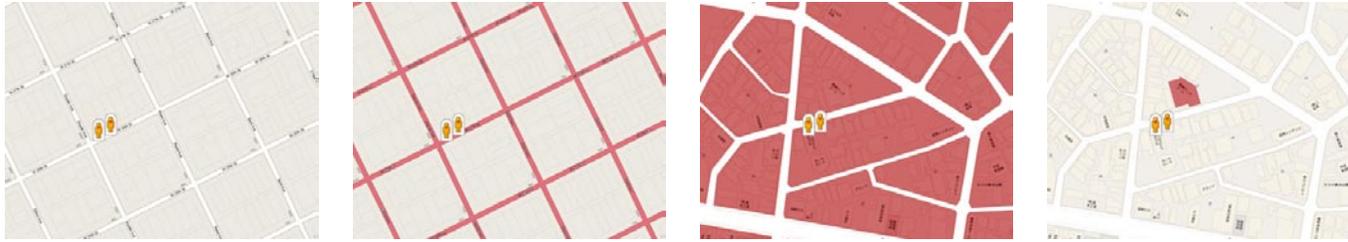
Being deeply familiar with his own, complex Indian culture as well as Western philosophical, religious and cultural concepts, Devdutt proves that even fundamental ideas such as fate, destiny and death are only constructions and not universally shared between cultures. He offers new ways of enriching our understanding of reality and approaching the challenges of our time: “Depending on the context, depending on the outcome, choose your paradigm. Paradigms are human constructions, they are cultural creations, not natural phenomena.”



Pictorial representations of two very different cultural concepts.

Devdutt’s conclusion: Both value systems are only constructions.

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Using the familiar visual metaphor of Google maps, including the the man-shaped icon of the Street View feature, Derek Sivers shows two opposite ways to order urban structures and talks about the the orientation problems that can cause in a globalized world.

**Derek Sivers:**  
*Weird, or just different?*



From the point of view of the curious globetrotter, Derek Sivers talks about open mindedness and tolerance using some unexpected examples of how easily we jump to conclusions and how always the exact opposite can also be

true. In only 2:20 minutes he takes us on a surprising journey around the globe — from a street in the U.S. to Japan, China, Africa, and India. Although very short, his presentation feels deep and meaningful, and helps us understand ourselves — and others...

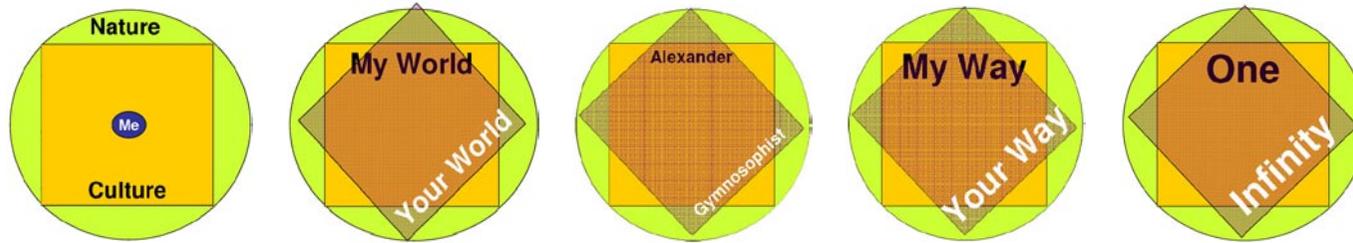
Derek tells actually four stories: about a Japanese man asking for his way on a street somewhere in the U.S., an American (or any Westener) asking for his way somewhere in Japan, about Chinese doctors being paid slightly differently, and the special rhythm of West-African music. All stories are real-life examples of things that we take for granted: addresses and street plans, doctor bills, music and rhythm. The genuine surprise and wonder they evoke prove how deeply entangled we all are in our own cultural conditioning and how that limits our view of the world.

Derek makes his point in a stunning way — with interesting stories presented in a light and conversational tone, accompanied by elegant and unobtrusive presentation slides that really serve as visual aids and support his talk. If true art means disguising the effort, making things look light and breezy, then Derek Sivers is a great artist. His presentation is so easy to follow, his examples so well chosen, that his message seems to fall into place almost by itself: “Let’s never forget ... that whatever brilliant ideas you have or hear, that the opposite may also be true.”



The world in South-North direction: the opposite may also be true.

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Devdutt Pattanaik uses the traditional form of a mandala, deeply rooted in Hindu and Buddhist culture, as a recurring element on his slides to visualize antithetic and highly abstract concepts such as world view, destiny, and reincarnation.

### Stories, slides, and stage performance

It is interesting to watch the two presentations one after the other. They couldn't be more different: Devdutt Pattanaik talking about Indian myths and how they relate to the Western culture and the business world, an educational experience; Derek Sivers painting an elegant picture with a few tender strokes (or so it seems), a motivational talk of 140 seconds.

And yet, they have so much in common. Both arrive at the same conclusion, that the world can be seen from very different angles and that it is up to us to understand the differences and to incorporate them into our own lives. Both tell wonderful stories and make the intercultural experience tangible. Both employ a minimalistic visual style to illustrate their talks.

Devdutt Pattanaik uses the traditional form of a *mandala* throughout his talk as a visual metaphor for antithetic and highly abstract concepts such as world view, destiny, and reincarnation. The *mandala* becomes a visual anchor, a "red thread" leading from point to point. Derek Sivers uses the map as leitmotiv, starting with a street map of a typical American city, ending up at a world map in South-North direction, charging his presentation with a virtual pan-and-zoom move.

Devdutt Pattanaik and Derek Sivers represent a new generation of presenters — beyond bullet points, data junk and clipart. They truly communicate with their listeners through interesting stories, meaningful visuals and passion for their topic.

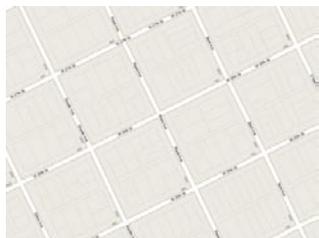
Online video of Devdutt Pattanaik's presentation:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/devdutt\\_pattanaik.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/devdutt_pattanaik.html)

Online video of Derek Sivers' presentation:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/derek\\_sivers\\_weird\\_or\\_just\\_different.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/derek_sivers_weird_or_just_different.html)

I would like to thank Devdutt Pattanaik and Derek Sivers for their kind help and permission to reproduce their presentation slides. Axel Wendelberger can be contacted at [axel@wendelberger.com](mailto:axel@wendelberger.com) or via the website [www.wendelberger.com](http://www.wendelberger.com)



From street map to world map — a virtual zoom-out that follows Derek Sivers' talk and emphasizes his message.

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Reporter's Sketchbook

...an American in Montréal

# American Identity Crisis

*(homo economicus without work)*

by Dan MacLeod



*"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free"*

**D**“own-sizing”, “out-sourcing”, “just-in-time workers”-- none of these terms existed 30 years ago.

If language defines the borders of perception, reality gives birth to words in the first place. Expressions are based on shared impressions at a given point in time and, throughout most of its history, American speech reflected a new nation describing itself in dynamic terms.

*Time is money!* summed up the brash impatience of a people conquering a continent. *Put up or shut up!* mixed haste with the businessman's defiant challenge in the boom-years after 1945, as did the far more picturesque *Money talks, bullshit walks*.

“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” says the lady holding the torch in New York's harbor.

In a country where virtually everyone was an immigrant and “liberty and justice for all” the mantra, democracy was a sacred thing--all the moreso given the founding fathers' ingenious “separation of Church and State”.

*The sky's the limit!* was how it looked to my parents when I was born in 1957. “Anyone can grow up to become the president,” was what everyone said when I was a kid and by then it was true: thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, blacks were finally on the national bus.

Things changed in the 1980s. Conservative Ronald Reagan and his myriad supporters looked back to an illusionary world where white-collar whites lived in “Leave it to Beaver”\* neighborhoods and the masses huddled as discreetly as possible.

The American legacy of FDR and JFK--like the post-war evolution of social democracy in Western Europe--was abhorred by corporations and financiers who preferred individual initiative to government intervention. In a return to the Roaring Twenties business-model, both unions and minimum-wage increases for non-unionized workers were vilified as “socialism”.

Proclaiming “government is the problem”, Reagan deregulated Wall Street and the banking industry (paving the way for the Savings and Loan scandal of the early '80s). But reactionary economics were only part of it.

From an intercultural point of view, neo-conservative politics were *wrapped in the flag* and *sworn to on the Bible*. It was the beginning of what has now been a Thirty Years War on gays and foreigners, abortion and euthanasia, evolution and education, art and science in general.

Meanwhile, after all the down-sizing and out-sourcing, a new

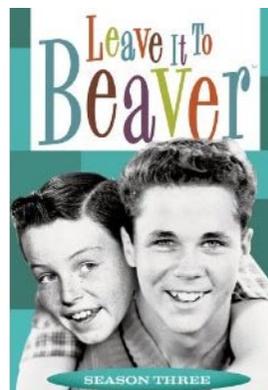
\* *“Leave It to Beaver”* was the most popular TV series in the late '50s and early '60s, symbolizing the ideal suburban neighborhood where happy families looked toward the American Dream.

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# American Identity Crisis

— *continued*

*Idealizing the American dream, the “Leave It To Beaver” show was the number one TV program in the late 50s and early 60s.*



linguistic pearl launched the '90s: “recovery without jobs”. Taken to its logical conclusion, it would mean the end of capitalism as a viable system.

A generation later, as Wall Street surges and banks thrive while people continue to lose their jobs and homes, both the expression and the concept behind it are back with a vengeance.

Activists, academics, and some interculturalists talk about kids who grew up in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, various parts of Africa. “They’ve known nothing but war...”

What about everyone who grew up in the U.S. in the past forty years? By the time ten-year-olds read their first front pages in the '80s, the headlines told of large sectors of the economy being restructured or phased out altogether. People were being “laid off” by the millions--was Dad going to be next?

If you lived in the American Midwest, the transition was from *steel-* to *rust-belt*. I was in West Virginia in 1990, talking to unemployed coal-miners about the long-wall excavators they’d been replaced by. Springsteen sang it best: “*Those jobs are goin’, boys, and they ain’t comin’ back...*”

Still, you can’t fight progress. This was “cutting-edge technology”, “space-age engineering”, “good old American know-how”!

Michael Moore’s “*Roger and Me*” was about something else entirely. GM closed plants in Michigan, opened others in Mexico and swore the two were unrelated. Executives continued to receive bonuses while families who’d shaped the company for three generations received food stamps.

Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, alluding to the rise of multinationals in an increasingly global economy. summed it up in seven words: “*IBM is no longer an American corporation.*”

There was now a complete disconnect between the folklore about private enterprise building the country and the fact that it had always been based on profit, not patriotism.

Imagine what it must have looked like to a sixth-grader. Kids don’t get all the words but that can be a plus; in both PR and politics, words transform meaning more often than they convey it. What kids *do* get--intuitively--is when people in authority aren’t telling the truth.

Also, a world in which the middle class can become “welfare-poor” overnight is a house (a real one, with parents and a sibling or two) built on existential quicksand.

And I say “parents”... By the '80s, almost half of marriages ended in divorce. It wasn’t just a question of economics, the entire concept of permanence was shaky.

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# American Identity Crisis

— *continued*

## Culture Wars



As in the 1840s and 1850s, the USA is currently going through a culture war.

Kid goes to the local 7-11 for milk and, though he's walked there before, takes a wrong turn. He returns home and says, matter-of-factly, "They moved the store."

I don't remember where I read that but it captures the spirit of the times. Suburban malls had hollowed out the downtown core of American cities. Hundred-year-old companies had ceased to exist but ten times as many new ones appeared, leaner and meaner and built for short-term gain. The American Midwest migrated to the Southwest--demographics were all over the map!

Even maps were changing. The Berlin Wall fell and the planet was no longer divided in two, it was exploding into dozens of new countries, "semi-autonomous regions" and "breakaway republics". The world was suddenly becoming a much bigger place.

Three wars later, the U.S. is both broke and broken in half along an ideological divide. The Culture Wars rage on and the spirit of Reagan rides again. Only 14% of America's latest Know-Nothings\*\*, the Tea Party, believe global warming is the result of human activity. A sign I saw last week on CNN: "*Climate Change = Fascist Plot!*"

These are the people who'll have changed the course of the country on November 2nd. And although they talk about re-

\*\* The Know-Nothing movement was an American political movement of the 1840s and 1850s empowered by popular fears that the country was being overwhelmed by German and Irish Catholic immigrants (Wikipedia)

ducing taxes and deficits, it's really a question of semantics: whether or not that most iconic expression of all--the "American Dream"--should include a black man in the White House.

Or gays in public, or *wops* ("without official papers") in public schools, or Muslims in general. Or public health-care, welfare, social security, gun control, environmental protection, abortion rights, or the fact of evolution. Or, in fact, the separation of Church and State.

The kids who read their first front pages 30 years ago were having kids themselves by September 11th, 2001. "They moved the store" became "They blew up the store."

A decade later my American relatives include a 13-year-old niece and an 11-year-old nephew. They're old enough to follow the news and, like the president, they're half-black.

What does the thinly-disguised racist rhetoric sound like to them? And what do they think about the millions of families who've lost their homes in the past two years in the biggest case of banking fraud in history?

Historians often talk about the centuries of damage to the German psyche done by the Thirty Years War.

I contend that the past 30 years of U.S. history will have much the same effect on the American people.

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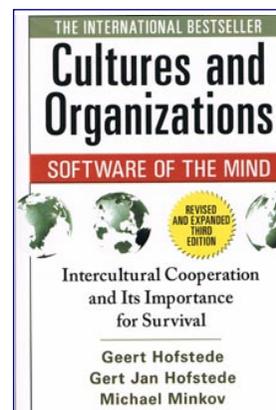
## Book Review

# Cultures and Organizations *Software of the Mind* (3rd edition)

by Geert & Gert J. Hofstede, Michael Minkov

€ 24.50, 561 pages

McGraw Hill (in the French language *Éditions Pearson*)



Perhaps no other social scientist in the last 30 years has revolutionized the field of culture and business more than Geert Hofstede. Because his initial Cultural Consequences was too “scientific” for most people, he published a simpler and more accessible version--*Cultures and Organizations*--in 1991. It became an instant best-seller, translated into 18 languages.

This revised, third edition (2010) offers a monumental perspective on cultural and organizational paradigms. The first section begins with an excellent overview of culture and explains the concept of “dimension” — an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. The authors then examine nations according to a six-dimensional plan and the culture of organizations. The final section deals with the implications of cultural differences.

The work itself features substantial additions and new contributions. Among other things, Michael Minkov reveals a novel, sixth cultural dimension: indulgence versus restraint. The gratification of basic desires, such as happiness, leisure and life-control, is juxtaposed with our very human guilt at “wasting” time or money. The statistical results explain why Filipinos, for example, are far more content than the citizens of Hong Kong.

Another absorbing chapter relates the 2002 study ask-

ing 1800 MBA students in 17 different countries what they considered the priorities of business to be. Americans listed growth, respect for ethical norms, personal wealth, this year’s profits and power. Quite a contrast with the German “top five” of social responsibility, respect for employees, innovation, profits ten years from now and ethical norms. These types of differences allow us to better understand national character and idiomatic behavior...such as why the 2008 sub-prime loan crisis was born in the USA.

The final chapter--written by Geert’s son Gert--gives a Darwinian spin to the evolution of societies and shows why we shouldn’t expect global monoculturalism any time soon. And *Vive la différence!*

Easy-to-understand tables summarize key concepts throughout, as do a plethora of entertaining anecdotes. I found myself returning to the multidimensional index scores as I pondered those differences. And then plunging on to read more.

The writing is fluid and helps us along but it must be noted that this is a very long book--a bit too long. Nonetheless, it’s a reader-friendly introduction to cross-cultural research and a definite “must” for anyone trying to understand our turbulent new century.

*Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

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## Book Review

# Leadership Insight

## *Going beyond the dehydrated language of management*

by Nancy J. Adler

Routledge, U.S. \$ 49.95, 190 pages



*Leadership Insight* is a collection of artwork (27 beautiful watercolors by Nancy Adler herself), over 30 meaningful quotes by Aristotle, Confucius, and other famous and not so famous people, augmented by 13 transparent pages with questions, mostly by the author, to inspire leaders to examine their own beliefs and attitudes. The book is meant to be a journal for leaders to reflect, collect their own thoughts, and write them down on the 84 blank pages provided for that purpose, to foster creativity and leadership. I'd like to accept Nancy Adler's advice and take the book as an invitation, "... an invitation to enter into the quiet and contemplation it takes to be wise." So, let's abandon all attempts of objectivity and follow some thoughts inspired by the book.

For centuries, art — and art alone — was regarded as an act of creativity. Only in the last decades we have started to understand creativity as a basic human ability, a fact proven by neurophysiology, locating creative thinking in the middle prefrontal area of the *neocortex* — the area where thinking of the highest level of abstraction takes place. Creativity ranks among the most advanced human activities and, as so many pointed out, seems the only way out of the terrible problems we cause for ourselves. To deal with the challenges of our age our leaders — as much as anyone — need creativity alongside with a deeper understanding and empathy in order to bring about the necessary transformative change. Creativity is a non-linear process with an uncertain outcome. It cannot be measured, it cannot be planned, and it can be messy

at times. People, managers in particular, find that hard to accept. Most of us are still caught up in 19th-century thinking with romantic notions about art and beauty. But, the way of the artist is usually hard and uncompromising. It is this unyielding determination that we need in our leaders — the will to embrace creativity and to accept the uncertainty that comes with it. However, the transition from the traditional linear thinking to a more holistic, creative approach is not an easy one and we should not pretend otherwise.

In creativity, quantity breeds quality. The more input we give ourselves, the easier it gets to generate new ideas, concepts, and associations. Keeping a creativity journal is a good way to collect impressions, ideas, and insight. It should contain pictures as well as text, and be as personal as possible. After a while it will become a source of inspiration itself. *Leadership Insight* provides exactly that, inspiration and space for collecting thoughts and ideas. Seeing a renowned scholar such as Nancy Adler practicing art alongside her academic work and sharing it is encouraging. Her book seems almost too beautiful to mess it up with one's own scribbles. The reader might want to use it for inspiration only and start a creativity journal on their own. It would be interesting to see the blank pages filled with more of Nancy Adler's thoughts in her own hand and to follow her visual thinking. That would add a new dimension and make the book even more valuable and inspiring.

*Reviewed by Axel Wendelberger*

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## A non-conventional, cross-cultural 'Building a Tower' Exercise

A teambuilding activity with spaghetti and marshmallows that will make your workshop 'the talk of the town'



### Objective:

This exercise gives participants a concrete task to perform by building a tower with spaghetti and marshmallows. The objective is to see how a group forms itself and accomplishes a task under the pressure of a time limit. The exercise can be used to demonstrate personality types, group roles and tasks, leadership styles, cultural values problem-solving, etc.

### Materials:

Spaghetti (c. 50 gr/team)  
Marshmallows (c. 25 gr/team)

### Directions:

1. Have the participants form into the number of groups you want to have. There should be at least 5 people in each group. Explain the objective, rules on building a tower with spaghetti and marshmallows. "Your group's task is to build a tower using only marshmallows and spaghetti. Your goal is to build the highest free-standing tower you can, with no other support. You may go about the task any way you wish, within these guidelines. The other groups around you are also doing the same task."
2. Have the members of each group count off, from one through five (e.g., if there are ten people in the group, there will be two of each number, 1 thru 5.

3. Have all the participants gather at another location by the numbers they have been given. All the ones in one group, twos in another, etc.
4. Give each group copies of their specific roles to play in the exercise. Have them read the directions and discuss how they might behave if doing that role. It is very important that the groups discussing these roles do not interact with any of the other groups and do not hear what the other groups are saying. They should be in separate rooms.
5. After each group has had some time to prepare their roles, have everyone go back to their original groups. Remind everyone that they are to act out their role **without telling anyone** who they are. They have 15 or 20 minutes to construct their tower.
6. The descriptions for each role are given below, and are to be printed separately on cards:

**Role 1:** You are from a culture that is action-oriented, competitive and energetic, pro-active. You like competitive games. Doing the best job possible is the objective, especially if you can build a tower better than any of the other groups. You think that you and your group should do whatever it takes to get the job done. You are very conscious of the time limit, which means do it as fast as possible.

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# 'Building a Tower' Exercise

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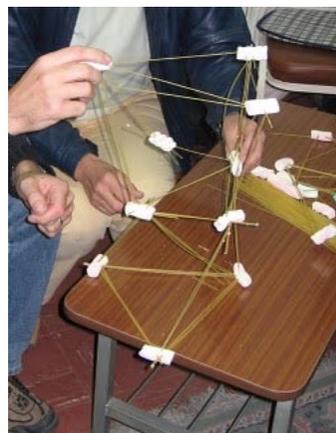
*Things you might say or do:*

- "Come on, let's get going – I want our tower to be the best".
- "Let's stop fooling around and get to work".
- (If visited by another group) Don't let them see what we are doing".
- "We have to hurry up, there isn't much time".

**Role 2:** You are from a culture that respects age and the wisdom it brings. Your philosophy of life is to defer to your elders, and ask their advice. You would like to build a successful tower, but only to bring honor to your family. You might say, "yes" to suggestions and requests, (even though you disagree), but go on doing what you think is best, or what your elders say is best.

*Things you might say or do:*

- I think someone older might have a better idea of how to do this".
- If there is an older person in the group, agree with what they say.
- If there is an older person in the group, ask their opinion often.
- If there is not an older person in the group, say things like "I wish there was someone older who had more experience with this kind of thing", or "My grandfather was really good at



this type of thing, I wish he was here to show us how".

**Role 3:** You are a culture that values "being" rather than "doing". Time is eternal, and relationships are more important than accomplishment. If you don't get done in time, it is not important. You firmly believe that a higher being or fate will determine the height of towers, not our own will; it is not that important. Anyway, all towers eventually fall down. Good conversation, inquiring about family and friends is more important. Doing the tower is just a vehicle to bring people together to talk.

*Things you might say or do:*

- "Hey, the tower is no big deal, let's just have fun". (ex. *La Dolce Vita*)
- Talk about other topics – bring up recent movies, music or TV shows.
- Start side conversations, play with the materials.
- In general, make light of the activity.

**Role 4:** You are from a culture that values sharing, so you will interact with other groups working on the same problem, asking them what they are doing, and telling them what you have learned. You want to build the best tower you can but you want each group to do equally well. Emphasize

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# 'Building a Tower' Exercise

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that the other groups will lose "face" if your tower is better than theirs.

*Things you might say or do:*

- Visit other groups and learn from what they do, complementing their accomplishments.
- Borrow their ideas and bring them back to your group.
- If any group is doing really well, take their idea to another group.

**Role 5:** You are from a culture that is quality conscious and thorough. That means, before the tower is started, it must be thoroughly discussed, in order to lay the groundwork for a solid piece of work. 100% perfection is your highest value, i.e. the tower should have a "Mercedes-Benz" like-quality.

*Things you might say or do:*

- I strive for perfection because it makes society better in the long run.
- Either we do it right or we don't do it all.
- Quality of life is dependent on doing things thoroughly and right.



## Debriefing

After the time is up, lead a discussion with these type of questions:

- How did you feel doing the exercise?
- How did the group organize itself?
- How did the group utilize its resources?
- What happened?
- What were the goals of the group/individuals in the group?

Depending on the purpose of the exercise, the facilitator can lead the discussion to such variables as:

- Describe any strategies you used in doing the exercise.
- How was your style of playing similar or different to the way you approach other tasks?
- Did you notice any particular personality types, cultural patterns or leadership styles displayed?
- What assumptions did people make about the goals or strategies of other people in the group?
- What did you learn from this exercise?

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The world around us is experiencing a period of deep change and social transformation in which the coexistence of different cultures, ethnicities, nationalities and abilities is becoming a critical element of professional and social tension.

As a reaction to this growing heterogeneity, discriminatory attitudes and penalizing policies against those perceived as different have crept into organizations and society at large, in an attempt to neutralize, reduce or even eliminate the impact of diversity, perceived as a cost and disturbance rather than as an opportunity and resource.

We, on the contrary, believe that diversity of gender, ethnicity, age, culture, religious belief and other factors can represent a novel and extraordinarily vital resource for society, one that opens up a whole new range of potential answers and creative solutions to cope with the ever greater and ever more challenging crises and changes that lie ahead.

This is why we believe that success, whether economic or of any other kind, can be achieved only by acknowledging, respecting and making full use of the diversity that exists in our society, not only in the workplace but in the lives of every woman and man on this planet. We are firmly convinced that concrete intercultural practices, proactively undertaken, can contribute to the creation of a more equable and peaceful society.

Therefore as members of SIETAR Italia – in particular each time we take out or renew our membership – we solemnly commit ourselves to respecting and complying with the principles, the values and the central tenants of our Association as expressed in its Statutes, with full awareness of all that this implies.

With respect to those with whom we shall have the opportunity and privilege of working, we guarantee our competence, dedication, professionalism and confidentiality.

With regards to the issues we are called upon to deal with, we shall study them thoroughly beforehand and then specify, in explicit terms, the nature, the extent and the anticipated outcomes of our contribution.

With respect to our continuing professional education, we commit ourselves to attending SIETAR Italia (and other) workshops and seminars and to keeping abreast of developments in our profession.

With respect toward SIETAR Italia, fully aware of the importance of principled and professional conduct we commit ourselves to loyal and ethical conduct towards our fellow members, as per the Association Statutes.

From the SIETAR Italia Board

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# Events, workshops, congresses

## Frankfurt, Germany

December 15-17, 2011

*Coaching Across Cultures — an Advanced International Seminar* Philippe Rosinski, global leadership pioneer and author, delivers this advanced seminar designed for seasoned coaches, consultants, interculturalists, senior executives, managers and HR/LD professionals. 15% discount for SIETAR members. More information at //www.philrosinski.com

## Chennai, India

January 22-23, 2011

SIETAR Europa Congress  
SIETAR India is putting its next conference at the beginning of January. The theme will be in conjunction with India's rapid development: *"Intercultural Solutions for a Sustainable World"*. More information at www.sietarindia.org

## Milan, Italy

February 5, 2011

*What all Interculturalists need to know: Why they are not cross-cultural psychologist, anthropologists, or Internationalists.* Milton Bennett will key give this keynote presentation at SIETAR Italia's annual meeting. More information at [www.sietar-italia.org](http://www.sietar-italia.org)

## London, UK

February 12, 2011

*"Dealing With Difficult People!"* A *Conflict Resolution Workshop (Beginners and Advanced)* SIETAR UK will begin the workshop with a plenary session — a high-powered Conflict professional will cover both the basics and some advanced areas of mediation, and dispute resolution. Cost - Members £70, Non - Members £95, Students £30. More information at - [matthew.hill@hillnetworks.com](mailto:matthew.hill@hillnetworks.com) [cometar.org.uk](http://www.cometar.org.uk)

## Krakow, Poland

September 21-24, 2011

SIETAR Europa Congress  
*Interculturalism ahead: Transition to a virtual world?* will be the theme of the next SIETAR Europa Congress. More information will be available in the months to come.

## Online Everyday

The SIETAR Europa group discussing

### "Competence in Intercultural Professions"

on LinkedIn has now over 1300 members in the group. Hot topics: "Decolonization" of Intercultural Theory and Practice," "Certification for Intercultural Professionals," and "2011 The EU year of Volunteering."

For more information, contact George Simons or Mirka Lachka at: [sietareu.volunteers2011@gmail.com](mailto:sietareu.volunteers2011@gmail.com)

Access to LinkedIn requires joining those sites. Both are free.

## SIETAR France congress on human rights far exceeded expectations

Taking place at the Catholic University in Lille from Wednesday, October 27 to Saturday, October 31, 2010, SIETAR France played host to over 100 eager participants attending its 2010 Congress. There were amazing keynote speakers, such as the lively Elmer Dixon, one of the founders of the 'Black Panthers' movement. Or the former French Minister Philippe Vasseur, who explained brilliantly how French companies dealt with diversity. Attendees participated in 'learning communities', where new ideas and experiences were passionately debated. Top quality workshops provided new methods and practical tools in the field of diversity. Two plays, one in French and one in English, examined the human condition when confronted with racism — both moving and profound.

As the congress came to a close, Matthew Hill, President of SIETAR UK, summed up the participants' mood by congratulating the organizers, Jonathan Levy and Grant Douglas, for an enriching event that went well beyond anyone's imagination.

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