

## Foreword

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### Barbara Covarrubias Venegas\*

Department for Human Resources and Organisation,  
University of Applied Sciences for Management and Communication,  
Währinger Gürtel 97, 1180 Vienna, Austria

Email: [barbara.covarrubias@sietar.at](mailto:barbara.covarrubias@sietar.at)

\*Corresponding author

### Christiane Erten

Akustik Buch GmbH,  
Naaffgasse 6, 1180 Vienna, Austria

Email: [erten@akustikbuch.at](mailto:erten@akustikbuch.at)

### Gerhard Fink

Department of Global Business and Trade,  
Vienna University of Economics and Business,  
Welthandelsplatz 1, Building D1, Room 3.032. 1020 Wien,  
Vienna, Austria

Email: [gerhard.fink@wu.ac.at](mailto:gerhard.fink@wu.ac.at)

**Biographical notes:** Barbara Covarrubias Venegas is a Researcher and Lecturer at the Department for Human Resources and Organisation at the University of Applied Sciences for Management and Communication in Vienna/Austria. Furthermore, she is the President of SIETAR Austria [www.sietar.at](http://www.sietar.at) and leading the academic committee of SIETAR Europa [www.sietareu.org](http://www.sietareu.org). She won several grants and recently finalised a research project financed by the city of Vienna with the focus on analysing human resource roles and required competencies in Austria and Central Eastern Europe. Her current research projects are in the area of age diversity, new ways of working and international human resource management.

Christiane Erten is the Managing Director of an SME in the field of plant engineering for industrial acoustics ([www.akustikbuch.at](http://www.akustikbuch.at)) as well as a Lecturer at WU-Vienna University of Economics and Business, also lecturing in different countries and at various Universities of Applied Sciences. Her research interest lies in cross-cultural management and training (focus on Asian and Islamic countries), expatriation research and international human resource management. She has numerous publications in books and journals.

Gerhard Fink is a retired Jean Monnet Professor. During 2002–2009, he was the Director of the doctoral programs at Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria; and the Director of the Research Institute for European Affairs during 1997–2003. His current research interests are in cybernetic agency theory, normative personality, organisational culture and cultural change in Europe. He has about 280 publications to his credit. He was editor and guest editor of numerous journals; among others, in 2005, he was a Guest Editor of the *Academy of Management Executive*, and in 2011, he was a Guest Editor of *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*.

There is an impressive broad range of literature relating to ‘cultural intelligence’ (Earley and Ang, 2003), i.e. the capacity individuals need to have to be able to effectively communicate and act across cultures and to be able to integrate into new cultural contexts. For an overview of the literature, see Thomas et al. (2015) and Alon et al. (2016). However, new perspectives and issues are emerging due to the current waves of refugees and the observation that within numerous societies there is a widening gap between those who have education and a workaday culture that fits labour market requirements, and others who do not.

The pressing issue therefore is: What can and should be done if significantly large groups of the population - for whatever reason - simply do not have developed ‘cultural intelligence’?

We suggest that a promising response considers that there is a need of counterparts who are willing and able to guide and to support the development of ‘cultural intelligence’ and can set adequate intentional actions which foster integration processes. Thus, there is a need of ‘strategic cultural intelligence’ devised by organisations, groups or individuals, who are well embedded into the higher order social system into which foreigners and locally marginalised groups might want to be integrated: into a society, into a corporation, into a university, or into a small-scale enterprise whose owner is in search of appropriately educated young people for a job as an apprentice.

We therefore invited theory development and empirical papers which highlight the interaction between teaching (or training), learning (or adaptation), motivation for (or resistance to) effective transfer of cultural knowledge.

This special issue includes seven papers from scholars from different areas contributing with their papers to stimulate discussion in diverse disciplines but with the overall scope to foster intercultural awareness. We hope that this special issue reaches a lot of scholars who enjoy reading about others’ experiences, theoretical thoughts and novel empirical results.

In the first paper of this special issue, Aida Hajro is telling a moving story about her personal experiences in Mexico City as a small child of less than the age of 5; 7 years later at the age of 12 on the day when the war broke out in Sarajevo; and the following years as a school girl in Vienna. She vividly describes her threatening and disappointing experiences but also the invaluable positive support her father has found by an old friend telling him about the predominant habits of local people; and by a school teacher (Hilda) who was willing and able to emotionally support her and her parents. Projecting these experiences into the current discourse about migration studies, Aida Hajro highlights research areas, which are worth closer investigation: e.g. the role of mentor strategies to foster positive acculturation outcomes; support strategies for emotion management and coping with discrimination, feelings of rejection, undervaluation and misunderstandings; or support by providing knowledge about different kinds of perceiving, thinking, judging and acting in different cultures.

In the second paper, in a joint alliance context, Maurice Yolles shows with a theoretical cultural agency model that under uncertainty an organisation (an alliance child - a joint venture) established by two culturally different firms can only develop and survive when beyond the adaptive learning process a creative learning process can be put into effect by the ‘alliance child’. The role of the adaptive learning process for child development was identified by Lev Vygotsky in the late 1920s and is also implied by the concept of ‘cultural intelligence’, which emerged in the 1990s. However, adaptive learning constrains the capabilities of the child to handling ‘well-known’ problems. Only

creative learning (called ‘figurative intelligence’ by Piaget, 1950) enables the creation of new knowledge for new problem situations. Thus, adaptive learning must sit side by side with processes of creative learning, and it is only through the broader idea of ‘cultural figurative intelligence’ that this can occur.

The third paper, Hirut Grossberger, Susanne Binder and Frank Michelberger draw our attention to the importance of fostering cultural intelligence in the educational context. Their research project involved schools in Austria with a high proportion of children and youth with immigration background. Participating schools covered all age groups: secondary technical and commercial schools; the new middle school and primary school as well as kindergarten and preschools. The aim of this paper is to outline how the integration process could be fostered and how enthusiasm was raised for science and technology among children and youngsters. ‘The bridge’ was on the one hand used as a metaphor from a technical point of view and on the other hand as a symbol for socialisation and a strategy for developing cross-cultural intelligence. While the technical part of the project involved the development and testing of a mobile app, the social part involved issues such as the understanding of social differences, strengthening social cohesion and building communication competence.

In the fourth paper, from an information processing perspective, Franziska Engelhard and Dirk Holtbrügge investigate into the roles of bicultural individuals as ‘cultural brokers’ and ‘boundary spanners’ and their contributions to multicultural team performance. The role of such mediators is of high importance internally but also in relation to other departments or teams. The authors contribute to the literature on intercultural management: they combine the topics of team boundary spanning, biculturalism and team performance from a member perspective and can show that there is a significant positive association between biculturalism and team facilitating activities. Furthermore, the authors identify a mediating effect of internal group processes and group cohesion on the relationship between team facilitation and team performance. The results are of interest for staffing decisions in organisations with multicultural teams.

In the fifth paper, Sean McDonald and Simon Moore are reflecting on the literature about the emotive value of physical landscapes and their connections to legitimacy, cultural values, norms, symbols, beliefs and rituals in an organisational environment. They find that as a medium of managed public communication, landscape has a close connection to power and authority and argue that there is need of successfully translating a physical landscape to a virtual landscape of sovereignty. They illustrate this view with quite a few historical examples and come to the conclusions that: “The natural landscape must ... be part of any state’s strategic communication plan to manage its identity and therefore its legitimacy to its own citizens and to external publics, who are exposed to many alternative and vividly realised messages”. Consequently, “modern nation states must use the natural landscape to reconcile cultural differences to a shared identity that embodies a state’s founding principles”. These findings are confronted with the impact of digital media that encourage and enrich instincts creating a disruptive and emotion-laden environment, which takes participants back beyond the information age ... ‘almost to the dawn of consciousness’.

In the sixth contribution to this special issue, David Ryback and Renate Motschnig focus on “transformative communication”, emphasising that for successful communication a task-oriented and a people-oriented perspective has to be simultaneously and strategically applied. Separation and inability to connect with surrounding cultures, be it of individuals, larger groups of people, or nations, due to lack

of cultural intelligence can be leading to extreme outcomes: terrorism by marginalised individuals, recurrent mutual terrorist attacks between segregated population groups and wars between nations. Supported by self-reflection of some of their personal experiences, the authors present a couple of cases offering a dash of optimism that if lessons would be learned from the past we might have a chance to create a better future: The University of Vienna 'Learning Club', the Atlanta 'Cultural Pairs', the Belfast 'Person-Centered Group', and the US President Carter's strategic setting for resolving the conflict between Egypt and Israel.

In the last contribution to this special issue, Robert Deller draws our attention to the phenomenon of terrorism through cyberattack. Based on an investigation into the thinking of world leaders in information technology development, the author shows that the impact of cyberattacks highly exceeds the obvious immediate damage to governments or enterprises. The probably even more dangerous consequences have to be addressed on the level of cultural and social behaviour that is increasingly jeopardised through such practices. However, it seems as if this side of cyberterrorism has not yet attracted the necessary focus of attention, awareness and concern that would be needed to concentrate joint efforts of communities, governments and big groups in designing strategies for cybersecurity. Among other interesting insights into the topic, the paper highlights serious obstacles to joint efforts and the very different focus and interest of different countries in taking action for cybersecurity.

### **Where do we go from here? Future directions for research**

From our point of view, the theory of 'positive scholarship' by Stahl and Tung (2015) offers promising perspectives for this context. We only add that there is a need to devise cross-cultural strategies which emerge from the value system of a 'higher order' social system and to help to define goals, which might be reached, as well as to devise intentional action on how these goals can effectively be reached. In a university context, Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2016) identified the need for a strategic agenda for integration, which includes an intercultural component, i.e. supporting those who need or want to integrate. This means that there seems to be at least one important key to successful integration - institutional support. From a theoretical agency theory perspective, Fink et al. (2013) identified a new theoretical construct, which they called 'cultural figurative intelligence' (see also Yolles and Fink, 2015) and that also points at the importance of institutional support and the goals which are to be pursued with that institutional support, and finally, on practical measures and types of behaviour that materialise the goals. The generic nature of the theory allows an application in different contexts, where a 'higher order' agency (an institution) is guiding a 'lower order' agency in the adaptation process.

Most of the authors of this special issue emphasise the importance of research in the area of mentor-mentee relationships on building successful exchange that explore in-depth how host country nationals can foster positive acculturation outcomes of highly qualified migrants and what personality characteristics do such mentors need to have in order to set adequate intentional actions that will foster the integration of these individuals, and what role does emotional support play in this relationship. This certainly poses the challenge of methodological approach, requiring a longitudinal design taking the cultural context into consideration. Furthermore, a more systematic approach would

be necessary to fully understand how strategic cultural intelligence can be fostered in the educational context and whether there are different tools to be used depending on the specific context, such as schools and/or higher education context.

When the call was issued, four contexts seemed to be of utmost importance

- 1 from university to students
- 2 from acquiring firm to acquired firm
- 3 from society to migrants
- 4 from society to non-employable individuals.

In all these contexts, it is important to enable individuals to build positive social bonds with their peers, and with those who have something to tell and teach.

From authors who submitted papers to this special issue, two additional contexts illustrating the need for strategic cultural intelligence as a basis to cope with the challenges of our today's world came to the fore

- 1 the role of landscape as an artefact, which is playing an important role in cultural identification, since it has close connections to power and authority
- 2 the challenges of cybersecurity: lack of cybersecurity is a serious threat to our cultures, as our current patterns of behaviour would have to be radically changed if cybersecurity is not guaranteed.

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