

# SIETAR-NEWSLETTER

## Editorial

### The Godfather of Intercultural Comparative Research

Thirty years after his breakout opus, Geert Hofstede remains a dominant influence in both the academic and cross-cultural training worlds. Many people feel that no other theoretical framework goes as far in explaining how national cultures differ in terms of tolerance for ambiguity, social equality and assertiveness.

*Culture's Consequences* examined countries according to a series of finely-tuned dimensions, a radical approach which engendered an entirely new paradigm. Firmly based in science, Hofstede's vision touched a universal nerve in its broad strokes and made the study of cultural differences far more accessible.

What makes his work even more fascinating is that it came about almost by accident. Hired by IBM in the mid-'60s to conduct in-house "attitude surveys", he gradually began to see patterns of difference according to nationality.

Corporate culture--even that of a monolith such as IBM--obviously took a back seat to the combined influences of eth-

nicity, geography, social values, and spiritual beliefs...but how to untangle the strands of this spaghetti-like puzzle?

Hofstede, as befits his training as an engineer and accountant, plodded along doing years of research before unveiling culture-difference analysis. His insights exemplify a great mind whose independence doesn't come from ignoring rules but by organically deriving new ones.

There was criticism, of course, notably that a study of the subsidiaries of one company couldn't possibly define national cultures as a whole. But Hofstede never claimed to do so!

"I was measuring differences between national cultures, not cultures in an absolute sense..."

I was privileged to meet with Mr. Hofstede and ask him about the turning-points in his life. Our interview begins on Page 2 and I hope you enjoy it.

Patrick Schmidt



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SIETAREUROPA

SIETAR Europa  
637 bd de la Tavernière  
Residence l'Argentière - Bât E  
06210 Mandelieu la Napoule FRANCE  
Tel.: +33 4 92 19 04 90  
Fax: +44 870 121 7440  
office@sietar-europa.org  
www.sietar-europa.org

### Impressum

SIETAR Europa, 637 bd de la Tavernière, Residence l'Argentière - Bât E, F - 06210 Mandelieu la Napoule  
Tel.: +33 4 92 19 04 90, e-mail: office@sietar-europa.org

# Geert Hofstede

## An interview with a pioneer in cross-cultural studies



Over the centuries, the Netherlands has made its mark on history by learning to survive in their own way. Too small to be a world power, with an absence of most natural resources, the Dutch channelled their energies into international trade and industry.

Their historic encounter with Calvinist thought provided the roots for a strong work ethic and a down-to-earth view of life. The result has been tolerance, modesty and (even when faced with *human* problems) great faith in the scientific method.

Add an excellent educational system which emphasizes foreign-language training and you get a dynamic country whose people are both curious by nature and inherently open to other cultures. It's no accident that the father of modern cross-cultural research is Dutch.

Thirty years ago, Geert Hofstede's work *Culture's Consequences* revolutionized the way we look at society. Through theoretical reasoning and statistical analysis, he identified four dimensions in differentiating cultures: high and low power-distance, individualism versus collectivism, strong and weak uncertainty-avoidance and masculinity versus femininity. (He later added a fifth, long- and short-term orientation.)

No one before had empirically measured value differences among cultures and — like most people who force us to

change our way of thinking — he had to battle nay-sayers. But his findings clearly showed how national and regional groupings affect the behavior of organizations, and that this is persistent across time.

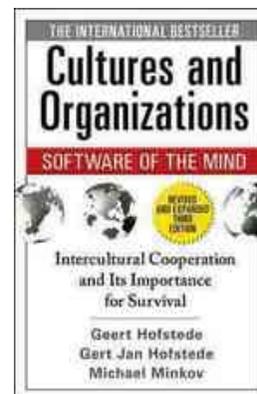
Because his initial work was too scientific for most people, Hofstede published a more accessible version in 1991. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* was an instant bestseller and has so far appeared in 18 languages. His “national dimensions” have become an integral part of most intercultural programs and textbooks; his books and articles, required reading for almost any MBA or PhD program.

Born in 1928 in Haarlem, Geert Hofstede completed a master's degree in Mechanical Engineering at Delft Technical University in 1953 and a Social Science doctorate at the University of Groningen in 1967. After founding and managing the Personnel Research Department at IBM-Europe from 1965 to 1971, he taught at IMD in Lausanne and at INSEAD at Fontainebleau, and did research at EIASM, Brussels and IIASA, Laxenburg near Vienna. In 1980 he founded his own research institute IRIC, which existed until 2004. In 1985 he joined Maastricht University as a Professor of Organizational Anthropology and International Management. He was made a Honorary Member of SIETAR Europe in 1993. He received honorary doctorates from universities in seven European countries. In the USA

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# Geert Hofstede

## A pioneer — continued



*Geert Hofstede's book for laymen "Cultures and Organizations" popularized his work on national cultural differences.*

he was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Management; a May 2008 *Wall Street Journal* ranking placed him among "the twenty most influential management thinkers". In 2006, Maastricht University inaugurated a *Geert Hofstede Chair* in cultural diversity; in 2009, six European colleges named their transnational Joint Master Program in International Communication the Geert Hofstede Consortium .

I had the opportunity to meet him at his home in Velp and ask about events that helped shape his mind.

### Could you give a brief description of your early life?

When the war ended in Holland in May 1945, I was due to graduate from the Gymnasium while the whole country was in chaos. The schools had been closed in the last year of the war. Despite this, the government decided to give all pupils their diploma. So I found myself, without the last year but with a diploma, entering college quite young--I was still 16.

My father, who was head of technical education in the Netherlands, suggested I should start at a technical college which had recovered from the war faster than the Technical University. I took Mechanical Engineering and spent my entire second year in internships — it was highly practical. I was a factory worker in various places and then I managed to get a three-month position as an assistant ship-engineer sailing from Holland to the Dutch East Indies and back.

After my internships, to avoid being drafted for military service, I didn't finish my last year of technical college but I entered Delft Technical University right away, continuing in mechanical engineering. I spent the next six years there and got involved in many other things beyond engineering.

One was becoming National President of the Liberal Christian Student Association. It was a nice time and allowed me to meet a large variety of people at other universities and widen my horizons and interests. I then became very curious about worker motivation and organization.

### How did all this mix with your engineering studies?

You could say my father had a strong influence in my orientation. Although he was an engineer by training, my father was more gifted in foreign languages. In his high school days, he excelled in them and was only average in sciences. With his technical university degree he had soon become a teacher at a technical college, and he had published a much-used engineering textbook in which every chapter started with a glossary in four languages.

His main interest was not so much in technology, but in the people who do the technology and their motivation. He was known for helping academically weak children of well-to-do families. He would tell parents that their children should first master a trade, such as carpentry, to give them

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# Geert Hofstede

## A pioneer — continued



*“In my student days, I was simply fascinated by motivation, the relationship between work and play.”*

the experience of success, which would build up their self-confidence so that they could take advanced studies later. Many of these students afterwards thanked him for this.

So you could say my father indirectly opened other worlds than technology. The irony is that I owe my engineer-like mind to my mother, who was the technical person of the family. She was practical and would do the fixing.

It was this sort of intellectual atmosphere that broadened my mind. During my studies, I took an elective for which I had to study a book by a Jesuit, Father Kuylaars on the social role of the enterprise. Its message was that work has a double productivity: externally, to produce things and internally, to develop people. This was years before in the USA Maslow and Herzberg published their theories of self-actualization and motivation versus hygiene.

I found this fascinating and it had a great influence on me. It went along with my interest in the worker-priest (*prêtre-ouvrier*) movement in France, men wanted to experience the everyday life of the working class. All this provided me with the material to do a paper about work and life. By the time I finished, my interests were more in worker motivation. But mechanical engineering had disciplined my mind and that would later be very useful in my work.

### After your studies, did you start as an engineer?

No, first I had to spend two years in the army. I was a technical officer in the arms-purchasing department. We were shooting and testing heavy guns and ammunition. It was adventurous, but I experienced it as a waste of time.

After that, I worked *incognito* as a factory worker for half a year. I did this because I wanted to know how an organization treats you when you are just seen as a worker, not as a student doing an internship. I worked with my hands and it was very, very revealing. Being a factory worker made me see things other industrial psychologists might have missed. My reports and my diary from those days were published much later in a Dutch sociology journal; an English translation has appeared in my 1994 book *Uncommon Sense about Organizations: Cases, Studies, and Field Observations*.

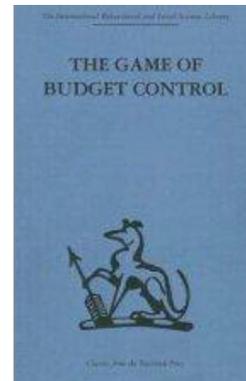
I got my first job as an industrial engineer in the company my father once had started working for. I was sent for a year to a consulting group to be trained in many fields: time-and-motion study, job classification, quality engineering, personnel selection. I became an internal consultant for the company. Later on, I was sent on a ten-week management course, one of the first in the country. We were sixteen young academics from different companies and by the end of the course we knew each other pretty well, including our strengths and weaknesses, our responsibilities and our salaries. It was

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# Geert Hofstede

## A pioneer — continued

*Geert Hofstede's PhD thesis "The Game of Budget Control". It's now regarded as a classic in the accounting field*



there that I realized I could do something else, and I left the company pretty soon afterwards.

I was hired as a future plant manager in a hosiery factory. That was a disaster — I ended up getting fired along with another manager — but it was a good experience; I learned a lot about people and Machiavellian power-politics.

My next job was in a textile company that needed to be modernized. They hired a former professor of economics as a financial director, who took me on as his assistant. However I already knew I wanted to do something else, get training in social science. The professor, who was very open, made a deal with me: you help me transform the company for two years and, afterwards, I'll allow you to do a doctorate while working half-time.

The only requirement to do a doctorate in Holland those days was to write the thesis. I didn't have to attend classes but I had to turn myself into a psychologist and that meant reading and studying many, many books.

### So that meant self-teaching?

Yes, you could say I was a self-learner. And there was a lot of pressure because my wife and I had a growing family, I was working half-time and studying. But I managed to do my doctorate in an incredibly short time--two and a half years--and even got a *cum laude*.

### What subject did you write on?

My thesis was "The Game of Budget Control". It was in English, which in Holland was unusual in those days. I chose the theme because during my time with the textile company, we had been setting up a budget system. My focus in that process had been on people's behaviour. For the thesis I did extensive interviewing and some surveying in six other Dutch manufacturing plants. The message in the thesis is that for a budget to be motivating, you should allow a margin of play or game in it. A commercial edition of my thesis was published in the UK and it became quite popular among accountants and led to a new field of study — behavioral accounting. You could say I was more or less the founding father and I even got one of my honorary doctorates for it.

### So, you're also an accountant!

Well, in a way. In fact I gave a speech last year at an international accountants' workshop.

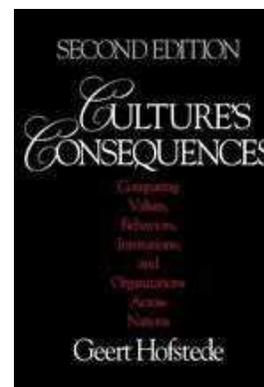
### When you finished your PhD, you joined IBM?

Yes, the textile company wasn't doing too well and IBM offered me a position in their international executive development department; I would also have to coordinate personnel research in the European subsidiaries. As a product of the Dutch school system of the 1940s, I could converse with people in Dutch, English, French, German

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# Geert Hofstede

## A pioneer — continued



*When "Culture's Consequences" was published in 1980, it introduced a new paradigm — dimensions — which since has acquired normal science status.*

and Italian which came very useful. We set up a system of periodic attitude surveys among IBM employees worldwide, and I had to use all my sales skills to convince local general managers to participate.

I worked with bright American and European colleagues who were very willing to share insights and observations. We made a fine team. I had my finest hours at IBM and made many friends in the company. I even received an award for the work I did.

### **How did this work with attitude surveys lead to your breakthrough on cross-cultural dimensions?**

In six years of working with people and with surveys in different places, I had noticed differences between countries but not completely understood the reason for them. The year 1968 brought its student revolts in several European countries and I noticed differences in the IBM subsidiaries in employees' ways of dealing with power and powerlessness. I wanted to analyse more.

IBM generously granted me a two-year sabbatical to teach and do research at IMD (then called IMEDE) in Lausanne. When I was due to return, I proposed to IBM to continue my research into national differences. Unfortunately I had got a new boss, who had no feeling or perspective on what I did, and wanted to assign other priorities. He said

I could give my research material to a university. Being somewhat stubborn, I said I would join that university, and consequently left IBM in 1973, with the permission to carry the survey results with me for further analysis.

I got a part-time teaching job at the INSEAD in Fontainebleau and a research position at EIASM (European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management) in Brussels. This allowed me to continue my research into national differences; the process took six years. I began to intensively read anthropology, international economics, world literature--I'd read anything in order to make sense of the results I had.

I finally published my findings and conclusions in *Culture's Consequences* in 1980. The rest, as you know, is history.

### **One last question: If you were a young researcher today, what intercultural issues would you investigate?**

Follow your own interests and instincts. Talk from the heart. The ones who have the best chance to make a difference are those with something to tell based on their own experiences and relationships.

*Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

*More about Geert Hofstede at his website: [www.geerthofstede.nl](http://www.geerthofstede.nl)*

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# Toward a New Intercultural Training Reality

*Do intercultural training models tend to defend the status quo of Western power and privilege? What are then some alternatives?*

by *Matthew Hill*



There is now a movement gaining interest amongst some progressive culture specialists that want to transform Western culture training and help it reflect world culture.

Cultural models starting with Geert Hofstede's interviewing IBM employees in the 1960s, continuing with Hall's "high" and "low" context dimension and Fons Trompenaars dilemma theory have been accepted as the norm, both by practitioners and academics alike for the past 40 years. The models used in training today are a product of our logic, scientific methods and European background, leading to a deliberate oversimplification, a reductionist "1 to 10 scale" approach to diversity and the peoples of the world.

The assumption of national culture and average cultures has been wearing thin for some time. The need for a more sophisticated philosophy has led to practitioners exploring other disciplines, other continents and other ideas to move the field forward. The quest is not to replace old theory with new. It is not to dismantle an old model and to replace it with a new one. It is to change the game itself.

Within the context of business, the question is - What is not being fixed by culture theory at the moment? And what culture training will be relevant to business in the future as power becomes distributed to non-Western countries?

What will it be replaced by - whole person training? Will it acknowledge the dynamism of global markets and the complexity of mind and language? Will the new approach take into account the ever-increasing pace of fluid change? Will the new ways include social media and non-Western centric business entities?

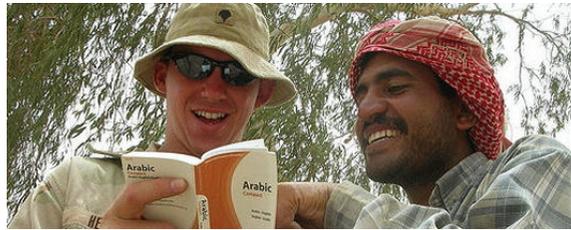
Where can a new approach begin? Kotter's Harvard leadership model, Landmark education's communication curriculum and many non-Western philosophies choose to start with **self**. That is, reflecting upon one's mind, body and essence to raise awareness of the impact the world has had on self and how one may influence and interact with others.

The beginning of the journey may be taken from observing functioning and happy people who exist in basic, difficult or even inhuman conditions. Beneath the trappings of human society, there is to be found what we all start with - **dignity** and **integrity**. Is it time to reconnect with what we began with and the pure intent that has helped so many face the most challenging of situations?

We can choose to see emotions as pre-programmed patterns of reaction that, in the past, have aided survival. Further we can see that human consciousness gives us feelings and choices as to how to respond. This has lead us to create social

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# Toward a new intercultural training reality — continued



*“The holistic revolution”, a shift from the old blame culture to a new reality of empathic listening and equal status*

structures such as justice, kindness, art, science, community and our economic system.

We will never escape our nature, our nurture or our society, but we can **transcend** their effect and we can chose to exist in a different way. What emotions do we feel when given the opportunity to break away from ego, our ethnocentric conditioning, our corporate boxes and our roles in society (sister, father, boss)? Is it about dissolving the self and creating a space from which to operate? Is it about transcending the need to control and judge? Could it centre on resolving our fears and freeing ourselves from patterns of behaviour that no longer serve us?

How can we move toward something else? What **intention** must we have to generate empowering thoughts? It can begin by raising your consciousness of the frames and patterns that we are in. Naming the frame can free you to see from a slightly different perspective. Escaping the Western superior view is easy once you realize that your tone, language, expectations and general behaviour come from a context of empire. When someone with Empire beliefs is high - then correspondingly the non-Empire person feels low.

Recognizing the cultural trap you're in is not the end of the process. However, the step of recognition gives you a choice

to have a different intention and to see others from a different perspective. You can then choose to create a context where you can behave differently and you will be seen differently.

As we transcend our normal unconscious constraints and the **self-limiting beliefs** that come with our nature, nurture and roles, we can be authentically open to our spirit, soul or essence. When we come from an authentic space, it is possible to have a much more constructive relationship with people, groups and companies originating in other places, other cultures and with other ways of thinking.

Many are calling this **“the holistic revolution”** a shift from the old blame culture, to a new reality of empathic listening, openness to synergy and the creation of a platform for equal status and collaborative relationships. It means escaping the self and experimenting with being unified with the energy of a bigger reality. It's a leap of faith, a manifestation of trust and about making a contribution because you want to.

Will you be receptive to possibility and open to the authentic expression of others? Will you transcend your old desires and endeavour to be creative, authentic and effective in your relations? **And will you do this before you have to?**

*Matthew Hill is a leadership trainer and executive coach working with diverse teams. +44 7813 760 711 matthew.hill@hillnetworks.com*

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# In search for a universal language

*An interview with presentation designer  
Axel Wendelberger*



**B**usiness presentations have become a major communication medium. Meetings without slides are virtually unthinkable. Often an intercultural element comes into play, unnoticed by the presenter and the listeners. International teams in big corporations are common today. And English is being used as a corporate language even in non-american businesses.

What advice can be given to business people who face the challenge of making a presentation in front of listeners of sometimes very different cultural backgrounds? Of course, we have a good idea what listeners of a certain nationality expect from a presentation. We know why presenters are perceived by some as too superficial and gung-ho whereas others feel motivated and inspired by them. But often, business presentations fail to properly inform, persuade, motivate or whatever the presenter tries to achieve. Time, resources and good will can be squandered away in a few moments — with harmful consequences.

Axel Wendelberger is an award-winning graphic designer who strives to inspire a new style of business presentation. His doctorate in art history and his intercultural knowledge provide the theoretical basis for his remarkable work as a presentation designer and consultant that gets increasing attention throughout the industry. I met Axel Wendelberger in his studio in Düsseldorf.

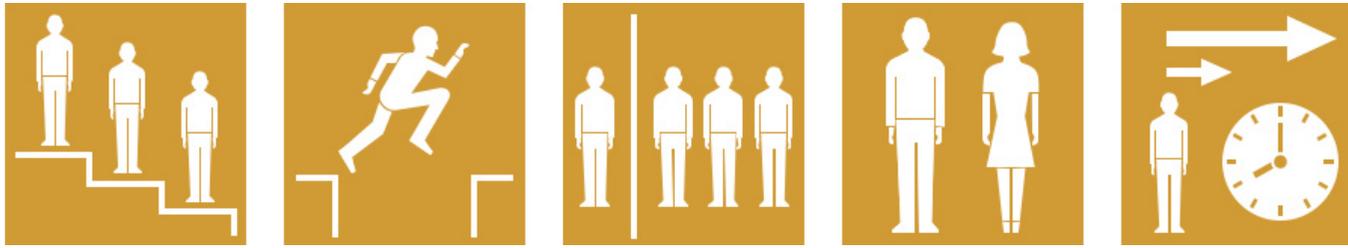
## How does an art historian become a presentation designer?

An art historian becoming a presentation designer seems as an exotic career. Though to me it feels quite natural; I just became increasingly involved with the practical side of creativity. The academic world was too theoretical for me, so I moved on to the museum and became a curator. In the late 1980s I co-organized an international exhibition of the Russian avant-garde artist, architect, designer, and typographer El Lissitzky. That's when I caught the graphic design bug.

In 1990/91 I was involved in a book project with Swiss photographer and designer Edy Brunner who documented the beautiful city of Dresden after the *Wende* (change) in East Germany. Brunner invited me to work in his design studio. So, my curiosity got the better of me and I moved to Zürich. We produced Brunner's Dresden book together, and received the *International Kodak Photo Book Price 1993*.

That brought me in closer contact with the publishing industry, where I started working as a graphic designer and copy-editor. Ten years ago my wife, Paule Gina, who is a trained psychologist, had the idea to join forces and start a coaching and design business. Cognitive psychology and communication design make a good combination for presentation seminars as well as presentation design services.

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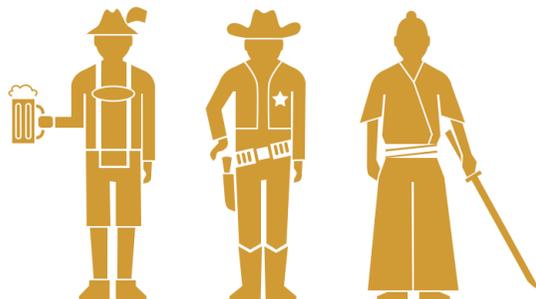


Visualization of Geert Hofstede's dimensions of culture for a presentation on intercultural awareness: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, long-term orientation. — Bottom: Three intercultural stereotypes.

**What defines your service?**

Over the last decade we developed a method of preparing, designing, and delivering presentations with impact. Of course, we didn't attempt to reinvent the wheel. We just joined a movement that started about 10 years ago with the goal of inspiring new and better ways to present in the media age. The main role in our approach centers on the audience — without an audience, no presentation, without an enthusiastic audience, no successful presentation. That's it. Everything else follows down this lane.

This is not possible without *intercultural awareness*. Our main lesson is: Know your listeners! When you have a mixed audience of Americans, Chinese, and Germans, you need to know their expectations if you want to get your point across. This can get tricky; cultural backgrounds can differ so much



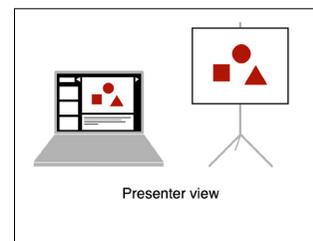
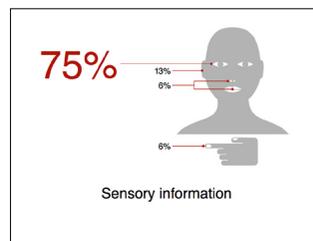
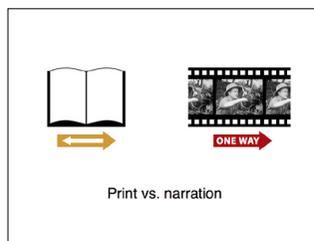
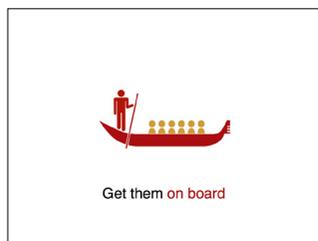
that it seems almost impossible to tailor a presentation to that audience. There we reach the limits of intercultural awareness and realize the necessity of a universal language that promotes mutual understanding in different ways.

**Is there such an universal language that can transcend cultural differences?**

For centuries there has been a search for a universal language beyond words in the Western culture. In the late 17th century, English philosopher John Locke proclaimed, "As the main objective of language in communication is to be understood, words are not suitable for this purpose." It soon became clear that this new language can only be a visual, pictorial system. In 1936, Austrian sociologist, Otto Neurath, wrote in his famous book, *International Picture Language. The First Rules Of ISOTYPE*, "words separate, pictures unite". In the 1960s, American media guru Herbert Marshall McLuhan said, "We return to the inclusive form of the icon." In the mid 1990s the term *Iconic Turn* was coined for a conversation about the power of images and their impact on our culture that has been going on ever since.

We live in a visual age. Our culture is brimming with images. But that doesn't necessarily mean that everybody is visually literate and able to read and understand all these different visual languages that we are confronted with. In the busi-

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In our presentation seminars we incorporate all the principles we teach. The participants can see right away if they do or do not work.

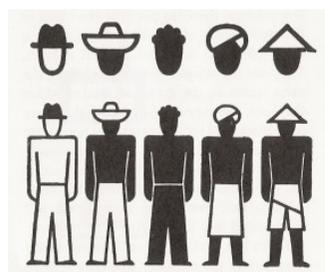
ness world we still find strong resistance against the use of pictures in presentations. It is this *typographical cultural bias* that leads to presentation slides filled with bullet points and whole text paragraphs. Neurath wanted to “debabelize” the international language. Together with artists he developed ISOTYPE (International System Of Typographic Picture Education), a visual language of informational signs that help make sense of statistical data.

I see myself in this tradition. When designing presentation slides I develop a congruent system of simple, distinguishable signs that stand for certain types of information, data, concepts etc. Pictures are far more easily recalled than words. We call that the *picture superiority effect*. This effect improves the retention rate of key information tremendously. Only the combination of pictures and key words is more effective. Our leitmotiv is: Combine simple pictures and key words on your presentation slides. Make it visual!

### Is it not too challenging for business people to follow that lesson?

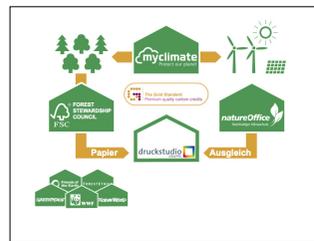
In our seminars we see people adopting the new approach and improving literally over night. It is possible. You can even be visual without any visual aids — by telling stories and using metaphors. Design starts long before the visual part. Design has to do with structure and logic. Many business people think of themselves as more logical and less creative (the left brain/right brain idea). That is not what we find in our seminars. We see that people are far more creative than they think. We see that people are eager to learn, that they hunger for proper guidelines and robust techniques. After attending our presentation seminar they never look at a presentation the same way as before. They might not be able to use all the techniques and suggestions in their daily work, but they get inspired by trying things out.

Creating presentations for clients can be challenging. It always starts the same way: I have to learn about the new topic. Together we develop structure, story and metaphors before the visual work begins. Once the client sees what can be done, the fun begins... It's a give and take and sometimes I'm not sure who learns most. Sometimes I sit down and change our own slides because the last client pushed me a step further, came up with a new idea, or interesting feedback after his presentation that helps me to progress.

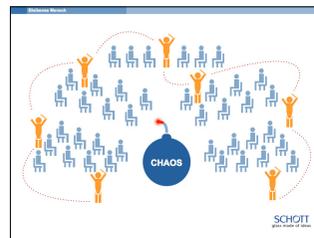


ISOTYPE signs for “the five groups of men” from Neurath’s book, International Picture Language, 1936

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A printing plant in Düsseldorf cares a lot for voluntary climate protection and carbon neutral printing. In their marketing presentation they wanted to talk about the difference they make — for themselves, for their customers, and the difference their customers can make for themselves. What the customers get from them is five-star quality, a five-star service, and good karma.



Setting up key concepts in sequences makes it easy to follow and remember. A major German corporation holds an annual Leadership Day for the management at their headquarter in Mainz. The keynote speaker wanted to make his talk as personal as possible. He compares a leader with a conductor who doesn't have to play the trombone but to stay focused on his task. Afterwards people started using his metaphors — that's when you know you have won.

### What are your plans for the future?

There is so much I want to do in the coming years. I want to get our message out to anybody who takes an interest in good presentations. I'd like to get in touch with business schools to teach our method to students. It is such a powerful tool. On a much broader scale, exciting things are going on at the moment that will transform our culture in unforeseen ways. I want to see it, I want to be part of it. The whole media landscape is changing, the internet, the ways we create, access and consume content. The new iPad from Apple is an indicator of all that. I always admired Apple for their user friendliness, their intuitive software, and their esthetical values. One of the core concepts of Apple's *Human Interface Guidelines* is to involve the user in the design process. That has always been an inspiration for me. Of course, I had to have an iPad as soon as it hit the market. I wanted to see its potential as the next computing device. It might not be there yet, but it certainly shows in what direction we are moving. Maybe the iPad will open up new ways to design and deliver great presentations. That wouldn't surprise me at all...

Interviewed by Patrick Schmidt

Axel Wendelberger can be contacted at [axel@wendelberger.com](mailto:axel@wendelberger.com) or via the website [www.wendelberger.com](http://www.wendelberger.com)

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# Management by Emergency, U.S. Style — Why it feels good

by George Simons

Some years ago it was popular for OD consultants to observe that many US organizations “managed by emergency.” In my several ongoing engagements with US groups, after living in France for some years now, it seems to me that all too many folks in these US organizations rush about in a constant state of urgency, “putting out fires.” I won’t tell stories at length or repeat the literature on the effects of this kind of management on planning, productivity and morale, but I do want to share a historical and cultural observation about it that I do not remember seeing in this kind of discussion. It also comes from my US soul, given the perspective of living abroad for many years now. Urgency is both part of me and something I recognize in others like me.

US culture values time as money and wasting time as at least secularly sinful. We were schooled in a Calvinistic vein that saw “idleness is the devil’s workshop,” rather than in the Catholic ideal that “leisure is the basis of culture.” We are “un-leisurely,” according to Aristotle, in order to have leisure. But why then do we resist leisure even when we have adequate resources to take it and profit from it? What is the root of the compulsion, the insecurity that leads to chronic workaholism? In short, why, in a US restaurant does the bill always land on the table before I have finished my coffee?!

The roots of this passion for work go back to the Calvinist concept of salvation brought to the New World shores by Pu-



Benjamin Franklin, the U.S. inventor, who coined the phrase “time is money”

ritan émigrés in the first half of the Seventeenth Century. They believed in the doctrine of predestination, in which from the beginning God chose some people for salvation and others for damnation. The inability to influence one’s own salvation presented a very difficult problem for Calvin’s followers. It became an absolute duty to believe that one was chosen for salvation, and to dispel any doubt about that: lack of self-confidence was evidence of insufficient faith, a sign of damnation.

So, self-confidence took the place of priestly assurance of God’s grace. Self-confidence was bolstered by viewing time as a gift from God, to be used frugally. To waste time was perceived as laziness, burdening one’s fellow man, and an affront to God; by not working, one failed to glorify God.

Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard’s Almanack* secularized this attitude with the phrase “time is money.” He wrote for the purpose of teaching colonists how to succeed in the New World. This need to use time efficiently and act quickly, “on the run,” is now fully anchored in the collective unconscious of US Americans. Later, at the height of the Great Depression success would be spoken of as “chasing the American Dream.”

The theological framework may have faded into the background for most of us, but the religious zeal with which “time is money” continues to accelerate our behavior and cause the urgency and “workaholism” to which many of us are given.

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# “Let the Inmates run the Asylum”

## *Thiagi’s Philosophy on Learning*

by *Patrick Schmidt*

I had the opportunity recently to take part in a three-day workshop put on by the brilliant game creator, Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan. He practices what he preaches, namely that real learning occurs when the students do most of the work. Or, as Thiagi humorously put it, “let the inmates run the asylum.”

And he means it literally. The very first minute you step into the classroom, Thiagi announces you’re going to play a game called “Hello”. The participants are split into teams which are assigned one of four questions based on past experience, expectations, future projects and personal interest. Each group had three minutes to plan how to collect the responses, three minutes for doing so, and three minutes for analyzing the data and one minute to present the findings.

Once this ice-breaker started, we were running around like chickens with our heads cut off, not knowing where the exercise would take us. But, as Thiagi pointed out, it replaced “the boredom of sitting down and listening to an introductory lecture.” It also set the tone for the next three days. Students took part in one game after another, making for incredible fun, while slowly reinforcing the idea that the best learning is done as a social process.

In Thiagi’s world, effective training means designing activities so that participants do the work; they gain knowledge

and skills rather than merely receiving information. Or, as seen from a Chinese perspective, acquiring knowledge is the interplay of content and activity — a sort of yin-yang movement.

Some of the principles are

- adult students bring a wealth of experience to sessions
- peer-teaching is a powerful technique
- students don’t consume teaching, they create it
- actively responding produces more effective learning than passively listening or reading.

Another important aspect is proper debriefing. Thiagi says that while experience may be the best teacher, raw experience doesn’t guarantee learning. An experience is long-lasting only when we have reflected on it, gained insights and shared them with others. A facilitator should follow up with the following questions:

1. How do you feel?
2. What happened?
3. What did you learn?
4. How does it relate to your work?
5. What if? (the activity had been in another situation)
6. What next? (improved strategies for future activities)

Thiagi’s methods may be based on simple cognitive rules and ageless common sense, but his effortlessly entertaining style makes him the supreme Master — the ‘Mozart of Games’.



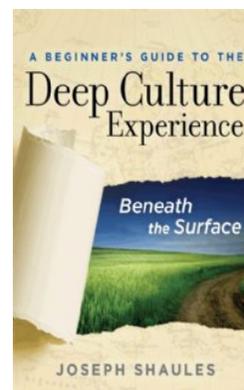
*The playful Thiagi*

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## Book Review

# A Beginner's Guide to the Deep Culture Experience

by Joseph Shaules,  
U.S. \$24.95, 186 pages  
Nicholas Brealey Publishing



Shaules' new book about the deep culture experience is an enjoyable read. It looks at this hidden part that makes or breaks our intercultural experience. The author's personal accounts and stories add life to the book and it is easy to follow, making this book useful for both students and business people who are going abroad or are already living in another country.

The book consists of eleven chapters, looking at deep culture from different perspectives, e.g., personal experiences, the human evolution and the role of culture; the brain and the unconsciousness; stages of dealing with cultural difference. There is also a chapter on people who have contributed to the field of deep culture and intercultural experience, such as Boas, Mead, Piaget, Freud, Jung, Hall, etc.

Are we aware of our deep culture processes? Not necessarily. According to Shaules, deep culture occurs outside of awareness, but intercultural situations make us cognizant of our unconscious preferences and assumptions. He adds that we never really lose our cultural programming, so it is important to be able to observe and know our own cultural preferences and how to deal with them in intercultural situations.

Having a deep culture experience means we learn about ourselves when we communicate with others. People can choose to be open and curious or closed and ethnocentric. That means it is up to us how far we go in the learning process. We can have a surface experience (people say "hello" to strangers) or deep (not

easily visible, e.g. what "yes" means, etc.) culture experience. The key is to accept the local culture and adapt without losing one's own identity. Deep culture is all about learning about others and growing as a person.

I found Chapter 6 most interesting. It describes the relationship between culture and thought; deep culture and the brain; the unconscious mind and the deep culture learning. It conveys the message that a lot of what we do is unconscious. This means we should stop flying on "autopilot" and deliberately change our routines to learn new cultural patterns. According to Shaules, an understanding of "how the unconscious mind works can be a powerful tool of cultural learning for sojourners."

The question people often ask is how to define a successful intercultural experience. Chapter 7 looks at deep culture and intercultural sensitivity in practical terms. Shaules suggests using Milton Bennett's *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* for understanding where we are at in our cultural learning. He also pays tribute to Edward Hall's *The Silent Language*, which defines cultural understanding as, "a way to experience another group is to understand and accept how their minds work."

I found the book both intriguing and helpful, giving the reader solid insights into the complex process of deep culture learning and how to go about it. As Shaules points out, the deep culture journey starts with an entrance into a new reality. Are you ready for this?

*Reviewed by Katrin Volt*

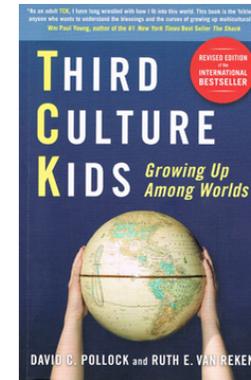
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# Book Review

## Third Culture Kids

### *Growing Up Among Worlds*

by David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken  
 £12.99, 306 pages  
 Nicholas Brealey Publishing



We continuously talk about the necessity of developing intercultural competence, defined as the ability to adapt and communicate appropriately and effectively in a large variety of socio-ethnic settings. For the majority of us, it's a mindset that doesn't come naturally.

People need to spend time abroad learning, as Milton Bennett puts it clearly, to gradually generate cognitive brain-shifting and a new repertoire of behaviors. Yet, there's a group of people who seem to naturally possess this tool.

Authors Ruth van Reken and David Pollock were the first to report in 1999 on the phenomenon with their book *Third Culture Kids*. In their revised, more complete 2009 edition, they expand on the growing complexity of the term. TCK usually refers to the children of expatriate, military or diplomatic families, but now the authors introduce a new category: cross-cultural kids, who are international adoptees or children of biracial or bicultural parents.

The increasing number of such culturally-mixed offspring is the future, the "new normal" in our globalized world and Barack Obama is the paramount example. Not only is he a true African-American (with close relatives on both continents), he spent part of his childhood in Asia as the "stepson" of an Indonesian Muslim.

The authors offer a simple definition of the TCK/CCK profile-children (up to age 18) who spend a significant period of their developmental years in a culture outside their parents' "passport country". Somewhat like their parents, but in a far more extreme immersion, they have a sense of simultaneously belonging to the host and "home" societies without any real ownership of either. Elements from both (or multiple) cultures are blended, resulting in a unique individual.

And what are the traits that make them so different from the norm?

To begin with, they possess an inherent capacity for objective observation coupled with cross-cultural skills such as flexibility and tolerance. They respect differences and are willing to learn from them; they never assume that their way of doing things is best.

Their worldview allows them to experience true diversity and develop an acceptance of people for who they are, regardless of race or nationality. And they're quick to think outside the box, appreciating and reconciling different habits and beliefs.

Of course, there's also a downside. TCKs and CCKs often talk about varying degrees of rootlessness, a sense of being profoundly connected to people and places around the

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## Third Culture Kids — continued

world yet somehow cut off from them as well. Frequent, painful good-byes leave them unable to bond with others or identify with any one culture, leading to a breakdown of identity. To cope, they learn to exist on the periphery. The idea of commitment or intimacy is accompanied by tremendous insecurity.

The end result is restlessness, the need to always be on the move. Ironically, if they form strong relationships, it's usually with those who share their sense of rootlessness--other TCKs and CCKs.

My two children, both young adults now, fit the portrait perfectly. Over the past three decades my wife and I have lived and worked in Germany, France, Malaysia, Canada, the USA and Austria. Our children grew up in a pot-pourri of cultures and languages.

Not surprisingly, they are multilingual, extremely open toward others and have an innate capacity for cultural frame-shifting. In their subjective worldview, however, they feel a strange, floating sense of non-identity. They may sound French, American and German in turn but they are none of these...and all of them too.

The greatest challenge for maturing TCK/CCKs is to forge a

sense of personal identity from the various environments to which they've been exposed. By addressing difficult experiences, they win the possibility of exploiting their intercultural knowledge and talents.

Pollock and Van Reken give good advice on how to put the past into context and be all the stronger for it. The contradictory aspects of being a TCK/CCK are explored and, ultimately, celebrated. The book is well written, with numerous interviews and anecdotes which make the concepts easy to grasp.

At times, the authors seem to repeat points--the challenges and benefits in Part II seem somewhat overdone--but this is a relatively minor point. *Third Culture Kids* is definitely the reference on coming of age in a multicultural setting.

It's a must-read for anyone who wishes to understand how traditional notions of identity and "home" are being radically changed by the ceaseless patterns of global mobility. And perhaps especially those who feel threatened by social evolution.

For in the end, despite some very real challenges, it's a wonderful gift indeed to grow up spanning two or more worlds.

*Reviewed by Patrick Schmidt*

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# Both Of Jews, both Catholic and Protestant...



by Dan Macleod

I hadn't been home to Boston in a while and it felt strange that I wasn't there to see my family but to give a speech at the Fletcher School of Government on the Tufts University campus near Boston.

*The WorldPaper* was, in fact, the world's first attempt at true intercultural journalism. Based in my hometown, it was published every month "in 28 countries on six continents" in English, Spanish, Russian or Chinese. And reporters were natives of the countries they wrote about: no more foreign reporting by Americans in trenchcoats...

I'd been flown in to talk about being a Global Citizen to a roomful of people from those 28 countries and they probably spoke a hundred languages between them. In company such as theirs I didn't feel all that exotic.

Simply stated, I was a local kid who'd gone off to become a journalist in a foreign country (not far, Canada) in a foreign language (French, which I took in high school).

I'd been brought up on *Star Trek* and truly believed in one-planet logic, thought it inevitable. But I'd also spent years covering an endless series of racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic conflicts all over North America and Europe.

I certainly didn't want to disappoint the kind of people who

engage in multilingual, cross-border journalism--I was on their side--but I ended my 20 minutes with the Northern Irish joke in the title above. If you care to read through, I'll be ending this piece with the same...

...

The column I begin today is a larger view of society--and societies--coupled with a more intense focus: a sort of zooming in and out of our analytical microscope.

Socio-economics play a role, as world be expected, but so do two theories I've been developing: "microcosmic polyculture" and "cross-cultural agnoticism."

These, in turn, affect universal systems like language, religion, the arts, sex, sport, business, government and media.

*Societal Interculturalism* is what I call it and I'll try to map it out for you over time. It should be an interesting ride.

...

The current newsletter deals with third-culture and cross-culture kids but I don't qualify as either. I came to Canada as an 18-year-old — an adult — to play a year

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# Both Of Jews, both Catholic and Protestant...

— *continued*

of Junior hockey before heading back home for college. I also wanted to use that year to turn my high school French into something I could use; the team, like the town it was in, was evenly split between francophones and anglos. Still, the odds of my staying on in New Brunswick to attend *l'Université de Moncton* had to be a million to one!

This is the kind of idiosyncratic wrinkle I've most enjoyed in the 15 years Patrick Schmidt and I have been working together on articles, speeches and books dealing with interculturalism. Ours has been an on-going dialogue and it started, against a backdrop of German voices, at our first meeting.

I was part of a *Stammtisch* (literally, "tribal table"): a group of Germans got together at a café once a week to chat about life in Montreal. I was there to practice my German and it amused me that the people at the other tables assumed I was from Germany too.

Similarly, when one of our group invited Schmidt one evening, he and I were equally surprised to learn we were both Americans. He was new to Canada and asked me about aboriginal relations. I told him about "Indian time".

I'd covered the 1990 Mohawk Crisis for *Radio-Canada*. Natives had blocked one of the city's main bridges but they

weren't very media-savvy--the mid-afternoon press conferences inevitably started 90 minutes late, making life hell for reporters who had to be on-air at 6 p.m. Hence our little jokes about *Indian time*.

"Let me tell you about Edward T. Hall," said Schmidt.

That's the kind of interplay that's made our association so interesting. I bring to the table 20 years of field-reporting on ethnic and social issues. In return I learn about the Halls and Hofstedes of the world: the academic theories and research-models which explain a lot of what I've lived.

Still, it's the literary picture I find fascinating, the individual ironies that make for comedy or drama.

The idea that an Irish-Italian from Boston ultimately wound up as a national reporter for a French-Canadian network. The cultural conundrum I face whenever an anglophone criticizes francophones thinking I'm the latter.

Idiosyncrasies. Anomalies which entirely make sense.

The Puerto Rican bar-owner in the African-American ghetto on Chicago's West Side who told my microphone, "When I first came to this country the whites called me *Nigger* and the blacks called me *Honky*...I was in *no-man's land*, man!"

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# Both Of Jews, both Catholic and Protestant...

— *continued*

Or the fact that, in some U.S. cities, Italian-Americans were statistically classified as “colored” into the 1960s. And called *Guineas*--an African reference--by the less-educated citizenry who’d arrived a few generations earlier. It was certainly a novel way of looking at shared European roots.

And there’s the staggering absurdity that, despite centuries of daily conflict and a couple of civil wars, Belfast’s Protestants and Catholics can’t tell each other apart. “Not by appearance or usually even accent.” According to my friend Sean, “You have to *know*, you know?”

Astounding realities. Like how it only took 28 years for the Berlin Wall to turn East and West Germans into foreigners in each others’ eyes.

Trivial things. For example, I’m about to buy a second-hand fridge from a shop named “Elvis” , famous for its neon sign and the bust of Mr. Presley in the window. Yet the owner is almost certainly a working-class *Québécois* who doesn’t speak English.

Elvis was American, of course, but it’s the same with British music. The record collections of the “anti-English” *séparatistes* I studied with in the ’70s and ’80s were full of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, Yes, Genesis, Cat Stevens, Gentle Giant, King Crimson...

Idiosyncrasies. The logic in illogical behavior. Or, as the following Belfast joke illustrates, the sense behind things that make no sense at all.

A well-dressed man comes into a pub alone and orders a beer. Everyone hears the American accent and can see how nervous he is. One of the locals decides to have a little fun.

“So you’re from the States,” he says. “But which are you, Catholic or Protestant?”

The American, instantly terrified, thinks quickly.

“Actually, I’m Jewish.”

“Ah, Jewish...So are you, like, a *Catholic Jew* or a *Protestant Jew*?”

*Dan MacLeod has written for a wide variety of American, Canadian and French-Canadian newspapers and magazines. He was a reporter-producer (radio and television) for Radio-Canada and the C.B.C. from 1982 to 1996. He can be contacted at dnmclcd@yahoo.ca*

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## Congress SIETAR-France

L'Université de Lille, Lille

28th-30th October, 2010

Registration & opening cocktail: 6pm 27th October

# Human Rights and Diversity

*From civil society to organizations*

### Congress Program

The mornings will be taken up by cinema and/or theatre events. There will be a keynote speech by Pierre Sané, the former secretary general of Amnesty International and current director of social science research and policy for UNESCO. Finally, there will be a panel discussion about understanding diversity and the respect for human rights

The early morning sessions will be followed by a pause for refreshments before participants break out into their "learning communities". These 8 communities will each be co-facilitated by 2 experienced facilitators who will allow participants to explore the concepts and work presented in more depth, analyze it critically and thereby reinforce their own learning and shed light on that of others.

The afternoons will be taken up by 8 training workshops. Participants are invited to select 1 workshop which they will follow for the 3 days, making the equivalent of 9 hours of training. Some workshops will be in English, some in French and some will use both languages.

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Workshop C: *Respectful approaches to multicultural education: Tools for Parents, teachers, child professionals, and all concerned with the future*

Workshop D: *Social Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Intercultural Dialogue*

Workshop E: *Beyond the Words: Turning the Scale of Intolerance Around*

Workshop F: *Religions et Société: Quels Rapports et Quels Droit ?* -

Workshop G: *Diversity and Human Rights: Exploring Our Personal and Professional Values and Practices*

Workshop H: *Visions of the World Through Language: The Ethics of Respect*

Click on <http://www.sietar-france.org> for full details about the workshops and the presenters.

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Stöger & Partner

DENKEN UND HANDELN FÜR MORGEN

Technologiepark 12

33100 Paderborn, Germany

phone: +49 (5251) 875432

[info@international-hr.de](mailto:info@international-hr.de)

# Events, workshops, congresses

## Lille, France

October 28-30, 2010

### 30th Anniversary of SIETAR France “Human Rights and Diversity”

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, SIETAR-France is planning a congress in conjunction with SIETAR-Europa. Themes will be human rights and diversity, dealing with questions on how are human rights understood and how do they affect the diversity of cultures. Languages will be French and English. More information about the congress on the SIETAR-France website: [www.sietar-france.org](http://www.sietar-france.org)

## Istanbul, Turkey

November 25-28, 2010

### Young SIETAR 11th Annual Congress “Interculturalism Reloaded”

This year Young SIETAR is going to Istanbul, Turkey designated as 2010 European Capital of Culture. We will spend four fun-filled days immersing ourselves in the local culture and through innovative methodologies seek to discuss and to challenge the way that we approach our intercultural work. For further information, go to: [www.youngsietar.org](http://www.youngsietar.org)

## Berlin, Germany

November 5-7, 2011

“20 Year German Unification” SIETAR-Deutschland is organizing this event that will deal with the intercultural relations between East and West Germans. More information at [www.sietar-deutschland.de](http://www.sietar-deutschland.de)

## Krakow, Poland

September 21-24, 2011

### SIETAR Europa Congress

As voted by the SIETAR Europa Board, the next SIETAR Europa Congress will be held in Krakow in September, 2011. 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 1100 members in the group. Hot topics: “Decolonization” of Intercultural Theory and Practice,” “Certification for Intercultural Professionals,” and “2011 The EU year of Volunteering.”

The SIETAR Intercultural Learning Center In “Second Life” offers you cultural quizzes in French, English and Spanish in preparation for the 2010 SIETAR France Congress. Try it at <http://tiny.cc/lgr8p>.

You can also volunteer to create a game on Human Rights, the 2010 congress theme. See instructions at <http://tiny.cc/xde5y>

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

Access to LinkedIn and Second Life requires joining those sites. Both are free.

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## Wish to be part of the SIETAR Europa Krakow Congress team?

The organizing team for the SIETAR Europa Krakow congress has drawn a list of preparation committees that are needed for the upcoming Congress in Krakow.

1. papers and presentations,
2. pre-conference workshops,
3. parallel programme,
4. keynote speakers,
5. sponsorship/exhibition,
6. website,
7. pr and advertising,
8. finance,
9. awards and appreciation,
10. registration,
11. infrastructure and steering,
12. film

If you are interested in volunteering your time and skills to this exciting event, look through the following list to find an activity that fits your talents. Then e-mail your wish to the [office@sietar-europa.org](mailto:office@sietar-europa.org) and we will contact you.



SIETAREUROPA

SIETAR Europa  
Tel.: +33 4 92 19 04 90  
Fax: +44 870 121 7440  
[office@sietar-europa.org](mailto:office@sietar-europa.org)  
[www.sietar-europa.org](http://www.sietar-europa.org)

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