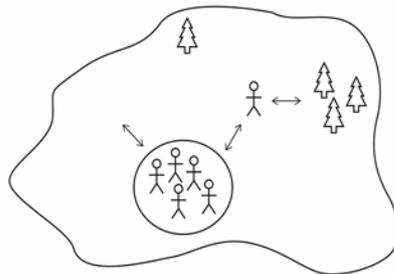


Comparative Theory of Culture¹

Turning cross-cultural complexity into high-performance vitality

The first element of the model with which EurAsia Competence works looks at the basics of human existence. This is the level where we can assume human universals are present in a significant number of intrinsic values. We all live in a specific natural and social environment and our community has had to deal with this environment to survive and flourish. The mechanisms for doing so are based on tradition, the experience of earlier generations in dealing with the environments they faced.



This view of culture makes it very clear that it is an outcome only in a very specific moment of its development. Culture is essentially a process, an instrument for mastering the challenges encountered in contacts with the community and the natural environment. It extends to the community in its relation with the individual and their natural surroundings, as opposed to people or communities outside this environment.

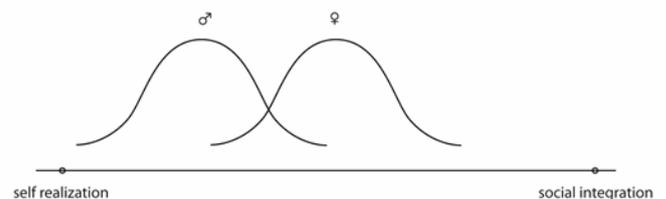
Graphic description of the basis of culture

Culture therefore has to be seen on every level of society, starting with the individual and ending with humanity as a whole. Each person's family has a culture, reflecting the part of the city in which their family lives, that city in comparison to other cities, the nation state and the region in which they and their family live (their specific cultures).

Culture shapes the institutions people create to organize their lives in their society and their environment (politics, economics, ecology, human behaviour, science and technology). Cultural comparisons must therefore be about the level on which they are made. Any misunderstanding leads to a wrong or distorted view on the culture in question.

The second element of the model is the basic relationship between individual and group. We are all primarily social beings as well as individuals. We live in a dynamic equilibrium of tension between our own aspirations and the need to integrate into a group so we can rely on the security of the community. Again, this can be graphically shown in the following Gauss distribution, making an initial distinction between men, who are in general more independent from the community, and women, who tend to be better integrated in their groups. The presentation in a Gauss curve is important, because it basically says that 50% of the people considered fit the pattern described. 25% fit it even better than those 50%, and another 25% do not really fit it much at all. As far as the distinction between men and women described here is concerned, the Gauss curve makes it possible to integrate gender differences that do not correspond to the 75% in the mainstream.

From these basic assumptions EurAsia Competence has developed its cultural model along differences in perceptions and behaviour as a result of cultural influences. If culture is seen the way we act, then how a person



appreciates nature and the community becomes key in any cultural process. How do we perceive our natural and social environment?

Proximity and distance, and their psychological parallels of closeness and detachment, allow a fairly precise assessment of a culture, because they are the basics in any cultural process. We can therefore distinguish between closeness-based and detachment-based cultures all over the world. In a closeness-based culture, the male curves shift more towards the social integration pole, aligning with the female curve in the same culture.

FACT SHEET

¹ See Roth, Hans Jakob (2013). Kultur, Raum und Zeit. Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlag

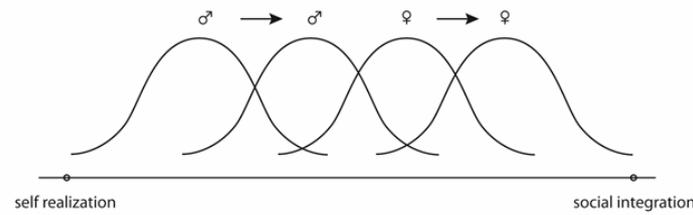
EurAsia Competence provides hands-on and customized strategic and operational support to the management of private enterprises and governmental and non-governmental institutions, enhancing organizational performance and value creation for clients operating in Europe and Asia. EurAsia Competence coaches, supports, and trains boards of directors, executive teams and project teams to integrate cross-cultural competences and gain competitive advantages for clients' organizations.

Our expert for Comparative Theory of Culture:



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 Thorough theoretical and practical knowledge in cultural differences and their influence on company strategy and management; Broad experience with European companies and their challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and vice versa; Broad experience in public and private education in intercultural competence; Broad experience in risk management/control in public and private institutions

Graphically this can be shown in the following way:



Cultural differences evolve out of these basic patterns and are primarily based on different environments and different perceptions of these environments, the human universals (intrinsic values) mentioned above

remain more or less intact. Closeness-based cultures work with all the senses, including taste, smell, and touch. Distance-based cultures rely much more on hearing and seeing. The ways in which these two kinds of perception take information in and process it are very different, and this lies at the heart of differences in behaviour, thought patterns and decision making.

Closeness-based cultures see reality in a very concrete, pragmatic way and have never detached from it. They are participants in what happens around them. In detached societies, the people have distanced themselves from both their community and surrounding nature. Individuals have become observers of their surroundings. The result is a more analytical, often abstract view of reality. Both positions have their advantages and disadvantages in dealing with their environment; in a cross-cultural context they very often lead to misunderstandings. Closeness-based societies have an excellent and holistic feeling for situations, but have problems analyzing facts. Detached societies often lack this feeling and rely much more on a rational assessment of a given moment. Closeness-based approaches are usually stronger in operational situation, with strategies based on a detached view.

The cultural dimension	Proximity and distance and their effects	Distance and detachment	Proximity and closeness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The natural environment The social environment Group effort in the natural environment Inherited tradition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception influenced by time and space and described in terms of proximity and distance Purely physical approach but perception also includes mental elements Mental elements described by closeness and detachment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength in analysis and abstraction and in planning and risk reduction Controlled and reduced information intake Creates mental detachment, the base for rational, binary thinking Reduction of empathy, exclusion of emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with all senses (information overflow) Different management of information (film vs. photo) Reality is felt, in flow, not analyzed Creates mental closeness, strong emotional engagement, empathy is assured Does not allow planning, analysis Limited to the in-group

Cultural inputs and adaptations / Bridging cultures (EurAsia Competence's proprietary comparative model of culture)

In a globalized world these cultural differences are encountered more and more often. We therefore need to develop a much better understanding of them, and should not be afraid to start with the differences. Under the EurAsia Competence approach, cultural differences are not used to discriminate against one side or the other, they are applied to define the strengths on each side so as to create a mutually beneficial awareness and understanding in order to capitalize on the bridging opportunity at hand. The basic insight of EurAsia Competence is that cultures can only be bridged if we remind ourselves of the key intrinsic values we share as human beings, and are aware of and accept culturally-driven differences – in all their strengths and weaknesses. Only with this knowledge will it be possible to overcome cultural gaps and minimize the risk of (unnecessary) misunderstandings. EurAsia Competence builds bridges for its clients – with a clear theoretical understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and a clear translation process for operational implementation and improving organizational performance.

The services of EurAsia Competence are aimed at the following target groups:

- Public and private companies
- Government institutions
- NGOs
- Professional associations and foundations

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