Cultural aspects of development
Dialogue of equals?

Working paper

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Foreword

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"What we take for granted in our cultures needs to be asserted anew. However, we do not need to cast doubt on such basic convictions as human rights and freedom of opinion. ... What is lacking is the warmth with which we profess our values. Democracy can only be contagious if it is not merely a matter of routine and is not imposed upon others by force – it needs to be lived out with enthusiasm – an enthusiasm that shows no trace of hubris. If we seek to garner acceptance for Western achievements in the world, we need to combine persuasiveness with modesty. (...) Enthusiasm and respect join together to form an invaluable possession: a culture of self-confident freedom."

Wolf Lepenies, winner of the German book trade's 2006 Peace Prize, in his acceptance speech; Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 9 October 2006

Development cooperation (DC) is a policy field influenced more than most by intercultural factors. Participatory processes – one of the core principles of German DC – are understood and lived out in very different ways, according to prevailing cultural patterns.

At the behest of BMZ, the Sector Project "Mainstreaming Participation" has focused its attention in the present booklet on the cultural aspects of participation. This is not an easy undertaking, particularly given the existence of varying points of view on the issue and the need for consultancy to be conducted in a culture-sensitive manner.

One fundamental insight gained from the various country evaluations carried out as part of the sector project is that efforts to promote participation are more successful the more openly they address existing cultural orientations or establish a link to them.

Discourse on "intercultural dialogue" in development cooperation up to now has largely concentrated on identifying shortcomings in the way cultural differences are perceived, while cultural orientations have been depicted as being relatively fixed traditions and artefacts that DC needs to work with.

It is important, nonetheless, that we also understand the dynamics of intercultural relations. In the course of cooperation, cultural orientations begin to shift – not least through the consultancy work we do. We bring western-based cultural values to our projects and adopt corresponding modes of behaviour in our daily work. It may be, for example, that the cultural orientations of our partners come into conflict with the objectives of a development intervention and contradict its objectives. At times, cultural difference is used as an argument for ruling out undesired behaviours, social changes and power shifts from the start and for not addressing them by undertaking necessary changes. Hence, cultural orientations should be rendered transparent and be subject to negotiation within the consultancy process. This entails being familiar with the values of the cultures in question, understanding their developmental dynamic and being explicit about our own society's values in our various consultancy roles.

Difficulties tend to arise with regard to burning issues such as the cultural boundaries that get drawn between western societies and societies shaped by Islam, the issue of the modernisation and autonomy of a society or, again, the role of democratic structures in development processes. It is within this highly charged realm defined by fundamental western values, the multiple cultural orientations of the partner country and our understanding of partnership that we work daily. This is where the challenge lies for development cooperation that is values-led and based on partnership.

It is in this spirit that sociologist and publicist Wolf Lepenies offers us the advice quoted above: Dialogue conducted on equal terms demands that we openly express our values with enthusiasm and respect, persuasiveness and humility.

It may also be helpful to realise that people and societies with different cultural orientations also have much in common, and that despite these cultural differences they are able to encounter one another with curiosity and an open mind and are prepared to work together.

The text that follows stresses the importance of intercultural issues for participatory development cooperation and is intended as a stimulus for reflection about our consultancy activities in a global society.

The text is divided into four parts. By way of introduction, a number of core issues related to participatory forms of cooperation are elaborated against the background of the typical structures of international cooperation. This is followed by the presentation of a dynamic understanding of culture that links the external material world to the internal psychological world and sets the stage on which one's own culture becomes comprehensible when contrasted with a different one. The third section contains a description of four dynamics that influence cultural development. Finally, five areas of dialogue are elaborated for participatory intercultural cooperation.

Claudia Maennling

Sector Project "Mainstreaming Participation"

The intercultural aspect of cooperation

The cultural norms and values of another country, along with its social groups and institutions, play a crucial role in DC in terms of the success or failure of development efforts. Those whose aim is to provide support and advice in processes of reform to people and organisations that have different cultural orientations will be able to do so in a sustainable and effective way only if

(a) all those involved are fully aware of the cultural assumptions built into their actions

and

(b) all those involved become familiar with the patterns and assumptions that shape people's actions in the other culture and take these into account when negotiating and agreeing on reforms.

This applies to both institutional and political culture in the context of state administrative reforms and the micro-cultural orientations of communities including, for example, indigenous groups or women who set up and run small businesses.

Current cross-sectional studies[1] on the intercultural aspect of development cooperation distinguish between different **thematic aspects of culture**, each of which can be related to a core issue of participatory cooperation:

Culture as context: How can participation be structured and organised to enable the various cultural orientations of the actors involved to be expressed and addressed?
Examples: Documentation of personal life stories that feed into the planning and management of the intervention; conversations with experts and cultural producers aimed at a better understanding of the cultural basis of ideas about co-existence, the environment and the future.

Culture as part of the development process: Which local practices, traditions and forms of expression can be used in the service of the development intervention?
Examples: Spiritual-religious significance of water and water wells as a connecting, life-giving element; well-established forms of economy and organisation in communities; appropriate rites of initiation as a means of introducing the young generation into the community.

Culture as a means of communication: Which forms of representation and media (radio, film, photography, exhibitions, etc.) can be used for the project?
Examples: Popular music, film, festivals and street theatre, traditional songs and dances.

Culture as a form of expression: Which broader material conditions and cultural forms of expression promote self-determination, self-presentation and dialogue between actors?
Examples: Creation of a space for dialogue and the exchange of experiences among single mothers; staged representation and discussion of life stories.

DC projects and programmes are joint ventures[2] that involve a variety of actors. They are negotiated, planned, implemented and managed by a large number of actors.[3] The actors form a

[1] Gould, Helen; Marsh, Mary: Culture: Hidden Development. A practical working guide to culture and development for the international development sector. Creative Exchange, London 2004. The study is based on a survey of 350 programmes by five development agencies and reaches the conclusion that attention to cultural aspects is not anchored explicitly enough in the guidelines and procedures of these agencies and that only in exceptional cases are consistent procedures applied in the programmes.

[2] The organisational arrangement of a joint venture refers to various forms of cooperation among the actors involved: exchange of information, coordination, strategic alliances, working groups, networks, co-productions. Joint ventures are based on the diversity of the actors and their potential.

[3] Cf. Sector Project "Mainstreaming Participation", GTZ 2006: Actor Analysis. 10 building blocks for designing participatory systems of cooperation. – The term "actors" refers to all the collective public and private groups in a society that are bound together by common needs and values and present themselves as organised groups in order to

flexible system of reciprocal relationships and dependencies. Mutual dependency is manifested in the fact that actors can achieve their objectives only if they communicate and coordinate their actions with other actors. Actors act on the basis of the roles and expectations ascribed to them, their capacity to influence events, their resources and, not least, their cultural orientations. They adopt an attitude of approval or rejection towards reform interventions and the cultural orientations they represent.

Over time the culture of the participating actors constitutes a relatively stable source of orientations for individuals and for the community: By means of language, symbols and images it determines how experiences are to be processed and represented, which options for action are to be chosen and what meaning is to be ascribed to one's actions. It also provides a set of explanations for cause and effect in natural occurrences. It contains life plans and norms for individuals and the community and describes what should be considered morally acceptable and what should be rejected; it determines the moral distinction between virtue and vice and provides ideal models of the good life from cradle to grave; and it contains procedural rules for co-existence and motivates people to engage in particular activities.

In simplified terms, the intercultural aspect of cooperation can be seen as a system of relationships consisting of three interrelated dimensions:

The cultural orientation of the participating actors (a community, an organisation, an institution) to which the project relates and which is changed by it. **Key question**: What are the cultural orientations of the participating actors? **Example**: Women are to be excluded from public spaces and are subject to a jurisdiction controlled by men.

The culturally determined relationship between the participating actors, on which the project has an impact: every relationship between the actors is influenced by the participants' cultural orientations. **Key question**: What cultural orientations guide relationships between the actors? **Example**: An actor avoids cooperation with a particular caste.

The culturally influenced management system of the project, which pursues explicit objectives and is guided by implicit norms and values: every reform programme or project develops a specific culture of organisation and cooperation. **Key question**: Which values and norms shape the project's management system? **Example**: Trust in planning, orientation towards performance, hard work, punctuality.

A reform intervention may have the intention of being guided by the cultural orientations of the participating actors, but at the same time it has its own rationality and internal culture. These are expressed in the guidelines, procedures, instruments and the sometimes limited intercultural expertise of the staff involved.

The relationships among the actors as well as their power, influence and cultural orientations change during the course of cooperation. This means that general statements about the culture of an entire region or country are of little use and often turn into blinkered views and prejudices.

However, the actors' practical strategies are determined not only by their cultural orientations and by the knowledge they possess. They are also determined by the way they perceive and interpret their relationships to the other actors and whether they are able to exert an influence on the design of the reform programme or project. Scientific notions of accuracy and measurability are only one

articulate their interests and to push them through by various means: Through dialogue, in negotiations and alliances with other actors, by adhering to democratic rules, or by virtue of their power and authority.

part of the reality and life world of the participating actors in this situation. They are accompanied by powerful desires and interests, world views and inner motivations. This powerful intangible part of diverse orientations can be accessed only through personal encounter and in ongoing conversation with the actors. Intercultural understanding functions by means of individual encounters and dialogue. There is no other way. Personal encounters that include self-critical reflection on one's own cultural orientations are the linchpin of intercultural cooperation. Insights gleaned from personal encounters need to be fed into the process of synchronising the different levels (micro-meso-macro) of an intervention.

Culture – a highly charged realm

Each discipline within the social sciences has its own definition of culture. There are sociological, psychological, ethnological, anthropological, historical, art historical and many other definitions besides. The Mexico Declaration (1982)[4] defines culture as *the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a social group, not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.*

At the meta-level of epistemology, culture comprises all the constructions of reality in a particular social community and the tacit knowledge associated with them. This means that cultural orientations are constructed and passed down within the community, both in the long life cycles of a community, as tradition, and in the shorter individual life cycles of its members, through the adoption and integration of new cultural orientations prompted by encounters with other people and cultures.

Culture develops as a result of the interweaving effects of contradictory forces. These consist of the processes by which people physically shape their environment, along with the social relationships that exist between actors on the one hand and the actors' interpretations and meanings on the other. A relationship of tension often exists between these two poles – the material world (manifested, say, in the globalised consumer society) and actors' identity. The thrust towards modernisation in material terms, for example, devalues the knowledge and experience of older people. New inheritance rights boost the self-confidence and material autonomy of women, who simultaneously begin to break away from traditional ties and obligations.

Two fundamentally different aspects of human creativity come to the fore in cultural processes and products.[5] On the one hand, human action is directed toward the concrete material and social environment: Human activity, whether it is undertaken by an individual or in social organisations, has the effect of shaping, exploiting or destroying the material and social environment; those involved bring their rational, inquisitive, analytical and planning capabilities into play. On the other hand, they are guided by tradition, available knowledge, images, wants and desires, intuition and empathy, all of which come from the inner psychological world of a person and are simultaneously the product of social influence and experience. However, no linear connection can be drawn between a person's physical or social environment and their inner world; the latter follows its own dynamic due to human individuation and the human capacity for reflection. While human cultural activity

focused on the social and material environment is chiefly purpose-driven, the dynamic stemming from the inner psychological sphere looks for meaning and – related to it – the person's own

[4] Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July – 6 August 1982. http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/mexico/html_eng/page1.shtml

[5] This approach draws on studies of Kabylic houses and culture by Pierre Bourdieu: Le sens pratique. Ed. Seuil, Paris 1991

identity and life world.[6] Culture emerges out of the interplay between these two different needs and necessities: to shape the socio-economic environment and to produce meaning.

Cultural orientations consist of many different elements; they overlap with one another and have more or less permeable boundaries.[7] The cultural orientation of a community can be shaped at once by traditional ties and "modern" business sense. It can have rural or urban characteristics or be a blend of both.

Discourses of ethnicity are located within the area of tension that exists between authenticity and imitation, within the interplay between self-definition and definition by others.[8] As we all know, culture and social structural characteristics such as age, gender, income, status, etc. are always intertwined with one another. Cultural, social, political and more or less urban characteristics form fluid boundaries. Cultural explanations need therefore to be understood against the background of locally specific societal development and power structures; these in turn lead ultimately to multiple social exclusions and discriminations which are also explained by reference to cultural arguments. Even the distance to the nearest town and the infrastructure to get there, or the migration of family members to other countries, have profound effects on cultural self-definition, consumer behaviour and development opportunities.

It is both erroneous and unhelpful to equate indigenous culture with community spirit or sustainable forest use. Neither democratic rules nor the despoliation of nature nor its sustainable use can be explained exclusively by reference to culture. In some work places, company culture is capable of creating a harmonious blend between competitive drive and interpersonal relationships. Cultural orientations may either promote or hinder the sustainable use of scarce resources. Trust in client-based dependencies may offer security and long-term working relationships or else dampen a company's competitive zeal. Debates about east Asian Confucianism, the influence of democratic politics on the development of market economies, the important role played by the Protestant ethic in the development of capitalism, and the trend towards concern for personal freedoms and individual self-realisation all serve to demonstrate that cultural orientations are nothing if not ambiguous and that they need to be viewed in their specific context. Moreover, people and groups move between many different cultures, adhering to norms laid down by tradition when they are with family, conforming to institutional rules when engaging in economic activity and politics, and adjusting their behaviour again when they encounter people from other cultures.

When changes occur in the material and social environment – through new forms of production and organisation, say, or through urban migration – changes also occur in people's inner psychological make-up. They experience new values and norms and construct new meanings for the world around them. This dynamic is associated with tensions, discontinuities and crises of identity.

A person's own culture appears perfectly normal to them because the production of meaning has become a part of their identity and unconscious. In order to become fully aware of one's own cultural orientation it is necessary to make the effort to engage in self-critical reflection. Conversely, the strangeness of a different culture is immediately noticeable because its meaning cannot be easily comprehended through the filter of one's own identity. We become aware of our

[6] According to Jürgen Habermas, the life world comprises the communicative space of individuals and groups, which are shaped, for example, by the town-country relationship. It consists in unquestioned and therefore taken-for-granted knowledge and in the cultural orientations and strategies for action that emerge from it.

[7] Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi never tires of referring to the two characteristics of Iranian culture: the ethnic diversity of the country – only slightly more than half of the population is Persian – and the many different Islamic lifestyles that are certainly compatible with ideas of democracy: "Fundamentalism exists in every religion. There will always be people who misuse religion. The majority of people in Iran do not want the separation of religion from the state. Democracy is a culture you cannot bomb into existence."

[8] Cf. Barth, Frederik: Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The social organization of culture difference. University Press, Oslo 1982 – and: Kramer, Fritz: Verkehrte Welten, Frankfurt 1977

own culture or identity when it stands in contrast to a different one. Cultural definitions of self and other are constructed and then revised or accentuated in the encounter with the other.

References to culture and borrowings from history play an important role in ethnic self-definitions. The invention of tradition and ethnicity is the subject of detailed debate in the historiographic literature.[9] For example, discourses[10] used by indigenous people in Latin America often recall the indigenous cosmic vision of harmony with nature and create the image of a traditional form of production based on cooperation and reciprocity. This is so despite the fact that the indigenous peasant economy today is based primarily on individual forms of production, private rights of use and market relationships and that the indigenous organisations themselves have a rather autocratic culture of leadership. Definitions of self and other lead to new ethnic boundaries. The origins of cultural manifestations are complex, lying hidden within the interactions between culture and society: Indigenous customary law, planting procedures, forms of political organisation, clothing, rites, dietary habits and other elements of ethnic identification deriving from tradition reveal, upon closer inspection, the presence of mixed forms of (pre-)colonial and postcolonial influences. This need not be accompanied by a loss of indigenous identity. Group identities can be reproduced as much through changing cultural characteristics as through the act of resolutely clinging on to the same.

Cultural orientations also influence the way we understand other, foreign cultures. They build connecting bridges and provide explanations for differences that separate, sometimes in the form of deep-seated prejudices. They are therefore part of every conflict situation and can aggravate violent confrontations. If tensions and conflicts are overlaid with cultural explanations, such as with ethnic or religious differences, it is especially difficult to address and transform them. Tensions and conflicts reinforce beliefs and cement differences. Cultural explanations for conflicts, however, are generally not an isolated feature.[11] They need to be seen against the background of their emergence and in the context of structural differences – for example, large differences in income and the refusal of access to resources.

Four dynamics of cultural development and the role of social capital

The cultural development that has taken place over the last few decades can be summarised briefly in terms of four basic dynamics:

(i) globalisation

(ii) differentiation and individualisation

[9] Cf. Geertz, Clifford: Dichte Beschreibung: Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme. Frankfurt 1983. Geertz's cultural semiotic perspective proposes that we understand artefacts and modes of behaviour described as tradition as transitory systems of signs that overlap with one another many times over.

[10] Drawing on the concept coined by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, Garden City (NY) 1966) and Michel Foucault (The Order of Things, New York 1973), a constructivist discourse comprises a network of guiding statements about a particular topic. The discourse connects the actors who use it and assent to it to one another. The discourse reflects the knowledge about a topic including the social perspectives of the actors, prevailing norms, interests and power relations that are cemented in turn by the discourse. Discourses remind us that we do not perceive reality directly but grasp it using pre-formed concepts.

[11] A culturalist discourse that emphasises cultural characteristics and artefacts can lead, for example, to the cosmic vision of indigenous groups being idealised. The fact that they are the product of a social (re-) construction of ethnicity is ignored. This impedes integration into the democratic state, with its rights and responsibilities, and may aggravate conflicts along ethnic lines.

(iii) processes of democracy

(iv) self-reflexivity.

These form the bedrock, as it were, upon which development interventions are planned and implemented.

(i) Globalisation

Technologies of communication have speeded up the process of globalisation and, with it, the spread of western culture. Western culture has a variety of impacts on other cultures that range from exerting pressure on them through to displacing or disrupting them entirely. The Internet, television channels that have a global presence, migration flows and the increasing mobility of commercial goods, services and capital constitute paradigmatic examples of this. This process triggers varying degrees of enthusiasm and consent or rejection and resistance in DC partner countries. For actor groups that have been marginalised or discriminated against by endogenous cultural influences, globalisation can signal new opportunities and life chances. Conversely, globalisation represents a new form of western dominance and concentration of power. It accentuates the existing power divide by regulating the right of disposal over market cycles, resources, communication infrastructures, patents, models and forms of expression. This includes western ideas about individual self-realisation and consumption, the separation of state and religion, the preference for society to be regulated by means of democracy and a market economy, a secular, individualistic world view, the ubiquity of pornography, the guarantee of individual liberties, and western ideas about gender relations.[12]

The intrusion of cultural orientations into other cultural spheres radically calls into question traditional values – or those considered to be such – and in some cases disrupts them entirely. Those cultures most affected (in their own perception) have barely any influence on what globalisation brings with it or the speed with which it occurs. They are spectators of the process – sometimes beneficiaries, sometimes victims, but always affected by it in some way. The cultural dynamic entails a loss of those things most one's own, be it cultural roots or a stable identity. The overpowering influence of a foreign culture triggers a sense of being put down, excluded, rendered powerless, and this manifests itself in various forms of resistance, both latent and explicit; from time to time it is vented in the form of fundamentalist positions. The dual feeling of being a victim of unpredictable developments and of not being able to keep pace with consumption creates a life world in which there is hardly any difference between poorer people in developing countries and marginalised, violent youth in urban Europe.

The dissonance between one's own culture and western cultural dominance draws new boundaries in society, right down to the level of the family. The adaptability of cultural orientations means that it is possible for parts of western culture, such as technological innovations (in production, marketing or weapons technology), to be integrated and other orientations, such as the separation of religion and the state and a democratic public sphere, to be firmly rejected. Nevertheless, transparent, open access to new knowledge, new choices and opportunities along with self-determined involvement in decision-making processes may assuage fears about the destruction of moral values and structures of meaning.

For many actor groups, however, the task of critically evaluating globalisation – weighing up its benefits and its disadvantages – overstretches their capabilities. The individual is cowed by a feeling of not being able to respond adequately to the challenge. Intercultural cooperation steps into this gap in meaning and needs to try proactively to encourage dialogue about it.

[12] An eloquent expression of radical questioning is the film *Keif al Hal* (How are you?) by the Saudi director Ayman S. Halawani, which depicts a young woman who breaks free from orthodox Islamic role expectations. The film cannot be shown in Saudi Arabia. The lead actor Mais Hamdan comes from Saudi Arabia but lives in Jordan.

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Example: Intergenerational dialogue in Guinea about sexual morality, female genital mutilation and AIDS

The continued existence of female genital mutilation in many African countries is, particularly from a western point of view, a stark reminder of the fact that globalisation and modernity have changed little with regard to traditions that define gender roles.

Since 2002, GTZ has been supporting organisations in Guinea, West Africa, in their efforts to initiate a process of discussion and debate about this tradition, its origins and its meaning for people today; the idea is that the discussions should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and should involve different sections of the population. The response on the part of the communities, which up to now were only familiar with these organisations' campaigns to change their behaviour, was extremely positive: Unlike those campaigns, they now participated keenly – and in large numbers – in these discussion forums, which were divided up according to generation and gender. The open-ended questions posed by the trained facilitators, along with their style, which was characterised by respect and appreciation, enabled older men and women to respond openly to the dialogue, giving expression not only to their many preferences concerning the way things used to be but also to their ambivalent feelings towards the custom, of whose numerous health risks they are well aware. The younger generation, for its part, repeatedly expressed its wish to experience these kinds of discussion forum – facilitated in a respectful way – together with their parents and grandparents, the guardians of traditional practices and customs.

Thus emerged the concept of an intergenerational dialogue between younger and older people. It is a method that enables local organisations not only to bring people closer together in a spirit of mutual respect and interest but also to agree on concrete resolutions for dealing with such controversial issues as female genital mutilation in the future; this is done in two dialogue workshops held over several days, one after the other.

The form and methods used in the workshops, which are held separately with members of each gender, are chosen in such a way that the specific knowledge and experience of both generations are equally able to be expressed. In sub-Saharan Africa, where most of the older generation have either no schooling or very little, this involves the workshops being conducted in the local language. There is no use of written media or teaching materials. The venue is decorated with local fabrics and furnished with straw mats, the traditional meeting place for relaxed conversation. Local instruments such as the balaphone, drums and a cora lie ready for songs and dances.

The exercises consist of discussions in small groups, "four-eyes-and-ears dialogues" between one young and one older woman, role plays and plenary discussions. The older generation in particular tends to bring proverbs, songs and dances into the dialogue process. The key differences between the two generations – their journey through life, their values and their life's work – are brought into the view of all the participants in the exercise "Life Paths". Both age groups present the different stages of a life path typical of their generation, using symbolic objects, role acting, songs and dances.

One impressive aspect of this is the women's depiction – through role plays, songs and dances – of initiation rites that are associated with suffering on the one hand but also confer pride and a sense of identity on the other, or again of the various stages of a traditional marriage. Often, this is the first time that young people have heard about rites and customs that were extremely important to their grandparents' and parents' generation. Values that still seem relevant and useful can be passed on in this way from one generation to the next.

Passionate debate is regularly triggered by issues to do with sexual self-determination: The younger generation generally argues for more open sex education for young people, for love marriages rather than forced ones, and for family planning, to ensure that the (fewer) children they have receive a school education. The older generation tends to insist on pre-marital abstinence and that wives in particular should be prepared to suffer. What unites the generations is a worry about the ongoing spread of the AIDS epidemic, and a concern that traditions and modern knowledge should be used to protect one's own community, family and oneself.

The concrete outcomes of the intergenerational dialogues, to which important community figures and opinion leaders are invited, are not only markedly improved relations between the generations in the families of the participants but also a greater commitment to dialogue between the generations in their various fields of activity (schools, mosques, churches, local agencies).

The approach aims to counter the lack of trust and increasing lack of communication between the generations and to replace it with curiosity, interest, creativity and confidence. Positive feedback from Kenya, Mali and eastern Congo, where the method has been replicated, confirms that young and older people can learn from and empower one another through dialogue.

(ii) Differentiation and simultaneity of different patterns

With globalisation speeding up the process in which forms of cultural expression around the world become uniform, many societies are developing tendencies towards individual, group-based and organisational differentiation by way of a counterweight. Negotiation, struggle and coercion are used in a variety of contexts to assert the right to self-determination, self-realisation and autonomy, to separate oneself off from others, to define oneself and to adopt an independent counter position. In this sense, globalisation and its counter movements are both the cause and the effect of political clashes of interest and violent conflict. This new particularism can lead to violent conflict and, in extreme cases, to social disintegration.

Patterns of thinking and behaviour imposed from the outside implicitly contain certain cultural orientations that lead to tensions and contradictions within a culture between individual and societal values, and between the values of modernity and tradition.

Worldwide mobility and communications technologies create the opportunity to absorb and weave in elements of foreign cultures to one's own life pattern. Group-specific cultures develop into patchworks made up of separate parts. Culture becomes malleable. Shaping culture out of cultural encounters becomes one option for self-definition. Conversely, this cultural eclecticism, swept along by the currents of fashion, promotes trends that include a loss of identity and lack of orientation. Both society as a whole and the individual tend to shape the cultural orientation in their life world in a uniform way if they can, to avoid cultural dissonance. But as the global diffusion of values has accelerated over the past few years, the different life worlds of family, work and leisure time with their different cultural orientations have come to exist alongside one another.

Individualisation in the sense of having a life plan of one's own that moves beyond traditional ties – once a typically western peculiarity – is a growing phenomenon that is spreading across the entire world today. Differentiation at the level of individuals opens up access to more choices and greater responsibility, but also brings the danger of isolation and a lack of orientation. Ascribed characteristics lose their significance while acquired characteristics become more important. The major causes of this are global economic integration with its concomitant patterns of consumption and the development of communication technologies.

(iii) Processes of democracy

The dominance of western culture is prominently accompanied by a demand for democracy and the rule of law. The contradictions and inconsistencies of this demand in the western world are a part of this debate – such as when issues of security and the control of scarce resources come into play, for example, or when there is discrimination and racism towards migrants, or when claims of political hegemony and global trading interests are at stake. Empirical studies such as that by Ronald Inglehart[13] reveal the following finding, which can be made a topic of discussion in project-related dialogue:

- In processes of democracy, cultural orientations become fluid, change and disappear. Cultural orientations interwoven with tradition and with cultural patterns foreign to democracy undergo erosion and come to be associated with quasi-democratic values and norms, such as individual self-realisation, participation based on equal rights, and tolerance. Normative action based on legitimation by hierarchies gives way increasingly to agreements forged through negotiation.
- Processes of democracy are highly "path-dependent". In other words, cultural orientations have both a supportive *and* an obstructive impact on processes of democracy, depending on their social context (gender roles, family values, individual self-realisation, consumer behaviour, social capital, etc.), their religious underpinnings (Islamic, Hindu, Confucian, Protestant, Catholic) and depending also on the dynamics of economic development with its global interdependencies. **The pattern of development relevant to each society can only be discovered contextually, in joint dialogue with the actors.**

(iv) Self-reflexivity

One general outcome of globalisation, differentiation, processes of democracy, mobility and cultural patchworks is that theories of culture, issues regarding the sociology of culture and cultural conflicts have become major themes in global society. One way this is expressed is through an increase in racism and through explicitly culture-based conflicts, such as in the Sudan, the Balkans or in Islamic movements grounded in fundamentalism. Equally, however, a global dialogue has arisen about this dynamic. Never before have so many people from different cultures exchanged views about their basic principles and their visions of development. The debate about an unchanging core of basic values – about human rights and conventions of international law – is part of a global intercultural dialogue about values and development visions, and is therefore part of a culture of globalisation. The discourse about the cultural bases of societal change provides an opportunity for development cooperation to encourage self-reflexivity about these processes and to share its many years of relevant experience.

These four dynamics flow into all development interventions and become interwoven with them. This is seen particularly clearly when the point at issue is ideas about democracy, the rule of law and the economic order, because these are directly linked to key cultural issues, such as cultural orientations regarding justice and law, religion and the state. Democratic social orders have acquired a variety of forms during the course of history and during the 20th century in particular.[14] Political organisation and participation differ, for example, in terms of how far nation building has occurred, how minorities are treated, how decentralisation is handled, the extent of horizontal connection among civil society organisations, the degree of equal access to political rights, and the

[13] Inglehart, R.: Culture and Democracy. In: Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison (eds.): Culture Matters. New York 2000, pp. 80-97. Ingelhart bases his views on three World Values Surveys, which have come to encompass 75 countries and 75% of the world's population.

[14] Developed forms of democracy and democratic control of power are relatively recent. Universal suffrage (including women), basic rights and effective legal protection, forms of civil society representation and control of the state, as well as democratic regulation of the state and the economy in the context of a liberal or social market economy emerged only in the 20th century.

core tasks of the state. Because of this, any dialogue about an unchanging core of democratic values, one not open to negotiation, can be conducted only in the specific context of a reform intervention. One of the paramount tasks of participatory development is to kick-start this dialogue and ensure it continues.

Given the findings of democracy research and current debates about nation building, it can be assumed that an orientation towards democratic development is more likely to be possible if the economic, political and social resources are spread broadly within a society or group. In other words, the greater the concentration of economic and political power, the greater the obstacles will be on the path towards democratic development. Processes of democratisation in a society are most likely to be successful if no single actor is in a position to push through their own interests and thereby consolidate their own economic, political and social hegemony. Democratic conditions emerge from participatory processes of negotiation that lead to compromises and workable agreements among mutually dependent actors. Here, dialogue is not only conducted about consensus-based democratic rules for processes of representation and participatory decision-making; it also entails talking about cultural orientations that are deeply embedded, including ideas about gender roles and religion, about ethnic minorities and their rights to cultural self-determination, about the foundations of a common political identity based, perhaps, on a constitution.

In many societies processes of democracy exist in a relationship of tension to religion-based cultural orientations. This issue should not be reduced exclusively to the fundamentalist elements of Islam, however. The boundaries between a secular democracy that protects the individual and his or her basic rights and liberties on the one hand and religious orientations on the other are fluid. Religious principles are certainly capable of providing a basis for and fostering democratic conditions, as long as they do not impede social equality, deny people's rights or block opportunities for reconciliation out of religious motives. A glance at European history indicates that this is a matter of long term change involving the gradual separation of the state from religion, a process directed by the actors themselves and one that cannot easily be influenced from the outside. The dominance of western culture in the Arab-Islamic world over the last few decades makes us aware of the fact that intervention can have the unwanted effect of reinforcing fundamentalist tendencies. These experiences also indicate, conversely, that religion-based cultural orientations by no means constitute an independent trend that casts a shadow over everything else. The oil-dependent economic development of the Arab-Islamic world and experiences of colonialism are just as important for cultural change and the development of democracy and the rule of law.

This is the background against which we can take a closer look at the role of social capital[15] – one that is undisputed in research on culture. Social capital is the cultural glue that ultimately holds civil society together. Every society and every organisation and community has its own unique form of social capital as a community-building energy.[16] The term generally has positive connotations, referring to a basic precondition for building community through social cohesion. The key factors in this are reciprocity and trust in the reliability and permanence of values and of rules agreed both formally and informally. Family networks or clientele systems based on reciprocity can help to

[15] Social capital refers to acquired cultural orientations and actions that enable cooperation within a group, organisation or society. Social capital determines the cohesion of a community. It serves to build up cooperation, workable relationships, tolerance and mutual trust in a community. The capacity for social cooperation is based on norms of reciprocity and exchange perceived as fair. All forms of issue-based associations, citizens' initiatives and networks are based fundamentally on social capital and reproduce it (cf. Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993). Social capital is expressed materially in deep transaction costs or constitutes the basis, for example, of migrants' money transfers to their families.
[16] Cf. Tocqueville, Alexis de: La démocratie en Amérique. 2 Vols., Paris 1835. – In his path-breaking study of democracy in America, Tocqueville discovered that the customs and mores of the immigrant population were at least as important for the development of democratic rules as the physical circumstances and laws of the state.

cushion the effects of poor social welfare systems and a lack of basic social provision. In economic and administrative organisations, social capital lowers transaction costs and proves to be a competitive advantage. “Low trust societies”, for example, are characterised by the fact that their members mistrust one another, close themselves off from one another and cause high transaction costs. Those in a community who do not have the relevant social capital feel that they do not belong, because they do not know the taken-for-granted “codes” associated with this social capital. They may be isolated and even excluded as a result.

Social capital is often distributed unevenly within societies. Educated and self-organised social classes and groups often co-exist with groups that have little education, are isolated and have no voice, given that they have little social capital. Social capital can also be applied to institutions: An efficient administration in which corruption is not a significant problem boosts people’s trust in state institutions and increases their willingness to pay taxes to finance public services. The absence of social capital in a society raises the transaction costs of social, economic and political communication. It is frequently associated with societal dysfunctions due to acts of God, crime, drugs, tax evasion and heightened state repression.

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Example: Taxes and culture – capitalising on social capital through tax reform

The significance of social capital can be demonstrated nicely using the example of taxation. The sector project Public Finance and Administrative Reform has undertaken a close examination of the issue of taxes and culture, the initial assumption being that if citizens are more involved in financing the state, they will have higher expectations of the state and of society. This is one way of making those responsible for state matters accountable for their actions; it also boosts trust in the state and increases the amount of social capital available in a society.

Thus a complex, reciprocal relationship exists between culture and taxation. The web of relationships between tax payers and the state is shaped by the political culture and by prevailing understandings of the state. On the one hand, this relationship is a determining factor in taxation, because it is able to influence tax-paying morale and the general feasibility of tax reform. On the other hand, the way the taxation-based state is perceived has a retroactive effect on how and whether citizens identify with the state in general.

DC consultancy work with regard to taxation up to now has not taken adequate account of wider cultural circumstances. The study “Tax and Culture” represents an initial attempt to identify relevant cultural factors that have an influence both on taxation policy, tax administration and tax payers and on the reciprocal relationships among these actors. The objective is to gain a better understanding of how tax system reforms can be adapted to the wider cultural circumstances. In an expert report commissioned by BMZ, recommendations for DC and technical cooperation have been developed with regard to how the culture factor might be better taken into account in the area of taxation.[17]

… the example of the chiefs in Ghana

[17] Edling, H.; Nguyen-Thanh, D.: Steuern und Kultur – Nachhaltige Entwicklung durch kultursensitive Steuerreformen? 2006

In the TC project Good Financial Governance in Ghana[18], German development cooperation is providing support for the Ghanaian reform process and for its system of taxation in particular. It offers a good example of the role played by chiefs in improving tax compliance.

Traditional forms of governance play a crucial role in Ghana. They survived colonial domination and are now a regulating authority in the independent nation state that curtails the power of central government. The continued existence of traditional institutions such as the National House of Chiefs is even recognised in and guaranteed by the constitution. In rural areas in particular the chieftaincy system fills a gap that is not reached by the short arm of a state frequently overburdened by its tasks. Moreover, in a country in which only about a third of the population lives a modern lifestyle, the traditional authorities are far more than just the guardians of a cultural heritage or a source of spiritual comfort for the overwhelming majority of people. Chiefs and Queen Mothers serve in everyday life as a mouthpiece for a region, representing its concerns towards the central state, and vice versa. In addition, they play a role in dispensing justice and arbitrating disputes. Since more than two thirds of the country are still in the communal possession of their respective population groups, every infrastructure measure requires the approval of the relevant chief.

The traditional chieftaincy system can certainly be viewed critically because it is in conflict with a modern understanding of the state. It throws up problems such as legal pluralism and dubious forms of control, legitimation and power concentration at local level. Recent isolated cases of corruption have also damaged the reputation of the Nananom (totality of princes) themselves.

The fact that the chiefs have carried out important functions in society up to now is a good reason for airing the role of the chiefs in Ghana's reform process. In the context of the project Good Financial Governance in Ghana, GTZ has initiated a dialogue between chiefs and financial administrators, with the aim of debating ways in which the chiefs can play a helpful role in improving tax compliance among citizens. Several dialogue workshops were held on this theme, and they included discussion of the outcomes of an extensive case study on Ghana's tax culture. One interesting result from the study, which was a survey of 1002 tax payers regarding their attitudes towards the tax system and the role of the state, was that traditional rulers are not considered desirable as tax collectors but that their role in disseminating information and mediating conflict was valued. On this basis it will now be a case of exploring jointly how the chiefs can be integrated into the information campaign directed at tax payers.

[contd. from p. 23]

Comparative intercultural research[19] has reached the conclusion that social cohesion is based on countless taken-for-granted, often unconscious acts, rituals, modes of communication and images that form the foundations of belongingness, identification and integration in a society. The members of a community themselves decide on the purposes for which they wish to invest their social capital, but foremost among them are communication, rituals and festivals as well as purposeful cooperation, as in irrigated farming. Thus, social capital has positive externalities in that it generates mutual trust, a willingness to cooperate and tolerance, and these have a positive impact on other areas of society beyond the narrow group context. It serves to ensure that problems of social interaction in a society are solved peacefully and the benefits of social cooperation are distributed in a way that is acceptable to all members of the society. Social capital generates a reconciling, integrative dynamic that binds those within a community to one another and simultaneously creates boundaries and exclusions. In principle, every form of social integration implies the exclusion of

[18] The GTZ project previously operated under the name of GTZ Revenue Mobilisation Support (RMS).
[19] Cf. Bourdieu, Pierre: Le sens pratique. Edition Minuit, Paris 1980

outsiders and strangers. Social capital can be used as a negative externality to form communities that separate themselves off strictly from everything outside their boundaries. This applies, for example, to organised crime or ethnic and religious groups. Illegality, organisational interests and social capital generated through ethnic or religious affiliation consolidate trust internally and erect boundaries externally.

Strategies for making the most of social capital are generally aimed at empowerment, participation, decentralisation and the democratic participation of citizens. Processes that create identity play an important role in this (Who are we? Whom do we get along with?), as do integrative strategies (Where are we going? What do we want to achieve together?).

Dialogue about cultural orientations that are either conducive or hostile to development must ultimately be conducted in the context of interventions at the level of programmes and individual projects. Viewed against the background of the overarching objectives of DC, this applies especially to the cultural preconditions for the development of democracy and a welfare-based market economy as well as to the specific organisational cultures of public and private actors.

Participatory dialogue about cultural orientations

Cooperation with people from different cultures follows certain rules. The way we see other cultures is always influenced by our own culture, the other always perceived through the lens of the self. Moreover, ambiguity exists between the exotic and the ethnocentric perspective. The underlying pattern of interaction is a familiar one: Whenever we are struck by the exotic, our attention is steered by curiosity and romantic admiration – we project onto the other what we ourselves lack. Conversely, the other may be rejected, perhaps because it triggers fear and uncertainty. If prejudice dominates our perceptions and rejection takes on totalitarian features, the cultural characteristics of the other soon become a stigma of inferiority.

Tackling dialogue about the intercultural aspect of cooperation and giving it a structure requires experience, the ability to stand back from oneself, and sensitivity. Not every subject can be referred to openly; what is needed is consideration, patience, cautiousness and a willingness to listen.

In the following, three topics for dialogue are outlined which play a role in participatory cooperation, ensuring that dialogue does not founder when it reaches cultural boundaries, but is intensified instead. The key issue is a willingness to reflect on one's own cultural orientations and to recognise the dynamic of transference and counter-transference.

Dialogue about one's own expertise and one's perception of others

There is no universal answer to the question of how those of use involved in DC should communicate and act in intercultural contexts, about what counts as appropriate and acceptable. As already emphasised at the start, there is no way around personal encounters. Intercultural communication and cooperation work by means of individual encounters and dialogue. The key practical questions here are:

- How can we shape processes of intercultural negotiation that are constructive?
- What is it useful to know in order to be able to communicate appropriately and judiciously?
- How is our perception of the other culture influenced by our own culture?

The priority objective of intercultural cooperation is to not allow communication to break down; this enables us to learn from mistakes and conflicts and to act differently the next time.

The key to constructive cooperation is to judge the cultural appropriateness of our actions and reform proposals in a specific cultural context, as well as critically to examine whether our

proposals are reasonable for the actors involved. However, there is no universal plan for how to go about this. Nonetheless, participating actively and judiciously in the negotiation process and taking different perspectives fully on board is doubtless a good start. A good basis for this is to seek out and consult with cultural go-betweens – that is, with people who are familiar with several cultural environments on account of their biography.

Given that development interventions are defined in terms of objectives and plans, two factors are especially important: time and a willingness to be flexible. Ambitious objectives and tight deadlines trigger pressure that severely constrains open, patient dialogue, and this is reinforced by the rationality entailed in planning. These may be trivial observations, but tight planning hinders dialogue. Periodically examining whether the planning matches the reality, considering strategic alternatives, and negotiating strategic objectives that can be pursued with the greatest possible flexibility are all ways of promoting dialogue.

(i) Self-reflexivity

Self-reflexivity helps us to see other cultures in the light of our own conceptual horizons and to see our own culture in the light of the conceptual horizons of other cultures. This is a prerequisite for recognising the constant flow of transference and counter-transference. It also helps us to see the limits of cultural tolerance.

Cooperating with people from other cultures obviously requires more than just specialist expertise. Social skills such a calm manner, tolerance and an ability to stand back from oneself are just as necessary. Practical socio-cultural skills are acquired by combining these social skills with a solid knowledge base. In systematic terms, it emerges primarily through self-reflexivity. The act of concretising cultural knowledge through social action, communication and artefacts stimulates self-reflexivity. This means making ourselves aware of what it is that makes the other culture tangible for us, and how these elements differ from our own culture. This self-reflexivity should be promoted through dialogue so that the actors themselves are able to manage cultural change and to resolve culturally-based conflicts. One obvious factor to bear in mind here is one's own life history and one's acquired, taken-for-granted cultural orientations. Sharing life stories enables differing cultural orientations, life plans and patterns, discontinuities and tensions to become tangible.

(ii) Knowledge

Practical socio-cultural skills are also generated by acquiring knowledge about one's own and the other culture. This includes the ability to recognise different discourses along with their implications and to open them up to debate. Having a stock of basic knowledge about one's own culture and other cultures is absolutely indispensable. Also needed are concepts and analytical tools for dealing with the grammar of intercultural communication and cooperation, with cultural orientations and perceptions of cultural difference. It is especially important to see how development interventions change the cultural orientations of those involved and to recognise which observable consequences serve to strengthen or weaken cultural orientations with regard to identity, security, social cohesion, the ability to assume responsibility, work performance, authority and participation.

(iii) Patterns of perceiving the other

Every cultural system provides a normative moral standard for judging other forms of cultural expression and culture orientations. Longer term cultural encounters give rise to culturally specific value judgments and patterns of behaviour towards the other culture which involve either appropriation or rejection. These patterns of acculturation or separation are themselves a part of culture. Knowledge and practical socio-cultural skills are also built on by becoming aware of what one's own culture provides in the way of tools for understanding other cultures different from our own. People tend to admire or condemn, to absorb or reject influences from other cultures. The

shortcomings of other cultures are diagnosed using concepts taken from one's own culture, which sets the standard for identifying which elements should be admired, accepted or rejected as an inhumane practice. Of course, the history of prior experiences of cultural encounter play a crucial role in this. Politically dominant western culture has a beam in its own eye in this regard when one recalls the violence with which European expansion pushed back, robbed and destroyed other cultures over the centuries. One outcome of western expansion and globalisation is that cultures have become composite forms that have incorporated elements from other cultures. The technically experienced Afghan tank driver reads the Qur'an in his spare moments, watches a Hindu soap opera on television at the weekend and has a bank account at an international bank.

(iv) Creating spaces for dialogue

Dialogue does not occur of its own accord. This has to do partly with the fact that if we want to talk about the intercultural aspect of cooperation, we have to talk about ourselves too. The spaces for dialogue required for this need to be specially created, for example by building up trust with the actors involved. Processes of intercultural negotiation depend on a climate of openness and familiarity. Personal conversations and small groups are better suited to this than large events. Within a horizontal exchange and comparison of one's own and others' experiences, new options and alternatives (contingencies) emerge, as does a basis for finding workable agreements and holding dialogue about cultural differences.

Dialogue about cultural differences and development visions

Cultural characteristics are taken for granted, they require no explanation or justification. Not until we encounter the other do we recognise our own otherness: Cultural differences emerge through encounters with other cultures. Only when we come up against cultural patterns that appear strange to us do we begin to think about our own cultural orientation. It is through dialogue that cultural differences become concrete in relation to specific areas of life and cultural attributes.

Many models exist for explaining cultural difference. These relate to specific social domains, such as education, gender roles, work or family life, or to individual sets of values. The model developed by Geert Hofstede[20] for explaining cultural difference reduces these diverse factors to five basic categories: power distance, avoidance of uncertainty, individualism, gender roles and the temporal orientation of entrepreneurial values. In practice these categorisations generate a surprising gain in understanding and make actors more culturally sensitive. When applied to actor groups that are too large, or even to entire nations, however, they serve to reinforce stereotypes and are of little use for intercultural dialogue.

Two fundamental aspects run through all the models like a constant theme: understandings of space and time.

The following two concepts relate to space:

- *sedentary*: rooted; space is given; the horizon line is drawn starting from a point; life is a circle; travel is disconcerting; familiarity and nearness are important.
- *mobile*: flexible; space is opened up, conquered, measured; different horizon lines criss-cross one another; life has a vector; travel is considered enriching; new things are seen as desirable.

Time is experienced in terms of the following aspects:

[20] Cf. Hofstede, Geert: Culture's Consequences. Sage, Beverly Hills 1980

- *polychronous*: time is seen as lifetime and is part of a cosmic time that continues beyond death; lived time is malleable and can be stretched; the question as to the right moment in time (Greek: *kairos*) occupies people's minds.
- *monochronous*: time is structured as lifetime and divided up into small units; it is a scarce resource, to be ordered and controlled; overview, planning, punctuality and chronology are important.

Another equally fundamental distinction is based on the culture-specific shaping of the life world:

- *synthetic*: actors are interested in social relationships and in the esteem they can build up. They seek balance, coherence and order; they take care to ensure that their social relationships, personal experiences and environment exist in an ordered balance. Purpose-led action and the pursuit of profit are subordinated to the pursuit of social integration and acceptance.
- *analytic*: Actors are interested in the pursuit of understanding and in causal relationships. They search for explanations beneath the surface, ask questions and are driven towards purpose-led action based on their insights. The pursuit of results and effects guides their conduct.

Another binary model of cultural difference is also used frequently. It is one that was already evident in the travel writing associated with European expansion, namely the tension that exists between a utilitarian anthropocentric and an ecocentric world view. The model was fully formulated in the colonial theory of administration and, later on, in the ethnology of Claude Lévi-Strauss[21] but has also been widely instrumentalised to propagate romantic models of society. In his study of the clay houses of the Kabyle people in the Atlas mountains, Pierre Bourdieu[22] examined the multi-layered symbolic forms of cultural expression that overlay their material shaping of the environment. The arrangement of the window openings and the way space is divided up are both references to the social and cosmological order, to the life cycle of people from birth to death, as well as to the change of the seasons, gender roles and important values such as fertility and a sense of honour.

Aspects	**Cultural orientation / difference**	
	Anthropocentric Expansive, ever changing, "hot" societies, open to risk	**Ecocentric** Intensive, stagnating, safety-oriented "cold" societies
Form of economy	Accumulative	Reproductive
Market behaviour	Competitive	Protectionist
Social behaviour	Selfish	Caring

[21] Cf. Lévi-Strauss, Claude: The Savage Mind. Oxford 1994
[22] Cf. Bourdieu, Pierre: Le sens pratique. Ed. Seuil, Paris 1991

Social status	Acquired	Ascribed
Work attitude	Performance-led	Oriented towards need
Pattern of argument	Causal, conceptual	Associative, pictorial
Assumption of responsibility	Individualistic	Group-led
Understanding of history	Rational	Mythological
Idea of development	Final	Cyclical

Enlightenment, secularisation and industrialisation have led to a "demystification of the world" (Max Weber) in western societies. An unwavering belief in instrumental reason and the Protestant work ethic are deeply embedded in western culture: This is a type of culture that is expansive, performance-led and individualistic, whose members believe in rationality and have seemingly turned their back on all mythological explanations. However, there is also abundant evidence in western culture that things are accorded a social meaning that extends beyond their functional meaning. Symbolic forms acquire outstanding importance in the mass media and in politics. A brief look into the symbolic closet reveals a large number of forms: the national anthem, the guard of honour that patrols at state receptions, the significance of the motor car beyond its function as a form of transport, the symbolic representation of office furnishings.

Ideal-typical models doubtless exaggerate reality and are no substitute for a close examination of specific situations. They are based on simplifications and occasionally tempt us to create new stereotypes. Looking at individual life stories is instructive in this regard; purely analytical descriptions of development paths always falls somewhat short. What is lacking in analysis is multi-faceted experience and empathy. It is similar with DC when questions are asked only about objectives or results and not about the experiences that those involved in a joint project take with them when it is over.

Thus, the tension between culture and development also shapes the cultural orientations of state, civil society and private business organisations. DC is directly affected by this when it seeks to boost performance and the capacity for cooperation in its partner organisations. The culturally conditioned rejection of new organisational ideas is hard to predict and often remains unspoken in the initial phase. The prospect of gaining a potential advantage or misunderstandings contribute to this. The following excursus elucidates this situation by way of an example.

Excursus: Dialogue about organisational cultures

Consultancy is interwoven with cultural orientations that are rarely rendered explicit by those involved. This will be examined by looking at three aspects of Latin American organisational culture in public administrations.

(i) Staffing system

Staffing systems in Latin American administrations are based on a curious pattern of relationships that goes beyond normative, formal organisation and official communication channels. It is held together by a network of informal relationships consisting of a mixture of paternalism, clientelism and friendship. In other words, social capital plays an extremely important role in organisations in the Latin American context. The pattern of relationships avoids open competition and stabilises cooperation through personal relationships. Rewards and sanctions are woven into it and reproduce it. This does not necessarily mean that performance declines in the process, because in economic terms transaction costs are lowered. However, what does suffer are principles of the rule of law on which the judiciary and administration are based – transparency, equal treatment etc. Every well-meaning suggestion for change invariably leads to the question among those involved of how the change will effect this well-balanced system of staff securities, dependencies and privileges. Even if the people involved are consciously aware of this issue, it does not mean they will address it openly, because the pattern of relationships is based on discretion and silent acceptance.

- Dialogue: In interventions aimed at developing democracy, it is important that proposals for change reinforce the discourse of the rule of law, that they should be formulated and developed by the people themselves and tried out in practice.

(ii) Authoritarianism

It is not only state organisations that show the signs of a deeply embedded authoritarianism – companies and NGOs do as well. People tend to look up to their superiors; an authoritarian management with a firm hand enjoys considerable prestige. Because of this, it is often the case that only lip service is paid to participatory and process-led procedures. The notion that change might be initiated from the midst of the professional classes or even from the bottom of society fits poorly with the Latin American context. Disagreement and criticism are a risky business because they threaten relationships among the staff. In this sort of environment, outmoded and obsolete management ideas have good prospects for survival if they are professed by superiors who enjoy a large following. Research on social capital indicates that hierarchical, centralised and authoritarian bureaucracies generate little trust, while horizontal organisations under local control promote trust among their staff. Both historically and in the present, this has given rise to various affinities for and aversions to democracy. Conversely, this shortcoming in administrative efficiency is partly compensated by the social capital that exists in the staffing system.

- Dialogue: Crucial to the success of development interventions is that those involved are able to try out new forms of horizontal cooperation and negotiation and that the management is not only in agreement with the change objectives but develops trust in the procedures.

(iii) Formalistic tradition of bureaucracy

Bureaucratic procedures in the administration and the judiciary are rooted in the Spanish colonial administration. This multi-layered system of bureaucratic, economic and political domination was oriented towards inertia and centralist control. Every act of administration was regulated and recorded in minute detail, and local administrations were monitored and managed by travelling inspectors. Since the colonial administration and judiciary had to deal with matters across great intervals of time and space, it was necessary to have procedures based on written records. Oral negotiations, entrepreneurial activity and self-organisation, as displayed by the English and Dutch

exploiters, was seen as a threat to an order in which entrepreneurship and performance were subject to strict state control. Even today administrative practice consists in a jumble of overlapping areas of responsibility and contradictory laws and norms. Paradoxically, this has meant that particular interests are able to be pushed through more easily. This bureaucratic rationality has been reproduced in Latin American organisations. Entrepreneurial activity is risky because it is highly likely to violate regulations that no one remembered existing till now. Reforms are diluted and slowed down in legalistic battles. Strategies and plans get no further than the paper they are written on, because they are far removed from everyday practicalities and are overly theoretical and formalistic.

- Dialogue: Effective reforms need to lead to concrete, visible outcomes in easily managed steps so that the participants themselves can see that change bears fruit.

[contd. from p. 32]

Development interventions take place on a cultural stage. Culture is the stage, so to speak, on which the actors perform their play, both in reflexive monologues and in dialogue. Of course, development strategies, thinking in terms of change projects, ideas about participation, market and democracy are also historically conditioned cultural phenomena that are evaluated by the actors in a cultural community and are negotiated with representatives of other cultures. They touch on basic values of human co-existence and have to be understood as being culturally and contextually conditioned. To illustrate the way this stage works, three examples will be discussed: Language as the most important means of communication; the shaping of social relations; and the use of resources.

- **Language**: As the most important medium of thought and social action, language plays a dual role. It orders, names, enables communication, defines one's affinity to a particular community, makes judgements and facilitates understanding and negotiation among actors about forms of social intercourse, strategies for action, rules, and the socio-economic environment. At the same time it is a means of expression and the basic tool both for creating meaning and for creativity, which has its roots in the inner psychic world and exerts a culture-shaping influence from this place. It is the material out of which constructions of reality are formed and communicated, and it enables a self-reflexive mirroring of these constructs in social intercourse and in the encounter with other cultures. The reflexive meta-communication established by language is part of the cultural process.
- **Social organisation**: This, too, reveals the dual nature of culture. Every social order reflects the practical, day-to-day necessities of a particular community; one way it does this is by regulating access to natural resources, how they are used, and the distribution of goods and power. Equally, at the core of every social organisation are particular sets of values and webs of meaning that are determined by historically evolved traditions and collective life plans. It is only possible to understand the significance of claims to participation or loyalty, to power and the exercise of power or different organisational and institutional forms once they are grasped as being the product of an interplay between socio-economic and meaning-giving cultural processes. Culture and social structures are always interwoven with one another.
- **Resource use**: The way natural resources and other scarce resources are used, the way landscapes are shaped and houses are built cannot be determined in terms of a purposive rationality alone. When the material environment is appropriated, shaped and transformed for particular purposes – an irrigation system, for example – different social organisations and power relations develop which in turn create meanings, convey a certain culture, and are subject to explanation and legitimation. For example, whether people live in an environment

that is carefully tended or stripped bare, their experiences in turn determine their perceptions and lead, through discourse about the matter, to the development of new practical options. The socio-economic environment is both a component and a driver of cultural development.

Development visions are mental constructs that change over the course of time: Catch-up development, technology transfer, help towards self-help, goal-oriented planning and action, participatory procedures – these are all models that have been developed out of a western cultural perspective and started out as consistent, unified wholes. In cooperation practice, that is, in concrete cultural dialogue, they are rendered relative because the actors involved make judgements and act against a different background. The silent, culturally taken-for-granted assumptions on which the models are based are reshaped and adapted in processes of negotiation. The actors fit the concepts into their horizon of meaning or else they reject them. In this sense, DC always constitutes cultural work and intercultural dialogue. In a society founded upon personal loyalties and ascribed positions, participatory procedures or citizen participation can be either a scandal or an opportunity. This only becomes apparent through dialogue. Intercultural dialogue therefore develops as a learning process in the area of tension between action and reflection.

Dialogue about development visions should be encouraged especially when it is a matter of assessing and selecting different strategic options:

- What grounds do the actors give for the various options and how do they assess them?
- What ideas about development and social organisation do they associate with the development intervention?
- How do they want to use scarce resources, and which procedures do they prefer?

Dialogue about the core functions of culture

Cultural orientations influence every area of daily life, including people's consciousness and self-awareness. Human beings are caught up in a self-spun web of meaning that eludes logical comprehension and the search for constants. Dialogue about perceptions of the other and about cultural differences is based on interpretations, which in turn are influenced by culture. (Geertz, 1997)

In order to initiate and promote dialogue about cultural orientations, we can start out from simple everyday observations, such as the question of which benefits the cultural orientations of a community offer its members.

A cultural understanding is then presented that is simple and functional and oriented towards the use of cultural services. This perspective has the advantage that it has a low entry threshold for dialogue. Basically, this is about the question of what utility the culture has for its members and how this utility is to be changed by a development intervention. For the dynamic processes of change involved in DC, this dispassionate, phenomenological approach is both practical and plausible.

To be able to asses the dynamic of a cultural system, it is expedient to ask about the services the actors can expect from their culture. This makes it possible to understand what people miss when culture is changed – by development interventions, for example – or when people remove themselves from their own culture, drift aware from it, are torn out of it or liberate themselves from it.

Essentially there are three core functions a cultural system provides to its members and communities:

A Support: Cultural orientations create stable social ties, convey security, care, protection and affection in the family and in trusted affinity groups, in education, in the neighbourhood and community. Support enables integration into a community, conveys medium-term security and a positive self-image. The primary medium for this is communication using language and symbols.

Intercultural cooperation can encourage, make fluid or transform social integration and social ties.

B Order: Cultural orientations create differentiations within a society with regard to heritage, age, gender, occupation, class affiliation, education and property. They give grounds for and justify these differences. They allow social classification and convey an idea of social justice and societal control. The primary medium for this is power relations.

Intercultural cooperation changes orders and power relations and confronts the inherited orders with new ones.

C Motivation: Cultural orientations show what is worth striving for. They indicate the existence of needs that demand to be satisfied. They judge one's own and joint efforts and contain norms concerning respect and loyalty, reward and punishment, and cooperation and competition. They are incentives for a certain way of behaving and thus provide a basis for building trust and cooperating with others. Motivation drives people to act and establishes life plans. The primary medium for this is ideas about justice found in religion, morality and the justice system.

Intercultural cooperation introduces new incentive systems and thus changes the motivations of the actors involved.

Conclusion

There is no doubt about the importance of the issue of culture in development cooperation. Globalisation – in which cultures come closer together – finds itself confronted with a process in which societies are returning to their traditional values. In view of these – frequently countervailing – trends, simple answers are out of place. This applies especially to development cooperation which, on the one hand, takes up and addresses existing traditions and values and, on the other, is supposed to change these values in order to make a contribution to modernisation in other societies. The relationship between the preservation and renewal of culture needs to be continually kept in balance according to country, context and concrete project situation.

The present publication provides help in understanding and assessing the importance of culture in the development process. However, intercultural expertise comprises more than this rather theoretical knowledge. What is needed, more than ever before, is that we integrate our knowledge of cultural issues into development cooperation practice.

Cultural dialogue is an immanent part of all development cooperation based on partnership and participation. Processes of change that involve a variety of different actors should therefore always be seen through the "prism of culture". In practical terms, this means posing critical questions such as: Which of the actors' cultural perspectives, norms or values are affected by the intervention? What does this mean in terms of project implementation? Are they conducive to the intervention or do they impede its objectives? How and in what context is it possible to speak about these values – including expressing criticism? The tools of Actor Analysis provide some helpful pointers.[23]

The fundamental prerequisite for understanding these issues is to have an understanding of other cultures and to disclose one's own values and norms in the course of consultancy work. Only with

[23] Zimmermann, A.: Tools for Actor Analysis. 10 building blocks for designing participatory systems of cooperation. In the series: Promoting participatory development in German development cooperation. Eschborn 2006.

this appreciative, respectful acceptance of the other, accompanied by self-confident admission of one's own cultural orientations, is it possible to conduct honest and open dialogue that seeks common ground.

Abbreviations

BMZ German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
DAC Development Assistance Committee
DC Development cooperation
DED German Development Service
DFID UK Department for International Development
GBS General Budget Support
GTZ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
KfW Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
MDG Millennium Development Goals
MoU Memorandum of Understanding
NGO Non-governmental organisation
OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAF Performance Assessment Framework
PRS Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SWAP Sector-Wide Approach
TC Technical cooperation