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## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Encounters between people of different cultural background have existed forever, and equally forever, people were thinking about phenomena that were unusual in other cultures. However, those encounters were relatively seldom in early times, today, they are almost part of everyday life: the facilitated communication and movement of people has made it possible. At the same time, the facilitated interchange between cultures has jeopardised their very existence, and facilitated the emergence of a cosmopolitan culture, a phenomena often referred to as globalisation.

This project aims to provide an overview of the three main areas that the intercultural encounter and the globalisation encompass. Primarily, what makes cultures different from each other. Secondly it aims to provide an overview of trends that have had a deep impact on cultures and intercultural encounters, and facilitated the globalisation and emergence of a cosmopolitan culture. Thirdly it looks at the process the individual goes through in an intercultural encounter, and how it adapts to culture shifts in its environment.

Many people have contributed to this project directly, or indirectly. In particular I would like to thank the **European University** Barcelona for providing the space and environment that made this project possible.

A major contributor, not only as the promotor of this project, but for the overall studies, has been **Mercè Cano Gómez**. She has been available at all times with a helpful advice and a helping hand and has provided a major support for this project and the studies in general.

Equally **Pilar Colom** has provided through her classes and further discussions invaluable input into this project. She has also been a great support for the studies in general, and beyond the scope of the class.

Also **Germán Aragón** provided, through his cross-cultural communications classes, an interesting and practical background to this project.

Finally I would like to thank those people outside the university, who have been helpful and supportive during my stay here in Barcelona and have had to endure sometimes tiring conversations about the scope and approach of this project. In particular, I would like to thank **my parents**, who made the studies financially possible and who have provided me with invaluable support, **Guido Verweij** who provided critical support and **Carlos Baez** for providing insights into the Spanish society and critical comments on my views. I would also like all **my co-students from the MA**, who have at all times provided critical support for this project.

## Introduction

*“The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption (sic), and as in material so in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. (sic) From the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.” Karl Marx*

At the end of the twentieth century the post-modern geographic order, and the neoliberal economic order have given rise, in the Western European states in particular, to a new form of identity. The global identity.

Particularly the Northern European states celebrate the transnational feeling, and the globalisation of their citizens. 93% of German students speak English well enough to have a conversation, 45% can do that with French. Sweden tops the list of foreign exchange programmes: 32% of it's students have studied abroad, 17% of the Germans have, 16% of British, 11% of French, 6% of Spanish students (Spiegel, 1998; 78). Via internet and satellite TV the world, at least the developed one, has moved closer together. Danone yoghurt, Ariel washing powder, Gillette razors and Mars snack bars have entered even the remotest of all local supermarkets, giving the world the best a man can get, the whitest whites and fun, work and play. No, the globalisation has not stopped with the Big Mac, the globalisation is in all our fridges and storage boards.

Stephen King, John le Carré, Jean-Dominique Bauby, John Grisham, Elizabeth George top the best-seller lists around the globe, while the split of boy-group Take That broke the hearts of the lost teenagers even in the smallest of the villages around Europe. Titanic was not only the luxury grandeur of the cruise ships, it also proved to be the luxury grandeur of Cinema audiences around the globe, breathlessly awaiting the tragic climax. The question ‘do you know Ophra?’ is just no longer asked, the grandmother of the banal, cliché talkshow has long made her way around the globe, and flimmers daily on millions of screens, either in person or impersonated by some equally tragically looking female, solving the problems of every housewife, mother, professional woman, daughter or whatever else might glue the audiences to the small screen. And once the problems have been discussed, then the Wheel of Fortune or the Price is Right bring the illusion of the big win, the great luck. And for those that are even more aspiring, there is always the new game of foreign students that do not speak the language: “name that show on foreign TV”, because after all, Fijf tegen Fijf or Familienduell, it's still the same.

Indeed, we are connected, interchanged, exchanged and, most importantly,

denationalised. Europe is growing together, or *Der Euro kommt* (The Euro is coming), and that not only monetary wise. A trip through Marks & Spencer in the UK reveals: The British diet has said good-bye to unsalted, overcooked and unspiced food, lovingly accompanied by one of Europe's worst wines. Chicken Tikka, Gnocchi and Calabacines al horno make up the new British diet, and who ever accused the British of horrific bread that can be squeezed to the size of a very small potato, should just see the latest selection at Sainsbury's: French Bread de la Campagne, made in France, baked in Britain. And after Tesco's is the Wine Merchant of the Year, and an Englishman the Maitre Des Vins, the scandal on the table has reached truly European (or shall we say continental?) format. And even across the Atlantic, long time known for their worse than brown water coffee, the zeitgeist has moved in, and the old out. In fact to much, that the US Americans are now ready to attack the European coffee market with Espresso à la Americaine.

But even with all of this, we are not the same. Somehow some people still refuse to become the world citizen that is so often proclaimed. Somehow the British are still British, and the Germans still Germans. Certainly, the globalisation is taking place. That can not be denied. And with the globalisation comes an unprecedented influence on the national cultures. The world is interconnected, the flow of information has only very limited borders, so has the flow of people and influences. What was before the colonisation, and the influence on the local culture, that is taking place now on a larger, faster and more efficient scale. It reaches not only a certain class, it reaches far into the society, every society.

This project aims to consolidate the phenomena of globalisation, of intercultural encounters and of cultural differences. In a post-modern society, the groups that make a society are no longer clearly defined, the borders are open. The national and local cultures have come in a suction of global forces, and have to adopt.

In the first part of the project, we will be looking at what cultural differences are as such. This is done in the tradition of the humanist/positivist tradition of enquiry, resulting in a variable set of culture determinants and their impact on the local culture under examination.

During the second part, we take a look at the development of the most influential impact factors that lead to culture transformation: The extension of the neoliberal economic world order, and the globalisation of consumption; the extension of the political ethos of the West; the Media culture and the shifts in the subjective reality it represents and finally the rise of the Internet (as the most dominant example of CMC), that emerges as a potentially new form of facilitated information flow around the globe.

In the last part, we examine the theory of intercultural encounters. The argument for this is that this theory is not only valid in the view of direct and personal intercultural encounters, but also in indirect encounters. The project ends with the conclusion, and review of some of the issues that have been discussed during the entity of the project.

## Determinants of Culture and Identity

### What is Culture?

The word 'culture' stems from the Latin "colere", translatable as to build on, to cultivate, to foster. Leibnitz, Voltaire, Hegel, von Humboldt, Kant, Freud, Adorno, Marcuse,... all have reflected on the meaning of the word in different versions of its use. In the early stages of the philosophical debate about what is 'culture', the term often refers to the opposite of 'nature', whereas 'culture' was referring to something constructed willingly by men, while 'nature' was given in itself.

Since the 18th century, the word 'culture' emerged more in the sense of 'products that are worthy': somewhat reduced to Dürer, Goethe and Beethoven, the term was used to describe Elite and high-culture concepts, particularly in continental Europe. This definition of culture is still vivid; Rickert, in *Kulturwissenschaft und Naturwissenschaft (The science of culture and the science of nature)*, defines culture, following the Elitist approach, as: "Gesamtheit der realen Objekte, an denen allgemein anerkannte Werte oder durch sie konstruierte Sinngebilde haften und die mit Ruecksicht auf die Werte gepflegt werden" (*The totality of real objects, to which the general values, or sense constructions of those, are related, and which are cared for with regards to the values.*) (Rickert, quoted in Maletzke,1996:16).

Equally, during the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of mass culture and popular culture emerged, fuelling the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the Birmingham School. In the words of Stuart Hall, of the Birmingham School, 'culture' is "both the means and values which arise among distinctive social groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationship, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions of existence" (Hall, quoted in McQuail,1994:100).

Another view of culture, focuses of culture as a set of values and attributes of a given group, and the relation of the individual to the culture, and the individual's acquisition of those values and attributes: in the words of Geert Hofstede: "the collective programming of the mind" (quoted in Victor,1992:6). Fisher, quoted in the same work, defines culture as : "It is shared behaviour, which is important because it systematises the way people do things, thus avoiding confusion and allowing co-operation so that groups of people can accomplish what no single individual could do alone. And it is behaviour imposed by sanctions, rewards and punishments for those who are part of the group" (Fisher, 1988).

In the context of this paper, we will adopt the definition of culture as the totality of

the following attributes of a given group (or subgroup): shared values, beliefs and basic assumptions, as well as any behaviour arising from those, of a given group. Culture is understood, in this context, as collectively held set of attributes, which is dynamic and changing over time.

A group can thereby be various forms of social constructions: it is not merely any nation, but also supranational and international groups are possible, and often clearly distinguishable.

The individual and the culture in which he lives is a complex set of relationships. On the one side, the individual determines his culture, on the other, it is determined by his culture. By contributing to the culture around him, the individual is part of the cultural change.

S.G. Sumner introduced the concept of "Ethnocentrism" early this century: it refers to the tendency that most people see their own culture as the 'centre of the world'. Often this phenomenon has been seen as a result of "naive" thinking, following from the assumption of the world in itself being like it appears to the individual: a set of 'self-evident' rules, roles, categories and relationships, seen as 'natural'. The concept of ethnocentrism is often displayed in the form of nationalism.

Returning to our initial discussion of what constitutes a 'culture', various concepts are often displayed as the basic differentiation of cultures (Maletzke, 1996: 42):

- national character / basic personality (Nationalcharakter/Basispersönlichkeit)
- perception (Wahrnehmung)
- time concept (Zeiterleben)
- space concept (Raumerleben)
- thinking (Denken)
- language (Sprache)
- non verbal communication (nichtverbale Kommunikation)
- values (Wertorientierungen)
- behaviour: norms, rules, manners (Verhaltensmuster: Normen, Rollen, Sitten)
- social groupings and relationships (Soziale Gruppierungen und Beziehungen).

Often, culture has also been described as 'ordered into' three layers, in fact like an onion, where one peel has to be taken off in order to see the following layer.

The three layers of culture are explained as:

The outer layer, artefacts and products, is the most explicit of all layers: including

language and food, architecture and style etc.

The second inner layer, norms and values. Norms are “the mutual sense what is right and wrong” while values represent the “definition of what is good and bad” (Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 1997:22).

The innermost layer, basic assumptions, represents the core assumptions of what life is, assumptions about how to handle everyday problems that have become self-evident.

This explanation of the visibility of the layers is based on a very practical approach to culture, whereas Maletzke’s basic differentiation provides a more profound approach to the actual criteria that influence the different levels. These criteria are explained in the following section:

### The National Character/Basic Personality

Each nation has its own character, the French are not like the English, and the Dutch not like the Germans. However, the attempt to define what makes each of the characters distinct will provide massive difficulties. The idea of a ‘national character’ is based on the assumption that people from one nation share basic common behavioural patterns and personality traits, differentiable from other nations. The concept has however been often criticised, and is often only fuelled by perceptions of the one nation towards the other, resulting in a number of attributes that one nation apparently displays: the Germans are orderly, hard-working and humourless... However, findings in that field have been often contradictory, particularly from highly diversified cultures. The methodological difficulties may be one of the reasons why the term ‘national character’ has widely been replaced with ‘basic personality’ or ‘social character’ in modern literature.

The two later concepts, although also often deemed as equally unreliable, stem from the idea that the child is being subject to cultural influence during his early stages, and hence develops a ‘basic personality’ similar in various cultures. Equally the ‘social character’ concept tries to identify the common character structures of a culture.

### Perception

Perception is not a passive, objective and neutral process. Every perception is seen as an active process: “what is perceived is becoming part of the subjective experience, embedded into the whole of the personality structure of that person, including whatever the person’s development process, his cultural and material environment

has given him or her as ways of thinking and viewing things” (Maletzke, 1996:48). The human being distinguishes actively between important and unimportant: perceives objects actively and clearly, while others are only partially perceived or ignored.

Visual perception is one of the traits where the culture specific view objects is clearly demonstrated: Most Europeans will have difficulties distinguishing for example Japanese faces. Tajfel (in Maletzke 1996,49) describes an experiment where US Americans and Mexicans were presented with a series of photos, depicting situations which were only known to the one or other nationality. Each participant was found to remember more accurately and vividly the photos showing situations that were familiar to the own culture. The other photos were only relatively vague if at all remembered.

Equally, the perception of feeling is altered in different cultural surrounding: shaking hands, kissing, have different perceptions in various cultures. Interpersonal distance may be perceived as essential or undesirable (English culture or Latin culture).

Also the perception of what smells ‘good’ or ‘bad’ can be highly different in various cultural surroundings.

### Time Concepts

The culture has a significant impact on the concepts of time. Time can either be perceived as linear (western perception) or circular (eastern perception). Equally the orientation, or outlook, of the culture can be focused on either the past, the present or the future.

Another concept is the notion of monochronic and polychronic time conception. The monochronic time concept follows the notion of “one thing at a time” and time is money”, while the polychronic concept focuses on multiple tasks are handled at one time, and time is subordinate to interpersonal relations. The following table gives brief overview of the two different time concepts:

**Table 1 Monochronic and Polychronic Cultures**

	Monochronic Culture	Polychronic Culture
Interpersonal Relations	Interpersonal relations are subordinate to present schedule	Present schedule is subordinate to Interpersonal relations
Activity Co-ordination	Schedule co-ordinates activity; appointment time is rigid.	Interpersonal relations co-ordinate activity; appointment time is flexible
Task Handling	One task at a time	Many tasks are handled simultaneously
Breaks and Personal Time	Breaks and personal time are sacrosanct regardless of personal ties.	Breaks and personal time are subordinate to personal ties.
Temporal Structure	Time is inflexible; time is tangible	Time is flexible; time is fluid
Work/personal time separability	Work time is clearly separable from personal time	Work time is not clearly separable from personal time
Organisational Perception	Activities are isolated from organisation as a whole; tasks are measured by output in time (activity per hour or minute)	Activities are integrated into organisation as a whole; tasks are measured as part of overall organisational goal

(Victor, 1992:234)

Equally, the concept of ‘punctuality’ and ‘scheduling’ is different in various cultural surroundings. Depending on the context of the culture, the time is subordinate to the people’s needs, or the people’s needs subordinate to the time. For example: a lecture that is scheduled for 60 minutes will be expected to last for not much longer or shorter than that in most low context cultures. If the lecturer continues, s/he will probably be asked to finish. As observed by Victor (1992) such a behaviour would be highly unlikely in a high context culture, such as Saudi Arabia. The time would be taken as subordinate to the topic, and the lecture might continue significantly beyond the scheduled time, if further discussion is required.

### Space Concepts

The question of how we perceive space is equally depending of the culture. The western cultures focus their attention on objects, and neglect the space in-between. The Japanese, on the other hand, honour the space in-between as ma. In a different system, the Hopi Indians have in their language no words for a fixed room: all objects are described in their relation to each other, but no concept of a three dimensional space exists (see E.T. Hall, 1969).

Also the way we deal with space is different. The concepts of the private space, the space orientation, the interpersonal distance and the space design. The interpersonal proxemics are discussed in more detail in the non-verbal communication section.

### Thinking

The way we think equally depends, and is influenced by the culture. Maletzke (1996:63) identifies the major paradigms for thinking as:

#### **logic and prelogic**

Most of classical Western thinking is based on the Aristotelian view of logic: analytical, linear and rational. Other cultures emphasise a more complex set of logic, which can be described as holistic, associative and affective.

#### **inductive and deductive**

While inductive thinking evolves from the particular and evolves into a theoretical model, concepts or theories, the deductive thinking established overall concepts first, which are then proven by specific, empirical findings. Deductive thinking is usually associated with the Latin American, Arab and Eastern European cultures.

#### **abstract and concrete**

The vision of the abstract or the concrete is another dominant model in thinking. Western cultures in particular have developed a highly abstract way of thinking, largely loose of emotions. Concrete thinking models however favour a more plastic, emotional way of thinking.

#### **alphabetical and analphabetical**

Related to the abstract and concrete models of thinking is the concept of alphabetical

and analphabetical thinking. In cultures that have a high degree of alphabetical perception, the abstract thinking is favoured, as writing is in itself an abstract picture of any situation. An analphabetical communication system however favours a direct, connected to the person, time and situation approach.

Each of the concepts of thinking are, of course, interconnected. With some care, the concepts of logic, inductive, abstract and alphabetical can be associated to the Western cultural influence area, however, those are not rigid, and can probably not be applied large-scale. A particular problem would be here, for example, the shift from printed words to highly visual media, shifting thinking from abstract and alphabetical to concrete and analphabetical.

Equally the 'frame of reference' is an enormously important part of thinking and perceiving. A frame of reference is the higher perspective from which a given situation is regarded, and evaluated. An example for an ideological 'frame of reference' is given by Wedge who illustrates what visitors from the Soviet Union perceived when visiting the USA: They were sure that they were monitored and that large parts of the country remained hidden from them. The fact that workers were exploited, that the USA was ruled by 'socially influential circles', that education was only available to the wealthy and that every thought was dominated by the craving for money remained the dominant thoughts about the USA.

Connected is also the believe in or rejection of magic, witchcraft and superstition, bound by the belief that certain thoughts and rituals can influence the world. While it is generally accepted in the western industrialised countries that the world is logical, clear and lawbased is this view not dominant in other cultures. Such traditions as Fengshui or the difficulties in attributing telephone numbers in Japan show this.

## Language

A symbolical-abstract language is the dominant sign of any culture. The language of any group is directly connected to the world view of the group. Humboldt wrote regarding language: "Die Verschiedenheit der Sprachen ist nicht eine Verschiedenheit an Schällen und Zeichen, sondern eine Verschiedenheit der Weltansichten" (*The difference in languages is not a difference in sounds and signs, but a difference in worldviews*). The most well known theory stemming from this is the Sapir-Whorf theory : "The real world is to a large extend unconsciously build on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached" Whorf

notes: “ the linguistic system ... of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade...” (in Victor, 1992:20).

It is also important to note, that language, just as every other of the cultural determinants, is a dynamic entity that evolves and changes with the time. In Arabic, for example, more than 600 words were known to describe a camel about 25 years ago. Today most of these words have disappeared (Condon and Yousef).

The interchange of Language and the frame of reference is also remarkable. Maletzke (1996) distinguished that the German word ‘Blatt’ can have different meanings in botany (a leaf), for a piano player (the score) , graphic designer (the sheet of paper) or players of card games (the set of cards). Equally, subcultures can have their own distinctive words or meanings of words.

### Non-verbal communication

Although language can be understood as the main way of communication between humans, it is not the only mean. Non-verbal communication can be classified under the following headings (Argyle):

#### **Kinesics**

Is a relatively far reaching expression for body language, a major factor that can differ from cultures to cultures, in particular when no, or little visual information is available on the other culture. One example of such a major misinterpretation: When Khrushchev visited the US at the height of the cold war, he greeted the press with a clasping of his hands, shaking them over each shoulder. This expression is understood to be a sign of greeting of friends in the USSR, symbolising the embracing of a good friend. In the US this gesture is understood to be the symbol of the winner in a battle; consequently, the US media understood the message as a sign that the USSR would be victorious over the US.

The examples of misunderstandable, kinesic signs is endless. One of the explanations for that is of course the fact that many of them are based on proverbial sayings in a language, which can not be translated literally. For example the French “ça t’a passé sous le nez” (literally: that has passed under your nose) is often used to describe “you missed your opportunity”, the kinesic sign for it is, of course, passing a hand under the nose, which makes perfectly no sense to members of a non-francophone culture.

The amount of kinesics usage varies of course equally, also for what they are used. Asian cultures, for example, are less inclined to show any kinesics at all, southern Europeans are far more open to show them. The kinesic usage is also related to genders.

### **Proxemics**

This refers to the way in which people structure the space around them. Generally spoken, low context cultures have a tendency to have farther distances than high context cultures, although this does not apply to south-east Asian cultures, who are equally high context and prefer a large distance. For example shaking hands is something that is highly uncomfortable for Chinese, while even the tap on the shoulder, often practised by US Americans, can be interpreted as threatening in Northern European countries.

### **Appearance**

The way how a person 'appears' has been shown to be highly correlated with the evaluation of that person. Appearance can of course be broadly classified in to different ways: biological appearance and acquired appearance.

Biological appearance includes skin colour, colour and the shape of eyes, texture and colour of hair, stature and body structure. Stereotyping is, in that area, a very vital fact, that leads to differentiated behaviour based on biological, physical appearance.

Equally the mode of dressing affects evaluation of a person. While in most Western societies suits, and formal attire reflect professionalism, this is not necessarily the case in all societies, in Arabian societies, a ghutra and thobe might be preferred. It is however a widespread assumption, for example, that a suit is required for business purposes, and represents civilised behaviour. The perception of dress however is again different regarding the various styles: for example the Italian, more flamboyant, style of dressing might be judged by a UK person as simply 'nouveaux riche', and ridiculously fancy.

### **Posture**

Posture is the fairly fixed concept of standing, sitting, etc. .The way someone sits or stands may, particularly when interpreted together with other non-verbal behaviour lead to confusion in intercultural settings.

### **Oculesics**

Oculesics is the use of the eyes in a communication setting. In most Western cultures

again, the use of direct eye contact symbolises listening and attention. However, direct eye contact is seen as unfavourable by for example various Asian cultures. The length of the eye contact is also a cultural variable, as it might extend to become perceived as aggression when used for too long, or as uninterested, when perceived too short.

### **Haptics, tacesics**

Haptics deals with touching behaviour in different societies. While haptics can be hostile (kicking), more often haptic behaviour is used to indicate the degree of intimacy. Heslin (1974), distinguished between the following degrees of intimacy:

1. functional/professional
2. social/polite
3. friendship/warmth
4. love/intimacy
5. sexual arousal

The most widespread heptic symbol is the hand shake. This however differs in degrees, length and strength between the various levels of intimacy (or gets completely replaced by more intimate heptic behaviour). A level 3 handshake for example in Spain could include the use of a double grip, which might cause confusion for, for example, a German. Equally the level 2 handshake is stronger in Spain than in Northern Europe, and might hence be interpreted as 'over-friendly' by Northern Europeans, while the level 2 handshake of the Northern European might be interpreted as functional only by the Spaniard.

Even more confusing would be a confrontation of a 'non-contact' culture, such as a Northern European one, with a 'contact-culture', where frequent touching is a sign of friendship or politeness (level 2 or 3). For example an Indian heptic behaviour might be interpreted as a level 4 or 5 behaviour.

### **Paralanguage**

Paralinguistics are also a major player in cross-cultural confusion. For example the notion that Americans are talking too loud is often interpreted in Europe as aggressive behaviour or can be seen as a sign of uncultivated behaviour. Likewise, the British way of speaking quietly might be understood as secretive by Americans.

The speed of talking equally is different in various cultural settings. For example Finnish is spoken relatively slowly in comparison to other European languages. This

form of speaking has often resulted in the Finish as being regarded somewhat 'slow' and lax.

Further importance is given to the amount of silence that is perceived as right during a conversation. A Japanese proverb says "Those who know do not speak - those who speak do not know"; this must come as a slap in the face of, for example, US Americans where even a slight silence is seen as embarrassing, and hence is filled up with speaking, something often perceived as hypomanic. Similarly, but different in usage, is the avoidance of silence in Arabic countries, where word games are played and thoughts repeated to avoid silence.

### **Symbolism and Passive Non-verbal Communication**

The symbolism and other forms of passive non-verbal communication are equally a major influence factor for communication problems between different cultures.

The meanings of colours for example can be highly different in various cultures. Although Lüscher (1948) found colour association, and effects highly equal in European societies, and those studies have been confirmed to equally be valid in US America and Canada (Cheskin, 1957), however little research has been done outside of that cultural area. More dangerously are, however, historically associated colours and shapes: for example a red circle symbolises for many south-east Asians Japanese aggression during W.W.II. Green has become a colour dominantly representing Irish and Ireland in countries with a high Irish immigration rate, such as the UK, US and Australia, while being totally associated with the ecological and peace movement in continental Europe.

Numerical symbolism equally can vary. An example of this is the number 13, in Christian cultures often associated with bad luck ( in Christian mythology, 13 is unlucky as 13 attendants were at the Last Supper), while in Jewish societies, 13 is a number of luck: The Talmud teaches that God has 13 attributes.

Politically and religiously connected symbols can equally cause confusion, or even anger. A cross, for example, worn in a Middle Eastern Arab society might be interpreted as a direct attack onto the Islam (and may even be forbidden to be worn by law).

### Values

Most of our actions and behaviour is based on values, on what is perceived as evil, good or neutral. The categorisation of behaviour in those categories is of course different in various cultures. In the book 'Variations in value orientations' Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck explore these differences. Their basic theses are:

- People of all times and in all societies have a limited amount of problems, for which they have to find solutions.
- For each of the major problems, there are only a limited numbers of possible solutions.
- For each problem, every society has the same amount of solutions available, however each society weighs the possible solutions differently. Doing this, a list of values is created. With social and structural change the weighting of those values is changed.

The five main problem areas are defined by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck as:

- Human nature orientation
- Man nature orientation
- Time orientation
- Activity orientation
- Relational orientation

Following the three categories of evil, neutral and good, the resulting table shows a variety of possible value orientations:

**Table 2 Value Orientations**

Orientation	Postulated Range of Variations		
	Evil	Neutral	Good
human nature	mutable    immutable	mutable    Mix    immutable	mutable    immutable
man-nature-time	Subjugation to Nature	Harmony with Nature	Mastery over Nature
activity	Past	Present	Future
relational	Being	Being-in-Becoming	Doing
	Lineality	Collaterality	Individualism

(Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; 12)

Also Religion is an important shaper of the values, and draws its principles and laws from them.

### Behaviour: norms, rules, manners, roles

In every culture, patterns of behaviour can be found to be judged as 'correct' or 'incorrect'.

Norms and rules of a culture determine how to behave. While the value orientations discussed in the previous section deal with behaviour on a very abstract basis, the norms, rules and manners of a society deal with behaviour in concrete, every-day-life. Various examples, probably the most illustrious in intercultural research, can illustrate the differences encounterable in different cultures.

The taboos vary equally from culture to culture: an example is the avoidance of the term 'hangman' in, for example German, where a variety of replacement terms are used. Equally, various religions do not allow the name of God to be pronounced. So various alternative expressions are found ( like: Almighty, Father, Lord...).

The expectations of how to behave, of what 'role to play' is equally differentiated across cultures. While most western cultures have very little differentiation between personality and 'role', other cultures have clear boundaries. One of the most dominant examples of such a cultural misunderstanding were POWs in Japanese POW camps: For the Japanese, once a soldier is captured and becomes a POW, he has to behave like that. The behaviour of the (Western) POWs caused outrage, as they continued to behave in their ways.

### Social groupings and relationships

Societies are grouped together: they contain families, classes, castes, status, elites... While those social structures are dynamically changing in today's world, they can still be found in all societies, although the importance has diminished in many. Equally the Indian caste system has officially been abolished, while it is still clearly visible and adhered to.

While the interaction between groups can vary drastically from culture to culture, the relationship of the individual to the group is equally volatile: both depend on and interact with each other, however depending on the cultural environment, the emphasis may be more on the individual or on the group the individual belongs to. One of the most quoted examples of this concept is the fact that in traditional Mandarin, no word describing the concept of 'personality' was in existence.

Also the individual to individual relationships, their depth and extend, can vary enormously. While for example it is often quoted that the Americans are very open, and have lots of friends. each one for specific purposes. the Russians are said to be

far more selective and 'unapproachable', however once a friendship has been made it extends far deeper and is a friendship for every situation.

Related to this category is also the 'speed of getting to the point' in a business or personal situation: depending on the cultural surrounding 'direct talking' can be viewed as rude, and a 'getting to know' phase is more important at first.

### **Axioms of the previous section**

- 1. Culture can be understood as a shared set of attributes of any group, by which this group organises its living together, its environment and its solutions to the questions of the society.*
- 2. The individual lives in a complex set of relationship with its environment: the individual is hence influenced by the culture surrounding it, as well as influencing it.*
- 3. There are ten distinct features in which cultures differ from each other: the national character/basic personality, perception, time concepts, space concepts, thinking, language, non-verbal communication, values, behaviours and social groupings and relationships.*
- 4. Each of the distinct features are interconnected, and influence each other. Every change in a single feature can cause changes in the others.*

## **Culture Acquisition and Modification**

The question of why any individual develops 'cultural behaviour' is of course central to the debate of this project. While I have pointed out, in the previous section, what determinants exist in cultures, we can now proceed to the question of culture acquisition, culture change and acculturation.

As I have argued before, the individual is in the midst of a complex system of interaction with its immediate surroundings: the culture that s/he lives in. The infant gets like this born into a set of relationships, in its early years consisting of its family members. Through them it experiences the culture of the family; the cultural attitudes, behaviours, norms and values that dominate the process of educating the early infant. These values represent, in turn, the culture(s) of the parents and their parents in modification and adaptation to the current situation. This notion is particularly important for the emergence of similar cultural attitudes in cases of diaspora identities.

With an increase in age, the individual increases its relationship to outside the family, including the school, later the university or work place and the peer-group. The individual also enters the wider influence area of the media and slowly the area of political and social influence and learns from those experiences. The two areas of influence can be, relatively, distinct: the family and the immediate social surroundings, and equally the social-economical-political surrounding. This explains, for example the emergence of multicultural persons in a single cultural surrounding: for example the British Born Chinese, or Turkish-Germans.

While the family surroundings, and their influence on the child while developing its identity are highly personal, the social reality (that is the general social, economic and political environment) can be subject to intensive investigation, and abstraction, as those phenomena can be more directly generalised.

The emergence of a national culture, is of course a difficult process of certain norms and values that are shared across the individuals that live in a 'national state or territory' or associate themselves to a certain 'national group', a concept that in recent years has diminished in importance, particularly because of the decline of the nation state and the break up of society in various subgroups, mobile social classes and various ethnic, religious and racial groups, that were less evident before. Each of those groups have, sometimes complimentary to or replacing of a set of cultural attributes in 'competition' to the 'national culture' per se.

A critical point in the discussion of the individual, and its acquired attributes, and the

culture it adheres to, is of course the idea of 'imagined communities'. As Malcolm (1994) argues, there has not been a fixed, unified Serb or Croat identity since the Middle Ages that could be resurrected. However, the individuals behave as if there was, and develop a set of apparently national symbols and a national culture for this 'imagined community'.

Returning to the origins of this discussion, the acquisition of culture, we can identify the two main areas: the family and immediate social surroundings, and the social reality. Changes in these surroundings will be reflected in the cultural attributes of the individuals involved, depending on the amount of individuals involved the changes can mean a change in entire groups: changes in the political system, for example, represent such a fundamental change.

The world, in which we live, is in a continuous change, with the advancement of technology, and changes in the political and economical structure the changes have become a continuum with great speed. The cultural adaptation has, for many, become part of everyday life. In the following section I shall explore the changes that occur in the cultural surroundings of the individuals.

### **Axioms of the previous section**

1. *The child is exposed to two major influence factors: its family and the social reality of the society it lives in.*
2. *Cultural attributes are transferred through both. Cultural transfer can be personal (family, friends) or impersonal (media).*
3. *Each society consists of various groups and sub-groups: each have a set of cultural attributes, that can be understood as complimentary or replacing the set of variables of the larger unit.*

## **Trends in cross-border and intercultural communication**

At the end of the 20th century the world in general, and the developed world in particular is presenting itself in a new outlook. The Western model of liberal democratic societies has been victorious over authoritarian systems in Latin America and Europe. In our society we can see a change in political groups and activism: politics is no longer emphasises itself as the binding and controlling mechanism of social cohesion and democratic legislation, but presents itself as the national regulator of the neoliberal world economy. The consciousness of many political and scientific elites is subdued to this neoliberal worldview, regarding the problems of social integration and democratic legitimisation only in the terms of a cost-benefit-analysis and utility preferences.

By the way of 'globalisation', as a result of the internationalisation of commodity flows, migratory movements, pollution and information, the classical congruence of nation, state, and democracy is in a process of dissolution. The pressures of deregulation have forced states to give up protective barriers, and sovereign powers, on a large scale to provide the underlying economy with sufficiently large markets. More and more powers of the nation states are transferred to intergovernmental institutions, providing themselves with tools more powerful than those of the dissolving states, and it seems acting with a never increasing expansionism. The rise in the consciousness of sub-state-nations and stateless nations is equally a threat for the traditional order and reflects the political reorganisation of the world.

In the advent of the neoliberal worldorder, the subjective reality, and cultural integrity, of the individual has become under increasing attack by new means of international communication and information flow. The dominance of global players in the media is a phenomenon that can not be left untouched. The emergence of the global concepts of movies, shows and series, as well as the emergence of a global audience of a concentrated media ownership, with its impact on program contents, is a concept without precedence. Modern media content is characterised by a never ending stream of popular and mass culture oriented programming and has banned alternative views and discussions from the consciousness of the mass audience. While fighting for viewer ratings, the programming of most stations is dominated by economic interest factors rather than intellectual context. In the truest sense of the

word, the culture has been commodified and is viewed as a cost-benefit factor for the attainment of the global media audience and the global information society. Politics has not been left untouched by this new global information society, and presents itself under the pressure of the popular, where context has often been sacrificed for media-representation and mass audience appeal.

### Global Business

The changing business environment, the changes in communication technology, the political changes, encourage and facilitate the emergence of global business, transnational companies and the emergence of common markets around the world.

### **Free Trade and Common Markets**

Free-trade agreements, such as NAFTA or more dynamic organisations such as the European Union, have given rise to enormous possible markets for a large amount of companies. The premise of 'globalisation' is in fact the most important single concept emerging in today's market economies.

With the emergence of a global economy, the export of business culture and business interests is evident. Today most bigger companies are run no longer in a 'national' way, but are strongly influenced by one management style or another; a massive export of Anglo-Saxon or Asian business culture, and their respective values.

### **Foreign Direct Investment , TNCs, Oligopolisation**

Foreign direct investment rose from \$68 billion in 1960 to \$2.1 trillion 1993, tripling between 1985 and 1993, showing a more rapid pace of globalisation (UNCTAD,1994). The largest part of this investment was accounted for in the three major economic regions: US, Western Europe and Japan.

While the numbers of transnational corporation rose from 7,000 to 37,000 from 1973 to 1993, with 206,000 overseas affiliates (UNCTAD, 1993), the structure equally changed from largely independent overseas subsidiaries and affiliates to integrated operations: in 1990 intra-firm trade accounted for around one third of world trade.

While the number of TNCs has increased immensely, the markets also experience an enormous oligopolisation, as competitors are going out of business or are merged into existing operations. Examples of this trend are numerous. Only two companies manufacture, for example, jet aeroplanes, and one company supplies 80% of the worlds computers with operating systems. In areas where there are still numerous players, the joint ventures, mergers and co-operation agreements have also been the dominant paradigm of the recent years: examples include the telecom co-operations

like Global One and Unisource, and of course the recent merger of Chrysler-Daimler (and Nissan's commercial vehicle unit).

### **Capitalism and Western Culture Export**

Morley and Robins explore critically the concepts of the globalisation in the light of cultural change: "Historical capitalism has, of course, always strained to become a world system. The perpetual quest to maximise accumulation has always compelled geographic expansion in search of new markets, raw materials, sources of cheap labour and so on. The histories of trade and migration, of missionary and military conquest, of imperialism and neo-imperialism, mark the various strategies and stages that have, by the late twentieth century, made capitalism a truly global force. If this process has brought about the organisation of production and the control of markets on a world scale, it has also, of course, had profound political and cultural consequences. For all that it has projected itself as transhistorical and transnational, as the transcendent and universalising force of modernisation and modernity, global capitalism has in reality been about Westernisation - the export of Western commodities, values, priorities, ways of life. In a process of unequal cultural encounter, 'foreign' populations have been compelled to be the subjects and subalterns of Western empire, while, no less significantly, the West has come to face with the 'alien' and exotic culture of its 'Other'. Globalisation, as it dissolves the barriers of distance, makes the encounter of colonial centre and colonised periphery immediate and intense" (1995:108).

### Political and socio-economical changes

#### **From colonial power to neoliberal Europe**

The current century has seen a magnitude of rise and fall of political power and economical, political, social and structural changes, which without doubt have influenced any society's culture that was touched. From the imperial ages early this century, Europe in particular has seen the decline of the colonial power, the democratisation and communisation, the rise and fall of totalitarian, nationalistic and socialist regimes, and their decline. Europe has also experienced the fall from economic and political superpower, in a century that was for a long time been best characterised as the USSR-USA century. Equally Asia has been struck by fundamental changes: from the imperial China to the communist China, the rise of the Tiger Economies, the Vietnam war, the Korean war, the independence of India, the Iran Iraq war, the Gulf war,... to name just a few.

This summary of some main political, economical and structural changes can only highlight some of the movements that have taken place in the recent past. It can not, and does not attempt to be a fully fledged analysis of current political trends, but merely a overview of some changes that have influenced national culture in Europe and beyond. For the Western part of Europe, the end of WW2 marked the era of a new beginning. With fall of the Third Reich and the Mussolini state came the separation of Europe into East and West, into democracy and communism, a major driving force for the recent history, and cultural changes.

### **European Integration**

After the wars of 1870, 1914 and 1939, for the first time the European continent embarked onto a mission to calm the national tension between France and Germany. Monet, Schumann, Adenauer and de Gasperi provided the new framework for the vision of a politically and economically united Europe, and the ‘rapprochement’ of the former powers Germany and France. Driven by Adenauer and de Gaulle, after his return to power in 1958, the EEC, merged in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, was a major driving force in Europe, and provided, at least for some, the viable alternative to regain the power lost to the USA and the Soviets after WW2. Other, similar organisations, such as the Council of Europe and to a lesser extend the Brussels Pact of 1948 attempted a less fixed programme of integration, and creation of a common market.

NATO, established in 1949, on the other side, was a clear organisation born out of the division of the world into the two major influence zones, and provided a mechanism of military defence of those states with a neoliberal worldview towards the threat of those operating under the socialistic paradigm. EFTA on the other hand provided Europe with the alternative version of a unified market, but political autonomy.

The quest to establish a common European market, the extension of the neoliberal world order, was the driving force in the European integration that has been a major force in the past 50 years or so.

### **Revolt and Social Change: May 1968**

After W.W.II, Western Europe became the ‘anti-Communist bastion’, and moved to the centre of the cold war, while at the same time trying to cope with its recent past. In Germany in particular this lead to enormous potential unrest, fuelled by the introduction of the ‘Emergency Situation Laws’ (*Notstandsgesetze*) and the Spiegel-Scandal. Coupled with a formerly unknown witch-hunt for alleged communist

activities and the rise of neo-fascism in Germany of the 60s, the student movement got heavily politicised. Other reasons for the unrest potential included the Vietnam War, particularly in the US and in recently war torn Europe. The killing of Martin Luther King, followed by the killing of 46, 2,100 wounded and some 21,000 arrests in the US caused further outrage in the US and in other countries whose political regimes were close to that.

The writings of Herbert Marcuse and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School were the most widely acknowledged base of the student movements in Europe. Particularly the notion, by Marcuse, that the working classes have lost their revolutionary potential, and it could only be the students, intellectuals and social outsiders who could evoke a revolution, was a major influence factor for the students movements in Germany and France. The criticism of the political activism by the press lead to further rise of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Enlightenment. While however those works were highly analytical and critical of the commercialisation and commodification of the news and media in general, they fell short of providing a reasonable alternative vision to the student movement. This missing vision was soon to be replaced by the works of Mao, Marx and Che Guevara, calling for an active revolution.

The student revolt reached its high points during April and May 1968: Particularly in France, where the students gained the support of the workers, and some 10 million people went on strike, calling for political reforms. The government of de Gaulle had to make far reaching compromises and abandon the further liberalisation of the French economy as a result of the unrest. In Germany, where the students did not seek the support of the workers, and hence the protests remained mainly confined to student-police fights, the new government of 1969, a social-democrat-liberal coalition, introduced many ideas of the student revolt into their programmes, and issued a far reaching amnesty for the prisoners kept after the revolts. The reform of the German educational system for example, the reformed second cycle of the grammar schools and the comprehensive schools are direct results of the 68 movement. Equally, the emerging of the Green party can be widely attributed to the students of 68.

On a more universal level, the feminist movement , the abortion discussion and liberalisation, sexual liberalisation as well as the peace movement have found a vital support in the 68 movement and much progress can be attributed to the 68 movement in Europe and the Flower-Power movement in the US.

However, the movement fell short to convince the politics for the need of any economic reforms, with the exception of France, where however the economic

reforms were less than hardly visible.

### **Extension of power: the fall of Franco**

The quest for democratisation, and with it the extension of the neoliberal market economy, particularly in western Europe, took its next step when the last remaining totalitarian regime ended with the death of Franco in 1975, and the democratisation of Spain resulting in the general election of 1977 and the constitution of 1978. With the return of such symbolic figures as Josep Tarradellas, Dolores Ibarruri and Felipe Gonzalez Spain's path to democracy and her becoming part of what has often been called Churchill's vision of the 'House of Europe' seemed secured. With the failed putsch attempt in 1981, the golpe, the rule of the military in Spain finally came to an end. With Spain's entry into NATO in 1982, the symbolically strong opening of the Gibraltar boarder in 1985, and the membership in European Community in 1986 Spain joined the democratic states of the West, and the common market.

### **Extending the neoliberal world view to the East**

The next major step in the history of Europe was the fall of communism, and with it the division of Europe. With the Soviet president Mikahail Gorbachev the policies of *glasnost*, *perestroika* and *uskoreniye* rose. In the light of the new policy, Hungary passed its draft law on independent public associations in 1988, a major step towards ending communist party rule. With the first free election in Poland in June 1989 and the collapse of the regimes of the GDR, the most symbolic of all collapses with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania in November and December the division of Europe started came to an end. In March 1990 Lithuania was the first of fifteen Soviet republics to declare independence, and the shedding of Article 6 of the Soviet constitution; ending the Party's leading role. In April Hungary saw its first democratic elections since 1947, with the conservative Magyar Democratic Forum forming the first democratically elected government, and, in a later election, the first democratic president, the Free Democrat Göncz Árpád. 1991 started with the ill-fated attempt to crush nationalist secession among the Soviet republics, particularly in Vilnius and Riga. The equally ill-fated coup in August in Moscow ended with the rise of Boris Yeltsin to become the dominant figure in Russia, and finally the Soviet Union got officially dissolved on New Years Eve. The later confrontations, the siege of the White House and Ostankino Television Tower, in October 1993, also ended with Yeltsin remaining in power.

Eastern Europe today is still in a transition to a full neoliberal order, but the necessary infrastructure has been build up. Extensive support from the Western nations for the changes towards market economy, and heavy investment have been streaming in ever

since. The media landscape has been revolutionised, with commercial channels broadcasting in all countries of the former East, offering the same diet of programmes as everywhere else in the West.

### **Yugoslavia**

Europe's most bloody recent transition must be the fall of Yugoslavia. After the death of Communist leader Tito in 1980, both Croatian and Serbian nationalism fuelled immensely. Under the leadership of Slobodan Milosovic Serbian nationalism gained momentum in 1988/9, and resulted in the walkout of the Slovenian and Croatian delegations during the 14th Special Congress of the League of Communists in January 1990. The victory of HDZ, the Croatian Democratic Union, under the leadership of the right-winger Franjo Tudjman in April 1990, led to further tension. With Slovenia and Croatia breaking away from Yugoslavia, and rising tension and breakaway movements in ethnic mixed regions such as Krajina, Kosovo, Sandzzak etc. Once again, concentration camps, massacre, rape and terror returned to Europe. In the words of Branka Magras: "the year 1992, scheduled to be a milestone on the road to European unity, has seen Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities slowly bombarded to pieces and their inhabitants starved before the television eyes of the world" (1992).

The support for the extreme right in Croatia, by the Western governments, has given rise to far spread criticism of the interest of extending markets rather than looking for the 'guilty ones' and fostering true democracy.

### **New Democrats, New Labour and Neue Mitte**

Together with the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe came another political phenomenon: the virtual collapse of the traditional left in political culture. In the US, the UK and in Germany, the traditionally left parties have left the vision of social democracy and committed themselves to largely neoliberal targets; the links to trade unions have largely been stopped, the Calvinist ethic of the 'responsibility of the individual' rather than the collective responsibility has been introduced, deregulation and liberalisation of markets has become priority, together with those elements that help the economical progress: tax cuts and restructuring of the welfare state.

Nowhere else has the swing of the left to a promoter of neoliberal politics been more evident than in the UK: the conservative Tories have been left without any vision and program, trying to respond to what used to be their political field, and is now Labour's domain: the economy. Since 1997 it is Blair's 'Deal with the City' (and Clinton's 'Alliance with Wall Street') that promote a completely new vision of the

social democrats: the market economy. The social-democratic visions of Roosevelt and Johnson, the 'Great Society', have been abandoned by US Democrats, and the slogan 'Leistung muss sich wieder lohnen' (performance must be rewarded again), in 1989 used by the conservative CDU in Germany is now guiding principle of the SPD (social-democrats) party program for the 1998 elections.

### **Western politics and commercial influence**

The question, what are the intentions of Western politics is one with probably as many viewpoints as participants in the debate. The interconnection of economy and politics can however not be underestimated.

Western politics still sees itself as a regulator of the capitalist economy in its states, however, it is equally involved in opening up opportunities and markets for the national economies, sometimes at the expense of democracy, but always under the guise of it. Those that comply with the opening of markets have been given lavish support, although they did not play by all the rules of Western democracy: Carlos Salinas in Mexico, Carlos Menem in Argentina and Boris Yeltsin in Russia are examples of this. Even dictatorships have been supported for 'creating a favourite climate of investment': Pinochet in Chile, Marcos in the Philippines and Suharto in Indonesia. Others, refusing to comply with the neoliberal order had to endure boycotts and even military intervention: Cuba and Nicaragua.

The quick intervention of the US in the Gulf is one of the most widely discussed cases in the scenario of the Western states as protectors of economic interest, the destabilisation of the Allende government in Chile by CIA actions another. Protectionism, in the forms of quotas and tariffs as well as subsidisation of products shows other areas where the governments seem to at least largely defend industrial rather than consumer interests.

The problematic situation, and the need for politics to bow down to economic pressure, and hence to more often neglect social and ecological issues is highlighted by Uwe Jean Heuse: "Einzelstaaten sind unfähig, ihr Sozialrechte und Umweltnormen gegen Globalunternehmen durchzusetzen. Die vaterlandslosen Aktiengesellschaften finden immer einen Weg, nationale Bestimmungen auszuhebeln und einen Staat gegen den anderen auszuspielen" (*The single states are unable to implement their social laws and ecological norms against [the pressure of] the global corporations. The homelandless PLCs always find a way to get around national directives, and to play with one state against the other*). (1998:1).

An even darker image about the power of politicians is painted by Herman and McChesney: "By 1996 Forbes magazine exulted in the fact that the world's

governments, be they ostensibly left or right, could no longer ‘interfere’ with the prerogatives of business without suffering an economic punishment that would bring them down; governments have effectively lost their power to govern. Political debate and institutions therefore have largely become irrelevant” (1997:32).

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing presentation of major political changes can efficiently be used to present major impact on cultures. The changes that have been presented have significantly changed the value orientation of societies: from Russia to Portugal, from Ireland to Greece. The fundamental impact a change in political and economic environment can have on the social structures and values of a society can at no stage be left unconsidered. Even a relatively ‘short’ event, like the Gulf war can show major shifts in the self-understanding of a society: Lloyd deMause (1990) describes that prior to the Gulf war “American national culture has been characterised by feelings of guilt, depression and sinfulness - partly linked to the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’. “ After the war ,”in George Bush’s words, America could finally ‘kick the Vietnam Syndrome’. What the war offered was the possibility of renewal and revitalisation: America could rediscover its moral purpose and emotional wholeness ... This epic spectacle sustained a sense of national integrity and moral regeneration.”

A simple consideration of the force of the impact of the gulf war and the far more fundamental changes that have occurred in other parts of the world will be able to explain the need for political environment consideration when explaining shifts in culture.

At the same time, politics as such have become less important: the political institutions have come under pressure from a more and more global industry, resulting in more dramatic changes towards a full scale, neoliberal world order.

## **Media Trends**

### **Influence of the media on society**

Media can “serve to repress as well as to liberate, to unite as well as fragment society, both to promote and to hold back change” (McQuail, 1994: 64). This makes media an extremely powerful tool, a promoter of social, structural and cultural change, a role model for those that follow it.

Mass media, television, cinema, magazines and newspapers are a power factor.

McQuail summarises their potential as:

¥ Attracting and directing public attention

- ¥ Persuasion in matters of opinion and belief
- ¥ Influencing behaviour
- ¥ Structuring definitions of reality
- ¥ Conferring status and legitimacy
- ¥ Informing quickly and extensively  
(idem., 1994:64).

Given the power potential of the mass media, the question of who's reality is presented; who owns the media and in whose interest, are the dominant questions in discussing the impact of media in the culture transformation of society.

### **Decline of the public broadcasting in Europe**

During the 1980s Europe has seen a dramatic restructuring of its media landscape: the emergence of commercial television and a genuinely global commercial media market. This has brought about the relative decline of the former state, and often independent broadcasters. In the wave of general deregulation, the public broadcasters were diminished in importance, and became subject to the viewer ratings war in order to maintain their financial support.

In reflecting the role of the public broadcasters, Herman and McChesney conclude: "If their [the public broadcasters] performance is poor, people will be ignorant, isolated, and depoliticised, demagoguery will thrive, and a small elite will easily capture and maintain control over decision-making on society's most important political matters" (1997:4).

Equally Jürgen Habermas described that the public sphere works best, where it is free from society's political and economic pressures. This statement must alarm anyone, who is researching the impact of the decline of public broadcasting, and the influence of the current media landscape.

### **The emergence of commercial broadcasting**

Various literature focuses on the "global conglomerates" that control a large amount of the media to date. Herman and McChesney (1997) identify 6 global players: News Corporation, Time-Warner, Disney, TCI and Bertelsmann. Their interests in European media and other, dominant players is presented in annexe 1.

**Table 3 The five largest media conglomerates**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Turnover \$b</b>
Time-Warner	USA	18.7
Walt Disney / ABC Capital	USA	16.4
Bertelsmann	Germany	13.9
Viacom	USA	11.0
News Corporation	Australia	9.3

(Die Zeit, Edition 08.09.1995)

Other than the main players world-wide, media ownership is also characterised by other corporations on a less large scale. However, the concentration in media ownership, and its interconnectedness to the economic powers can not be easily dismissed. The influence of each individual owner, and their clients, on the social reality transmitted via their respective media is of course the clue to the social reality as perceived by the viewers. This is not to say, that the viewer is a passive receiver and remains critique-less in front of the image of the world that is presented to him. But the way that information and images of reality is transmitted and displayed can have significant impact.

**Table 4 Production Prices**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Production cost</b>	<b>Buy-in price</b>
Germany	400.000	60.000
France	471.250	47.500
UK	546.300	70.000

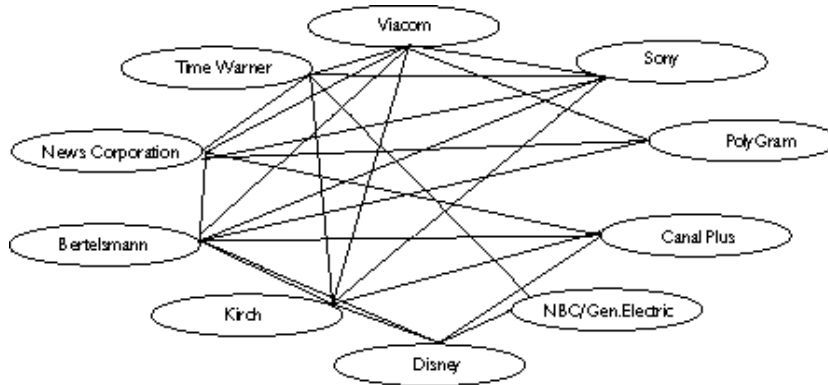
Italy	400.000	42.500
Spain	264.000	16.000

Production and buy-in price of one hour of drama in US\$ at the beginning of the 90s. (Meckel, 1996, 148).

### **Commercial, global media content**

Commercial stations rely exclusively on the advertising revenue generated. They are trapped between providing mass appealing content and economic pressures to reach certain audiences, and influence their behaviour. The solution to the problem is of course the co-production, export and copying of viewer catching, mass appealing and profoundly popular culture programming, that sustains and supports the interests of the economy. A view that is contradictory to the intentions of the advertising purchasers can not be allowed to be aired or printed. Equally, the media are subject to the scrutiny and regulation by political powers, who in turn are equally influenced by the economic power base. The view, the social reality that is constructed in the media hence has to be based on sustaining the political and economical order.

Media contents presents itself today as a global form of entertainment. The concepts of game shows, talk shows, soaps and films are equally created around the world to mirror one type of society. What works in one country is exported heavily through a complex network of distribution and co-operation agreements as well as economic interests in stations in other countries than their homebase. 'Dallas', 'Dynasty', 'Roseanne', 'Ellen' and 'Married With Children', 'Nurses' and 'Golden Girls', 'X-Files', 'Startreck', 'the Simpsons', all are example of universally distributed programmes on TV. Game shows like 'The Price is Right' and '5 versus 5' are produced around the world, and even Japanese concepts, long-time deemed as purely local entertainment, provide now a form of global entertainment in the form of the game show 'Endurance'.



**Figure 1 Co-operation and Distribution Agreements of some media companies**

(1996)

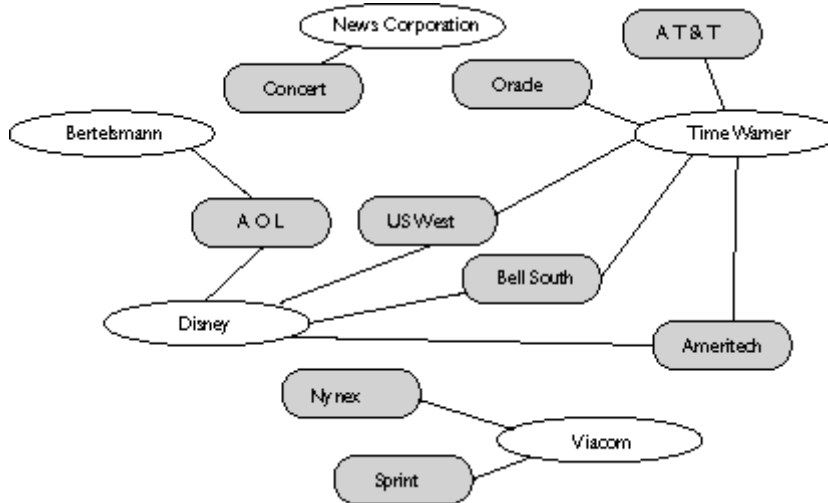
### **Co-operation and global distribution**

Most of the first and second tier media firms have distribution and co-operation agreements with the other players. For example: Disney has co-operation agreements with Bertelsmann, NBC and TCI, Kirch, CLT Ufa, Canal Plus and TF1. Some even have joint channels: such as Viacom and Time-Warner with the “Comedy Channel”. For a more in-depth discussion of this phenomenon, the reader is referred to Herman & McChesney’s book “Global Media” which analyses the global distribution and ownership in depth. In another interesting look at the European (or active in Europe) media moguls, Berlusconi, Kirch and Murdoch, Kleinstaub points out that all of them have co-operation and distribution agreements. He discusses the influences, and in particular the differences of the “mogul” companies and the more capital based companies, like Viacom or Time-Warner. He traces, for example, that Berlusconi has joint-ventures with Kirch both in Germany, France and Italy, and co-production agreements with both Kirch and Murdoch (Kleinstaub, 1996, p.136f.). The influence of Bertolusconi’s political ambitions on the content of his media certainly highlights the dangers of such a political-economical mix of mass influencing power.

### **Diversification into multimedia services**

Another trend is the diversification into multimedia services, jointly produced with telecommunications and information providers. Some of the alliances are detailed below. The quest for the ‘dominance of the mind’ reaches far beyond the current perspective that is detailed in this section. With the emergence of the multimedia

conglomerates the message of the media conglomerates reaches even further beyond the current limits, and the globalisation of content can be driven to new highs.



**Figure 2 Media - Telecommunication and IT agreements**

(1996)

### **Cinema globalisation**

The cinema industry, owned and operated by the most dominant media firms, also shows the signs of globalisation, or as often claimed, Americanisation. Meckel (1996, p.148) states that the market share of US-produced films shown in cinemas across the EU grew from 56% in 1985 to 76% in 1995. As Frank Webster (1995) remarks: in 1991 “Dances with Wolves, Terminator 2, Robin Hood Prince of Thieves and Silence of the Lambs were box office leaders in Germany, Britain, Italy, France, Spain, Australia and the USA - pretty well everywhere that there were cinemas”. The co-operation and distribution agreements, the ownership of TV studios, cinemas and TV stations, video distribution, print media and radio and the multimedia services makes economic sense for the distribution of the world vision of these conglomerates. The circle of promoting and using the produced material to the full extent is closed by the shared ownership.

Furthermore, the local, small size cinemas have experienced an enormous decline. Where the multiplex, fully commercialised cinemas have moved in, the independent cinemas have moved out, reducing the cinema menu to mass culture production (see Meckel, 1996).

### **Localisation of focus**

At the same time however there seems to be a trend to localise media, media focus and media content, particularly in Europe. This new market is of course opened by the wider availability of media, however is quite strongly progressing. Examples of this localised or regionalised focus can be found in various countries:

In Spain for example TV3 and Ch33 of the Generalitat de Catalunya provide localised content and news with great success.

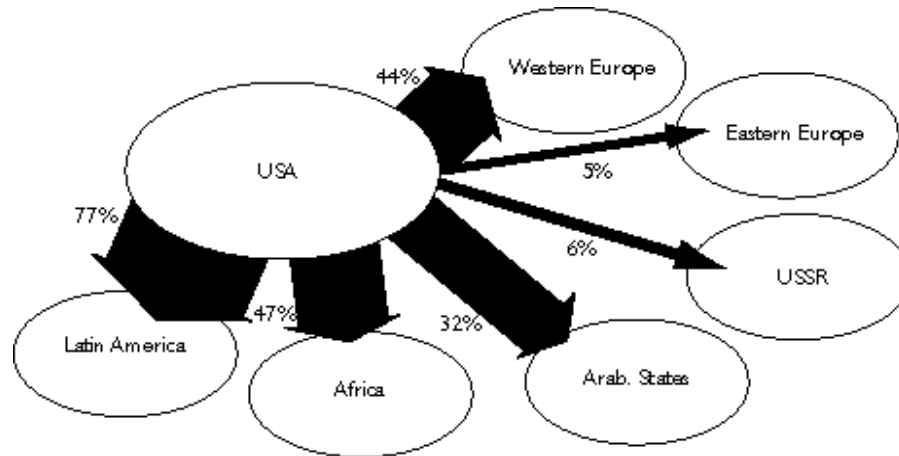
In the UK, BSkyB, the satellite media group, launched Sky Scottish, providing news and features for Scotland.

In Germany, various TV stations in Munich, Hamburg and Berlin provide highly localised general programming TV.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, the local stations provide daily local information, while the Amsterdam station has evolved to a full TV programme.

Although most of these stations provide the viewer with a link to his/her immediate surroundings, offering localised news and information, most of them also carry a large amount of “American-style”, popular culture programming, such as films, talk shows and game shows. This type of programme falls in line with the general programming that is offered through the globalised media firms, who in fact sometimes own and always distribute through these local channels. Equally, these channels represent the emergence, and outsourcing of the local or regional advertising markets, and are often hence subject to the same programming constraints as their national and international counterparts. Morley and Robins (1995) conclude on the topic that “this new regionalism puts value on the diversity and difference of identities in Europe, and seeks to sustain and conserve the variety of cultural heritage, regional and national.” (idem. 1995: 17) This celebration of the emergence of this type of media focus as the herald of the emergence of a local community appears to be a somewhat early bunch of flowers, for what really can be seen as just another part in the chain in the recuperating of production cost and the focus to provide the economy with a platform for their advertising.

In a deep ranging discussion regarding the two-way move of media, Matthias Kurp states: “As a reaction to the globalisation of all communication processes and the emergence of a ‘World culture’, more and more counteracting forces develop with a local or regional focus. The maxime “Think global, act local” dominates therewith the paradox of simultaneous globalisation and fragmentation.” (Kurp, 1996, p.213)



**Figure 3 Americanisation of TV: Volume of US programming on TV imports**

(1983)

### **Resistance towards globalisation**

Equally, there seems to be a resistance to the “Americanisation” of TV culture emerging in more and more European countries. While the EU commission is fostering protectionism in trying to enforce EU produced programmes, the swing towards locally produced programmes has been more radical in some countries than enforced by the EU.

The German media situation can be seen as quite exemplary of this trend. While in the beginning of commercial stations virtually all prime time programming was American, by now most programming is produced in Germany itself (this overview is relating to the dominant commercial broadcasters RTL, SAT1 and Pro7 who can afford to produce locally): The average of American produced programming is some 33% in prime-time.

In the UK, BSkyB announced only recently, that it would switch to more UK produced programming in order to revive subscriptions to the service. At present, this resulted in one series and some documentaries being produced in the UK, but further own-productions are planned.

This trend also seems to be echoed in the Netherlands and Belgium, where VTM (Vlaamse Televisie Maatschappij / Flemish Television) has gone over to produce some 40% of its prime time programming in Flanders. Equally, RTL4 and RTL5 have stepped up own production activities.

It can however not be said that for any TV station producing its own programming

comes cheap. This can well be explanatory why, overall, only some 30% are own produced programming, 5% Co-productions and 38% bought in (Meckel, 1996, p.145).

### **Global content, produced locally**

The BSkyB announcement may be taken as explanatory for the trend in this apparent resistance against Americanisation. As a profoundly commercial operator, and exempt from the EU content directive, BSkyB is making the move not in an attempt to reflect more the diversity of national, or supranational UK culture, but in an economically based intention. Herman and McChesney characterise BSkyB's programming policy as: "offering popular fare and audience-attracting special events, while neglecting anything profound, challenging and merely contributing to the public sphere"(1997;168). While the UK audience is served the story of a UK football team (in BSkyB's new series 'Dreamteam'), the series is produced around problems and with a plot that can be found in any US series, the only change is the surrounding.

Equally, series produced by the RTL-brand of channels reflect no local values whatsoever, nor do they in any way reflect any notion of national identity other than the place where they take place. In 'Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten' or the Dutch counterpart 'Goede tijden, slechte tijden' the problems encounter are to a large extent the same as can be found in any comparable family soap that has made its way around the globe. Any notion of political or social debate are barred from the content; current problems in the countries remain unreflected in the lives of the soap opera stars.

### **Conclusion**

Television, on which this debate has focused the most, is certainly not the only media with significant impact on its audience. It is however the most powerful of all tools, and the most widely spread. In 1996, Carmen Luke reported, that some 99% of all households own a TV set in Australia, 60% own two or more, and 72% own a VCR (1996).

Economic pressure has lead the governments to deregulate the media situation in many countries of Europe, where previously the commercial media was relatively restricted, and in the case of most countries, the public broadcasters provided an unpressured platform for programme content. and a platform for a 'national identity'.

The point to make here, is the fact that the commercial media has been, out of necessity for its own economic survival, the driving force behind the depolitisation and banalisation of the public sphere. “The stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the summarily it can deal with consumers’ needs, producing them, and even withdrawing amusement” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). It gives “full play to audience-attracting programmes featuring sex and violence, all in accord with the market logic” (Herman & McChesney, 1997:188).

The media hence contributes to the emergence of the ‘global culture’: Tom Cruise, Pamela Anderson, Brat Pitt and so forth are role models for millions of people, their behaviour is mirrored, digested and internalised. The norms and values, the morals of the culture industry, they represent are taken over. If they drink coke, the followers do.

### The Internet

The internet merits a different section of discussion. Primarily, because it is a quintessentially different form of experiencing than television or cinema. While both TV and cinema, even with the large amounts of channels provided by now, are a passive form of communication, the internet makes the communication activity active. The viewer actively chooses what s/he is prepared to see, and with whom to interact. While the media is essentially a one way communication process, where the feedback is only very marginally provided (by means of viewer ratings), the internet offers the possibility of a far more interactive experience, with a feedback directly provided (this is particularly important in activities such as interactive games and chatting, while less in the WWW).

The internet also offers the possibility to jump boarders and cultures “at a single mouse click”, and offers an unlimited resource for information of any kind and flavour. At the same time, the internet breaks down the barriers between the more traditional entertainment services (TV, cinema, magazines etc.) as providers of content, the software firms, as providers of access software, and the communication sector (telephone), as providers of the links.

### **The Emergence of the Net**

The internet emerged in the 1960s as a US Department of Defence project. Linking

with academic institutions during the 1980s, it emerged as a public, global computer network at the beginning of the 1990s, reaching widespread distribution also into non-academic or defence related homes. The spectacular growth of the internet can be seen at the hostcounts presented below both for Europe and world-wide.

**Table 5 Hostcount development**

Date	European Hostcount <sup>1</sup>	World-wide Hostcount
January 1998	5,942,491	29,670,000
January 1997	3,921,946	16,146,000
January 1996	2,284,750	9,472,000
January 1995	1,106,077	4,852,000
January 1994	587,135	2,217,000
January 1993	303,828	1,313,000

Source: Network Wizards (www.nw.com) and RIPE (www.ripe.net)

Also the following abstract of the Dutch Volkskrant shows the uptake of the internet: “Van de ondervraagde bedrijven met meer dan honderd werknemers zegt 58 procent over een Internet-aansluiting te beschikken. In Januari was dit nog 35 procent.(...) Binnen een jaar komt daar volgens de huidige gegevens nog 20 procent bij” (*Of the asked companies with more than 100 employees, 58% says to have an Internet connection. In January, this was 35%. Within a year the current figures will grow by 20%.*) (De Volkskrant, in van Ruler, Groendijk et al, 1996:95).

### **Internet Users and Usage**

The total amount of internet users remains of course still unknown. Hammond (1996) estimates the amount of users at around 50 million in 1996, 100 million in 1997 and 400 million by the year 2000. With the emergence of alternative connection methods to the telephone access, this number might however be well surpassed by then. In January 1997, the distribution of internet access in households is shown in

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<sup>1</sup> This count counts hostnames registered under any European top level. It might hence not be entirely accurate to the actual number of hosts, as not every host might choose for a national top level (for example: www.british-airways.com)

the table below.

**Table 6 Internet access in 1997**

Country	%
Japan	18.4
USA	16
Germany	11.7
Hong-Kong	11.7
Taiwan	10.3
UK	9.5
Australia	8.9
Singapore	7
France	6.5
South Korea	6.3
Italy	5.8

Source: IDC/Link in Hammond 1996 p.290

The main uses of the internet have been documented by a Nielsen Research in 1995. The persons 16+ in the US and Canada using the Internet in the past 24 hours (over 24 hours ago) who used to...

**Table 7 Internet usage**

	<24hrs	>24hrs
Access WWW	72%	44%
Send E-mail	65%	48%
Download Software	31%	19%
Participate in an interactive discussion	21%	21%
Participate in a non-interactive discussion	36%	43%
Use another computer	31%	21%
Utilise real-time audio or video	19%	17%

(Source: Hammond, 1996:275)

### **Critical Mass Levels**

The critical mass conceptual framework helps “to better understand the size of the audience needed for a new technology to be considered successful” ( Morris & Organ, 1996: 6). Morris & Organ conclude: “Each of the[se] specific Internet services can be viewed as we do specific television stations, small town newspapers, or special interest magazines. None of these may reach a strictly mass audience, but in conjunction with all the other stations, newspapers, and magazines distributed in the country, they constitute mass media categories. So the Internet itself would be considered the mass medium, while the individual sites and services are the components of which this medium is comprised” ( Morris & Organ, 1996: 6). They also quote Valente (1995) who “notes that the critical mass is achieved when about 10 to 20 percent of the population have adopted the innovation” ( Morris & Organ, 1996: 6). This would indeed suggest, that the internet has reached critical mass in the US, Japan, Germany , Hong-Kong and Taiwan. It also suggests that it is close to have achieved that status in the UK and Australia. With the growing boom of the internet, it may well have achieved this status by now.

Following the notion of the erosion of the boundaries between true mass communication and interpersonal communication, Neuman (1991) notes: “ The quintessential characteristic of the new electronic media is that they all connect with one another. We are witnessing the evolution of a universal, interconnected network of audio, video and electronic text communication that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communications... The ultimate result... will be intellectual pluralism and personalised control over communication.” ( Neuman, 1991 in: McQuail, 1994: 88)

### **The Commercialisation of Cyberspace**

While the internet in the beginning was a distinctive academical network, and frowned upon any commercialisation, the growth, and potential for commercial growth, has resulted in the effective commercialisation and commodification of cyberspace.

US government support for the backbones of the net has been withdrawn in 1995 and been handed over to seven firms, including the telecom giants MCI and Sprint. As Bart Ziegler notes: “an already compromised ban on commercial use of the Internet ended altogether” (1995).

The battle of Microsoft and Netscape for the dominance in Internet access software is just one of the examples of the commercialisation of every aspect of the Net: Cello and Mosaic, the predecessors of the browser software were free software, developed and distributed by academic institutions such as the Swiss CERN.

While it is true that everyone can create a Website with little investment, attracting visitors to such a site is costly and time consuming. The traditional media firms have been heavily investing in branding and promoting their sites through their other operations, resulting in an enormous popularity of sites connected to the traditional media. Herman and McChesney observe: “The relevant media analogy for the Internet, then, is not that of broadcasting with its limited number of channels, but, rather, that of magazine publishing or book publishing. Assuming no explicit state censorship, anyone can produce a publication, but the right to do so means little without distribution, resources and publicity” (1997:125).

The emergence of the ‘push’ technology is equally a sign of the dominance of certain media and software firms aiming to broadcast their commercial content: News Corporation, the Microsoft/NBC venture MSNBC and CNN all provide direct ‘push’ feeds of streaming video and audio and information. The advertising vision of a ‘web in the web’, dominated by a handful of highly profitable, commercial websites, has become clearer.

In summary, we can say, that the internet has experienced an enormous boom over the last decade from a small and rather closed network to a major influence factor, which has reached critical mass level in a number of countries. It has also been commercialised heavily, and traditional media companies have moved in to provide commercial on-line content.

### **Axioms of the previous section**

- 1. The neoliberal worldview has been the major political model in the last years: it has been victorious over alternative political models.*
- 2. Global business has increased like never before: the emergence of TNCs and Free Trade areas is evidence of this.*
- 3. The rise of Western TNCs, and their pursue of markets, has lead to an enormous export of Western lifestyle and culture, contributing to the growth of a multinational hybrid culture.*
- 4. The traditional forces opposing the rise of a neoliberal worldorder have declined, alternative political models have, largely, ceased to exist .*
- 5. Western politics is promoting the extension of the neoliberal worldorder, and*

*is increasingly under pressure of the global industry.*

- 6. The decline of public broadcasting and the emergence of commercial media has helped to shape a multinational hybrid culture.*
- 7. The global, commercial media is in a concentrated ownership of a few companies, linked to each other by distribution and co-operation agreements.*
- 8. The programming of most media has become non-political and non-critical, it displays the same content to a world-wide audience, either through globally shared programmes, or locally produced programmes with global content.*
- 9. The internet facilitates the global communication enormously: it has reached critical mass levels in a number of the Western countries.*
- 10. The internet is in the stage of developing into a commercial information medium, the analogy most likely towards the media environment is the publishing business.*

## **The need for an interactive model of cultural transformation**

In the previous parts of this paper we have examined three basic influence types, all of which have a potential to lead to some form of culture exchange, or how Kim (1996) terms it: “we live in the midst of rapid cultural change and increasing intercultural connectedness” (Kim, 1996: 299).

Undoubtedly, television and cinema, the Internet, changes in political structure and international business expose us everyday to new cultures, values and attitudes, whether or not actively perceived by us. New forms of communication have brought the vision of a “global village” and “globalisation”, not only of business and finance, but also of culture.

As I have argued, that the media has undergone a profound change, and polarises itself in the two corners of a global media, with universal programming and regional or local programming, displaying global-like content. This shift moves the media from focusing on the country’s culture to a more universal or global culture, whose values it displays to the receiver.

The Internet shifts our communication use to a potentially global form. With the rise of the internet around the globe, intercultural communications become “a mouse click away”. The internet indeed gives the chance to experience intercultural communications at low cost, which facilitates the use of it in a wider audience.

Global business forces the employees to think more global, and experience intercultural encounters. This effect can reach from the placement in a foreign country to the foreign co-worker in a home factory.

Politics also play an important role. While political framework is less “intercultural” as such, it opens up the way to a intercultural experience. The European Union, NAFTA and ASEAN are examples of those political structures facilitating intercultural encounters. Equally, the collapse of the Eastern Block, and the following investment of money and people in those countries have made intercultural encounters possible to what was largely a closed system before. The political changes in turn have also influenced the globalisation of media available in those countries experiencing the opening of their systems, as well as the availability of communication resources such as Internet.

Although the culture shock, if one wishes to use that term, that is experienced differs in degree by the circumstances that surround it. A culture shock of cinema and

television will be less great than that experienced when conducting a cross cultural, inter-active conversation over the internet, and even more when dealing with foreign business partners.

Following the notion that a culture shock “is thought of as a profound learning experience that leads to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth” (Adler, 1987:29), this situation would suggest that we find ourselves in a continual learning approach, where we adapt to the new. Kim (1996) notes: “Intercultural communication experiences are inherently stressful in varying degrees [...] An outcome of intercultural stress adaptation experiences is an intercultural transformation in internal conditions.” (Kim, 1996:315).

Following this reasoning, we can state that cultures, who are exposed to the influences (among others) discussed in the previous sections experience continuous intercultural transformation. This would show that basically static models of culture, as largely favoured in intercultural research, are inadequate to explain and predict current culture situations. There is hence a need to develop a more interactive model of cultural transformation, that is capable to explain the shifts in the cultures that we are experiencing in the world today.

By looking at an individual experiencing intercultural transformation, we can possibly explain a communal cultural shift.

## **Towards explaining intercultural transformation**

In the attempt to explain what makes a culture a culture we have identified various distinctive concepts: such as the space and time concepts, perception, language etc. These concepts can be broadly classified as parts, processes and outcomes of three categories, or variables, that interact in 'culture'. This categorisation leans towards the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner model of culture, whereas culture is a set of three concentric circles, existing out of basic assumptions, norms and values and artefacts and products (see section 1 and: Trompenaars & Hampden Turner, 1997:22).

Rather than seeing the three variables as distinctive elements, they should be seen as interacting together, and with it in a constant change. They display, to some extent, cybernetic properties: The basic assumptions influence the values and norms and those in turn influence the artefacts and products, however equally changes in the artefacts and products can change values and norms and in turn change basic assumptions. Any such process is of course primarily a process in the individual, that will then in turn influence the culture surrounding him or her, and that may lead, gradually, to a culture shift; or more precisely in a shift in the behaviour of any element.

For example: while during the industrialisation it was a basic assumption that the workers had virtually no right, the challenging of that assumption through the various Marxist and socialist movements have gradually shifted this basic assumption. Primarily the shift may have been encountered by only one person, who then shifted the norms and values of the workers, and with it both their basic assumptions as well as their artefacts and products: the assumption shifted to the fact that the workers have rights, and the behaviour changed to claiming those rights. While in the early days of the Marxist movement this 'basic assumption' was only seen by some, namely those aligned with the communist, Marxist and socialist ideas, the forced change in behaviour and values gradually shifted the basic assumption of society towards the assumption that workers have, at least some, rights. A full detailed account of such a movement would of course go far beyond the scope of this project, it can however be noted that the shift created an immense follow up in changes in society: from giving the right to vote equally to the establishment of trade unions, to

legalising of parties that were aligned with that idea, to the fact of making this commitment part, at least in some form, of most democratic constitutions. Another, major, attempt to shift basic assumptions can of course be seen in the feminist movement.

The point is, that by being exposed to new ideas or a new environment, the society culture changed significantly at all levels, resulting in a shift in culture over time. Shifts in culture can of course initiate in the own society, but are more likely to be brought in by an outside culture, with a different set of assumptions, values etc. . Shifts can of course be significant, or subtle, they can be fast or slow. Example for subtle shifts can be a shift in only one layer with little effect on the others, it can be a slight change that is in danger of going unnoticed. The significant shifts are easily determined, changing society structure as a whole while taking place, and over a relatively short period of time.

Slow shifts are those shifts that occur over a long period of time, at least relatively spoken: The feminist movement is such a slower shift, taking some hundred years and more to change the basic assumptions, the values and attitudes of society.

Fast shifts are dramatic revolutionlike developments: the end of the Third Reich was a fast shift, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe etc. The shift is abrupt, and changes society values fundamentally over a very short period of time.

This discussion of fundamental changes in an entire society is of course a dramatised view of what occurs in the individual when exposed to a society with a fundamentally different culture. However the similarities are striking. In both situations one or more individuals are exposed to 'foreign' concepts of life: a capitalist view of economy, a hierarchically structured society with deep respect for authority, a deeply individualistic society. While adaptation is not necessarily the outcome, the individual will start reflecting on the concept, and may choose to adapt parts or all of the new outlook.

### The Culture Shock

Fundamental to the occurrence of such a shift is a 'culture shock'. While this is traditionally seen as a profound negative experience while encountering another culture, I would rather define it as anything that has a potential to start shifting variables in the culture system of either the individual or the society as a whole. Adler describes it as: "Culture shock is thought of as a profound learning experience that

leads to a high degree of self-awareness and personal growth. Rather than being only a disease for which adaptation is the cure, culture shock is likewise at the very heart of the cross-cultural learning experience. It is an experience in self-understanding and change” (1987:29) . The culture shock can be evoked by being exposed to any other culture, as a result of being on a ‘foreign’ culture territory, by cultural changes in the home culture or by being exposed to fundamentally different cultural forms on the home ground. The fact where the encounter occurs, and how different the cultures are, will have a profound influence on the depth and extend of such a shock. Some argument has been centred around which shocks occur: following this line of enquiry, there are a multitude of possible shocks, such as the role shock, language shock or cultural fatigue when individuals are exposed to a ‘foreign’ culture. Some studies suggest a positive correlation between culture shock ad the occurrence of mental illnesses resulting from the stress experienced (Kinzie, Tran et al, 1980; Williams & Westermeyer, 1986) while other research has found that culture shock may have a positive influence on social and professional effectiveness (Ruben & Kealey, 1979).

### From Shock to Self-reflection

Such a shock will cause reflection upon the individual itself, and the new ideas stemming from the new cultural environment. As Boulding (1977) remarked, the human nervous system is organised in such a way, that all patterns of behaviour and perception are processed unconsciously. They only come into consciousness “where there is a deviation from the familiar”. This process will inevitably provide the space for reflection upon own behaviour patterns, and their underlying norms, values and so on; resulting in a conscious reflection upon their validity. This reflection can then cause the adjustment process to start. The adjustment can however not in all cases be found to correlate with the depth of the shock (Ruben & Kealey, 1979). Different schools of thought present their findings of what happens after such a shock. While the notion of some form of adaptation can be found in all of them, the way such an adaptation, and the extend, is different. Some ideas as to how the acculturation, or culture transformation occurs shall be presented at this stage:

### Shock, Reflection, Adaptation

Adler (1975) describes five phases that occur in the event of a culture shock: Initially the individual is in a contact phase. The individual experiences excitement and

euphoria, the new culture is seen ethnocentrically. In the second phase, the disintegration phase, the cultural differences become increasingly noticeable, marked by confusion, alienation and depression on the side of the individual. In the third phase, the individual strongly rejects the second culture. The choice is made to either regress to earlier stages or to move on to a higher level of adaptation, this phase is known as the reintegration phase. The fourth step is marked by the increase in understanding the second culture and a feeling of autonomy and competence on the side of the individual, the autonomy stage. In the final phase, the independence stage, the individual cherishes the cultural differences, has an increased self- and cultural awareness and displays creative behaviour to accommodate the new culture in its own worldview.

Oberg (1960) also describes the adjustment process, over four stages: The initial 'honeymoon phase' encompasses fascination, elation and optimism on the side of the individual exposed to a foreign culture. In the second phase, the individual enters into hostility and displays emotionally stereotyped attitudes towards the host society or culture. Equally he or she seeks closer contact to fellow sojourners. The third stage is characterised by the increased language knowledge and the ability to get around in the new culture. It marks the recovery from phase two. In the final stage, the adjustment to the host culture is as complete as possible. New customs are accepted and enjoyed.

The adjustment process has been characterised in the current literature as either U or W shaped, following the argumentation that, after returning to the home culture, a sojourner will experience an other culture shock (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963 ; Church, 1982) However as Kim (1996) following Church (1982) points out, some basic questions about adjustment have not been answered: "Is the order of stages invariant?" and "Must all stages be passed through or can some be skipped by some individuals?" (Kim, 1996:303).

While the discussion on the reaction to a culture shock is useful to explain possible stages that an individual or society moves through in order to show adaptation to a new environment, a stage where the environment and the individual are in 'equilibrium'. The main points are that the individual will experience a profound change in its identity. Following some form of rejection, the individual will rise to adaptation of the new culture, and learn to live with it. Some people will show a more

profound adaptation than others. While it can generally be said, that most people are able to adjust, Kim points out (1996:313) that “certain individuals, although in the minority, may strongly resist such internal change.”

### From The Individual To The Society

Most current research has focused exclusively on experiences of sojourners, travellers and immigrants. In other words, the research is based on findings that involve direct communication and contact, in most cases direct interpersonal communication. While undoubtedly this has the highest possible impact on the individual, the research should be extended to encompass non-direct and mass communications to further reach areas where intercultural communication occurs. Kim recognises that “many intercultural experiences occur indirectly through being exposed to messages that we read, see and hear in the mass media (including books, journals, magazines, movies, television programmes and newspapers)” (1996:305).

In the previous sections of this project we have discussed a variety of intercultural encounters and phenomena: media exposure, business encounters, internet as an interactive mass medium and cultural and structural change through political changes. These form a major part in the everyday experiences of ‘ordinary’ people and other cultures, and equally starts to shift cultures and may, over time lead to the same phenomena as occurring in any intercultural direct-communication. In the words of Morley and Robins: “Globalisation as identity crisis”.

### Definitions

Following the reasoning from the previous paragraphs, **intercultural communication** is defined for this project as the information exchange between one person and any other source transmitting a message displaying properties of a culture different to the one of the receiver’s culture. The source of such a message can be either a person, in an interpersonal communication process, or any form of mass media or other form of media. For the purpose of the project, the source of such a message can hence be a film or television programme, that displays to its viewer a cultural difference. The viewing of such material is hence an intercultural communication process.

The term **culture** is used in the same sense as Kim, referring to “the collective life patterns shared by people in social groups such as national, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, regional, and gender groups”(1996:305). This necessarily involves that intercultural communication is also understood to take place outside its traditional domain of ‘international’ communication. Intercultural communication can occur between two nationals of the same country, which have for example different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

The impact of such a communication is understood to be variable. A communication impact is higher in a situation where the personal involvement of the receiver is more actively involved in the communication process. A person living in another country experiences hence a strong impact, whereas a television viewer has a relatively low impact.

The **intercultural cultural transformation** is understood to be the result of such an encounter, as it occurs in the person that has received such a message. This might be a very insignificant change in a single, low involvement communication situation, or a significant change in an active discussion. The transformation is seen as any shift in the artefacts and production, in the values and norms or in the basic assumptions of that person.

The individual is seen as an open system: s/he interacts actively with his/her environment, mostly through the means of communications. That is the encoding and decoding of messages exchanged with his/her environment.

The individual is further understood to be homeostatic to. That is that the person tries to maintain constant a variety of variables in the meaning structure (layers 1, 2 and 3). At the beginning of any intercultural transformation process, the individual is seen as being in equilibrium: their world view and actions are in line with their meaning structure. If through communication or other encounters the meaning structure is disturbed, in the terminology of Kim, experiences ‘stress’, the individual will aim to actively adapt to regain equilibrium.

If the individual is exposed to other cultural values, a reflection process starts. To various extends, the human mind starts to review, anticipate, generalise, analyse and plan, and starts an active transformation process. The individual ‘grows’.

This adaptation process is dynamic, cyclic and continual, as the individual is in an

continuous interchange with its environment. As the environment changes, the equilibrium of the internal meaning structure is continuously disturbed. This requires a continuous adaptation or growth process.

The stress level needs to reach a certain level before active adaptation can take place: this can be reached by either continuous exposure or radical exposure. Before such stress levels are reached, the change in the environment may be ignored or seen as irrelevant: very little adaptation or growth will take place. If a certain level is reached, the adaptation will take place. The stress level is depending on the need for adaptation imposed from the outside and the willingness to adapt from the inside of the individual.

### Assumptions

Following the discussion above, we can make the following assumptions:

- 1. A person is an open system: it is in continuous interaction with its environment through output and input.*
- 2. Any person possesses an internal meaning structure: composed of artefacts and products, values and norms and basic assumptions.*
- 3. The internal meaning structure is inherently logical in itself and interconnected, it is, in that state, in an equilibrium.*
- 4. The person aims to maintain this equilibrium: s/he is homeostatic.*
- 5. If the environment of the person changes, the equilibrium gets disturbed.*
- 6. Any change in the equilibrium causes stress.*
- 7. If the stress reaches a certain level, the person will aim to restore the equilibrium*
- 8. To regain the equilibrium, the internal meaning structure has to get modified to accommodate the changed environment.*

We have discussed before that the cultural environment that the infant grows up in is the determinant of the basic personality: it is also the start from which cultural transformation takes place. Kim explains this process: “In this process, the individuals become cultural beings. Cultural attributes become a large part of their unconscious patterns of communication, particularly the cognitive patterns of categorising and sorting information from the environment. As cultural persons, they

are further conditioned by the collective ways of feeling and behaving. Humans, thus, have limited freedom in experiencing what is beyond the borders of their cultural consciousness” (idem., 1996:309). Once the ‘cultural consciousness’ is confronted with cultural otherness, the human is propelled into some form of reflective process, the cultural assumptions and premises are called into question: the “Stress-Adaptation-Growth” process in the words of Kim (1996).

In a direct intercultural encounter, the individual experiences inevitably difficulties in communicating: due to other cultural premises and assumptions of the other party. Whether or not the communication takes the active form of direct conversation (with its immediate feedback and propelled cybernetic adaptation process) or the form of a limited feedback conversation or exposure. The ‘otherness’ projected by the other party will inevitably evoke some reflection about the person’s own cultural premises and assumptions. The degree of the heterogeneity of the ‘other’, and the context and feedback of the communication, is of course a determining factor in the need for such a reflective process: if the heterogeneity is high, and the context low, the impact of such an encounter will only call for a very limited amount of reflection. If the context is high, and diversity equally high, then the reflection process has to be more in-depth, it is challenged more significantly.

Once such cultural ‘otherness’ is perceived, and the individual is confronted with the need for some kind of adaptation to accommodate the ‘other’, the internal meaning system is disturbed. The individual is reacting with discomfort and uncertainty: the internal equilibrium is propelled into disequilibrium. Confronted with a significantly large change in the cultural environment, a large scale adaptation and growth takes place. As in the case of immigrants, who moved to an alien culture, Kim suggests: “Within the first year in a new culture, an individual may experience nearly one third of what Holmes and Rahe considered the 43 most significant life changes” (idem.,1996: 310).

The culture shock, the generic intercultural stress, is the result of such an intercultural encounter. It requires, that the individual adapts his/her behaviour at least temporarily to regain equilibrium and to cope with the situation. This requires the suspension of certain behaviour, and possibly norms and values and basic assumptions, and the accommodation of new behaviour and adaptation of norms, values and basic assumptions to accommodate those new ways. This may, initially, meet with

conscious or unconscious resistance of the individual to adapt. This causes additional stress. The adaptation, the accommodation of the new ways of thinking, perceiving and acting, causes can result, according to Kim in “temporary personality disintegration, or even ‘breakdown’ in some extreme cases. Intercultural stress is therefore viewed as the internal resistance of the human organism against its own cultural evolution.

To the extent that stress is said to be responsible for suffering, frustration and anxiety, it also must be credited as an impetus for learning, growth and creativity for the individual. Temporary disintegration is thus viewed as the very basis for subsequent growth in the awareness of life conditions and ways to deal with them” (1996:311).

What results out of the process of disintegration and adaptation, of stress and growth is a cyclic, forward and upward moving process in which the internal meaning structure is continuously leaping forward.

At the starting point the individual experiences stress, the internal meaning structure is disturbed. It acquires the energy for adaptation to overcome the stress experience. The individual then leaps forward to a new, adapted meaning structure. At some point, new stress may arise: the stress causes a draw back, a new disintegration and questioning of the current meaning structure. In a new leap, the individual adapts again. With the individuals growth, the society of which they form part, also grows. In the words of Kim: “Ultimately, the intercultural communication experiences of the individuals contribute to the evolution of the social systems of which they are part” (1996:311).

While learning and growing, the individual also learns to better cope with intercultural stress. Some indications are that the more stress is experienced, the more adaptation takes place (Ruben and Kealey, 1979). Through the continuous stress-adaptation-growth process, the individual learns to ‘function’ in the new environment: their internal meaning structure is expanded to accommodate the new environment, and the individual is able to experience what is beyond the borders of its previous cultural consciousness.

Resulting out of intercultural encounters, out of the stress, growth and adaptation is a new ‘cultural conditioning’ of the individual: the individual grows to become a multicultural person. This state is then characterised by the person becoming open to cultural transformation and growth, and a loosening of cultural bindings to any one particular culture. Adler (1982) describes it as:

“The identity of man [woman] is based, not on ‘belongingness’ which implies either owning or being owned by culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality. In this sense multicultural man [woman] is a radical departure from the kinds of identities found in both traditional and mass societies. He [She] is neither totally part of nor totally apart from his [her] culture; he [she] lives, instead, on the boundary” (1982:391).

Equally to becoming an ‘intercultural’ person intercultural encounters and the stress-adaptation-growth process lead to a learning progress in the individual, resulting in a broadened understanding “of human conditions and cultural differences and a view of things that are larger than any one cultural perspective” (Kim, 1996; 314). This way of viewing things will of course, in return, influence the ability to react flexible in an intercultural encounter: the intercultural person will have the flexibility to adapt to the situation, and creatively manage any intercultural stress and possible conflict. “At this stage, one achieves the maximum capacity to communicate with individuals who are significantly different in cultural backgrounds, and are able to make deliberate choices of actions in specific situations rather than simply being dictated by the normative courses of action in a given culture” (Kim, 1996; 315).

While the foregoing discussion has focused on interpersonal communication, based largely on the reasoning of Kim (1996), the situation is transferable to a variety of other intercultural encounters which are not a direct, interpersonal communication. As explained before, those encounter have a lesser impact, when taken as a single incident, however occur with great frequency in everyday life. Such a situation can be, for example, eating in foreign food. Virtually no encounter with the other culture as a whole is made, rather a single factor is displayed, and equally a single factor is possibly modified in the internal meaning system. Being confronted with ‘alien’ food, puts the individual equally in a situation of uncertainty, a very small version of a culture shock. While learning to how to eat the food, how it tastes and so forth, the individual is able to expand its horizon of food: it may not be cooked but still digestible, it may not be eaten with knife and fork and so on. A related ‘encounter’ can occur in the case of a TV show: the heroes displayed may be seen as possible role models, and as such the internal meaning structure may be modified to accommodate for possible new behaviour of the hero in the individual’s own behaviour.

### Axioms

This discussion, up to this point, can be summarised in the following axioms:

- 1. Through various means the individual is exposed to ‘alien’ cultures.*

2. *The means can be low in context, or high in context. Equally the cultural gap can be large or narrow.*
3. *Intercultural encounters are stressful in varying degrees, owing to the participants cultural differences, and to the amount and depth of culture involved (low- or high- context of the situation).*
4. *The stress facilitates adaptation: the higher the stress, the more adaptation is required to adapt.*
5. *Most individuals are able to adapt: some have a greater facility to accommodate otherness in their internal meaning structure than others.*
6. *The outcome of such an adaptation is a change in the internal meaning structure of that individual: an intercultural transformation.*
7. *Intercultural transformation influences, and is reflected in an increased cognitive, affective and behavioural capacity.*
8. *The increased cognitive, affective and behavioural capacity facilitates future intercultural encounters: such encounters will cause less stress, requiring less adaptation, which is easier to achieve.*

## Conclusion and Discussion

The previous sections can be distinguished into three broad categories: an explanation of what culture is, and how different cultures distinguish themselves, a presentation of current political, economical and media tendencies and an explanation of an intercultural encounter, and the resulting modification of the internal meaning structure.

In the first section, we have developed a number of variables that make cultures different. Those variables can be distinguished into three broad sections: artefacts, values and norms and basic assumptions. Each of the variables is in constant interaction, and makes up the internal meaning structure of the individual.

The individual learn its culture from its environment - first from its family, later from its social relationships, and the social environment, in particular the media, politics and its professional life.

During the second section, we discussed a variety of political and economical influences that shape the culture of societies. Particular attention is also being given to media and computer mediated communication, which facilitates the intercultural exchange, and exposes the individual to cultural attributes. The media in particular have a critical role in the globalisation, as through them cultural attributes are distributed largely globally. The interchange of economy, politics, the local and the global is particularly interesting in the commercial media. Primarily the commercial media depends on the economy for revenue, it hence has to obey to the demands of its source of income. Equally it has to adhere to political norms. This of course in turn makes the programming profane and uncritical of the status quo. On the other side, the media has to satisfy the consumer: giving access to both local and global media content for identification. With the main target to reach as many viewers as possible, in as many markets as possible, the media has to adapt to the local consumer, and the majority as a whole. A platform for alternative views can hence be no longer allowed, as that would sacrifice the total amounts of viewers. If the depolitisation of society is the consequence of this, then the turn out to elections in Germany and the UK should an alarming signal, the change of the Left in politics also shows the centralisation tendency of societies with strong media influence.

The third section looks at the process of acculturation, and intercultural encounters. The section describes the process of becoming 'multicultural'. One of the important aspects of our discussion is the internal meaning structure, or the system of assumptions, values and behaviour. This internal system is aimed to be 'logical', that is basic assumptions must be able to lead to the values and to displayed behaviour, or

In other words, the internal meaning structure is in equilibrium.. If the environment changes, our internal meaning structure gets disturbed, and we hence have to adopt after a certain pressure occurs: this can well be a small adoption to accommodate behaviour that is new, or a major adaptation changing values and assumptions.

Our worldview is of course subject to the reality that we experience around us: it is the 'real world': family, friends and colleagues; but it is also the 'non-real' world: the world of television and media, the world of the abstract. Both worlds have equally an important impact onto our meaning structure, and give the impulses to change and adopt our meaning structure. In this view, the concern for, for example, children being exposed to extremely violent children's programming seems extremely realistic. Research concluded, that for example people with a high television consumption estimate the crime rate clearly above the 'real' crime rate. This shows how their view was shaped by the influence of media (Dominick 1990, Chandler 1995).

Cultures have clearly moved closer together. In addition to the traditionally understood symbolism, there is something like an internationally understood symbolism and 'the popular', the world-wide understood meaning system that is displayed in the 'cosmopolitan' culture.

Does this mean that the local cultures will be completely eroded? No, for the time being that is not the case. The internal meaning structures are still focused, when arising, to our direct environment, the 'home environment'. Although this is no longer as distinct as it was, and the individual transforms, via media usage and intercultural connectedness, it maintains the home environment as its base. This is particularly true for those individuals that never physically move from their own culture. Their meaning structure incorporates some 'cosmopolitan' or universal culture, but it also maintains a strong link to the home culture. The development over time is, of course, less predictable, but might well be somewhat brighter for the existence of the local cultures and the protection of the 'heritage', than it is seen by some very pessimistic scholars.

Cultures do converge, new identities do arise. Imagined and real communities are formed and dissolved. People do shift through cultures, and identities. But the underlying culture still determines a lot of the emerging cultures: the local focus is still present, and we have not reached the universal culture.

It is also not, and that is often confused, the disappearance of certain cultural attributes that make a culture disappear or no longer existing. A culture is more than just the attributes that are displayed, it is a more deeper, more profound system that makes the cultures distinct. Cultures converge. but they do not disappear. as yet.

This project has aimed to give an overview of the complexities of culture and globalisation, society and the individual. With the emergence of new communication forms, further research is needed to identify the impact of the possible new communities and communication possibilities that arise. Equally, the influence of mass media, and in particular commercial media merits further attention. Their influence on shaping the individual's reality is still largely contested, particular problems that arise are the democratic culture and the national cultures. Another important research question is the rise of neo-fascist and anti-democratic tendencies in various cultures, and their connection to cultural variables and globalisation.

Furthermore, the convergence of cultures has to be studied in more detail. While the field of what makes a culture has been elaborated and solidified, the predicting theories of cultural convergence are still not developed. Also there is a need for further research into the different theories of intercultural exchange, the appropriateness, usefulness and relevance of developed theories has to be tested against reality. For this a more profound set of research methods needs development.

In the end, it is the almost unlimited human capacity for adaptation and self-organisation that makes the area of intercultural encounters and cultural convergence so interesting. And with the further development of intercultural-connectedness the field for further research seems endless.

## **Appendix 1 - Global Media Players**

### Time-Warner

- various respected newspaper titles, including Time
- Time Life Books, DC Comics
- Warner Music Group
- Warner Brothers Film and Video
- Theme parks (Movie World in Germany)
- Cinemax TV
- Paramount Comedy Channel (UK)
- CNN, TNT and the Cartoon Network
- Significant interests in Germany's N-TV and VIVA

### Disney

- Disney and Buena Vista Film and video production and distribution
- Themeparks (EuroDisney in France)
- Disney Channel (UK, Germany, France, Spain)
- History Channel
- a controlling interest in Eurosport, Teasaurio S.A., RTL2, SuperRTL and TM3 in Germany, SBS with interests in Scandinavia (SBS), the Netherlands (SBS6) and Belgium (VT4).

### Viacom

- MTV, VH1 and Nickelodeon
- Paramount Comedy Channel (UK)
- Paramount Pictures and other production companies
- Blockbuster Video
- Publishing companies including Simon & Schuster and Macmillan
- 75% interest in Spelling Productions

Bertelsmann

- Arista and RCA Records
- RTL, RTL2, SuperRTL, VOX TV and Premiere (D)
- ClubRTL and RTL-TVi (B)
- RTL4 and RTL5 (NL)
- M6 and TMC (F)
- Channel 5 in the UK
- Eighteen European radio stations
- some forty publishing houses for German, French and English books
- Newspapers
- America On-line Europe (AOL) and Compuserve

News Corporation:

- various newspapers in the UK (Times, Sun, News of the World, some 132 in total world-wide)
- Twentieth Century Fox, a major film, television and video producer
- various book publishers, including HarperCollins
- a controlling interest in British Sky Broadcasting, and Sky Radio (NL)
- further a controlling interest in Granada Sky Broadcasting (UK)
- 49.9% of Germany's Vox TV channel

TCI

- Discovery Channel
- QVC

Other "first-tier"-players include Universal (Sci-Fi Channel, Universal Production, RTL 7), PolyGram and Sony (VIVA1 and VIVA 2) as well as General Electric (NBC and CNBC).

Furthermore, there are numerous "second-tier" firms identified, that hold important interests in Europe: American owned companies include: Dreamworks TV and Film

productions, Westinghouse and McGraw-Hill.

European “media conglomerates” of the second tier group include:

CanalPlus/Nethold, with pay-TV and digital services in Spain, France, Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Belgium. Kirch with controlling interest in Sat1, Pro7 and Kabel1 TV networks in Germany, Telepiu in Italy, and the digital service DF1. Further more Hachette-Lagardere, Mediaset and Reed-Elsevier, mainly active in publishing. Havas also ranks as a second-tier firm, with its interests in Canal Plus and CLT (Bertelsmann TV). Further, however more national companies include: Germany’s Axel Springer (Spiegel) and Bauer, Italy’s RCS Editori Spa, the French CEP Communications and TF1, the Dutch Wolters Kluwer and VNU, the Swedish Kinnevik, the Spanish Prisa Group and Antenna 3, the British Carlton Communications, Granada Group, Pearson PLC, the BBC, Reuters, United News & Media and EMI. CLT, the Luxembourg based TV company owning most RTL-branded channels, has merged with Bertelsmann/Ufa.

Two other media groups have recently appeared on the European market, mostly by distribution of films and soaps, namely Mexico’s Televisa and Brazil’s Globo.

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