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RESEARCH ARTICLE
Enhancing intercultural learning through the exchange student experience: Insights from Hanken School of Economics (Finland)

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In contemporary business schools both internationalization and accreditation agendas contribute to an understanding of student exchange as an experience that enhances intercultural learning. The aim of this article is to report and reflect on an ongoing Assurance of Learning (AoL) process at Hanken School of Economics (a Finnish business school) which is designed to support such intercultural learning in exchange experiences. This AoL process entails a pre-exchange workshop and post-exchange student reporting. We first describe the structure of the AoL process and how it is meant to facilitate intercultural learning. We then reflect on the contents of the pre-exchange workshop and emphasize the need to both problematize dominant intercultural knowledge in business schools and open up possibilities for students to make sense of intercultural experiences in alternative ways. In the pre-exchange workshop and in this article, this need is addressed through the presentation of some empirical research about experiences of young French expatriates in Finland which illustrates different ways of making sense of intercultural experiences. We argue that it is important to promote articulations of intercultural learning that (1) consider culture as dynamic and fluid, (2) make an explicit connection between understanding others and self-understanding, and (3) provide positive associations for the intercultural encounter.

Keywords: assurance of learning (AoL), cross-cultural management, expatriation, intercultural learning, sensemaking, student exchange

Dans les écoles de commerce et de management (ECM), les demandes actuelles en termes d'internationalisation et d'accréditation tendent à présenter l'échange étudiant comme une expérience développant un apprentissage interculturel. L'objectif de cet article est de décrire et développer des réflexions sur une initiative Assurance of Learning (AoL) à Hanken School of Economics (une ECM finlandaise) conçue pour encourager un tel apprentissage

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interculturel. Cette initiative AoL inclut une séance de discussion pré-échange et des rapports post-échange écrits par les étudiants. Nous décrivons tout d'abord la structure de l'initiative AoL et la façon dont elle est censée faciliter l'apprentissage interculturel. Nous développons ensuite des réflexions sur le contenu de la séance de discussion pré-échange et soulignons le besoin d'à la fois problématiser le savoir interculturel dominant dans les ECM et d'offrir des possibilités pour les étudiants de donner un sens plus ouvert à leurs expériences interculturelles. Lors de la séance de discussion pré-échange et dans cet article, une étude qualitative sur les expériences de jeunes expatriés français en Finlande est présentée et permet d'illustrer différentes manières de donner du sens aux expériences interculturelles. Nous concluons qu'il est important de promouvoir des visions de l'apprentissage interculturel qui (1) ont une conception dynamique du concept de culture, (2) connectent explicitement la compréhension des autres et de soi, et (3) caractérisent la rencontre interculturelle de manière positive.

1. Introduction: Positive Pressures for the Development of Intercultural Learning

In today's world, higher education institutions are faced with the imperative to 'internationalize' in terms of student exchange, research collaboration, faculty recruitment, mobility of graduates, etc. The challenge of 'internationalization' has reached a central position on the strategic agenda of many universities, and it has possibly been emphasized even more in business schools, as the latter are increasingly thinking in terms of the demands placed on them by accreditation institutions. Both 'internationalization' and 'accreditation' can be seen as entailing positive pressures for the development of intercultural learning.

1.1. Internationalization and Pressure for the Development of Intercultural Learning

In the context of higher education, common definitions of internationalization include 'policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions – and even individuals – to cope with the global academic environment' (Altbach & Knight, 2007, 290). Issues of internationalization are considered to be central at all levels (education, research, etc.) in order for universities to position their contributions in a global perspective and think in terms of how 'competitive' they are internationally in their attempts to recruit the best possible students and faculty, to ensure significant amounts of funding for research projects, to publish in high-ranked journals, or to feature in high positions in international rankings.

Contemporary discourse within Finnish higher education is particularly exemplary of this trend that affirms the central importance of internationalization. As per the formulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture: 'The key words in Finnish education policy are quality, efficiency, equity and internationalization. Education is a factor for competitiveness.' (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2012). All Finnish universities are supposed to adhere to this statement, and Finnish business schools have perhaps taken it to heart even more than other faculties since such a framing in terms of 'efficiency', 'internationalization' and ultimately 'competitiveness' is core to the understandings of the world they typically (re)produce when transmitting and contributing to knowledge in economic and business sciences. In

many respects business schools can be argued to have been forerunners in internationalization; for example, in Finland business schools have been among the most eager to develop exchanges for students within institutional frameworks such as ERASMUS in Europe (Garam, 2012). Overall this drive towards internationalization can be argued to have emphasized the need for students to develop intercultural learning in order to be successful in a world that is increasingly globally connected.

1.2. Accreditations and Pressure for the Development of Intercultural Learning

In parallel with broad calls for internationalization coming from regional and national policies as well as the competitive dynamics of attracting good students, accreditation processes have been an important driving force explicitly articulating the internationalization imperative for business schools. When attempting to gain and maintain accreditations, such as AACSB and EQUIS, business schools have to commit to further internationalization.

Why are the accreditations considered so important? There are numerous answers to this question. However, when putting aside various political and strategic reasons, one amongst many aims of engaging in accreditation processes is to develop student learning through a process of continuous improvement, an activity that commonly is referred to as Assurance of Learning (AoL). Through AoL processes, business schools attempt to shift their pedagogical approaches from focusing on what is being taught to how students learn. Here, teaching/learning methods relying on dialogic interaction, reflection and critical thinking have been highlighted as they are believed to enhance deep learning, that is, higher level cognitive processes. A more international classroom is often viewed as providing a broader array of perspectives on the topic taught/learnt about, which in turn is seen as a source for improving reflection and learning. More specifically, the intention is to assure that every activity related to the business school results in fruitful learning experiences for the students.

Accreditors such as AACSB have developed specific AoL processes, which business schools adapt to their mission (http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards-busn-jan2012.pdf, 2012). These processes require that the business schools make learning goals and expectations explicit amongst stakeholders (for example teachers, students and administrators), set objectives for achieving the goals, systematically collect and analyze data on student learning, compare data to goals and objective to identify needs for improvement and continuously improve curricula to ensure better student learning. The thinking that is supported by these processes also encourages the development of intercultural learning. As AoL processes are meant to be adapted to the national and school-specific context, they are not only about putting the schools under pressure to implement ‘best practices’; they can also be seen as opportunities to develop student learning in creative and fruitful ways.

1.3. Exchange Programmes as Opportunities for the Development of Intercultural Learning

Exchange programmes in higher education form an interesting context where internationalization and student learning become interweaved to a great extent. More specifically, exchange programmes are often seen as important keys to

internationalization in business schools. Consequently, many business schools and universities have made extensive efforts to increase student mobility on bachelor's and master's levels during the last few years; for example, Hanken School of Economics introduced a mandatory semester abroad within the school's bachelor's programme in 2009. Simultaneously, business schools need to consider what the expected learning outcomes for the individual student taking part in exchange programmes should be. This becomes particularly crucial when the exchange programme is a target of systematic AoL processes. As already mentioned, learning outcomes should be measurable as accreditors require some type of assessment of the learning although the learning occurs 'outside the walls of the school' and in a great variety of ways in different cultural contexts.

1.4. Structure

As internationalization in higher education has increased through exchange programmes and through processes of accreditation, it seems important to explore and reflect upon what these trends can offer the individual students. In this article we report and reflect on our ongoing AoL work at Hanken School of Economics (as faculty member in charge of intercultural sessions and administrator of AoL processes respectively), where we attempt to enhance intercultural learning of students through an AoL process relating to the learning of students during their exchange period. This AoL process entails a pre-exchange workshop and post-exchange student reporting.

In section 2 we describe the structure of the AoL process and how it is meant to enhance intercultural learning. In section 3 we report and reflect on the contents of the pre-exchange workshop, and notably emphasize the need to both problematize dominant intercultural knowledge in business schools and open up possibilities for students to make sense of intercultural experiences in alternative ways. In subsection 3.3 we present some empirical research whose results are discussed in the pre-exchange workshop and are meant to help opening up such possibilities for students to make sense of intercultural encounters in constructive ways conducive to learning both about 'the other' and themselves. In section 4 we conclude the article.

2. Description of the Planned Learning Process

In our case at Hanken School of Economics, designing the AoL process for learning from the exchange student experience has entailed (1) formulating learning goals and objectives, (2) providing a pre-exchange workshop that will sensitize the students to intercultural issues, (3) specifying the questions for the post-exchange report, and (4) setting up processes for assessing these reports in terms of intercultural learning. This process has developed over several years. However, the assessment of the AoL process has gained increasing attention since Hanken entered the process of applying for the AACSB accreditation.

2.1. Learning goals and objectives

The process of planning the learning from student exchange begins by formulating learning goals and objectives for the exchange experience. These learning goals must be consistent with the school's mission and the learning goals set for the programme in which the exchange semester is included. When formulating the learning goals and objectives we drew on an understanding of goals and objectives

in line with the definitions articulated by AACSB (http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation /standards-busn-jan2012.pdf, 2012). Hence we first defined a goal for the exchange semester to express what we expect our students 'to know and to be'. Then we defined two objectives in order to communicate the outcomes that we expect from students as evidence of achieved goals, that is, learning (Martell & Calderon, 2005). To ensure inputs from many perspectives in this process, the learning goals were specified by administrators as well as faculty and students represented through the School's assessment committee. The goals that this group of different stakeholders specified are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Learning goals and objectives of the exchange programme.

Learning goal: The students can draw on their international experiences and new perspectives as analytical tools in their studies at Hanken and further on in their working lives.

Objective 1: The students develop intercultural awareness and respect for difference that goes beyond simplistic comparisons, evaluations and stereotypes.

Objective 2: The students participate in courses in an international environment and, through a different course offer that introduces different perspectives to them, develop broader and more nuanced knowledge of business-related disciplines and how they relate to society.

As shown in Figure 1 the learning goal emphasizes the exchange semester as an opportunity to gain new perspectives on intercultural issues and on the students' studies in business related disciplines.

2.2. Pre-exchange Workshop

Before the exchange semester, all students selected for the exchange programme are invited to a preparatory workshop on intercultural issues and learning. The aim of the workshop is to facilitate and enhance the students' learning during the exchange semester at different levels. The contents of the workshop are discussed more extensively in section 3, but here we can emphasize that the workshop makes learning expectations explicit to enhance learning, by introducing the questions from the final exchange report and encouraging the students to think about these questions throughout their exchange period – for instance by writing a diary.

2.3. Post-exchange Report

The questions that the students will need to answer in their final exchange reports are listed in Figure 2. The students are encouraged to reflect on the report questions before and during the exchange semester, in order to develop more awareness of cross-cultural issues.

Figure 2. Questions included in the exchange report.

1. Reflect upon how the intercultural experiences (postitive and/or negative) during your exchange semester have helped you develop your self-understanding, ability to relate to others, and respect for difference.
2. How has your knowledge of business-related disciplines and how they relate to society developed during the exchange?
   -E.g. have you gained new insights or perspectives?
   -How has the international environment contributed to the insights?
3. Reflect upon how you could make use of your *intercultural experiences* in your studies at Hanken and at future workplaces.

In the end of the exchange semester or soon after the completion of it, the students must write a report which includes the questions in Figure 2.

2.4. Assessment of learning

The reports are then assessed by the international coordinator at the School, who uses a rubric for this purpose. The person assessing the reports pays attention to how well the students meet learning expectations on a scale from one to three (1=below expectation, 2=meets expectation, 3=above expectation). The criterion for each grade are clearly stated, for example, as shown in Figure 3 where the criteria for assessing how students analyze their own intercultural experiences gained during the exchange are specified.

Figure 3. Criteria for assessment of students' learning from intercultural experiences

	1 (below expectation)	2 (meets expectation)	3 (above expectation)
Graduates analyze intercultural experiences	Uses simplistic comparisons, evaluations and stereotypes when describing intercultural experiences.	Discusses intercultural experiences by illustrating how these have contributed to awareness of self-understandings.	Analyzes thoroughly intercultural experiences by illustrating how these have contributed to awareness and hence new self-understandings.

The clear criteria not only improve the assessment but should also enhance student learning by providing direction. Furthermore the aim is to identify how the school may improve its support of student learning in the future: the rationale is of continuous improvement of all the stages described above based on how well the reports meet the learning goals and objectives. The results are shared and analyzed by administrators and faculty members. The aim is to create an understanding of the students' intercultural experiences in terms of learning. The understanding of the assessment process as continuous, creative and constantly emergent rather than prescriptive and fixed needs to be emphasized.

3. Pre-exchange Workshop in a Business School Context

In this section, we report and reflect on the contents of the pre-exchange workshop that we have designed in order to enhance intercultural learning at Hanken School of Economics. It is important to note that this workshop (as the whole AoL process) is now work in progress, in a spirit of continuous improvement in line with any AoL process. This means that rather than being the description of 'excellence' in terms of enhancing intercultural learning, this section provides ideas for how to support the possibility of intercultural learning during exchange periods of business schools students. In line with the contents of the pre-exchange workshop, in this section we in turn (1) discuss the dominance of a certain type of intercultural knowledge in business schools, (2) suggest ways to problematize this knowledge, and (3) present some empirical research that can help in order to open up possibilities for students to make sense of intercultural encounters in constructive ways conducive to learning both about 'the other' and themselves.

3.1. Mainstream Intercultural Knowledge in Business Schools

Cultural and intercultural issues are often discussed in business schools, so seeking to enhance intercultural learning is by no means a new endeavour in this context. But what may pose problems is precisely that, while the notion of culture has been the focus of a great deal of studies within management and related disciplines (notably organization studies and international business), acceptable understandings of culture and 'the intercultural' are particularly constrained by the three main approaches that are dominant in management-related literature on culture. The first of these approaches, dealing with 'organizational culture' (henceforth OC; see especially Schein, 1985), has been characterized by a prescriptive, as opposed to descriptive, ambition, as Kunda (1992, 8-9) explains – although in more recent years there has also been a parallel development of studies using ethnographic methods to study these issues. OC literature is hardly interested in intercultural interactions so it will not be in focus here. The second of these approaches, dealing with so-called 'cross-cultural management' (henceforth CCM), tends to be ontologically comparative (Cray & Mallory, 1998): the classic works of Hofstede (1980; 1991) or Trompenaars (1993), presented as epitomes of the 'culture-bound' and 'naive comparative' approaches respectively by Cray and Mallory (1998), have been highly influential, and contributed to the infamous notion of 'cultural distance', operationalized in many quantitative international business studies. A central underlying argument of most of the literature within CCM is that 'cultural differences create problems in organizational integration processes' (Vaara, 2000, 85). CCM has defined what can be said about intercultural interactions in business in such a dominant way that in order to introduce another angle on these issues, it is imperative to begin with an explicit problematization of CCM. The third approach, which has only developed more recently, is one that sees cultural differences as a potential source of value. It revolves around the so-called 'value in diversity hypothesis' (henceforth VID; see e.g. Ely & Thomas, 2001) and seeks to demonstrate that cultural differences among work group members can enhance creativity and improve performance. While CCM and VID literatures start from different outsets – culture as problem/cost vs. culture as opportunity/asset – they share a highly functionalist agenda, which means that in them the possibility of intercultural learning is virtually always posited as a means to a business bottomline end.

Now, the way in which the exchange student experience is typically presented in a business school naturally has to be in line with mainstream knowledge produced in business studies – and most typically it draws on expatriation studies, the overwhelming majority of which has been adopting a view of culture consistent with CCM: a fairly static view, in which one can talk of such a concept as 'cultural distance', implying that, the more distant the culture, the harder to communicate with and to adapt to it. Overall, mainstream expatriation studies suggest that expatriates will have a hard time adjusting to the new culture that they are going to encounter, and that, in their 'acculturation' process, they will face a 'culture shock' (see e.g. Adler, 1997, 237-238). This process will be characterized, allegedly in almost all cases, by a first phase of excitement while discovering the new culture, then a second phase of disillusionment leading to the culture shock itself, and finally, a real adaptation to the new culture, without either the 'highs' or the 'lows' of the previous phases. This simplistic mainstream representation of the expatriate experience is often used to represent the exchange student experience, which is quite problematic since (1) this provides exchange students with highly 'ordered' expatriate subject positions (see Peltonen, 1998) having to comply with a predictable culture shock when more open subject positions would be much more desirable to make the experience more fulfilling, and (2) even if one accepted the dubious notion that there would be typical expatriate or exchange student experiences, 'the typical exchange student experience' would surely differ a great deal from 'the typical expatriation experience'. Hence, introducing a more open understanding of intercultural learning in a business school environment requires an explicit problematization of both CCM and mainstream expatriate studies – in a way that resonates with recent critical discourse analyses on the use of 'cultural difference' in cross-cultural studies (see e.g. Angouri & Glynos, 2009; Dervin, 2011).

3.2. Delivering a Critique of Cross-cultural Management that Makes Sense to Students

Thankfully, many explicit problematizations of CCM have been made in the past ten years. A good starting point for exposing the many problems with dominant Hofstede-inspired CCM discourse is to rely on McSweeney's (2002a) critique of Hofstede's (1980) seminal study and its consequences. Notably, this critique points to the problems with attempts to 'measure' cultural differences through surveys, the fact that an exclusive focus on the national level does not make much sense for the study of culture, and the inappropriateness of making conclusions based on old data from only one multinational company. In short, it claims that Hofstede's highly influential study is 'bad science'. Acquainting students with this systematic critique can help them understand the problems that lie with such a reductionist, essentialist understanding of culture, and the successive replies to McSweeney's (2002a) article – one by Hofstede (2002) and then a reply to that reply by McSweeney (2002b) himself – can serve to further illustrate (in an entertaining manner) how problematic an understanding of cultural differences and human behaviour based on Hofstede's study alone can be. In particular, what can be perceived as the excessive personalization of the critique only mirrors Hofstede's inferences on how his findings on national culture explain individual behaviour, habitus, and even, as in his example of Freud, theory development – this is ridiculed by McSweeney (2002b) through the example of Hitler as another famous Austrian with very different 'theories'.

This tactic of 'mirroring' is also present in two recent deconstructions of Hofstede's works (Ailon, 2008) and international business discourse more broadly speaking (Fougère & Moulettes, 2012a) which can be used as insightful problematizations of dominant CCM discourse for students to understand not only the problems with Hofstede's essentialistic and static notion of culture as 'software of the mind' (which McSweeney does very well). Beyond the very valid critique that culture cannot be measured and should not be essentialized, it is also important to expose the 'normative viewpoint and political subtext' (Ailon, 2008, 885) that characterize Hofstede's works and their followers. Notably, both Ailon (2008) and Fougère & Moulettes (2012a) agree – with others such as Westwood (2001; 2006), Kwek (2003), Jack and Westwood (2006; 2009), Fougère & Moulettes (2007; 2012b) and Tipton (2008) – that these works tend to represent 'non-Western others' in ways that facilitate Western cultural hegemony. In Hofstede (1980) this is done through (1) overvaluing the West and (2) devaluing the rest (Ailon, 2008); in those Hofstede-inspired international business textbooks analysed by Fougère and Moulettes (2012a) this overvaluing of the West is made possible through (1) the affirmation of 'cultural sensitivity' which serves as the emperor's new clothes for naked instrumental business practices, (2) a systematic dichotomization granting Western cultures positive modern characteristics and dumping the 'disavowed supplements' of these characteristics onto non-Western cultures, and (3) a deliberate omission of the role of colonial history in the development of international business. It is difficult – or very ambitious to try – to make business school students fully aware of these discursive characteristics of CCM discourse. But the tactic of 'mirroring' can be very useful for the students to get an intimate understanding of what dichotomization does. Let us pick this mirror version of an international business textbook extract from Fougère and Moulettes (2012a: 15).

Mirror version

Just as there is no totally homogeneous thought in other regions of the world, such as Europe and South America, there is no totally homogeneous thought in Africa. There is in fact a diverse sociocultural, linguistic, and historical composition among the African nations. However, as is the case in the other regions throughout the globe, there is an underlying pan-African character that results from a unique geographical, historical, cultural, and political experience. Therefore, Africans can be identified by certain characteristics in their daily lives. Just as there is an Asian thought system (*Confucianism*), for example, there is an African thought system – *Ubuntu*. One important characteristic of *Ubuntu* is a high degree of collectivism[3] – unity of the whole rather than the[4] parts is emphasized. Thus, similar to *Confucianism*, the individual is strongly connected to the group. Hence, *Ubuntu*, too, emphasizes suppression of the self-interest for the sake of the group's needs…Therefore, in general, managing people in organizations in Africa is likely to require a substantially different managerial approach from the one used in many of the organizations in America, Sweden, and Denmark, for example. This means that, in many organizational situations in Africa, a reward system emphasizing group achievement is often more effective than a reward system emphasizing individual achievement. (Rodrigues, 2001: 21; 2008: 21-2, with two slight modifications)

Just as there is no totally homogeneous thought in other regions of the world, such as **Africa** and South **Asi**a, there is no totally homogeneous thought in **Europe**. There is in fact a diverse sociocultural, linguistic, and historical composition among the **Europe**an nations. However, as is the case in the other regions throughout the globe, there is an underlying pan-**Europe**an character that results from a unique geographical, historical, cultural, and political experience. Therefore, **Europe**ans can be identified by certain characteristics in their daily lives. Just as there is an **Americ**an thought system (***Self-actualization****ism*), for example, there is a~~n~~ **Europe**an thought system – ***Εγωισμός***. One important characteristic of ***Εγωισμός*** is a high degree of **individual**ism – unity of the **parts** rather than the **whole** is emphasized. Thus, similar to ***Self-actualization****ism*, the individual is strongly **disconnected from** the group. Hence, ***Εγωισμός***, too, emphasizes suppression of the **group's** interest for the sake of the **individual**'s needs…Therefore, in general, managing people in organizations in **Europe** is likely to require a substantially different managerial approach from the one used in many of the organizations in **China**, **Swaziland**, and **Lesotho**, for example. This means that, in many organizational situations in **Europe**, a reward system emphasizing **individual** achievement is often more effective than a reward system emphasizing **group** achievement. (our mirror version)

3'collectivism' changed to 'harmony' in 2008 edition.

4 'the parts' changed to 'its distinct parts' in 2008 edition.

It is possible to present this mirror version (the one on the right, without bold) in class as if this was a real text from an international business textbook, and then to ask the students to react on whether they agree on this general description of 'European culture'. Although their reactions vary, typically reflecting on this text leads them to think about 'who' has written it, where the author comes from, the main assumption being that this could not be someone from Europe. The most common interpretation, usually expressed with a good deal of annoyance that such a text can be published, is that only an American who does not know anything about Europe can have written this – this, as such, may be an opportunity to problematize the overwhelming Anglo-American dominance in terms of who are the authors of most of the influential business textbooks. More attentive (and perhaps knowledgeable) students may come up with the suggestion that the person who wrote this is probably from (Southern) Africa, as only a person from there could write about Swaziland and Lesotho – this again is an opportunity to ask them what other features of the text would lead them to think that this is written by an African. Whichever way this initial discussion goes, a problematization of knowledge as always being situated can emerge from this. Then it can make sense to show how this text was produced, first by showing the only aspects that were changed from the original text (the bolded parts), explaining that every term related to individual/group was simply replaced by its opposite and that every Western/non-Western geographical area was replaced by a non-Western/Western one. Then the original text (on the left above) can be shown. As they were not happy with the extreme essentialization and simplification of supposed broad European cultural characteristics, the students then typically acknowledge that such essentialism is intolerable. This feeling of rejection of the text is often worsened when it is revealed to them that this text is the only half-page (out of 671 pages) devoted to Africa in a whole international business textbook subtitled 'A Cultural Approach' – and that most other textbooks ignore Africa even more in their discussions of culture. Depending on the level at which the session takes place, it is possible to problematize the only subject position that is offered to Africans in the textbook: since the only implication mentioned is in terms of a reward system for group achievement, it would seem that they can only be subordinates who do not need to be rewarded for individual achievement. Another learning point from this could be to show how much is lost, not only for the other but also for Westerners, when such dichotomizations are made: as Africans are not supposed to be individualistic, the collective, a relationship orientation, etc. are suppressed in the West (see Fougère & Moulettes, 2012a for lengthy discussions of what 'we' as Westerners lose when locating such traits as 'tradition', 'superstition', or 'collectivism' only in the non-Western 'other').

Other ways of enhancing learning of the notion that cultural categories only make sense when posited from a certain, situated perspective, include asking students to react to comparative cross-cultural tables with more than two terms. Within CCM such tables are typically written from one perspective. Consider the following example from McDaniel and Samovar (1997, 290):

Table 1 Cultural traits Influencing Communication in a Multinational Environment (McDaniel & Samovar, 1997, 290)

Trait	United States	Japan	Mexico
Social unit	Individual	Group	Family
Locus of organizational loyalty	Self	Group/organization	Superior/organization
Authority structure	Egalitarian	Hierarchical	Hierarchical
Basis for authority	Competence	Seniority	Trust
Style of negotiation	Direct	Indirect	Indirect
Decision making	Individualistic	Consensus	Authoritarian
Role of conflict/competition	Seeks	Avoids	Avoids
Empathy for others (emotion)	Low	High	High
Role of personal relations	Beneficial	Essential	Essential
Basis for status	Money/competence	Title/position	Title/position
Role of formality	Medium/low	High	High
Importance of appearance	Medium	High	High
Sense of history	Low	High	High
Spatial arrangements	Individual	Collective	Collective
Time structure	Monochronic	Polychronic	Polychronic
Importance of time	High	High/low*	Low
Type culture	Low context	High context	High context
Proxemics	Near	Far	Close
Tactility	Low	Very low	High

*High in business, low in personal matters.

When asked (without much context about the actual book chapter where this comes from) to comment on interesting patterns in this table, students usually come up after a while with the comment that it is surprising to see Japanese and Mexican cultures as supposed to share 12 out of 19 key characteristics when on the other hand US culture shares not a single characteristic with either of the other two. When asking the students 'why do you think that is?', some students may adventurously attempt to rationalize supposed connections between Japanese and Mexican cultures, but at some point the point is made that probably this was written from a US viewpoint. This can lead again to a critique of US dominance on mainstream business (and

CCM) literature, but it is important not to fall into only this critique. The main learning point here should be that all these 'relevant' cultural categories (1) are 'measured' from a certain viewpoint (e.g. if the US are considered to be particularly 'low-context' then anything that is higher in context will be perceived as 'high context'), (2) are largely about subjective, situated perceptions (e.g. 'typical US communication' – for instance, the way service is expressed in a US context, related to tipping expectations, etc. – may seem very 'high-context' to people from distant countries with no experience of interactions with Americans), and (3) would probably not be considered the most 'relevant' ones from the Japanese and Mexican perspectives (e.g. there may be 19 other categories that are better at differentiating Japanese culture from both US and Mexican cultures than the categories chosen from the US perspective). There can be other variations in making these types of arguments to students; as long as the students can relate to these illustrations, they typically understand the notion that all knowledge / experience of cultural difference has to be situated, from a particular perspective – there is no possibility of 'objectively' or 'neutrally' studying cultural differences because any study is made by people who themselves are positioned somewhere. Then it is also important for the students to understand that these positions do not necessarily have a great deal to do with 'national cultures' but may have more to do with individual or 'habitual' – i.e. related to a certain *habitus* (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990) – characteristics.

In sessions directed at exchange students to be, it is important to complement this critique of CCM and the notion that *habitus* may be more important than national culture by a broad understanding of culture; indeed, a view of culture as 'as broad as (social) life'. One way to do this is to use an all-inclusive definition, such as the following (Césaire, 1956, in D'Alleva, 2009, 76):

> Culture is everything. Culture is the way we dress, the way we carry our heads, the way we walk, the way we tie our ties -- it is not only the fact of writing books or building houses.

This type of definition can then be complemented by, for instance, examples of the different meanings of culture on the internet. A simple 'Google images' search leads to extremely diverse understandings; showing a slide full of this diversity of understandings easily does the trick. Once culture is deemed as broad as social life then the culture shock experience can be unpacked as having as much to do with life situations as it has to do with 'cultural difference' and 'acculturation'. As evidence that the culture shock experience does not have to conform to normative descriptions in expatriation literature and has a great deal to do with life situation and how culture is made sense of, we can introduce some empirical research by Fougère (2005) which focused on the experiences of four French *coopérants* (young graduates who were neither real expatriates nor students anymore).

3.3. Uses and Ways of Making Sense of Culture

In the remaining parts of this section – and for the purpose of understanding intercultural learning in a way different from mainstream CCM knowledge – we reflect on findings from four long individual interviews of French *coopérants* (young graduates from universities, engineering or business schools who went working for 16 months in a company abroad instead of having their military service) who were in Finland in 2001 and 2002 (Fougère, 2005). Three of the interviewees (referred to as Antoine, Bruno and Cyril) were working for subsidiaries of French firms in Finland,

thus their workplaces were quite 'bicultural' – or binational – by nature. The fourth interviewee, to whom we refer as David, was more isolated in the Finnish subsidiary of a big non-French multinational, and was thus not representing one of two communities within the organization, but just himself. These long interviews mostly consisted of answers to a very general request ('I would like you to freely tell me the story of your work and life experience as a *coopérant* in Finland') and the conversational development of it, with no further predetermined structure for this section. Interestingly, this question positioned them as *coopérants* rather than anything else. This was in order to preserve an inductive element: intercultural issues would come up if the *coopérants* felt they needed to bring them up, not because of the researcher's will to make them 'come up'. It turned out that they seemed reluctant to position themselves as *coopérants*, not thinking this was a particularly meaningful identity. Rather, for all of them, in the way they freely constructed their narratives, intercultural aspects were presented very much as focal. The aim of analyzing the rhetorical 'use' and sensemaking of 'national culture' – in terms of how it was invoked by the *coopérants* themselves in the interviews when they talked about 'French culture' / 'Finnish culture' or behavioural patterns supposedly characterizing 'the French' / 'Finns' – had not been decided upon from the outset, but as national culture turned out to be made sense of in many different ways in the interviews, it became interesting to conduct an analysis of these different ways. Below some findings from this study are discussed – these have been discussed in the pre-exchange workshop in order to show students the different ways of making sense of, and learning from, intercultural encounters. In the *coopérants*' narratives, national culture was not merely 'something to adapt to', 'a barrier to overcome', or 'something to be managed', as would be in the dominant business discourses, but also, it turned out to be, alternatively, the following.

National culture as a scapegoat, blaming frustrations on national culture. If cultural differences are supposed to be seen as a problem, as is implicit in many of the assumptions in business studies, then it can serve as an ideal excuse in case of failure: they have been made ready to be 'used' as such by the dominant discourse presenting culture as a potential barrier to cooperation. As Vaara (2000, 103) argues, 'cultural differences serve as convenient attribution targets for failures or unsuccessful projects while successes are less clearly associated with cultural conceptions'. In that sense, cultural differences seem to be ideal 'scapegoats', understood as 'product[s] of emotional and logical oversimplifications which are the result of situations perceived as negative' (Bonazzi, 1983, 1). This probably is largely due to the fact that usually, in organizations, external agents tend to be blamed for failure while success is attributed to internal factors (Brown & Jones, 2000). In bicultural organizations that are in post-merger change processes, the negative emotions that emerge from the change processes thus tend to have 'a powerful effect on the actors' conceptions of cultural differences' (Vaara, 2000, 98). Interestingly, only one of the respondents (Antoine) was clearly and repeatedly using 'the other culture' as a sort of 'scapegoat', and he was the only of the *coopérants* who did not seem to appreciate very much his experience as a whole – as well as the only one who was dissatisfied of being assigned to Finland in the first place. It seems that he had to blame his frustrations on some extrinsic aspect (see note 9), and 'Finnish culture' would occasionally take up this role for him. He appeared particularly contemptuous towards Finnish culture in the later stages of the interview, when he was asked about his opinion on some more specific aspects of Finnish

culture. Reacting to my mentioning the stereotype of *sisu*, he went on to claim about Finnish people:

> They are really stubborn, obstinate. Because, if they haven't understood how it works, they won't apply. That is, they don't trust in an order, they won't really tell why but... (Antoine)

While the concept of *sisu* is supposed to mean something at least as positive as negative, Antoine chooses to only see the most negative aspects. A lot of his such judgmental statements are made towards people who were clearly below him in the hierarchy, thereby reinforcing the impression of contempt from him towards them. About another stereotype, that of 'Finnish silence', he had a strange, surprising statement:

> Unbearable. Unbearable, when you are with clients or other people, you are having lunch, and... [...] it is hard for one to imagine that a discussion that is going on may be stopped by a "no nii" [...] The thing, meaning "how good silence is", the "no nii" (Antoine)

Here, Antoine is actually mixing the idea of the appreciation of silence and the Finnish no niin**, presumably based on some explanation that some person may have given to him. It is quite striking, in any case, that he may be so virulent towards something that he seems to be half-inventing, so that it may fit with the simplified way in which he wants to see things. What is interesting here is that these cultural features are presented as ultimately contributing to the non-appreciation of the experience, while the appreciation of them may have only depended on whether the expatriate would have wanted to come to Finland in the first place. It seems that, because Antoine was not satisfied to have been sent to Finland, he had to dislike Finnish culture, use it as a scapegoat for his frustration of being in Finland. In a way, there is here a 'circular causality': an initial disappointment causing a negative attitude towards the cultural otherness to be encountered, and in turn a refusal to try to understand this cultural otherness causing more frustration. Finnish culture and Finns turn out satisfactory scapegoats since the very fact that they are different makes it easy to complain about them: things that they are not responsible for can easily be mixed with other aspects - for instance differences in organizational behaviour – that were once seen as intriguing in an interesting way but have, in the new light of adverse events, become irritating and frustrating.

National cultural differences as a potential for complementarity / synergy. When analyzing the empirical material in terms of uses of 'national culture' or 'cultural differences', one of the expectations could be probably to find examples of the more and more 'fashionable' discourse connected to the 'value in diversity' hypothesis (cf. e.g. Ely et al., 2001). Strangely, there were not many clear examples of such an articulation of cultural difference in the *coopérants*' narratives. In the case that came closest to a synergistic understanding of intercultural interactions, Bruno explained that, in his small organization, it was good that the two managers with more of a 'commercial role' were French because of their communication skills, and

** A Finnish interjection which depending on the context can variously be translated as 'now then', 'that's it!', or 'well', for example.

that it was good that the engineering manager, the secretary and the two technicians were Finns because of their reliability and, for the latter two, their *sisu* (for when maintenance on some outdoor instalment was needed while the winter conditions were quite tough!). This was, however, very much presented as a 'common sense' issue – however stereotype-based – of complementarity, not as an example of intercultural synergy per se.

As Vaara (2000, 103) suggests, when individuals involved in bicultural interactions recount their positive experiences, they rarely refer to 'cultural differences', but 'more to concepts such as "strategic fit", "synergy", "value" or "transfer of knowledge"'. He points out that a rhetoric involving 'culture' tends to be mainly associated with problems while a 'strategic rhetoric' is usually associated with 'positive outcomes' (ibid.). That may partly explain why 'national culture' was not much used or made sense of as a factor that may create synergy(ies). Another reason for this lack of acknowledgement of the possibility of intercultural synergy may be that the bicultural environment as such tends to emphasize differences: in multicultural situations that are perceived as involving much more than two cultures, on the other hand, it is more likely that extensive cultural diversity may be interpreted as neutralizing cultural differences and thus stimulating performance, as for instance argued by proponents of the VID hypothesis (see Ely & Thomas, 2001; and subsection 3.1 here).

National cultural differences as a source of humour.

Features attributed to national culture were also used, by all interviewees at some point or another, as sources of humour and self-derision. This is not surprising since humour is generally understood to be used extensively in diversity settings (see e.g. Burawoy, 1979; Collinson, 1988; Smith, Harrington, & Neck, 2000). In such situations, ambiguity, paradoxes and incongruities are bound to arise, and humour can be used in order to make sense of them (Douglas, 1975), to cope with a reality perceived as threatening or, more generally, with situations that cause anxiety (Broussine, Davies, & Scott, 1999). Linstead's (1985; 1988) five characteristics of humour (as a 'play' framework, as exploration, as performing a boundary-function, as a coping device and as a characteristic quality of social structure) make it an especially relevant communication mode for diversity situations. The fact that humour, despite its subversive potential, remains something that one can indulge in 'safely' (Linstead, 1985; Wilson, 1979) makes it even more readily usable in these situations. Surprisingly, however, especially considering the 'boundary-function' of humour, there was not much use of overtly 'destructive humour' (cf. Schmitz, 2002, 91) towards Finnish national culture, even though there was quite a lot of criticism and 'scapegoating', especially from Antoine, as discussed above. It is probably partly due to the fact that telling a too distastefully mean joke while talking to a researcher may not have been perceived as an appropriate option for the interviewees.

While there was no purely derogatory humour, there were still humoristic tactics that we interpreted as aiming to indirectly criticize the other culture. Interestingly, the interviewee who was most critical of Finnish national culture, Antoine, used humour only pointed at his own (French) side. An example follows:

> As soon as there are meetings with the French, it always gets beyond the planned time, so [...] the French spend their time missing their taxis, everything going wrong, it's always like that. [My French boss] was there the other day, he missed his plane again. He always misses his plane [...],

> leaves 20 minutes before departure, runs for the taxi... and fails miserably [to catch the plane] (laughter) (Antoine)

Now, it is important to state that this piece of apparent cultural self-derision came immediately after a very long criticism of the time-inflexible and 'mono-task' – meaning roughly what Edward Hall (1983) calls 'monochronic' - work behaviour of the Finns. This criticism was quite harsh and totally devoid of humour, as if this type of behaviour, perceived as 'boring' and perhaps lacking flair, was not even worthy of being laughed at. Antoine's seriousness – and facial expressions showing a lack of indulgence - when talking about the Finns, as opposed to his more humorous comments – and his smile seemingly full of affection - while talking about his French boss and referring to the French way of doing things – which he also articulates as the right way of doing things -, contribute to a description of the Finns as boring 'mono-task' people who do not understand humour or other subtleties. Insidiously, that gives an even more negative impression of Finnish national culture at work than if he had been using overtly derogatory humour towards it.

The other interviewees, as far as they are concerned, usually succeeded in making their humorous statements much more balanced. Cyril, especially, showed good skill at using humour in a way that allows for relaxing the atmosphere at the workplace, by creating 'positive energy' out of cultural differences. Such a use of humour has been argued to make people's social lives more enjoyable and make these people feel more confident when interacting with others (see Nezlek & Derks, 2001), by allowing them to gain some distance and objectivity and thus to better perceive and cope with the problems they have to face (Thorson & Powell, 1993). The use of self-derision itself can be understood as being made possible by the very position of the coopérant, who, being in contact with another culture, sees his own cultural assumptions in a new, funny light when taking some distance from them.

> The French take more liberty with the rules and procedures, it's obvious, one can see it in daily life, only by walking in the streets, and by being the only person to cross the street while the pedestrian light is red, provoking accidents because the others are following behind thinking that if someone crosses it must be green. (Laughter)
>
> At work, it's quite clear, in the evening there's only French people, and in the morning there's only Finns. Ok, that's slightly exaggerated. (Laughter) (both from Cyril)

In the above two quotations, Cyril manages to make fun of both sides simultaneously. In the former, it may be the Finns who end up being most ridiculed as indulging in 'sheep behaviour', although the French are the ones who are responsible for breaching a 'cultural rule' in the first place. In the latter, the comment may be making slightly more fun of the French - although it remains arguable: the ethos of 'being at work early' is supposed to be shared by both national cultures, only in practice it is with varying flexibility and differing rates of 'success'. Cyril's most interesting 'two-way joke' may be the following:

> The Finns are very shy during the week, and suddenly on Friday, they are all outside, they drink like hell [...] on the other hand, the Finns, when they came to France, they arrived during the week, they saw the French habits, having some lunches with them, and they saw them drink wine at lunch,

> and they were wondering "what is it going to be like on the week-end?" (Laughter) (Cyril)

Here, Cyril starts with a comment that could be perceived as derogatory about Finnish drinking habits, and thus, it may raise a concern, on the part of the listener, that the joke may not be very tasteful. But, rather than being a handicap, this can be an asset for the joke, which may seem to 'walk a thin line between the acceptable and the unacceptable' (Linstead, 1985, 751), or at least, in that case, be on the border of bad taste. It does never cross that border, however, and at some point, the listener expects that things will be turned upside down, that the French will be laughed at for their own habits and that the joke will end up 'balanced'. But in a final twist, the punch line gets back to the Finnish viewpoint, in the form of a misunderstanding that appears as a result of the bicultural interaction (which is reminiscent of Cyril's first humorous observation above). Not only do we get an idea of both viewpoints in that joke – which shows that Cyril has also learned to place himself from the viewpoint of 'the other' – but also there is a play on them from which the joke's funniness arises. This suggests that, in bicultural encounters, there is particular potential for playing on the different understandings, which can produce a humour that is not too simplistic, making fun of both sides through the oddities that their interactions can cause. Another interesting use of humour can be found in David's quotation below:

> Sharing a silence, after all, it's quite nice. [...] And it's quite funny, because once, I was in a plane, and someone started discussing with me, and, I was thinking, something which I would never have thought two or three years ago, "he really starts annoying me, that guy; I don't feel like talking to him now". (Laughter) (David)

What is interesting here is that David expresses a change that he has been going through as a result of his bicultural experience, but at the same time, he is also laughing at the way he has become from the viewpoint of how he would have thought about that situation before. The bicultural dialogue has thus become a dialogue between his 'transcultured self', who has been immersed in a fairly small Finnish town for one and a half years, and a sort of 'former self' who had been socialized in 'more talkative cultures' (expression from David himself) – in France and briefly in Spain.

The other culture as pointing to, and reaffirming, one's own culture. The encounter with cultural otherness has also represented at times, and for all respondents, something shocking reaffirming and pointing to their own belonging to their original culture. This has not only been made conspicuous through the use of humour, as above. For Antoine, as we have seen when dealing with scapegoating, it has, on several occasions, been a matter of claiming a 'lack of culture' on the part of Finland, which necessarily pointed to a supposedly much richer French culture:

> My assessment of Finnish culture? We'll start in a French way, we'll start with gastronomy, good food and restaurants. They don't stay around the table long, these people, they don't have big banquets, as we're used to in France. [...] The Finn, he will have... the sauna culture, with the vihta. So, everybody is in suits, they discuss and then everybody gets naked and everybody goes to the sauna together. It's a little surprising, at the start,

> one has to acknowledge. [...] Then, if I think about art, culture as such, I'm quite soon appalled. [...] there's no great, there's no deep culture that is rooted in this country. (Antoine)

In Antoine's statements above, everything has to be – explicitly or implicitly – compared with (largely stereotypical representations of) French culture, and then, either Finnish culture, considered in its most stereotypical traits, is considered extremely inferior – regarding food or what Antoine calls 'art, culture as such' – or its most exotic features are presented as weird or absurd – in this case what Antoine calls 'the sauna culture'.

The other interviewees, although much more appreciative of their experiences, have also sometimes expressed a real disapproval of the local cultural habits, and thereby their own cultural values were claimed and reaffirmed more strongly. This has been especially striking as to the Finnish attitude towards partying, and especially alcohol – including in occasions organized by the workplace – but has also been noticed in relation to gender issues, as in the example below.

> In certain ways, actually, it's not even a question of equality anymore. My impression has been that, in fact, women dominate men. [...] When I see for instance a man, coming home with a low profile because he is afraid of being told off, well, somehow, it's shocking. It's shocking, because, in the couples I have met, it's the woman who 'holds the reins'. And, as well, seeing the amount of single women with a child, it's like: "I feel like having a child, well I'm gonna have one, I'm gonna pick a father and then..." [...] As far as I'm concerned, I'm 200 % for equality, I don't see why there should be one who should lead the other, what I wouldn't accept, it's that someone should lead, command me things. I can't accept that. I'm in favour of equality, of her having her own activities and me having my own activities, and us having common activities as well. (Bruno)

Here, the assessment of so-called 'gender equality' in Finland is an opportunity for Bruno to express a disapproval of how things are working in Finnish society, meaning that he feels that things are more balanced in his original society – and his generation – in that respect. It thus is an occasion for him to reaffirm his position, and identity, as a Frenchman. Further, at a deeper level, the encounter with the other culture can be understood to be a pointer to the very existence of a French culture to people who, having not had too many occasions to be confronted to other cultures, were unaware of what 'being French' might mean. Cyril expresses this idea in the following way:

> Going abroad [...] teaches one to relativize a lot of things. It teaches one to forget the small habits that somehow, one was believing to be something universal, so to say... and it allows one to realize, at the end of the day, what it is to be French, I think that if one doesn't go abroad, one doesn't realize what it is, to be French, that is, well, what is it that says that I am really French... It's... I don't know... is it this sort of... I wouldn't say politeness but, the good manners à la française, is it... well, there's a whole lot of things, which belong to daily life and are commonplace, and which, when one goes abroad, one realizes that they're typically French. (Cyril)

This resonates with some of Bateson's (1994, 21) statements on learning from intercultural encounters:

> Whether negative or positive, the presence of the other leads to self-consciousness and puts familiar ways of being in question. [...] For a member of a dominant group, the sense of self is enhanced by a conviction of the inferiority of the other. Colonists may become more British or more French than they would have been at home.

It is true that in the cases studied here, the conviction of an 'inferiority' of the other is not always so strong – although at times, some of the comments do sound fairly contemptuous towards Finnish culture, and the attitude may be reminiscent of that of a 'colonist'. However, in the cases where there is respect and openness towards the other culture, the learning should not only be a matter of discovering a cultural belonging, but it should also allow for a better understanding of oneself, and a possibility of accepting – and acknowledging – change. We turn to these more open ways of sensemaking below.

The encounter with the other culture leading to new self-sensemaking and changing.

Bruno, Cyril and David all have identified, to some extent, their encounter with another culture as providing an 'occasion for sensemaking' (Weick, 1995, 100-105): coming across 'incongruous events that do not make sense within [one's] perceptual frameworks' (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988, 52) indeed has allowed them to start questioning some of their assumptions. This should thus be an occasion for them to emancipate themselves from some of their cultural heritage, to learn more, both about themselves and the other: not only a matter of discovering what one's own culture is and claiming belonging to it, but getting the possibility to evolve by trying to incorporate the good sides of all the worldviews they encounter.

> To sum up Finnish culture, I think that... pragmatism, that's something they really have. Whether in their organization, in time, or whatever... even the way they see things. That's a quality I appreciate. Now, there are other things in French culture that are also nice. I'm not a lover of Finnish culture more than of French culture, I enjoy them both. I try to take the best from each, from all the things I know, and with a little bit of Spanish features too, since I've lived there for a little while. (David)

However, combining two or more cultural styles into a 'third pattern' does not come that easily. Confusion may also arise, and a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity may impose itself on the expatriate. Bruno's conclusion on his learning is interesting in that respect:

> I have learnt about others, about myself even though there's still a lot to learn [...] and then, it has taught me about what I want to do exactly, since... actually, no, it's not true. It has given me a few ideas on what I want to do. Well, not exactly, since I'm still wondering, but, at least, it has confirmed the choice of an international career [...] The international side of it, I want it, it's a choice, but, I know what I don't want to do, that is, I don't want to stay completely in technical jobs, I don't want anything too static, I don't want to be, in short, monodisciplinary [...] and thus in fact

> apart from that it leaves a very varied, wide choice, a little too much actually, that is, I want to be multidisciplinary, but which disciplines? (Bruno)

Bateson's (1994, 82) discussion of 'zigzag people', also mentioned in Weick (1996, 209), suggests that it may actually be desirable to raise more questions than answers at the end of learning experiences such as an expatriation. More questions raised about different career options can actually be a good thing, in that it can open towards future possibilities. What is still missing, however, is a form of legitimation for these sorts of discourses, still not valued in the business world, where managers are not necessarily convinced yet that the 'zigzag' may actually have the potential to turn into a 'rising spiral'.

3.4. Explicit Connection of Workshop with AoL Process

Looking at how culture is made sense/use of allows to take attention away from essential categories and the stereotypes that business literature tends to focus on. Instead, the aim is to stimulate students to think of the strangeness of the intercultural encounter as an occasion for learning and creatively making sense. There is thus an underlying understanding of learning here, which entails learning about both the other and oneself. Thinking in terms of both intercultural and self-(cultural)learning is explicitly encouraged in the workshop, and further supported by the questions that the students are going to be asked for their post-exchange reports (see Figure 2). Towards the end of the workshop an explicit connection is made with these questions so that the students can see that there is an alignment between the workshop, what learning is expected of them during their exchange experience, and what types of reflections they will need to produce in their post-exchange reports. Especially the first set of questions is emphasized: 'Reflect upon how your self-understanding, ability to relate to others, and respect for difference has developed during your exchange semester? Refer to (positive and/or negative) intercultural experiences and discuss how the way you have made sense of these experiences has supported your self-understanding.' Students are explicitly encouraged to think about these questions - and to for instance write a diary on these issues – throughout their exchange period.

4. Conclusions

As the rubrics for assessing intercultural learning have not yet been used (they are introduced this year) we have to acknowledge here that we are at the beginning of our AoL process and that our current design will surely be developed over time, as we identify shortcomings and avenues for improvements. At this stage, the main learning points we can suggest relate to the need to *both* explicitly problematize dominant business discourse on cross-cultural management *and* open up possibilities for alternative articulations of intercultural learning that (1) consider culture as dynamic and fluid rather than static and characterized by essential traits, (2) make an explicit connection between understanding others and self-understanding, and (3) provide positive associations (in terms of adventure, development possibilities, fun, etc.) for the intercultural encounter. We look forward to receiving evidence – through the assessments of learning – for whether we are managing to inspire the type of stimulating intercultural learning that we hope the exchange experience to foster.

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