Swedish-German Project Team Members: Problems and Benefits due to Cultural Differences
Concept to Succeed

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Abstract

Most multicultural teams are not as successful as expected. Germany and Sweden are close trade partners and one form of cooperation are German-Swedish project teams. In this thesis the reader will get answers to the following questions: What are the problems and benefits among German-Swedish project team members due to cultural differences and in which way can problems be coped with and benefits be enhanced. This thesis does not focus on virtual teams, the leadership of multicultural teams and the formation of German-Swedish project teams.

The main components of the theoretical framework are cultural models which serve as basis for our analysis are Hofstede’s five dimensional model, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model and Hall’s model. For our research we interviewed eight members of German-Swedish project teams. We discovered problems among German-Swedish project team members deriving from differences in the communication styles, in the focus on cooperation versus task and in dealing with rules. Beneficial in the German-Swedish collaborations is that the cultures complement each other in focusing on the facts versus broadening the subject and in the focus on team spirit versus goal achievement. Another beneficial characteristic is the similarity of the German and Swedish culture.

After analysing the problems and benefits due to cultural differences in German-Swedish project teams, we present our concept to reduce the problems in German-Swedish project teams. The concept consists of steps which build up on one another and therefore represent an overall concept which can serve as a basis and inspiration for enhancing the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams. Our concept includes the steps: intercultural training, a mentor system in the team, internal advisors in the company and a cultural evaluation.
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Table of Contents

1 Introduction................................................................................................................. ..............................1

1.1 Choice of the Topic..........................................................................................................................1
1.2 Structure of the Thesis......................................................................................................................1
1.3 Problem Derivation...........................................................................................................................2
1.4 Aim of the Thesis ......................................................................................................................... 3
1.5 Limitations of the Thesis..................................................................................................................3

2 Methods and Data............................................................................................................. ........................4

2.1 Research Process ...............................................................................................................................4
2.1.1 Literature Review....................................................................................................................... 5
2.1.2 Qualitative Interviews ...............................................................................................................6
  2.1.2.1 Interviewees and Setting of the Interviews .................................................................... 7
  2.1.2.2 Handling of the Interview Data....................................................................................... 7
2.2 Thoughts about Ethics and Bias .....................................................................................................8

3 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................................9

3.1 Multicultural Teamwork..................................................................................................... ..............9
3.2 Conflict .............................................................................................................................................14
3.3 Team Culture ...................................................................................................................................15
3.4 Organizational Setting ....................................................................................................................16
3.5 Culture...............................................................................................................................................17
  3.5.1 Models of Culture........................................................................................................ ............20
   3.5.1.1 Geert Hofstede......................................................................................................... ........20
   3.5.1.2 Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeek...................................................................24
   3.5.1.3 Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner.....................................................26
  3.5.2 German Business Culture.................................................................................................. .....31
3.5.3 Swedish Business Culture................................................................................................. ......36
3.5.4 Intercultural Communication.................................................................................................39
  3.5.4.1 Edward T. Hall......................................................................................................... ........43
  3.5.4.2 Barriers in Intercultural Communication......................................................................46
3.6 Intercultural Competence...............................................................................................................48
  3.6.1 Self-preparation......................................................................................................... ...............48
  3.6.2 Intercultural Training..............................................................................................................48
  3.6.3 Intercultural Coach.............................................................................................................. 50
  3.6.4 Intercultural Mediation...........................................................................................................51

4 Research Model......................................................................................................................... 52

5 Empirical Study ............................................................................................................................55

5.1 Interview Guideline.........................................................................................................................55
5.2 Data Presentation.............................................................................................................................60

6 Analysis of Empirical Data................................................................................................... .................79
6.1 Communication Style .......................................................... 79
6.2 Demand for Structure and Rules ........................................... 82
6.3 Importance of Hierarchy ....................................................... 84
6.4 Cooperation versus Competition ......................................... 86
6.5 Group versus Individual ....................................................... 87
6.6 Open-mindedness ............................................................... 89
6.7 Attitude towards Time ........................................................ 90
6.8 Working Style ................................................................... 91
6.9 Internal Factors ................................................................. 91
6.10 External Factors ............................................................... 93
6.11 Internal and External Factors ............................................. 95
6.12 Misunderstandings and Conflict ......................................... 96
7 Conclusion ............................................................................ 97
  7.1 First Research Question ................................................... 97
  7.2 Second Research Question ................................................ 98
  7.3 Future Research ............................................................... 102
References .............................................................................. 103
APPENDIX I ............................................................................ 109

Table of Figures and Charts

Figure No 4. 1 Research Model .................................................. 55
Figure No 7. 1 Concept for Team Collaboration ......................... 101

Chart No 5. 1 Interviewees ....................................................... 61
Chart No 5. 2 Interview Data .................................................... 78
1 Introduction

1.1 Choice of the Topic
In this thesis, we want to examine in which way cultural differences between German and Swedish project team members affect their teamwork. With the help of interviewing project team members we want to point out the existing problems and benefits which occur due to cultural differences of the team members. The occurring problems and benefits do not only affect the members of German-Swedish project teams, the project execution also affects the involved departments. Often the quality of the output of a multicultural project affects the entire organization. Consequences of intercultural misunderstandings in multicultural teams have a negative impact on turnover, communication, teamwork, morale and organizational performance in general. The coping with problems and the enhancement of benefits deriving from German-Swedish project teams can consequently increase the organization’s success. In order to achieve effective collaboration in multicultural teams team members have to work for that actively. Therefore it is important to train people involved in multicultural teamwork to deal effectively with intercultural differences.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis
The first chapter “Introduction” gives the reader an impression of the topic, what it consists of and why it is important, at the same time we point out the limitations of the thesis. In the following chapter “Methods and Data” we present the research process and the methods for data collection we use in our thesis, explain them and argue for the choice. Furthermore our interviewees, the setting of our interviews and the handling of the interview data is described. In chapter three “Theoretical Framework” we present the theories, concepts and definitions that are necessary to understand the problems and benefits of German-Swedish project teams. Therefore the theoretical framework consists of an overview about teamwork with all its components like collaboration, conflict and team culture; an outline about cultural studies, including German and Swedish culture, and intercultural communication. The last part of the theoretical framework consists of theories about training in order to develop ways to cope with problems between German and Swedish team members. The next chapter “Research Model” contains a presentation of our research model, which we developed out of the theoretical

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framework and which we use in the following chapters. In the chapter “Empirical Study” we present the interview guideline and we present the interview data. The following chapter “Analysis of Empirical Data” is composed of an analysis of the factors from the research model using the results from the interviews and the literature, pointing out the problems and benefits between German-Swedish project team members. The thesis ends with the chapter “Conclusion” in which we draw a conclusion of our findings and answer the second research question with developing a concept to enhance German-Swedish project work with the help of our theoretical framework and current practices mentioned by the interviewees. The thesis ends with recommendations for further research.

1.3 Problem Derivation

We expect the existence of problems in the daily interaction within German-Swedish project teams due to cultural differences. Cultural dimensions, tools to analyse cultural differences, serve as our theoretical basis. The most famous scholar in the area of intercultural studies is Geert Hofstede with his five dimensional model of national cultures. According to his model Germany and Sweden differ mostly in the masculinity versus femininity and the uncertainty avoidance dimensions.\(^5\) We expect that the differences in the cultural dimensions lead to varying approaches of work and communication in German-Swedish project teams which can hinder successful collaboration. Govindarajan and Gupta discovered in their study of 70 multicultural teams, that only 18% regarded the team performance as “highly successful”, all the other teams were not reaching their goals as planned.\(^6\)

The problems emerging due to cultural differences in German-Swedish project teams can be of great importance since Germany is the most important trade partner of Sweden. In 2005 18.1 % of the Swedish imports came from Germany, and Sweden is for Germany one of the most intensive trade partners, too. The exchange between the two countries does not only involve money and goods, but also people. Almost 700 Swedish companies are located in Germany employing about 150,000 employees. At the same time approximately 750 German companies have subsidiaries in Sweden employing 47,000 employees.\(^7\)

1.4 Aim of the Thesis

We expect that problems and benefits due to cultural differences among Germans and Swedes in project teams occur, the basis of this expectation are Hofstede’s findings described above. We write our thesis in order to describe, understand and analyze cultural differences between German and Swedish project team members; therefore we have to apply the theoretical concepts of cultural studies. After conducting and analysing the interviews with German and Swedish members of German-Swedish project teams we want to combine the theories of cultural studies with training. With the help of this combination we want to develop a concept to cope with and reduce problems in German-Swedish project teams and to enhance their benefits. We are aware of the fact that every German-Swedish project team is special and therefore our developed concept will not apply to German-Swedish teams in general as the composition, personalities and contexts each team experiences differ. Our aim is to develop a concept that can serve as a basis and inspiration for German-Swedish project teams who could adapt this concept to their specific situation.

The main objective of our thesis is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the problems and benefits among German-Swedish project team members due to cultural differences?

2. In which way can problems be coped with and benefits be enhanced?

1.5 Limitations of the Thesis

In our thesis we will not focus on virtual teams which also consist of members from different cultures, we want to focus on physical multicultural teams. The exclusion of virtual teams already derives from the fact that Germany and Sweden are located close to each other. This makes co-location or regular meetings of the team members rather uncomplicated. At the same time we are more interested in interpersonal problems and benefits than in technical problems that virtual teams have to face in addition to the interpersonal ones.

The formation of multicultural teams will also not be discussed in our thesis. We consider the team formation as a pre-determined fact. Our thesis will focus on the steps that follow the team formation of German-Swedish project teams to ensure success.

Another aspect we will not concentrate on is the leadership and the leader of German-Swedish project teams. We want to focus our research on the collaboration between the team members - the operational level.
2 Methods and Data

In order to understand how we conducted our research, we introduce in the following the research process, methods and data we used.

The basis for our thesis derived from our own knowledge and experiences about German-Swedish collaboration as German students in Sweden. Our study is a qualitative research. We see a quantitative study as not being able to cover the complex phenomenon culture, and evidence which is not easily reduced to numbers should be researched qualitatively.\(^8\) Qualitative research is the appropriate way to understand what, why and how questions when doing research on people in organizations.\(^9\) Since we want to answer these kinds of questions in our thesis, this is a qualitative study. Qualitative research assumes reality as a social construction\(^10\) and consequently not one single reality exists, but many realities referring to the individuals within the society.\(^11\) Therefore scientific conclusions are not seen as a copy of reality, they are understood as descriptions of the construction processes of reality.\(^12\) One major critique about qualitative research is that its findings cannot be generalized\(^13\), but we consider each situation as unique and as determined by the context and the individuals involved, therefore our goal is not generalization.\(^14\)

2.1 Research Process

During our research we use two methods literature review and qualitative interviews in order to answer our research questions. Remenyi et. al. point out deep investigation of small samples as the preferred method for a qualitative approach.\(^15\) Therefore our interviews provide the empirical basis for our thesis. As our thesis concerns in its main part culture and hence people, a purely theoretical approach would in our opinion not have been suitable, especially since we want to develop a practical concept to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams. In order to be able to collect relevant data and to know what to observe and question in the

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interviews, we use the literature to develop theoretical sensitivity and knowledge about the subject.\textsuperscript{16} From the literature used in the theoretical framework we developed our conceptual framework – the research model. The research model helps us to develop an interview guideline which will be explained in chapter 5.1.\textsuperscript{17} The empirical data from our interviews will serve as the ground to develop a new concept, which can help to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams. Since we ground the concept in empirical findings, this process can be described as grounded theory.\textsuperscript{18} The empirical data from our interviews will be coded according to the factors of our research model. This coding process enables us to abstract the empirical data in order to analyse it.\textsuperscript{19} The analysis of our interview data is guided by our research model and the theoretical framework. Glaser and Strauss point out the practical usefulness of the grounded theory.\textsuperscript{20} The practical usefulness of our study lies in the concept which we develop to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams presented in chapter 7, it will not apply to every German-Swedish project team and to every specific situation, but it can be modified.

2.1.1 Literature Review

Literature in the areas of intercultural management, intercultural communication and connected fields constitute our theoretical framework. Based on the theoretical framework we develop a research model. The research model will be the basis for our interview guideline, in this way the literature directs our interviews. After the literature guided us in the identification of probable cultural differences between German and Swedish project team members, it will also be used in the analysis of our interviews, to explain the cultural differences and their consequences, in order to answer the first research question.

Literature about training and other tools to improve intercultural competence will guide us to answer the second research question: In which way can problems be coped with and benefits be enhanced? The literature will help us to identify a practical concept which can enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams.

To accomplish objectivity throughout our thesis, we read as much as possible and present advantages and disadvantages of theories and concepts. We have a critical attitude towards the literature we read but try to present the concepts free from our own judgement.\textsuperscript{21} In order to ensure the criteria of reliability we read and cite books from reputable scholars. We will present the current state of the art in the subjects that belong to our research.\textsuperscript{22}

\subsection*{2.1.2 Qualitative Interviews}

In order to answer our first research question: What are the problems and benefits among German-Swedish project team members due to cultural differences? We have to ask team members of German-Swedish project teams how they work together, if they recognize differences and how those affect the teamwork. Qualitative interviews include a limited number of interviewees.\textsuperscript{23} There are different types of interviews depending on the amount of structure used by the researcher.\textsuperscript{24} We used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews give the opportunity to lead the interview into areas that have not been thought of before because open questions are used.\textsuperscript{25} Closed questions do not offer this possibility they restrict possibilities to answer.\textsuperscript{26}

The answers of the interviewees will lead to further questions. Open questions give the interviewee the chance to answer spontaneously\textsuperscript{27} and give the researcher an insight into the construction of reality of the interviewee.\textsuperscript{28} In our interviews the open general question is followed by more specific questions in order to make the implicit knowledge of the interviewee explicit.

The method of qualitative interviews itself is not objective since interviewees talk about their own experiences, perceptions and opinions. We as interviewers can try to not influence our interviewees with our ideas during the interviews and to present the results free from interpretation.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Margit Breckle, “Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation”, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), p. 57.
\item Margit Breckle, “Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation”, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), p. 57.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
2.1.2.1 Interviewees and Setting of the Interviews

We recruited our interviewees on the Karma company fair in the library of the Kalmar Högskolan on February 28th, 2007. Here we had the opportunity to talk to the companies directly and contacts developed. In the end our visit of the Karma company fair resulted in contacts to eight interviewees from four different companies, who work or worked in German-Swedish project teams. Four interviewees are German and four are Swedish. The interviews with the Germans were telephone interviews while the interviews with the Swedes were conducted face-to-face. One interview took place in the Baltic Business School and three at a company’s site in southern Sweden. All interviews were recorded. The interviews lasted between 45 and 110 minutes each. The interviewees are from different companies and the Swedes and Germans we interviewed are not team members of the same project and do not even work in the same companies.

It was not possible to interview just members of German-Swedish project teams since we are lucky that our contact persons managed to organize interviewees for us and we are glad that the interviewees volunteered to support us with their personal experiences. We interviewed project team members (4), project team leader (1), supervisors of projects (2) who work together with project teams due to the function they have and one German who took part in an exchange programme.

The different engagements in projects shed light on the team collaboration from different perspectives. All interviewees have in common that they have experience in working together with Swedes and Germans so that they have experience in collaboration with members from the other culture and they can speak about the cultural differences they perceived and how they judge those experiences.

2.1.2.2 Handling of the Interview Data

All interviews were typed after the audio recording. The first interview was transcribed word by word. The following interviews were transcribed in another way: The introduction of us and the subject is left out, the second part concerning the context, the internal and external factors were summarized in their main parts so that the background information is clear to the reader. The other parts were transcribed word by word. The following part about the cultural factors and the internal and external factors were typed word by word. Anecdotes about other countries than Sweden and Germany, things that did not concern the topic itself like comments about our tape recorder and details about the company and customers were left out and are marked with squared brackets “[…]”. We are aware of the fact that the summary of the beginning and leaving out of stories is already an interpretation of the interviews before the real analysis, but we saw no other
way to handle the amount of data and the expenditure of time which a word by word transcription of the entire interview takes.

In the transcription we left out the “mhs” and “ähs” as they have no influence on the content the interviewee is explaining. We also left out our “mhs” and “okays” during the interviews that showed the interviewee that we are listening and that were a gesture of encouragement, because those filling words will not affect the content and the analysis.

We listened carefully to each interview but due to the quality of recording, the phone connection and other noises around some words were hard to understand and not clear. In some cases we listened together and manifold, if we still could not understand we left the word out and marked it with “…” as we consider it as wrong to start guessing the word. In all other cases we did our best in trying to understand what our interviewees said and wrote down the words which we considered to be correct. It should be added here, that usually the quality of our recordings was very good and cases of not understanding were seldom.

During the transcription we left out the interviewees’ names, the name of the company and the location. We used numbers for the interviewees according to the sequence of the interviews. We used abbreviations for our first names W. and B. in the transcriptions of the interviews.

2.2 Thoughts about Ethics and Bias

We are sensible and honest researches and proceed to the best of our knowledge. Everything stated in our thesis has been researched and we try to represent a picture of the statements of our interviewees which is not distorted to fit our research, but which has accuracy and integrity, the same holds true for the used literature.30 It is very important for us to give credit to authors when using their ideas and information, therefore thoroughly referencing has been applied throughout the thesis.

We keep anonymity of our interviewees in order to protect our interviewees’ privacy and to underline their freedom of speech. We also expect that the knowledge that their statements are printed anonymously will encourage and motivate our interviews to speak about their experiences without any blockings. We do not publish the names an the places which have been mentioned during the interviews, but the professions, gender and other data that enhances an understanding of the context of the interviewee is provided.

We try to write in a clear and explicit way that cannot be misinterpreted or misunderstood by the reader, as far as that is possible. Problematic with a research about German-Swedish cultural differences and us being German ourselves is a distortion of the research due to our own cultural

bias. Also the Swedish interviewees might identify us as Germans and might therefore not feel comfortable to tell us about negative aspects of their collaboration with Germans. We are aware that our thesis is influenced by our own national culture and the way we were educated in our universities, so the structure, the choice of topic, the approach and the perception and interpretation of data is influenced by our own culture. We will try to minimize that as far as possible by being aware of our own cultural bias and by being as careful, accurate and objective as possible. But on the other hand that is a tricky task, just like working in a multicultural team, to separate oneself from one’s own cultural roots because culture belongs to our identity. Even though extensive research on cultural differences has been made our understanding of those differences and their meaning is probably limited. Due to our Germaness we might never be able to understand or see things in the way members from other cultures do.31

We are aware that our thesis contains stereotypes about Germans and Swedes, but in our opinion it is not possible to write about cultures without the use of stereotypes which help to categorize cultures. As we did not want to further intensify stereotypes we did not give detailed descriptions and examples of the stereotypes. The major parts about German and Swedish business culture originate from authors who themselves are members of the described cultures therefore those parts are rather self-perceptions than stereotypes.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Multicultural Teamwork

Multicultural teams embody all things that have been said about teams and globalisation in general and go even further. Since they incorporate all the things that are known about teams we will look first at teams and teamwork in general. In the second step we will take into account all extra layers of complexity that apply especially for multicultural teams.32

The most common definition of a team compared to a group is the following. A team is a number of people working closely together to achieve a shared goal, while a group of people does not aim at achieving a shared goal.33 Another characteristic of teams is that they are usually quite small, so that interaction between all the different team members is “easily” accomplished. Members of a team are dependent on each other and are responsible for each other; therefore

decisions which affect the team cannot be failed alone.\textsuperscript{34}

Even though teamwork could be described as a natural phenomenon for human beings, who have always worked in teams to achieve certain goals, for a long time it was not very usual to introduce teamwork in the workplace.\textsuperscript{35} But already at the beginning of the 1960s the idea of teamwork spread quickly over Scandinavia. In Sweden especially the Udevalla and Kalmar plants of Volvo are good examples of this job-enrichment movement, teamwork is seen as a way to make work more interesting and motivating for the employees because teamwork allows task sharing and teamwork puts employees in an environment which is more natural for them. In Germany this job-enrichment movement was not as successful at that time, because German companies had to compete more globally than Swedish companies, and rationalization and productivity were greater concerns for German companies. The strong result-oriented view changed at the beginning of the 1990s with a stronger implementation of teamwork in German companies, especially in assembly lines.\textsuperscript{36} The use of teams worldwide has highly increased over the past decades. Earley and Gibson see the cause for this increase in the growing pressure on companies to work faster and cut down costs, as competition grows. In their opinion companies are using teams to find solutions for their problems.\textsuperscript{37}

There are several terms used to name a team consisting of members from at least two different nations, these are global, multinational, international or transnational.\textsuperscript{38} Other common expressions are intercultural, cross-cultural, multicultural and intercultural teams. Solomon differentiates global teams in intercultural teams and virtual teams. Intercultural teams consist of employees from different cultures who meet face-to-face to work on a project. Virtual teams consist of team members who stay in separated locations around the globe and communicate and meet each other with the help of technology.\textsuperscript{39}

Since we want to focus on cultural differences and their consequences for the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams we will use the term multicultural team throughout this thesis.

\textsuperscript{34} Christopher P. Earley and Aria Erez, “The transplanted executive: Why you need to understand how workers in other countries see the world differently”, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 93.
Cultural differences include the national and the organizational culture, and the term multicultural already expresses the involvement of several layers of culture like industry, organizational and national cultures. These layers of culture are not mentioned in the common definitions of multicultural teams. In our opinion, the term intercultural is associated more with national culture. Therefore we preferred the term multicultural because one of the central questions in multicultural collaboration is also how much the organizational behaviour is influenced by the national culture of the organizational members, and how much by its organizational culture, the industry or the technology that is being used.\textsuperscript{40}

A multicultural team is a group of people whose members come from different national cultures and work independently for a common goal.\textsuperscript{41} Multicultural team members do not necessarily have to differ in other layers of culture, which are stated above, than their national culture.

Companies working in a global environment today are not only facing the issue of introducing monocultural teamwork and making it successful. The building of high performing multicultural teams is according to Marquardt and Horvath the biggest challenge for organizations in the twenty-first century and yet the only way to be successful in global competition.\textsuperscript{42} Globalization and the growing complexity of tasks are the reasons for establishing multicultural teams.\textsuperscript{43} Marquardt and Horvath see the implementation of multicultural teams growing, but still most multicultural teams fail.\textsuperscript{44} Solomon also states that multicultural teams are the hardest challenge for organizations, but those teams can succeed.\textsuperscript{45}

Organizations with good functioning multicultural teams will outgrow competition, because they can gain a better understanding of local markets, they have better access to specialists, and therefore to knowledge and information.\textsuperscript{46} Due to their diversity, multicultural teams have a much broader perspective on issues. And the highly complex problems of the twenty-first century can only be solved by teams which combine innovative ideas and new ways of thinking.\textsuperscript{47} The implementation of multicultural teams also prevents organizations from inventing things

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40} Lisa Hoecklin, “Managing cultural differences: Strategies for competitive advantage”, (Wokingham, Addison-Wesley, 1994), p. 2.
\end{flushleft}
constantly new for every project because knowledge and experience crosses national borders. Multicultural teams enrich organizations through cultural synergy effects across business units regarding experience and knowledge.\textsuperscript{48} Another benefit of multicultural teams is the chance of providing the organization with a significant gain of productivity.\textsuperscript{49} The potential benefits of multicultural teams are often not realized because of intercultural difficulties.\textsuperscript{50} Due to different cultural backgrounds of team members perceptions and judgements vary within the multicultural team. This complicates working towards reaching goals. It is important to understand the effects of these cultural differences within the team because they can create negative emotions as they are rarely outspoken.\textsuperscript{51} Cultural differences can originate from different native languages and ways of communication, different worldviews, different assumptions how things function, different ways of information processing, different expectations about the right behaviour including showing emotions, making decisions, handling conflicts and leadership, differing stereotypes regarding each other in the team, different status in the organization, different access to resources, and a different demand for instructions and control.\textsuperscript{52}

Another major reason for the failure of multicultural projects is the fact that they are treated like monocultural ones because cultural diversity is not regarded as having an effect on the project. Since they are treated like monocultural projects, little skills are on hand to get these projects back on track once they are of. Since multicultural projects often involve higher costs, higher risk and possible higher benefits the management takes a closer look at intercultural projects. The tight control of the project performance can reduce the project effectiveness.\textsuperscript{53}

As a consequence of the possible benefits and the reasons for failure multicultural teams face the following challenges: effective and transparent communication, coordination of team members' activities, good relationships between the team members, appropriate management style and conflict management style.\textsuperscript{54} Another common challenge in multicultural teams is the lack of


\textsuperscript{53} Marcey Uday-Riley, “Eight Critical Steps to Improve Workplace Performance with Cross-cultural Teams”, \textit{Performance Improvement} 45, no. 6 (July 2006), pp. 28-29.

agreement, because not enough time is taken to make sure that everyone agrees.55

Teambuilding should include addressing potential problems that might arise during the project for example conflicts between project and line work and how to handle conflicts. A good way to enhance collaboration between the project team members is to assign tasks to two people. Lientz and Rea recommend assigning 40% of the task to “pairs”.56

The goals in a multicultural team should be to communicate and to learn from other team members instead of mistrusting them, and the development of empathy (trying to understand each others points of view) instead of rivalry besides the goal achievement. One way to achieve this is through awareness of culture to minimize negative assumptions.57 To be a successful multicultural team clarification of goals, complementary skills and experience of team members, clear roles, a high degree of motivation and commitment, cooperative climate and the provided technology are essential.58 In order to increase team effectiveness standards should be created for the teamwork and sanctions for violating those should be set. A system which monitors the team member’s contributions to the teamwork is important. Productive team discussions are essential and the team leader has to create an atmosphere in which all the team members feel comfortable to contribute to the discussions and s/he also has to encourage team members to participate in the discussions. The team should set itself achievable goals and team members must commit themselves to these goals. Continuous improvement on applied practices should be monitored.59
Multicultural teams should be evaluated in terms of group processes and goal achievement. Assessing how a multicultural team is doing according to broader criteria than only goal achievement gives management an insight about the potential of those teams regardless of their current goal achievement.60 These broader criteria should also include the satisfaction and the development of the team members regarding their experience gained through the multicultural teamwork.61

Since organizations try to reach higher goals with challenging multicultural teams, those teams

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need strong support, adequate evaluation and they have to be trained differently than monocultural teams.62

3.2 Conflict
Multicultural teams have due to their diversity a higher potential for conflicts than monocultural teams.63 In order to be able to benefit from multicultural teams it is indispensable to resolve conflicts among team members.64 “If we perceive each other as wanting mutually incompatible outcomes, we are in conflict. No matter how successful we have been in forming and maintaining relationships, conflict will occur.” Conflict itself is not good or bad but how conflict is handled can result in positive or negative consequences.65 According to Ting-Toomey and Oetzel conflicts in multicultural teams usually have five critical sources. These are cultural differences, unbalanced power, adaptation versus identity maintenance, conflicting goals or competition over resources.66 In order to resolve conflicts occurring due to the diverse cultures, team members have to be aware of the cultural differences and their consequences for the teamwork.67 If trust is not established within the team, good teamwork cannot be accomplished and unproductive conflict is likely. According to Govindarajan and Gupta trust is established, if people share similarities, communicate often and work on a common cultural ground. Most of these requirements are not given in multicultural teams, making it very difficult to establish trust. In order to resolve conflicts the authors point out the importance of clarifying the common goal and establishing certain behavioural patterns.68 Snell et al. see a working culture as the most important element for the integration of a team.69
When a conflict occurs, in order to resolve it, first the sources of the conflict and the involved actors have to be identified. Aims and goals of the involved parties are the hidden sources for conflict.70 Each conflict occurs in a context. The history of the conflict has to be identified and

the cultural and organizational factors that influence the conflict.\textsuperscript{71} Often conflicts in multicultural teams cannot be recognized by all the team members. Consequently the team member stating the conflict is left alone to understand and resolve it. Intercultural conflicts are not only about different ideas they also test deeply rooted assumptions about other people. When searching for a solution often less powerful members in multicultural teams “capitulate to the resolution methods of the more powerful members”. Problematic about this common practice is the fact that “few people act on decisions which they still quietly agree with or feel that the method by which they are arrived was biased or unfair”.\textsuperscript{72}

3.3 Team Culture

One major challenge of multicultural teams is to integrate the different cultures of the team members to build up a new or “third” culture - a team culture.\textsuperscript{73} The team culture should prevent team members from idealizing their own or the other culture, and should bring them in a rather “neutral” position concerning culture.\textsuperscript{74}

Gertsen et al. point out, that in multicultural teams a process of acculturation occurs, because different cultures have to work together. In their opinion one culture will always remain dominant in this process.\textsuperscript{75} The authors describe four acculturation modes that can be found in the acculturation process, these are assimilation, integration, separation and deculturation. Assimilation occurs if one culture replaces its cultural identity with that of the dominant culture. Integration means that the involved cultures move towards the dominant one while maintaining parts of their own identity. Separation leads to separate cultural identities, none is dominant. Deculturation means giving up one’s own culture and replacing it with the dominant culture.\textsuperscript{76}

These acculturation modes have to be carefully taken into account when creating a team culture, to make it possible for all the team members to identify themselves with the team culture and to avoid that one culture dominates.

To create a team culture and therefore to give a project team an identity, the team has to build psychological and physical boundaries around itself. These boundaries distinguish the team from

the “outside”. A part of the team culture is the team identity. The successful introduction of a team identity is among others accomplished through the definition of clear goals, the building up of trust among the team members and the creation of a shared vision. A vision gives the team a focus on the objectives of the project and distinguishes the team from the rest of the organization. In a multicultural team the team vision should also be multiculturally in order to overcome local and organizational culture, which is usually locally oriented, and to unite the team members under their own team culture. The team’s vision has to be developed not only by the team leader, but s/he has to develop it in cooperation with the team members. The vision has to fit to the setting of the team, as well as the strategy of the organization in order to point out the importance of the project for the whole organization. To increase the feeling of working in a team it is advisable to move the team to a special location and to create there the team logo or theme.

3.4 Organizational Setting

There exist only a few studies which focus on the organizational setting as an influential factor towards the project team. But the organization’s international experience will influence happenings in the team. Organizational factors influence how intercultural differences in the team are handled. Those organizational factors include the status of different cultures within the organization and the team as well as the similarity or difference between functional, organizational and other “cultures”, like ethnic and gender.

In order to successfully introduce multicultural teams the organization has to value diversity. Organizations need to take a systematic view into operating globally rather than simply creating multicultural teams and assuming everything will remain unchanged. Resistance to the intercultural work creates a sub-optimal organizational setting in which multicultural teams are placed, this affects their effectiveness. There are two actors in the organization that can build up a supportive environment for multicultural teams to enhance their effectiveness. The first actor is the senior management and the second one the human resources department.

Members of the senior management have two roles in the process of creating the organizational

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context for multicultural teams. They are leaders of the organization as a whole and they also lead multicultural teams. Senior management is responsible for the next step the focus on the organizational infrastructure. A working infrastructure can prevent that multicultural teams waste too much energy with inner organizational problems instead with the project itself. The organizational infrastructure consists of the organizational structure and operational policies and practices in order to support project teams. Another pre-requisite is the implementation of team-friendly operational policies and practices. Those practices have to be reviewed so they do not affect the multicultural team negatively. This can include the salary for performance, extra bonuses for goal accomplishment and so on. The senior manager itself can actively try to create diverse top teams. In order to have successful multicultural teams in an organization its managers have to select people outside their immediate culture for top teams. Senior managers also have to be actively involved with multicultural teams they create, as sponsors or mentors. If that is done multicultural teams perform more effectively and deliver on time and within budget. Senior management should also help multicultural teams to identify stakeholders, provide an overview and assist in conflict resolution. Senior management should support the multicultural team throughout the whole project. Senior managers are role models for team leaders and members.

Organizations have to develop a human resources strategy that provides support for multicultural teams. Truly global organizations which implement multicultural teams as core elements have to make a fundamental review of their human resources strategy. The global human resources strategy should take the entire organization into account. The human resources department has to be accessible and respond to employees’ demands. Like the senior management also the human resources department itself should be a multicultural team and serve as a role model for all other multicultural teams in the organization.

3.5 Culture

In order to understand cultural differences and their consequences, we first have to understand culture in itself. Since culture does not only define the way we work and manage, culture also affects everyday business routines like the way how a meeting is lead, how decisions are made,
how memos are written and what titles are used.\textsuperscript{87} There are many different ways of defining culture, and numerous studies have been done on the subject. Lustig and Koester define culture as “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behaviour of a relatively large group of people”.\textsuperscript{88}

Culture is not always bound to national borders, as it has developed much longer in history, than most of these borders exist. This makes culture differ within nations as well. In our thesis we want to focus on the German and the Swedish culture, and in order to make it understandable, and also because we are researchers in the field of business administration and not in the field of cultural studies, we will use the national borders to define a group which shares a common national culture and refer to Germany and Sweden.

The important aspect when looking at culture is that culture is not something humans are born with, it is learned.\textsuperscript{89} Another important fact about culture is its invisible appearance; it consists of a certain set of symbols, those are words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry often complex meanings recognized as such only by people from the same culture.\textsuperscript{90} The shared symbols affect the behaviour of the members of a culture.\textsuperscript{91} This behaviour is the only visible sign an outsider is able to recognize of a culture.\textsuperscript{92} Culture can be seen as an iceberg, most of the elements of culture are hidden, and just a little amount of things is visible.\textsuperscript{93} Often rules and norms of the own culture do not become explicit until they are violated.\textsuperscript{94}

Culture is complex there are more factors or determinants of one’s own culture except the country one is living in. Those determinants are history, family, region, climate, technology, neighbourhood, education, religion, profession, social class, gender, race, generation and organizational culture.\textsuperscript{95} Organizational culture is a number of practices inside an organization that are passed on from one generation of employees to the other. Those practices tell employees

\textsuperscript{94} Margit Brecleke, „Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation“, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), p. 25.
how to behave in certain situations.96

How important each determinant is depends on the characteristics of the national culture and the situation of the individual.97 Culture originates out of several components; here we explain just the most important ones. History is a very important force for forming a culture, as it determines the experiences of a certain group of people.98 The religion of a group of people also influences its behaviour. Climate affects culture, people adapt to the climate for example with behaviours, architecture etc. Just thinking of the “siesta” taken in the warmer countries, whereas this break during the hottest time of the day is not needed in cooler climates. Technology models and alters a culture, like the introduction of e-mails and mobile phone which has changed the way people communicate.

Even though culture is passed on from generation to generation, it is subject to change.99 “Cultures are dynamically stable”. Dynamic and stable is normally a contradicting pair of terms which suits culture very well. Cultures change over time. The basic value orientations change very slowly. At the same time culture is influenced by economic, political, demographic and social changes. Since these conditions change quite fast cultures need to adapt to these changes.100 Culture produces what we think and we also produce culture by what we think, what we decide and what we do. Cultures are full of tensions. These tensions are the reason why changes occur.101 This can be recognized in the values every culture shares which change over time. Macionis defines values as “culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty that serve as broad guidelines of social living”.102 This definition of values emphasizes the fact that values cannot exist without culture and vice versa. Several values co-exist in a culture. In order to understand another culture one has to understand the relationships between its values and the contexts of those different relationships.103

The most obvious fact usually recognized when meeting different cultures is the difference in language. Language strongly influences a culture and its communication. Different cultures also

differ strongly in the way how people are motivated. Dysfunctions in the interaction between members from different cultures due to different knowledge and interaction conventions are called cultural differences. Cultural differences do not only occur between members from very different cultures that are far away concerning language, geography, history, politics, religion and society they also occurs between members from “close” cultures. That is why we expect cultural differences between Germans and Swedes even though both languages are Germanic and both countries are located in Europe. Cultural differences between “close” cultures are even more severe since one expects a more proper behaviour than from members of “far away” cultures.

When looking at members of a culture it is important that individuals can switch cultural orientations due to the current situation they are in for example at work, in the family or when meeting friends. Consequently it is important to make not too many assumptions about a person with another cultural background. It is possible to understand the main value orientations of a national culture but each individual we meet may vary significantly. Therefore paying attention, listening and observing and the flexibility to adapt is necessary. “No culture is without internal variation.”

3.5.1 Models of Culture
In the following we will present three models of culture from important scholars in the field of cultural studies.

3.5.1.1 Geert Hofstede
In order to classify and to compare national cultures Hofstede developed a five dimensional model. His model is a typology model, this means that each of the dimensions has two extreme sides, these are the ideal types. Usually the scores for a country can be found in between the ideal types. The dimensions Hofstede developed out of his study of 23 countries are: Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity and long- versus short-term orientation. In order to make a classification of a culture, the categories are used together with their counterparts.

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105 Margit Breckle, „Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation“, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 26-27.
• Power Distance

In Hofstede’s model power distance is the relationship between the boss and the subordinate in from the perspective of the subordinate. The way in which power is used within an organization and its hierarchy, depends on the values of the superiors and the subordinates. Power distance is determined by culture and therefore a certain power distance is accepted by the members of the same culture.110

Sweden and Germany are both comparably low power distance countries. This means that the people holding power in these countries behave more like others around them and do not need to show off their power but rather underplay it. The striving for harmony between the powerful and the powerless is strong. Naturally conflicts occur but in low power distance cultures these are rather result oriented than personal. Organizations in low power distance cultures are characterized among others by flat hierarchies, few supervisors, democratic leadership and consultancy of subordinates and leaders in decision making processes.111

• Uncertainty Avoidance

Each society has a different way in dealing with uncertainty. The more a culture wants to avoid uncertainty, the more rules are made. Rituals are also a way of avoiding uncertainty. Hofstede sees it as important to point out, that uncertainty avoidance is not the same as risk avoidance. As opposed to uncertainty, risk is very specific, focusing on only one issue, whereas uncertainty covers a much broader field. The way people tolerate uncertainty is determined by their own personality and by their culture.112

Germany has a medium uncertainty avoidance index; Sweden has a low uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede low uncertainty avoidance leads to less stress at work and controlled emotions. It also leads to a quicker change of employers, smaller companies, more career ambition, and competition among employees. The breaking of rules is allowed when necessary, trust exists among people and the resistance to change is comparably low. People in cultures with a low uncertainty avoidance take life more easily and feel no urge for being busy. Diversity is tolerated, as well as change. “What is different is curious.” Chaos is alright and people feel able to influence their life by themselves. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance the opposite

characteristics as described above can be found. As Germany has a medium uncertainty avoidance on Hofstede’s scale it has to be seen as a mixture of these two extremes.

- Individualism versus Collectivism
  This dimension shows the relationship between the individual and the rest of the society. In collectivistic cultures people feel more responsible for their organization and the other way around. Employees in an individualistic culture are very much focused on their self-interest. Therefore it is important that the interest of their organization or workplace is similar as their self-interest. In a collectivistic culture it is important that the employee fits into the group. The employee will act to fulfil the need of the group, even if this is not identical with his/her own interest. In a collectivistic society personal relationships are more important than the tasks or the organization. In individualistic societies the task and the organization are more important than the society.

  Germany and Sweden both have a high individualism score. According to Hofstede this means that decisions about hiring and promotion are failed on the basis of skills and not on the basis of personal relationships, rather do family relationships form a difficult basis for hiring. The commitment of the employee to the work and the organization is high. The best performance from individuals is reached when they perform individually.

- Masculinity versus Femininity
  This dimension shows how strong the differences between the values of males and females are among the cultures.

  In masculine cultures status symbols are of higher value compared to feminine cultures. In masculine cultures material rewards, performance and competition are valued in the work place, whereas in feminine cultures relationships and quality of life are important. In masculine cultures payments are based on equity, whereas in feminine cultures payments are based on equality. Feminine societies also fight more for the equality of women. In masculine countries conflicts can be solved by “a good fight”, whereas in feminine cultures conflicts are solved through

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“compromise and negotiation.” Feminine countries “work in order to live”, they see managers as usual employees, and more women can be found in management positions. These female managers adapt their careers to their families; the preference goes more to fewer working hours. Masculine cultures “live in order to work”, competition and equity is important in the job and managers are seen as “cultural heroes”, few women can be found in management positions and the wage difference between the genders is strong. The career expectations are high and the family comes after the career, higher pay and larger companies are preferred.\(^{118}\)

Sweden is the most feminine country in Hofstede’s study but this does not mean that there are no differences in the values of men and women in Sweden. It means that more values are shared between the genders. Germany and Sweden differ greatly in the masculinity dimension. According to Hofstede cultures with a low masculinity index, like Sweden, value cooperation at work and a cooperative relationship with their superior, security in employment is important, job stress is lower and smaller companies are preferred. In cultures which score high on the masculinity index, like Germany, people find a challenging job important, as well as advancement and the level of earnings. The stress in the job is higher and large corporations are preferred.\(^{119}\)

- **Long- versus Short-Term Orientation**

Long-term versus short-term orientation is related to the choice of focus for people’s efforts: the future or the present.\(^{120}\) The long-term versus short-term dimension was not considered in the first study of Hofstede, which only included western cultures, but in Hofstede’s second study in 1985, in which he studied 23 countries, the questionnaire was developed for eastern people as well. Hofstede believes that the long-term versus short-term dimension is based on Confucian thinking which also includes these dimensions. The study (Chinese Value Survey) showed, that eastern countries score highest in the long-term orientation, western countries score low and some developing countries score lowest.

Germany and Sweden score similarly low in this dimension.

Hofstede emphasises that in his statistical analysis the dimensions were able to describe 49% of the variances in the data; the other 51 percent are specific to each country and cannot be conceptualized.\(^{121}\)


• Critic about Hofstede’s Model

Hofstede’s dimensions are linear continuums this means by being individualistic one cannot be collectivistic at the same time.\textsuperscript{122} Repetitions of his studies, using his model and questionnaire, came to strongly deviating results.\textsuperscript{123} Countries are not equivalent to cultures, different cultures can co-exist in a country like Switzerland, also some cultures cross national borders. This is not considered in his model. Nowadays one can say that his data is after 30 years already too old. The main critic point is the limitation of the study to IBM. IBM had already a strong organizational culture worldwide in the 60ies and 70ies, so that organizational culture differed to some national cultures strongly so the question can be asked to what extent the study reflects the national cultures and to what extent the organizational culture of IBM at that time.\textsuperscript{124} Therefore the scores are not an accurate description of national cultures as a whole; the scores can be seen as an indication of differences and similarities across employees at IBM in different countries.\textsuperscript{125}

3.5.1.2 Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck analyze culture from an anthropological perspective. Anthropologists “regard knowledge of the basic assumptions of a people as indispensable to the interpretation of concrete behaviour.”\textsuperscript{126} They developed five universal questions each individual has to deal with. They see their questions as universal because each of them addresses an issue to which everyone at all times has to find a solution for. They add that a range of possible solutions can be found in a society, but each society has a dominant solution to each of the questions.\textsuperscript{127} Their questions refer to the basic value orientations of an individual. The questions are:

• What is the character of human nature?

Kluckhohn und Strodtbeck distinguish the character of human nature in the divisions good, good and evil, neutral and evil. They further divide each of the divisions into mutable and immutable;

\textsuperscript{124} Herman Blom and Harald Meier, “Interkulturelles Management: Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Internationales Personalmanagement, Diversity-Ansätze im Unternehmen”, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Berlin, Verlag Neue Wirtschafts-Briefe, 2004), p. 56.
this sub-division describes how variable each of the four divisions is.\textsuperscript{128}

- **What is the relation of man to nature?**

To characterize the relation of humans to nature Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck recognize three main attitudes. The first attitude includes the idea that people are mastered by nature, making natural happenings indomitable for humankind. The second attitude is a harmonic relation with nature. Here nature is seen as a part of life and not as a force to fight against. The third attitude conveys the view of people’s ability to control nature.\textsuperscript{129} This is for example the Western point of view and can exemplarily be found in the science of cloning and genetics.

- **What is the orientation towards time?**

With this universal question Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck again distinguish between three concepts. On the one end of the scale is the orientation towards the past, history and traditions are strongly valued and used as guidelines within a culture. In the middle of the scale one finds a strong emphasis on the present, the only thing really existing for these cultures is the here and now. The other end of the scale is marked by a strong orientation towards the future people strive to reach something higher in the future and seldom look backwards.\textsuperscript{130} The two researchers point out that one can predict the direction of a change within a culture on the basis of the time orientation.\textsuperscript{131}

- **What is the value placed on activity?**

The activity orientation question distinguishes between being, being-in-becoming and doing.\textsuperscript{132} This value orientation describes the way of self-expression through activity. Being oriented cultures are very spontaneous; act on desires and impulses and like to enjoy the moment, whereas being-in-becoming cultures emphasize the idea of development and growth through the activity. According to Samovar and Porter this is especially strong in cultures in which meditation plays an important role in life. The end of the scale is marked by doing oriented cultures. Doing and acting straight away is valued as important, decisions are taken quickly and accomplishments have


\textsuperscript{130} Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, “Communication between cultures”, 5th ed. (Belmont, Thomson Learning, 2004), pp. 73-74.


\textsuperscript{132} Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, “Communication between cultures”, 5th ed. (Belmont, Thomson Learning, 2004), pp. 74-75.
to be measurable in those cultures.\textsuperscript{133}

- What is the relationship of people to each other?

Relationships between people differ among cultures and can be divided into the orientation towards authority, collectiveness or individualism. The authority dimension describes the value which is given to the autonomy of the individual. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck point out that collectiveness can be found in every society, they say that “The individual is not a human being except as he is a part of a social order, […].”\textsuperscript{134} The degree to which a society is collectivist can be seen in the value attached to group goals over individual goals or the other way around when a society is individualistic.\textsuperscript{135} This idea strongly correlates with Hofstede’s dimension of power distance, and is very important when looking at leadership styles within countries, as members of a certain culture are used to a certain amount of authority, a certain degree of individualism or collectivism when they work, or when decisions are made.\textsuperscript{136}

- Critic on Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s Model

First of all the research of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck dates back to the early sixties and their findings might not be contemporary. The researchers conducted their research among three American tribes, their research does not include other cultures and therefore the applicability is restricted. This is also the reason why we do not refer to the way in which the German or Swedish culture is rated in the universal questions of the two authors.

3.5.1.3 Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner are also well known researchers in the field of cultural studies. They did their research on business culture and their findings brought them to the identification of three universal problems. Due to these problems every culture developed solutions, national cultures differ in these solutions. The solutions to those problems divide the three categories further into seven dimensions.\textsuperscript{137}


• Relationships with People
This category describes the way human beings deal with each other and can further be broken down into five dimensions:
  o Universalism versus Particularism
This dimension defines how other people’s behaviour is judged. On the one hand universalistic cultures believe that what has been right once will always be right, whereas particularistic cultures believe that every situation has a unique solution and not one best way exists which must always be followed. Particular cultures also put more emphasis on the obligation of relationships. Therefore other rules exist for friends and family.\(^{138}\) Whereas universalistic cultures apply the same rules and treatment to all people in all situations and make no differences between friends and other people.\(^ {139}\) In particular cultures persons are protected no matter what the rules say.\(^ {140}\) In universalistic cultures it is feared to make exceptions because it weakens the rule and the system will collapse. Therefore everybody is treated equally.\(^ {141}\) Germans live in a universal code of rules and law.\(^ {142}\) The German culture is highly universalistic or rule-based, crossing of a red light even when there is no traffic is an unaccepted behaviour. Also Sweden is a universalistic country.\(^ {143}\)
  o Individualism versus Communitarianism
This dimension determines if people rather see themselves as individuals or as part of a group. This dimension also includes if the individual with its goals is valued over the collective with its demands and interests.\(^ {144}\) Trompnaars and Hampden-Turner assess this dimension with its two forms as rather complementary than opposing. Individualistic cultures believe that the contribution of each employee can be singled out and that each employee should try to distinguish him or herself from colleagues. None of this may apply in communitarian cultures.\(^ {145}\)

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Communitarian cultures share information.\textsuperscript{146} This dimension also affects how decisions are made. In communitarian cultures the decision making process usually takes longer since one tries to achieve consensus, not taking quick votes that do not respect the opinions of every group member. For individualistic countries this seems to be a “waste” of time.\textsuperscript{147} Germany is a communitarian culture.\textsuperscript{148} Whereas Sweden is according to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s study an individualistic culture.\textsuperscript{149}

- **Neutral versus Emotional**

This dimension answers the question if people show their emotions in public or keep them neutrally inside themselves.\textsuperscript{150} Neutral cultures consider anger, delight or intensity in the workplace as “unprofessional”,\textsuperscript{151} while in emotional cultures business is a human affair and therefore the entire range of emotions is appropriate.\textsuperscript{152} The dimension also gives an answer to the question if emotions should be separated from reasoning.\textsuperscript{153} Swedes are emotionally neutral meaning they do not reveal what they think or feel.\textsuperscript{154} At the same time Swedes separate reasoning and emotions.\textsuperscript{155} The authors do not state their findings concerning the German culture in their research.

- **Specific versus Diffuse**

Certain cultures prefer business relationships which are regulated by specific contracts, in those cultures there are also clear borders between business and private life. While in diffuse cultures people prefer personal relationships with diffuse borders between private and business life. In some diffuse cultures a diffuse relationship is even necessary before business can be done.\textsuperscript{156} In specific cultures every situation has a specific border and is different to another situation.

Meeting the boss privately is a different situation than meeting him in the office. Even the roles can change so that in private life the subordinate teaches his superior for example golf. In diffuse cultures the boss is even outside his responsibility superior regarding knowledge and opinion about other aspects of life. Specific cultures have a rather small private life which is clearly separated from work. For members of specific cultures it is much easier to criticise people without desolating the entire life of that person. The private life in Germany has diffuse borders meaning that the identity of Germans does not change so much in different situations of private life. A professor will be a “Herr Professor” at a party, in the supermarket and on the street. The title is a permanent extension of someone’s person and relevant in almost every situation in private life. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner do not state their findings about the Swedish culture in their original work.

- Achievement versus Ascription

Achievement cultures value accomplishments that individuals accomplished, whereas ascription cultures pay more attention to status. The status can derive from birth, kinship, gender, age, social connections and educational record. In ascription cultures it matters which educational institution was visited while in achievement cultures the subject of education matters. Achieved status derives from doing whereas ascribed status derives from being. In ascribed cultures managers have to know answers to all questions and should not admit in public that they do not know the answer in order to live up to the ascribed status. By this behaviour mangers in ascribed cultures try to justify their status after they received it. In praxis the achieved and ascribed status can be interdependent. Germany is one of the countries in which achieved and ascribed status are interwoven. In the Swedish culture status derives from achievements of the individuals.
• Attitudes towards Time

Attitudes towards time differ between a focus on the past, present and future. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner focus their model on business cultures and therefore characterize the attitudes towards time with regard to the achievements of a business person. Cultures differ in the way how employees are judged. In past cultures achievements of the past are the basis for the judgment, in present cultures the present performance and in future cultures the potential of an employee.

Some cultures perceive time as a straight line, a sequence of disparate events called sequential. Whereas other cultures perceive time as a moving circle including the past, present and future opportunities called synchronic.

The different time perceptions sequential versus synchronic influence how plans, strategy and investments are made.\(^{166}\) In a synchronic culture the past, present and future are interrelated, the ideas about the future and the experience from the past influence the present actions.\(^{167}\) Germany has synchronized attitude towards time for Germans the present and the future are very strongly interrelated.\(^{168}\) In Sweden time is perceived sequential.\(^{169}\) This can be recognized in the sequential order customers are served in some shops using numbers which determine who will be served first and who will be served next.

Sequential versus synchronic cultures are further divided by the amount of activities going on at the same time. In synchronic cultures several activities are going on at the same time. In sequential cultures one thing is done at a time. Members from sequential cultures might feel insulted by members from synchronic cultures who do several things at the same time while for example talking to them. In sequential cultures like Germany and Sweden punctuality is highly valued due to a plan of events whereas in synchronic cultures people feel offended by the lack of “spontaneity”.\(^{170}\)

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner also made research whether cultures have a long- or short-term time horizon. The Swedes have a long-term horizon which the two researchers explain with the long winter in Sweden.\(^{171}\) The authors do not state which time horizon applies for Germany.

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167 Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner, “Riding the waves of culture“, 2nd ed. (London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1997), p. 120.
• Attitudes towards the Environment

This dimension describes if a culture acts against its environment and tries to control it or if a culture acts with its environment and goes along with nature since man is a part of it. The controlling attitude towards nature is called inner-directed; organizations have to obey the will of their operators. The latter is called outer-directed meaning that organizations itself are products of their environment. The dimension also includes to which extend people believe that they themselves are responsible for their success or not. In inner-directed cultures people are responsible for their actions and therefore their success while in outer-directed cultures success is also explained with other forces that are outside the organization or the individual like the market.\textsuperscript{172} Swedes are rather outer- than inner-directed.\textsuperscript{173} Some outer-directed cultures do not welcome debates and confrontations and are willing to compromise.\textsuperscript{174} The authors do not state their findings of the German culture concerning this dimension in their research.

Limitations of the cultural models

The dimensions are useful tools to explain behaviour of people from different cultures. They also help to make comparisons between different cultures but do not explain variations of behaviour in one culture.\textsuperscript{175} There does not something like the Swede or the German exist. The danger of bipolar dimensions is that they lead to stereotyping entire cultures.\textsuperscript{176} It is important to keep in mind that the cultural dimensions or orientations in the models of culture are not separated from each other.\textsuperscript{177}

3.5.2 German Business Culture

When describing the German business culture Lewis emphasizes the strict organizational boundaries between the departments of organizations. If a certain kind of information is needed or passed on, it is important to reach the correct person. He also describes the German boss as a

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rather “private person”, as s/he is usually sitting in a private room behind closed doors and only passing information down to his/her immediate subordinates. The closed doors cannot only be found at the boss’ office, but in almost all other offices and also in private life. This is because privacy is important; knocking is expected before entering a room with a closed door. But these closed doors do not only lock out disturbances, they also show the subordinates that the boss is not constantly looking over their shoulder.

The life of Germans is defined by isolated structures, this leads in business life to the situation, that information is shared only in the work groups and not between them. According to Sivesind German leaders value friendship on the workplace as not so important, sometimes even see it as a disadvantage for the equal treatment of subordinates. When it comes to wages, the German norm of equity legitimates differences in wages related to the complexity of the job, the competence needed to carry it out and the level of responsibility. Within the German organization responsibility is usually put on only a few members of the organization and is not carried by everyone. German companies are hierarchical and the organizational structure is specialized. Standardization and certification of skills are used for coordination and control.

Germans are formal, it is not only important to know this when it comes to being correctly dressed at the workplace, but also when it comes to the polite usage of surnames and titles in order to show respect to each other. First names are only used in friendships, which are valued as deep and usually long lasting. The breaking down of the barrier between the formal and intimate way of saying you, using the “Du” instead of the “Sie”, can be for many Germans an important step. A clear distinction can be found between the private and the professional life. When you meet a colleague after work a different language and approach towards the person is used, but this will be different again when meeting with the colleague at the work place the next

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180 Karl Henrik Sivesind, “The indispensable role of culture - Explaining different organisations and understandings by comparison of German and Norwegian factories” (Ph.D. diss, University of Oslo, 1997), p. 143.
181 Karl Henrik Sivesind, “The indispensable role of culture - Explaining different organisations and understandings by comparison of German and Norwegian factories” (Ph.D. diss, University of Oslo, 1997), pp. ix-2.
182 Margit Breckle, “Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation”, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 43-44.
morning. In Germany friendships usually form during the leisure time, few friendships develop in the work place. Private things are usually not known and not talked about at the work place, only when colleagues have a close relationship. Friendship is highly valued and friends are treated in a very special way. Helping others, being hospitable and emotional, and touching the other to show closeness is very usual in friendships.

In the professional life Germans prefer the content level in communication. Germans come straight to the point and like to stick to the content and not talk around it. The content oriented communication style can be offending for others, especially when the weak points of a problem are analyzed without mercy. When problems arise during the work they have to be reported immediately, so that all the parties involved can discuss and find a way in which the problem can be minimized. Honesty when mistakes, also ones own mistakes, occur is seen as being responsible, self-confident and reliable. It does not mean that the person reporting the problem is incompetent. The expectations of others that problems will be reported can be so much taken for granted, that a superior does not even ask for problems but sees it as natural that everything works like planned when nothing else is reported. Not only in business communications, but also in private life content information dominates the communication and emotions are often suppressed. Small talk is considered as goalless, taking up time and as exhausting. Emotionality dominates the private life, but is seen as unprofessional in business life. In business life trust is build up over the content level. If people work well together on the content level, than they see each other as trustworthy. Experts show their knowledge through well preparation and competence, this leads to a positive impact on the interpersonal level. If someone's performance is disappointing on the content level, a good interpersonal relation will not develop. To businessmen Lewis gives the advice to be well prepared at meetings, which usually follow a strict hierarchical order. As the German businessmen will be well informed, have

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logic arguments and will be prepared for counter-arguments. Germans are very goal oriented and argument with facts. Written documents are highly valued. In business life Germans value money, costs, profits and cost-benefit thinking. In Germany facts are more important than face and therefore honesty and directness about facts is more important than politeness. In this way Germans are very self-assured; other cultures often experience this behaviour as arrogant. This is often the case in professional life. Many Germans are experts in their area and think that they are free to speak even without being asked, they are not scared to criticise others openly.

The decision making process in Germany is slow. Facts are analyzed thoroughly. This is done to make sure that any possible outcome is considered. Reaching a consensus is very important. Long discussions will be held and everyone has the chance to add his/her opinion, until in the end a decision is failed. This process might be a long one, but in the end the decision is failed with the support of everyone and therefore everyone will oblige to it. Germans are also avoiding risks, nothing is left to happen by chance and risks are avoided with good planning. Decisions can therefore take a long time because a lot of planning has to be done. For Germans negotiating is rather a competitive than collaborative task.

Germans view conflict as a symptom of being unprepared. The German behaviour towards conflicts is very direct; conflicts are not avoided but rather treated as useful to analyze problems. Direct confrontations and arguments are not seen as a personal attack. Long factual debates take place, instead of emotional resolutions. This leads to a long resolution cycle, starting with what is now and not what is in the future, a compromise of the facts is looked for.

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Germans love structures (e.g. laws, rules, and regulations) they exist for everything and are there because Germans have the need for clear and reliable orientations, minimizing risks and sources of failures. When Germans plan, organize, structure and systematize they do so because they are convinced that this is the best way to do it. Lessons from the past are taken into account; Germans like to look back on the past. Written contracts are valued and often used to regulate things and to give security to both sides. Germans like to negotiate the terms according to which will be worked before the process is started, and then work along the terms. When things should be changed in the work process, this has to be discussed and a new rule made, before the change can be implemented. In Germany there exists some kind of internal control for following all the rules and plans. Usually this does not have to be checked, but it is natural for everyone to work for fulfilling the plan and to be aware of and follow the existing rules. This makes Germans reliable, because the rules are accepted as they are and seen as the best way to fulfil the tasks. The rules have to be followed, no one has special rights, and every one is to be treated in the same way when it comes to obligations. It is usual to tell others when they make a mistake and do not follow a rule.

Responsibilities in the work place are very important and people only do the job they are responsible for. They do not like to get interrupted during their work and prefer to do one thing at a time and to finish something before they start something new. Otherwise they easily feel stressed. This makes others experience the Germans as inflexible. The sentence “I do not have time right now!” often hurts people from other cultures as they feel that their matter is not important.

Time is very important for Germans and plans are made for a long period of time. Sometimes it seems as if the people are caught into their appointments and plans also in private life, on the

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other hand the strict sticking to plans makes the Germans reliable.\textsuperscript{214} After finishing the work small talk and fun can take place, but not in between.\textsuperscript{215} Germans try to do a job better than anybody else and to show, through a combination of steady performance and some bureaucratic manoeuvring, that they deserve promotion and can carry higher responsibilities.\textsuperscript{216} Germans hate to fail; they do everything to free themselves from failure.\textsuperscript{217}

\subsection*{3.5.3 Swedish Business Culture}

Swedes are very punctual not only at the workplace also in private life. Many things at work and home are planned, organized and scheduled carefully, “and it can throw the schedule off if things are delayed.” Since they do not let other people wait Swedes are surprised if they have to wait even if it is “just” for ten minutes. Punctuality is a part of Swedish respect for other people’s time. Swedes are patient and offended by others impatience.\textsuperscript{218} Swedes also like to stick to agendas at meetings, even when some other points seem to be more important at that moment.\textsuperscript{219}

Another characteristic of Swedish business culture is the distance Swedish people often keep to others, for example not inviting them to their family or to dinner after the business is done. The habit of not talking about personal things at work and avoiding small talk is also unusual for many people from other cultures.\textsuperscript{220} Swedes draw a clear border between private life and work life therefore for Swedes it is normal to not socialize privately with their colleagues even after working together for a couple of years. This fact does not contradict with the fact that a lot of Swedes regard their colleagues as among their closest friends. In Sweden a good friendship at work does not lead necessarily to private socializing.\textsuperscript{221} Daun writes about this, “it may appear that Swedes display an unsympathetic and impractical rigidity when it comes to human relations”.\textsuperscript{222} But most of the time Swedes will be comfortable with people they have not met

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before quicker than one expects. Swedes are not so good at small talk. Swedes rather fast reveal the point without being confrontational. Swedes will remain silent if it is impossible to be direct without confrontation. A Swede may want to contradict, but be too reserved or afraid of being rude to do so, and remain quiet. On the other hand, if a Swede agrees one will probably hear about that. Swedes generally prefer to be straightforward, and believe that being open is very important, this does not apply for private or emotional issues.223

The two most important concepts in the Swedish society are “lagom” and “trygghet”. “Lagom” means “just right”.224 In order to keep up the solidarity within the Swedish society “lagom” is a principle which minimizes envy and therefore helps to sustain the Swedish solidarity. “Lagom” means do not take too much and do not take too little.225 The principle of “lagom” for the working place means one should work hard, but not too much. “Trygghet” means security or safety and is another main concept of Swedish society. The Swedish demand for safety affects all aspects of life also in the working place high emphasis is put on worker safety.226 Another important concept of the Swedish culture is “jantelagen”. The “jante” law “counsels people to not boast or try to lift themselves above others’. Due to the “jante” law many Swedes strive to be like all others. Being average and in order are good traits. Competition is judged as negative, cooperation and consensus are valued higher.227 Swedes downplay their achievements and do not look for extra credit for well done work in order to not stick out of the group.228 On the other hand Edström and Margolies point out how this conformity makes it easier for the Swedes to work in teams, seeing them as natural with high trust.229

Organizational structures in Sweden are most of the time flat. The small power distance leads to decentralization, and emphasis on democracy in Swedish companies.230 Managing directors are accessible for all employees and open for discussions. Relations between employees from different job levels are normally open and informal; the same applies for the casual dress code.231 When making major decisions, discussions with the whole staff become of great importance, as

there even exists a Swedish law stipulating the involvement of staff in important decisions. The downside of this collectivistic approach to decision making is the avoidance of conflict and competition within an organization, the fear of confrontation and the reliance on the group for initiatives, as well as rather long decision making processes. Swedes prefer to be cautious and foresee the risk before making a decision. Before deciding everything has to be evaluated and documented as it is always better to be on the safe side. This attitude fits well with the Swedish way to plan, to predict and the preference for consensus. In Swedish opinion a decision with disagreement cannot be a good decision. After making a decision Swedes will stick to it in accordance with their demand for reliability.

Swedes have a strong work ethic, they work hard and are generally loyal to their job and their company, and they take pride in the work they do. A refreshing difference between Sweden and many other countries is that there is respect for work across the spectrum of jobs; from a factory worker to a teacher, or a bus driver to a doctor, Swedes take pride in their work and strive to do well. But their private time is also very important for them. This does not mean they will never work overtime, but in order to convince them a good reason is needed. Remarkable of the Swedish business life is the large percentage of women in business, as the number of females with a paid job equals that of men. At the same time family life is very important for Swedes, because they often have arrangements with child carers they prefer to leave on time. Just as they arrive on time. This is the same with taking work home, which does not often occur.

The Swedish preference for directness and efficiency affects the daily language usage. Swedes use as less words as possible. Many words are not only a waste of time and energy it is also superficial. Swedes are factual when they present things. Swedes dislike interruptions while talking, they will wait for natural pauses in conversations. In the Swedish concept of fairness honesty and reliability are important. They influence the way Swedes are open about things and speak directly. Seldom Swedes will think or reason aloud. They will either answer right away or keep quiet until they have made up their minds.

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While Swedes speak they do not gesticulate or move very much, they rely on the words alone to convey their message. Daun explains the low amount of gesticulation with the “lagom” principle in Swedish society. Swedes also do not show and express emotions in discussions emotional arguments are not valued highly. Just rational arguments are accepted. The Swedish way of avoiding conflicts, except in the family, reinforces the tendency to not express emotions. A common solution is to end conversations with disagreements by stopping to talk to each other. Here again the strive for consensus in Swedish society is inherent to avoid discomfort and uncertainty. Swedes also incline to take critic personally when their opinion is criticized in public. To avoid conflicts is also a Swedish way to respect the other person. Swedes do not raise their voice when actively engaged in a discussion a loud voice is considered as unruly. Swedes value silence very high. Silence between friends is seen as a positives sign. Being quiet is a compliment for Swedes. They dislike talking for talking’s sake. They are concerned about the importance of what they say and what consequences the words have as well as how others could interpret it.

3.5.4 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication includes the same concepts as communication in general; therefore we will first present basics of communication.

According to Adler’s communication model individuals are sending and receiving messages through the interaction of communication. The goal of the communication process is the mutual understanding of meanings between the sender and the receiver. Communication does not only include the sharing of information also emotions, ideas, opinions, instructions for the other person and encouragement can be shared. At the end counts what message the receiver receives and not what the sender tried to send. The sender of the message in communication is

not always aware of what s/he is sending. Communication is successful if the receiver understands the message in the way the sender intended it. Rules about communication are: It is impossible to not communicate, because all human behaviour turns into communication. With meeting another person communication starts. Communication is non reversible. Said things are said they can just be explained or excused afterwards. Communication takes place in a context. The context is defined among other things by the time, location and the cultural background of the sender and receiver. Communication is dynamic. The sender and receiver change their roles constantly. Communication does not always work. In some cases the message does not reach the receiver. In other cases the receiver ignores the sender and its message in order to communicate his/her lack of interest. Since sender and receiver did not exchange information in both cases communication was unsuccessful.

Unsuccessful communication can already occur when members of the same culture communicate with each other. Consequently the communication between members of different cultures potentially leads to more misunderstandings. Intercultural communication is concerned with the communication between individuals from different cultures. Since members of multicultural project teams have different cultural backgrounds the communication in the team is intercultural. Rehbein describes misunderstanding as the key problem in intercultural communication. The sender is not only influenced by his or her own cultural background in the intercultural communication process but also by the expectations s/he has regarding the receiver, like stereotypes.

Misunderstanding between members of different cultures are more probable if the difference between the cultures is extensive. Misunderstandings in intercultural communication occur due to misperception, misinterpretation and misevaluation. Perception is selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent and inaccurate. Perception is the result of selecting ideas, opinions, and tendencies in our surroundings. One is constantly bombarded with many stimuli from the

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environment; however one is not able to pay attention to all of them. Objects that do not catch our attention are ignored. Interpretation is the giving of meaning to observations and relationships. It is the way one makes sense out of one’s perceptions. Interpretations guide the behaviour. Interpretations are strongly influenced by culture. Misinterpretation especially in intercultural communication happens because individuals group their perceptions according to their own cultural background, called categorization. A special form of categorizing other cultures is stereotyping. The way in which situations are interpreted is also strongly influenced by culture. Intercultural misinterpretations are also due to the lack of cultural self-awareness and projected similarity. In order to minimize misunderstandings it is very important in intercultural communication situations to have the ability to stand back from oneself and to realize that things might be unknown, guesses might be wrong, interpretations might not make sense and that insecurity about the situation is present.

Verbal Communication

The same words have different meaning across cultures. Each language has its own word pool due to that often synonyms do not exist because the other language does not have a word for that term. The language points out the things which are important in a culture. For example in German there exist different pronouns if you know someone closer or if it is more an official relationship. This does not exist in English. Implicit usage of language leads to more misunderstandings in intercultural situation than the usage of explicit language. For foreigners often jokes or complicated messages are not understandable. Choosing the working language is the first task of a multicultural team. In western teams this is predominantly English. The choice of language can have an impact on the outcome of the entire

Non-verbal Communication

Often intercultural misunderstandings happen because the conscious and unconscious non-verbal communication differs. Non-verbal communication includes the face-to-face interaction, eye contact, marking of territory, voice volume, intonation (melody of language) and speech rate as well as gestures (posture, nodding).\textsuperscript{265} When sending a message 55% is influenced by non-verbal signs, 7% by words, and 38% by articulation. Typical sources for errors in non-verbal communication between cultures are: Body distance, clothes, eye contact, volume of speech, conversation regulation (pauses and turn taking) and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{266} Non-verbal communication does not only differ between the cultures but also between individuals from the same culture. People have different ways to express themselves and are different according to the extent of expressing themselves with the use of non-verbal communication.\textsuperscript{267} For a successful intercultural non-verbal communication it is important that one is aware of one’s own non-verbal communication as good as possible, to not send wrong messages or messages which will be interpreted in a different way than intended. It is also important that one tries to not evaluate the non-verbal communication of the other culture in order to avoid misinterpretations.\textsuperscript{268}

The ability to communicate across-cultures includes:

- The knowledge that human thinking, actions and behaviour depend on culture.
- The awareness that the own thinking, actions and behaviour are dependent on the own culture.
- One should be willing to get to know other cultural perspectives.
- One should know how cultures differ.
- One should know the different communication styles and recognize them during the conversation.

\textsuperscript{264} Margit Breckle, „Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation“, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), p. 25.
\textsuperscript{266} Herman Blom and Harald Meier, “Interkulturelles Management: Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Internationales Personalmanagement, Diversity-Ansätze im Unternehmen“, 2nd ed. (Berlin, Verlag Neue Wirtschafts-Briefe, 2004), pp. 84-88.
• One should know about the principles how to reduce insecurity like stereotypes.
• One should recognize and analyse intercultural misunderstandings with the following skills:
  o cultural differences and their effects on behaviour and communication
  o lingua franca usage (nowadays usually English).\textsuperscript{269}
• One should listen and observe actively.\textsuperscript{270}
• One should be curious, patient and tactful.\textsuperscript{271}

3.5.4.1 Edward T. Hall

• Low-Context versus High-Context Communication

A famous model which points out different ways of communication is Hall’s model. Hall differentiates high-context and low-context cultures. In low-context cultures people communicate explicitly while people in high-context cultures communicate implicitly\textsuperscript{272} by means of simple messages with a deeper meaning.\textsuperscript{273} Low-context cultures are characterized by heterogeneity, high social mobility, high job mobility, and short-term relationships\textsuperscript{274}, they are highly individualized.\textsuperscript{275} High-context cultures, on the other hand, are characterized by homogeneity, little social mobility, little job mobility, and long-term relationships. Also silence and the meaning of silence are different among cultures. People from low-context cultures usually avoid silence and feel uncomfortable with it, while it is valued in high-context cultures.\textsuperscript{276} High-context cultures make a greater distinction between in-group and out-group than low-context cultures. People in high-context cultures speak around the point because they expect others to know what they mean.\textsuperscript{277} The level of context information needed in communication depends not only on the culture but also on the closeness of the receiver and sender. Good friends or close relatives usually use high-context communication even within an otherwise low-

\textsuperscript{269} Margit Breckle, „Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation“, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 27-28.
\textsuperscript{271} Michael Marquardt, Nancy Berger and Peter Loan, „HRD in the age of globalization“, (New York, Basic Books, 2004), pp. 96-97.
\textsuperscript{272} Nina Jacob, “Intercultural Management”, (Milford, Kogan Page, 2003), p. 73.
\textsuperscript{274} Nina Jacob, “Intercultural Management”, (Milford, Kogan Page, 2003), p. 73.
\textsuperscript{276} Margaret C. McLaren, “Interpreting Cultural Differences: the challenge of intercultural communication” (Norfolk, Peter Francis Publishers, 1998), pp. 149-150.

Germany and Scandinavia can be found at the very low end of the context scale.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “Beyond Culture”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1976), p. 91.} Germans always ask for information and like to have thoroughly elaborated product descriptions, etc. For low-context messages a high speed in communication is common, for high-context messages communication needs more time.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1983), p. 60.}

- **Time and Space**

Hall calls time and space the silent language of culture.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “The Silent Language”, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1959), p. 1.} Time and space are functionally interrelated.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “Beyond Culture”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1976), p. 17.} “Time is not just an immutable constant, as Newton supposed, but a cluster of concepts, events, and rhythms covering an extremely wide range of phenomena.”\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1983), p. 13.} The Western world sees time as a single unit, but this is not true according to his definition of time.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1983), p. 13.} Hall makes two distinctions in the use of time and space: Polychronic and monochronic systems. Monochronic time systems emphasise the use of plans, schedules and punctuality, only one thing is done at a time, whereas in polychronic time systems several things are happening at the same time. Polychronic time is less tangible than monochronic time. A monochronic time system can be found for example in northern Europe, a polychronic time system exists in southern Europe.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “Beyond Culture”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1976), p. 17.} In polychronic cultures people do not need and use privacy for doing business and discussing personal matters, this together with the ability of doing many things at the same time affects the information flow and the formation of networks.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1983), p. 45.} People in polychronic cultures always have a group of people around them, making a schedule or appointment is almost impossible. Polychronic countries make a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. For a friend many things can be made possible and friends also expect this.\footnote{Edward T. Hall, “Beyond Culture”, (New York, Anchor Books, 1976), p. 22.} Monochronic cultures see time as predictable and there is an order and a schedule for everything, for example when it comes to waiting in lines, which is unknown in polychronic cultures. Schedules are important in monochronic cultures because they make it possible to concentrate on one thing at a time, this thinking leads to the treatment of time as a tangible resource which can be wasted. Monochronic time is learned, it is not inherent in the human beings, but without it the western countries might
not have come to their industrial success. In organizations the polychronic time demands a higher centralization of power because the leader has to stay in constant contact with the subordinates and control the flow of information. Therefore polychronic organizations are restricted in size because everything has to be kept manageable for the leader. Monochronic organizations do not have a size restriction because authority and responsibility are spread throughout the organization.

The German culture is monochronic and highly low-context. Due to their monochronic culture Germans have a need for order and privacy. Germans spread authority throughout the organization and leave their employees by themselves to conduct a task. The time system is the dominant organizing principle in the German culture. In German communication the emphasis is on words and technical signs. Things symbolizing authority and details are very important. “Time may indicate the importance of the occasion as well as on what level an interaction between persons is to take place.” For example, if a person calls someone in Germany during the night this indicates emergency. The importance attached to time is different among cultures. Cultures in which time is important have special expressions in their language which indicate time plans, etc. For example lead time, which describes the time needed for a finishing task, is such an expression in American English.

Time and space are interrelated, for example when deadlines have to be met this is only possible if the working persons is not constantly interrupted and has some more space around him-/herself. Every person has certain invisible boundaries around him-/herself which s/he considers as his/her territory, the size of this territory is differs across cultures. People from different cultures have a different view upon the distance they like to have to others. Some feel more comfortable when they have a close distance to the other person; others feel exactly the opposite. When communicating people perform a dance with each other this dance is accompanied by a certain rhythm, in order to keep a comfortable distance between each other. Space also refers to the way in which we perceive space when it comes to geography and to the

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way buildings and rooms are built and organized. 300 Space is patterned, Americans for example it is treated like a coordinate system and directions can be given accordingly. Other cultures pattern space differently, for example with the use of certain names for a space. 301

3.5.4.2 Barriers in Intercultural Communication

The most important barriers in intercultural communication are stereotypes and ethnocentrism.

Stereotypes

Stereotype is a term originating from the printing industry. “A stereotype was an inflexible mould used to print the same image over and over again.” In the context of intercultural meetings a stereotype is an “inflexible statement about a category of people. Stereotypical statements are applied to all members of a group without regard for individual differences.” 302 The stereotype influences the attitude to someone from another group and therefore the interaction. 303 Stereotypes are learned throughout socialization. 304 Stereotypes can be positive and helpful, especially in new situations, or negative. A stereotype can be helpful when we are aware of it and its implications of just characterizing a group of people and not individuals. 305 Problems with stereotypes occur when they are negative and used to generalize about a group of people, when in reality only very few members of this group have the generalized traits. Ethnocentrism and prejudices can follow out of stereotypes. 306 In order to be effective in intercultural communication stereotypes should just be used as first aid and then be modified or set aside according to personal experiences. 307 The main reason why people use stereotypes is to relieve anxiety. Ambiguous situations or unpredictable behaviour lead to anxiety. The construction of categories and boxes into which one places others help to regain control and predictability. One even tries to fit new perceived information into known categories. Consequently if information does not fit a stereotype we will distort our perception of the environment, so that it suits our expectations. 308 Sometimes stereotypes will not fit to individuals one meets. But if our stereotypes are reconfirmed we feel right. Not fitting stereotypes are ignored, therefore stereotypes can be self-fulfilling. 309 There are several reasons why stereotypes are often inaccurate. Individuals of a culture differ in their socioeconomic status, education, financial status and social strata. Those factors lead to differences between individuals in a culture. Also regional differences in a country may exist, as well as differences between generations and gender. Individuals can also have differing values than the majority of society. Stereotypes are destructive because they limit one’s definition of a person. One does not see people as they really are. One does not value their skills

and traits. In order to minimize stereotypes the first step is to be aware of the stereotypes one has in mind and to gain knowledge about other cultures.\textsuperscript{310}

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is often one of the most important barriers in intercultural communication.\textsuperscript{311} Ethnocentrism means that one tries to interpret the behaviour of others with different cultural backgrounds with rules and values of one’s own culture. It is an unconscious process if one evaluates things in accordance to what one already knows. Problematic about the process is that identical actions can have different meanings across cultures, consequently behaviour gets misinterpreted.\textsuperscript{312} In order to overcome ethnocentrism one has to know the own culture’s rules and values and to learn about other cultures.\textsuperscript{313} Everybody has ethnocentric tendencies. Ethnocentrism leads to hasty evaluations and comments. To avoid ethnocentrism the intercultural communicator should have realistic expectations about him-/herself and others, should try to look at things from the other person’s point of view, should be patient and should not compare the other culture with the own.\textsuperscript{314}


\textsuperscript{304} Margit Breckle, „Deutsch-schwedische Wirtschaftskommunikation“, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2005), p. 34.


3.6 Intercultural Competence

“Intercultural competence generally means to be capable of becoming aware of the cultural differences and their effects on oneself and the other, to accept them and turn them into productive cooperation.” When gaining intercultural competence, people experience an intercultural learning process which can be divided into a process consisting of several levels. A person being on level one is not aware of the existence of cultural differences and cannot understand how people can be different. Contact and interaction with people from different cultures can create a state of awareness of the existence of cultural differences. People begin to understand that there are different ways of behaving than their own. The next level is the level of tolerance. On this level people start to understand that there are different ways of doing things and ethnocentric judgement is not made anymore. The fourth level developing from the tolerance level is the understanding that the cultural differences could be used in a positive way, leading to a successful teamwork and to an integration of the different cultures.

In the following we will present instruments to develop intercultural competence.

3.6.1 Self-preparation

There are three different strategies of self-preparation to reduce uncertainty when interacting with another culture. First people usually consult secondary sources (books, movies, observation) to gain knowledge about other cultures. This strategy usually strengthens stereotypes as it is a passive strategy. The next strategy used is also a passive one, which might change stereotypes. This strategy involves asking members from the other culture. The third strategy used is an interactive strategy, meaning that uncertainty is reduced due to interaction with the members from the other culture.

3.6.2 Intercultural Training

Members of multicultural teams have to understand cultural differences before working effectively with each other. Teambuilding activities and intercultural training can help to enable good collaboration in multicultural teams. Intercultural trainings for the team members before the project should cover cultural differences, communication styles and attitudes concerning teamwork. The training cannot prevent cultural misunderstandings totally but it can ease them

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315 Manoocher Kavoosi, “Awareness in Intercultural Cooperation: Studies of Culture and Group Dynamics in International Joint Ventures”, (Göteborg, BAS Förlag, 2005), p. VII.
and bring them faster to the surface. To prevent these misunderstandings it is necessary to gain knowledge about the other culture in order to understand the behaviour and to be able to fit one's own behaviour better to it. It is important to know, that knowledge should not only be gained about the other culture, but also about the own culture, as this awareness is often nonexistent.

Goals of intercultural training

Intercultural training also prepares the trainees for the emotional challenges they face when living or working in another culture, because challenging situations occur in which the feeling for what is right or wrong is questioned. This causes stress and disappointment. Therefore training to understand these emotional challenges is very important. Intercultural trainings should help to identify skills and behaviours which might be helpful for the adjustments in the other culture. Intercultural training also increases relationship skills. Intercultural training helps the multicultural team in overcoming cultural obstacles and gives a description of how to establish relationships in other cultures, it advises in how to accomplish tasks with the same efficiency in the other culture as in the home culture, and assists in how to deal with the stress that occurs in intercultural meetings.

Kinds of intercultural trainings

When training interculturally it is important to keep in mind that cultures shape the way people learn, this happens e.g. through school, parents, teachers, religion, organizational norms and the community.

There are four different kinds of intercultural trainings:

- Intercultural informational trainings: These are usually not used in business organizations

but more in university trainings in the form of theoretical seminars.

- **Culture-specific informational trainings**: This kind of training relies on the culture comparing management research and uses comprehensive information about the target country, especially its leadership style and everyday life issues. It provides a deeper understanding of the culture, but a problem might be the enhancement of stereotypes.

- **Intercultural interaction trainings**: These are especially role-plays and simulations. These are good when done in groups with people from different cultures, but are usually not very accepted by the participants because of their distance to reality.

- **Culture-specific interaction trainings**: These trainings are off-the-job trainings that involve the participation of members from the home culture and members from the host culture. They include either sensitivity trainings or simulation games. The goal is to deal with the ways of the other culture in order to reduce prejudices and stereotypes. The problem is that culture specific knowledge is usually not taught.

In order to prevent the downsides of all of the four trainings methods none of them should be used by itself, but they should be combined. But these integrated trainings, which combine interaction with informational methods, are not widely used so far and have to be further developed.\(^{326}\)

A good intercultural training should be conducted by an intercultural training team “practising what is being preached”. This is not easy, because different cultures share a different understanding of how people learn and therefore of teaching methods. Through many meetings and discussions the trainers should develop an individual intercultural training plan.\(^{327}\)

Apart from intercultural training, are intercultural coaches and intercultural mediators more and more used in today’s organizations.\(^{328}\)

### 3.6.3 Intercultural Coach

Intercultural coaching is “a process in which a person who is acceptable to all members of the group, and has no decision making authority intervenes to help a group improve the way it


identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, in order to increase the group’s effectiveness. Lövey advises the use of an intercultural coaching team, which consists of all the involved cultures. This constitution of the coaching team will encourage the team members to consult, because their own culture is represented and they can also talk in their native language if they want to. Team leaders might not have the time to take care of all the issues caused by misunderstandings due to cultural differences of the team members. Therefore a coach can be helpful. A coach usually has more an outside perspective on the team and can easier identify unsuccessful communication and conflict within the team. Coaches try to build up self-management capacity in the team, they provide rewards when the team managed itself efficiently and they give advice for problem-solving processes. The coach has a very important role in the team in the beginning of the teamwork, but the more and more the teamwork process smoothens, the intercultural coach should step out of the picture and enable the team to work independently.

3.6.4 Intercultural Mediation

In order to resolve conflicts in multicultural teams intercultural mediation can be used. It is similar to intercultural coaching, but the difference is that it starts when a conflict occurs. The mediator helps the team to discuss and explore the intercultural conflicts and to come up with a resolution. It is highly important for members of multicultural teams to know how to cope with conflicts within the team. These conflict resolution skills have to be trained concerning the different cultures, there is no general approach in multicultural teams.

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4 Research Model

After studying the literature about cultural differences, with a focus on Hofstede’s, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s as well as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s cultural models, and after setting the different cultural dimensions in relation to works about German and Swedish culture we see our expectation about the existence of problems and benefits due to cultural differences in Swedish-German project teams further affirmed. Out of the theoretical framework we developed the following cultural factors we want to analyse in our thesis:

Factor 1: Communication Style
The cultural factor communication style consists of differences in what is communicated and how it is communicated (e.g. formal or informal). It also addresses feedback, criticism, use of language, language itself, non-verbal communication and discussion behaviour across cultures. This factor includes Hall’s classification of low- and high-context cultures and of space, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s dimension neutral versus emotional, as well as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s question what value individuals place on activity.

Factor 2: Demand for Structure and Rules
This cultural factor covers Hofstede’s dimension uncertainty avoidance that leads to a varying demand for structure, rules and clear explanations and to different application of structures and rules. In this factor also Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s dimension of universalism versus particularism is included.

Factor 3: Importance of Hierarchy
The cultural factor importance of hierarchy points out differences in Hofstede’s dimension power distance and includes Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s criterion of the autonomy an individual in a culture has. It regards the way decisions are made, who makes the decisions and also how meetings are hold and tasks are assigned. The importance of hierarchy also describes the way in which hierarchy is perceived and superiors are dealt with. This factor also incorporates Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s dimension achievement versus ascription which explains who in a culture reaches an influential position.

Factor 4: Cooperation versus Competition
This cultural factor refers to Hofstede’s masculinity dimension. It states how much time and effort are spent for reaching the project goal or for a good atmosphere in the team. This factor also reveals how distinct the border between private and working life is, as included in the
dimension diffuse versus specific of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model.

Factor 5: Group versus Individual
The cultural factor group versus individual expresses the degree of individualism in a culture. This can for example be seen in the way rewards are given. This cultural factor refers to Hofstede’s dimension individualism versus collectivism, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s dimension individualism versus communitarianism as well as their dimension attitude towards the environment with the distinction of inner- and outer-directed cultures, as well as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s question how relationships of people are to each other.

Factor 6: Open-mindedness
This cultural factor refers to the expectations individuals have towards another culture as this influences the attitude towards that culture. Stereotypes can be changed or ensured during the multicultural teamwork. This factor also includes the change of expectations through the contact with members of another culture. We added this cultural factor to our research model since expectations of the team members influence intercultural communication in the multicultural team.

Factor 7: Attitude towards Time
The cultural factor attitude towards time explains how time is perceived as a resource. The factor includes Hall’s differentiation between poly- and monochronic cultures as well as the importance of time and punctuality. The factor also refers to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s dimension attitudes towards time including sequential versus synchronic and the different time foci on the past, present and future which are also mentioned in Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s model in their question about the orientation towards time.

Factor 8: Working Style
This cultural factor includes the existence of different preferences towards collaboration and working style in cultures. We introduced this factor for issues that do not fit in any other of the above mentioned factors because we did not want to try to press an issue into a factor which does not really suit the issue. The working style includes for example working time and gender proportion at the work place, which may also effect the collaboration in multicultural teams.

The two questions what relation man has to nature and the question what character the human nature has of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s model are not included in our research model. We did
not use these two questions because in our opinion they do not address aspects of the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams.

All the above mentioned cultural factors and their differences between the cultures in multicultural teams can lead to intercultural misunderstandings and conflicts as stated in chapter 3.1 “Multicultural Teamwork” and 3.2 “Conflict”. The misunderstandings and conflicts can also occur between the team and its environment (external).

The cultural factors do not only influence the team they also influence the environment which surrounds the team. Further on the collaboration in the project team is affected by other factors in the team than culture (internal factors) and factors in its environment (external factors). Factors which ensure and enhance a good and successful teamwork and help to level cultural differences are:

Internal Factors:
These factors include tools and exercises within the group, such as teambuilding, forming of a common vision and goal, setting up rules for the teamwork, and the skills and experiences, especially intercultural experience, the personality of each team member and its influence on the collaboration in the team.

External Factors:
These factors can be training, support of the human resources department, organizational culture, colleagues and departments outside the project team, budget, time, technical equipment and the senior management which can enhance the collaboration in multicultural teams.

During the multicultural teamwork the cultural factors and internal and external factors mentioned above influence each other. For example the attitude towards time influences how much time is spent for communicating with team members or with completing the tasks. This again is influenced by the focus on the group or individual and by the factor competition versus cooperation. If time is a rare resource, then time is valuable and spent for completing a task in a competitive culture. At the same time personal relations are less important than in a group oriented culture. As this example shows, the factors are mutual dependent. Figure 4.1 shows how all factors work together is shown by the arrows.
5 Empirical Study

In the first part of this chapter we present the interview guideline we used for our interviews. In the second part we present our interview data.

5.1 Interview Guideline

The interview guideline covers all factors of the research model introduced in the previous chapter, surrounded by an introduction of us, facts about the interviewee’s background and the project, a close up of the interview and questions concerning experiences in and ideas for training and other tools to enhance a successful multicultural teamwork.

In the introductory part of the interview guideline we explain how the interview will be treated, we introduce us as interviewers and the topic of our master thesis so that the interviewee knows what will happen during the interview and feels more comfortable. During these first minutes we find it important to create a nice and relaxed atmosphere to take away all kinds of nervousness.
from the interviewee and us.

- Greeting/Welcome and introduction
  - Introducing us
  - Introduction of the subject
  - Is it ok for you if we record this interview?
  - Addressing anonymity

When we had interviews with Germans we started out the conversation in German and asked them in which language they want to proceed. In the case of telephone interviews the first part also included a check of quality of the technical devices.

The second part of the interview consists of questions that give more details about the interviewee, the project and the context within which the project work took place, so that we can understand the situation better. In that part we also asked for other internal factors which influence the project work like experience and external factors like team composition. The working language can be either an internal or an external factor because it depends on who decides what the working language is. We also asked for external factors like location, duration, the way of project conduction and the relation of project and line work. To get an overview of the contextual factors related to the project.

- Asking the interviewee about personal facts, job, age, profession?
- For how long do you work in the company?
  - What kind of experience do you have in international project teams?
  - With which nationalities did you work together?
  - Have you worked in monocultural project teams?
  - What kind of project did you work in?
  - How long did the project work last?
  - Where was the project located?
  - How was the project work conducted? Regular meetings, co-location, virtual team?
  - What was the working language of the project?
  - What kind of people worked in the project? Profession/nationality/gender/only one company or several?
  - How many people worked in the project?
  - Did you only work in the project team, or also in your usual position?

In the next part we asked questions about the procedure of the projects, the success of the projects and the interviewee’s ideas for improvements. These questions will help us to answer our second research question how benefits can be enhanced and problems be minimized. At the same time the answers to these questions can help us to understand the project procedure better. The procedure especially at the beginning and end of the project can be an external factor when
it is pre-given by company rules or an internal factor when the team decides on the procedures used.

- In the start of the project, did you have teambuilding activities? (vision, common goal, expectations, rules for teamwork)
- At the end of the project, was there a project evaluation, how and with whom?
  - Were you asked to give advice for future projects?
  - What kind of advice did/ would you give?
- Did you reach the project goal, did the project succeed?
  - Yes – did you like the way in which the project went on?
  - What would you see as the key for success?
  - No – why did the project fail?

In the main part of our interview we ask the interviewees about all factors included in our research model, how they perceived them during the teamwork and if they recognized differences between Germans and Swedes. We start with the differences in the cultural factor communication style. This factor includes the amount of communication within the team, the discussion behaviour and communication mediums, since these have an influence on the collaboration within the team. We also ask our interviewees about the internal factor language ability and which influence it has on the project.

- Do you find it different to work with Germans/Swedes as compared to working with colleagues from your own nationality? Please describe.
  - Was there more communication between members from the same culture or more between project members from different cultures?
  - Do you think there was enough communication within the team?
  - Were there differences in the communication styles between the cultures?
  - How did the communication take place? (Through which mediums?)
  - Were there differences in language abilities between Germans and Swedes?
    - What influence did they have on the project work?

The following questions refer to the differences in the cultural factors working style and communication style. The answers to these questions might help us to find differences and similarities in the working and discussion style of Germans and Swedes.

- Conduction of the meetings, how did you proceed?
  - During the discussions were there differences in the contributions between Germans and Swedes?

The next question addresses the differences in the factors importance of hierarchy and demand for structure and rules, and in the second question the cultural factor communication style especially low- and high-context communication is addressed. The importance of hierarchy is
addressed because the first question asks who assigned the tasks. The degree of demand for rules and structure determines the detailedness of an assigned task, which is also determined by the use of low- or high-context communication.

- In which way were the tasks assigned?
  - Were the assigned tasks rather specific or was the way in which the tasks were executed to your own choice?

The following two questions address the differences in the factor importance of hierarchy, how decisions are made and who makes decisions.

- In what way did you make decisions in the team?
  - Who made the decisions?

The next questions refer to the different foci on the factors group versus individual and cooperation versus competition, because they determine if either a goal or a team focus exists. The second question also addresses the cultural factor attitude towards time, because it addresses the way in which time is treated in the culture.

- Would you say that there is/was a difference in the effort towards the team and the goal achievement between the members of the project team?
- Do/Did you see a difference in the time spent for the team and the goal achievement between the members of the project team?

The following question refers to the different attitudes towards time, because it asks about the way in which time is organized and treated as a resource.

- Do you see a difference in the organization and spending of time between Germans and Swedes?

The next questions address the occurrence of misunderstandings and conflicts, they are the consequences of the differences in the cultural factors and have to be considered when developing a concept to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams.

- Did misunderstandings in the team between Germans and Swedes occur?
- Did conflicts occur during the project?
  - What was the cause of the conflict?
  - How was the conflict treated?

After that the interviewee is asked which of the differences are due to what reason (culture,
personality and organizational culture). With that question we want to get to know the personal explanation from the interviewee in order to find out which of the previously mentioned differences are cultural ones and which are not cultural differences.

- The differences you are listing here, which would you see as cultural differences and which as differences in personality?
  - Organizational culture differences?

The next question asks the interviewee how s/he personally judges the intercultural differences in the team. We ask this question in order to find out which of the cultural differences are problematic or beneficial for the German-Swedish project team, in order to address the first research question.

- The differences between the cultures, which do you see as positive and which as negative for the project work?

The last three questions do not address differences in the cultural factors; they address the personal standpoint towards certain cultural factors of our interviewees which may give hints to their cultural background and personality. The first question addresses the factor open-mindedness, the second the factor for demand of structure and rules whereas the third question addresses cooperation versus competition and group versus individual factors.

- Were your expectations of the other culture fulfilled or did you change your view upon the other culture during the teamwork?
- How important is a clear plan and structure for you in your working environment?
- What is more important for you, a good team spirit or a challenging task?
- During the project work, were there rewards given to the team or the individual team members?
  - Did you agree with this procedure?
  - Would you prefer individual or team rewards in a project?

In the next part we ask the interviewees for the external factors that influence their teamwork, like training, we also ask about support from the organization and how this can be improved. The answers to these questions will again be helpful for us to further develop an adequate concept to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams.

- Did you receive any kind of training before or during the project?
  - What kind of training did you receive?
  - What kind of training would you like to receive that would help a successful project work, and when would you like to receive this training?
What kind of other factors supported or influenced the project work? Organizational culture/management/HR department/technical equipment/budget?

The following questions also address the second research question, how to improve the cooperation between Germans and Swedes, and ask for internal factors and tools which are used to enhance the collaboration. In those questions we also ask for advice for improvements from the interviewees which will help us to develop an adequate concept.

- After or during the project work were any actions taken to enhance the work and to ensure a successful project work?
- What did you miss in the project work, with what and how could the project work be improved?

The interview ends with a close up, asking for the general attitude regarding future collaboration with Swedes or Germans. We thank the interviewee and offer a copy of our thesis when it is finished.

After getting some experience throughout conducting the interviews the interview guideline developed, but the applied changes have little to no influence on the comparability of the interview results. During the interviews the interview guideline was applied flexible, the order was changed in accordance to the answers of our interviewees, because some questions were answered without stating them. We also reformulated the questions in accordance to each interviewee’s background and experience. This represents our approach of a semi-structured interview, in which the prewritten questions only serve as a guideline. In interviews conducted in the German language we translated the English questions into German to the best of our knowledge.

5.2 Data Presentation

In this part we present the data that has derived from our interviews. As a framework for the presentation we use our research model. For each factor of the research model we state the answers given by the interviewees, in this way we want to give an overview about the external and internal factors mentioned and the differences in the cultural factors stated by our interviewees. The data is presented in a chart which is subdivided into the factors of our research model and the two nationalities of our interviewees. In the data presentation we use our own neutral words, when this is not possible quotes from the interviewees are presented. We do not present answers which we do not understand and can therefore not classify them to one of the factors. After each
statement in brackets the number of the interviewee who made this statement is added. When more than one interviewee made the statement more numbers can be found in the brackets. Chart 5.1 contains information about the interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>technical documentation manager, project leader</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>industrial engineering manager, project supervisor and project team member</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>in charge of settlements of projects, project team member</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>product development manager, project supervisor on a management level</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>HR specialist, made an exchange in Sweden</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>recruiter, project team member</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>shift manager, made an exchange in Sweden</td>
<td>German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>product development manager, sometimes project team member sometimes project supervisor</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart No 5.1 Interviewees source:own
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Swedish Interviewees</th>
<th>German Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Communication Style    | - Clothing in Germany is not so casual, in Sweden you are who you are and in Germany you are what you dress like (2)  
|                        | - Germans dress up with suits, vests, ties and polished shoes (4)  
|                        | - Swedes do not dress up (4)  
|                        | - Usage of titles in Germany (e.g. Dr.), this is not important in Sweden (2)  
|                        | - English in project work but internal documentation in native language and communication within the organization is in the native languages (1)  
|                        | - All documentation in English, but communication in the daily work was in German (1)  
|                        | - Explicit communication with the Germans (1)  
|                        | - Germans have a higher demand for information (1)  
|                        | - More communication in subgroups (1)  
|                        | - When speaking English Germans are less formal (e.g. using ‘Sie’ and order of speaking) than when speaking German, Swedes find this switch in behaviour strange (1)  
|                        | - Communication in Sweden is less formal (1)  
|                        | - Germans always shake hands when they meet (1,2)  
|                        | - Not enough communication within the team, this leads to misunderstandings and doubling of fulfilled tasks (1)  
|                        | - More communication across departments in Sweden (1)  
|                        | - Swedes are more easy going (5)  
|                        | - Swedes are not so formal (usage of first name, casual clothing, no ties and suits) (5)  
|                        | - Swedes are not as direct, this includes addressing problems and criticizing (5)  
|                        | - Germans keep track of things in written documents (this might be due to stricter laws) (5)  
|                        | - Swedes do not use as many written documents as Germans (5)  
|                        | - Swedes are polite and avoid direct confrontation (5)  
|                        | - Swedes are rarely direct and do not like to make decisions in direct conversations (3)  
|                        | - Swedes are a lot more engaged in discussions (6)  
|                        | - Germans are more direct (6)  
|                        | - Swedes are more polite and circumscribe things but they express their opinion faster and are more open regarding disagreements (6)  
|                        | - Swedes do not communicate the status of the decision during the group decision making (3)  
|                        | - Swedes are reticent in their formulations and do not clearly state their opinion, these soft formulations are difficult for Germans to understand as they prefer a more direct way (3)  
|                        | - Germans focus on the facts and do not avoid debates, debates do not affect the working atmosphere, Swedes avoid confrontation (3)  
|                        | - No difference in the way to discuss (3, 7)  
|                        | - In Germany not saying anything is already a commendation, this is ok for him (3)  
|                        | - Swedes communicate more (6)  |
More content and facts in the communication with other departments in Germany (1)
- Germans use a correct language, in Sweden you only say what you need to make yourself understood (2)
- Swedes are more open for discussions (1)
- Germans and Swedes discuss in the same way (4)
- Swedish employees communicate more with each other, also with employees in other areas e.g. about their tasks (2)
- Swedes are easier to speak with (2)
- German employees do not know what their colleagues are doing (2)
- Germans do not communicate within the team unless they have the instruction to do so (4)
- Swedes have a broader definition of topics to be discussed (1)
- In Sweden you have no prestige (2)
- No difference in the way and contribution to discuss between Germans and Swedes (2)
- Germans communicate with their superiors and subordinates, but not horizontally in the organization (4)
- Communication is soft in Sweden (4)
- Assigned tasks are broader in Sweden (4)
- If no one criticizes you it is already a commendation in Sweden (4)
- Swedes are very open, they say what they think (8)
- Swedes share information better because they communicate across hierarchical levels (8)
- There is more communication in the sub-groups, Swedes integrate quicker in a team and are actively involved from the beginning on, Germans are more distant in the beginning (6)
- Critique is taken on a factual level in Germany and Sweden (6)
- Swedes are good listeners (6)
- Swedes are more open when it comes to critique and misunderstandings and give positive feedback when indicated (6)
- Germans are more dominant and do not change their point of view easily (6)
- Swedes are more distant, it takes longer to get to know someone even though it is easy to get in touch with them, but this first talk is superficial (6)
- Germans are more formal (they address each other with their first names) (6)
- In the first meeting everyone in the team points out his/her strengths in Sweden (6)
- Swedes commend and criticise more, they give more positive feedback (6)
- The communication styles of Swedes and Germans are very similar (7)
- Swedes are quite formal in meetings (7)
- Swedes are open (7)
- In Sweden you should not be shy to ask for further information it is the duty of the individual to fetch information and to point out problems (6)
- Easy to get in touch with Swedes (5)
- Food and drinks are provided in German meetings, in Swedish meetings people get this
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand for Structure and Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Germans feel insecure if they do not have clear instructions and information how to work, Swedes prefer less instructions (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Germany team members receive and expect instructions (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes are more free in how to execute the task (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans are more prepared than Swedes (e.g. for meetings) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Family relationship between departments in Sweden (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes are more spontaneous (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans use hierarchy as a map for understanding decisions and executing their tasks (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Structure is important in Germany (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans stick to the structure when it comes to executing their tasks (2) even when knowing that it is not working (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans have a lot of rules and obey them (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans do not like experiments (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans do everything in the right way (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| - Germans are more organized (5) |
| - Germans prefer a lot of information (5) |
| - Focus on the goal and not on the way to get there in Sweden (5) |
| - He personally likes the focus on the goal and freedom in executing the task (5) |
| - Meetings in Germany and in Sweden are organized in the same way (agenda) (3) |
| - There are clear rules how to execute a task in both countries (3) |
| - The differentiation into departments is not as strict in Sweden as in Germany (3) |
| - For him it is essential to have a concrete structure and time plan (3) |
| - Meetings in Sweden are more chaotic but somewhat structured, meetings in Germany are more organized (6) |
| - In Sweden in the execution of tasks only the goal is given and the way to reach it is open, in Germany the way how tasks are assigned depends on the superior and the task, but in Germany in general stricter instructions exist in |
- Germans think in two extreme categories, there is nothing in between, if they like something than they support it very strongly this makes them reliable and transparent, if they do not like something they do not change their opinion, this makes them inflexible (2)
- Germans follow the time plan (2)
- Swedes follow time plans towards the customer, but internal time plans are not so strictly followed (2)
- He is not structured (2)
- Swedes work across functional borders (4)
- Germans follow the rules how ever long it takes, Swedes take shortcuts (4)
- Germans and Swedes follow the agenda in meetings (4)
- Assigned tasks are broader in Sweden (4)
- Germans are more specialized and have more specialized functions (4)
- He sees it as important to have rules for meetings in the project (8)
- In the meetings Swedes often have an agenda which determines who is mainly talking (8)
- There are many rules in Sweden and in Germany, but Swedes act according to the rules when they want to and it is important to them that things are done quickly, why for Germans it is important to follow the rules even if it takes longer time (8)
- Germans rather blame the rules instead of doing the job in time (8)
- He thinks rules are quite important but does not order to give more structure (6)
- There is a lot of bureaucracy in Germany which slows down processes, this does not exist in Sweden (6)
- Germans are orderly and structured everything goes according to the plan, Swedes are more laid-back and chaotic (6)
- Structure is not that much important to her anymore, when executing a task she only needs a goal (6)
- For meetings Swedes have an agenda and follow it from the beginning to the end like in Germany (7)
- Swedes are slightly better prepared for meetings than Germans (7)
- Tasks are very regulated since it is a power plant, in Germany and in Sweden (7)
- He personally likes a structured schedule (7)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Hierarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Germans expect the boss to be able to answer all their questions (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The German boss does not ask for help even if he does not know, this is why they work slower (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Important for Germans to know who decided something and when it was decided (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans respect the hierarchy, whereas the Swedes are not aware of it (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tasks are assigned according to the competences (1, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tasks are assigned according to the structure (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decisions are made by the team leader (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Sweden decisions are made in the team and supported by everyone (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decisions are made by the team and if no agreement is found the management decides, there is no difference between Sweden and Germany (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Sweden there are few hierarchical levels (4, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Germany you first listen to what the boss says and wait for an informal approval to speak up (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tasks are usually assigned by the team leader but if someone wants to do something s/he will probably be chosen (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Superiors are easily accessible for subordinates (3, 5, 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Subordinates have direct contact with superiors and also talk about private things in Sweden (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Status in the company is important in Germany (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes are more open to criticize the boss (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Sweden decisions are made by the team (6), in Germany the team leader has more impact (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Furniture in the office of the German boss is more expensive (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nicer hotels are provided for people higher in the hierarchy (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In Sweden superiors and subordinates stay in the same hotel (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hierarchical structures are penetrable and not visible in Sweden (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tasks are assigned according to the competences (3, 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In the first meeting everyone in the team points out his/her strengths, according to this tasks are assigned (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The differentiation into hierarchical levels is not as strict in Sweden as in Germany (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The project leader starts the meeting and follows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Swedes communicate openly between the different levels of hierarchy and in Germany one should be aware of the own position in the hierarchy (8)
- In Germany you can feel the level of hierarchy more than in Sweden (8)
- In Sweden people tell the manager if they disagree, in Germany nobody talks against the manager (8)
- When Germans have a strong leader and respect for the hierarchy they stay at work until 6 or 7 pm. In meetings the possibility of the older Swede speaking and the German top guy speaking is quite high (4)
- Swedes do not so much consider the different levels of hierarchy in discussions, Germans are “intimidated” by superiors (6)
- German companies have a more hierarchical structure (6)
- Decisions are taken by the boss in Sweden and in Germany (7)

**Cooperation versus Competition**

| - Germans like to stick to the subject, Swedes like to widen their horizon about the subject (1) | - Relationship to colleagues is closer after just a short time of knowing each other in Sweden (5) |
| - No difference in effort and time towards goal achievement between Germans and Swedes (1) | - No difference in effort towards goal achievement between Germans and Swedes (7) |
| - Swedes help each other in executing the tasks (2, 4) | - No difference in time and effort towards goal achievement between Germans and Swedes (7) |
| - Swedes are flexible in working on Sundays/vacation, when Germans are out of the office they are out, Swedes are more flexible because they do it for friends (2) | - A challenging task that has to be executed by competent people and leads to a good team spirit (3) |
| - Swedes talk more about private things with their colleagues (2) | - Swedes are tolerant (3) |
| - In conflict situations Germans protect their own back (2) | - In meetings Swedes make more small talk, chatting and jokes (6) |
| - When solving a conflict Swedes rather take one step back and let the one that makes the decision take the consequences, but if they really think that it is a bad decision they do not take a step | - Swedes are helpful and always available when needed (6) |
| - Swedes talk more about private things with their colleagues (2) | - She prefers to have a combination of a good team spirit and a challenging task, but team spirit is more important (6) |
| - When solving a conflict Swedes rather take one step back and let the one that makes the decision take the consequences, but if they really think that it is a bad decision they do not take a step | - Even if one team member is commended in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back (8)</th>
<th>Front of the whole team, no envy and competition occur in Sweden (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Germans consider their future career when making decisions, Swedes think about task related matters (2)</td>
<td>- The relationship to the Swedes was good and trustful, it was easy to work with them (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He prefers a challenging task (2)</td>
<td>- He needs a little bit of both, good team spirit and a challenging task (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He thinks that employees should not only be motivated by rewards, but they should do a good job because they like to work (2)</td>
<td>- Swedes communicate more (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans are more business minded and have no problem to work with someone they do not like (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- For him team spirit is more important than a challenging task (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Career is not so important in Sweden (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team spirit and cooperation is important in Sweden, in German it is not so important (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes put more effort in having a good atmosphere, Germans put more effort in reaching the goal (8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When Germans like something they support it (8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes want to have some free time to spend it with their families (8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He sees a good team spirit and a challenging task as important, but most important is that work should be fun (8)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- German employees do not know what their colleagues are doing (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans do not communicate within the team unless they have the instruction to do so (4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedish employees communicate more with each other (2)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group versus Individual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans communicate with their superiors and subordinates, but not horizontally in the organization (4)</td>
<td>- In Sweden decisions are made by the team, in Germany the team leader has more impact (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The team leader in Sweden strives for agreement, whereas the German leader makes decisions on his/her own (1)</td>
<td>- Discussions take place in the team and results are definite and communicated in the end, Germans are irritated by this (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In conflict situations Germans protect their own back, this is not important in Sweden (2)</td>
<td>- In Sweden decision are made through team discussions (3), this process often takes a long time because Swedes strive for cooperation and democratic decisions, often the quality of these decisions is better since the decision is approved by everyone therefore the implementation is quicker, in Germany decisions are made quicker but bureaucracy slows the process down, decisions are criticized and resistance exists this makes the implementation slower than in Sweden (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans consider their future career when making decisions, Swedes think about task related matters (2)</td>
<td>- In Germany the expert makes a suggestion for a decision, this is then discussed in the team and a decision is made in the team (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- He thinks each team member is responsible for a good team spirit (2)</td>
<td>- Swedes are group oriented and even make their coffee break together (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- For team achievements he prefers team rewards (2)</td>
<td>- In a complex project it is important that the team works together, but special difficult tasks have to be solved by the expert, rewards should be given accordingly (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans only care about problems in their responsibility, if the problem is in someone else’s responsibility they do not care, they do not care if the other one has problems with the way they work (4)</td>
<td>- Swedes are team oriented, in the team they do not only exchange information (like the Germans), they work closely together (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes help each other to execute their tasks and solve problems (4)</td>
<td>- Swedes have a lot of meetings and teamwork and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team rewards should be given otherwise team members focus too much on their own task (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Open-mindedness | - Expectations about the Germans existed but experiences were more extreme (formality, rules, bureaucracy) (1)  
- Gaining of inspiration from the experiences in Germany and adaptation of the procedures in later projects (1)  
- Understanding of personality differences and their importance in relation to cultural differences (1)  
- Describes himself as a quick cultural learner due to close contact with his German colleagues (2)  
- Learns about culture outside of the office because cultural differences occur more outside the office (2)  
- Tries to learn a few words in the other language (2) | - After the multicultural project more self-assured and relaxed (5)  
- No expectations in order to not get disappointed (5)  
- He had the expectation that the Swedes would be reserved since the German company swallowed the Swedish, this expectation was fulfilled, he solved the problem by taking away the fear, being reactive instead of active and being a partner (3)  
- He reflected about the cultural differences outside of the office (3)  
- He had the expectation that he as an employee from the headquarter in Germany would tell the Swedes how to do things, and that they would therefore not be so open, but this was not the | - He likes the idea of team rewards (8)  
- Swedes integrate quicker in a team and are actively involved from the beginning on they also integrate others quickly into the team, Germans are more distant in the beginning (6)  
- Swedes have more meetings (7)  
- The Swedish boss sent out thank you letters and organized a party as a reward for the team, and he liked this (7)  
- He thinks that rewards should be given to the one who has the most impact, this can be either the team or an individual (7) She prefers a combination of individual and team rewards (6)  
- Quick solution for problems of company guests is important in Germany (5) |
- He had expectations for big differences but experienced smaller ones (2)
- He had expectations but changed them because he was disappointed since the Germans were not as organized as expected and made mistakes, but on the other hand he liked that they are not as stiff and rigid as he thought, they are human (4)
- He thinks that Germans should understand how Swedes work (8)
- Differences between north and south Germany (1)
- Difference between the generations in Germany (1)

- Everything was better than expected and he was positively surprised (3)
- She expected no big differences between Germany and Sweden since they are almost neighbour countries but experiences some (6)
- She underestimated how important knowledge of the Swedish language is to understand documents and culture, the Swedes really appreciated it when she learned their language (6)
- She expected the Swedes to be good in English, this was the case (6)
- He did not expect them to be different, therefore it did not change that much and he thinks that he did not see differences because he did not expect them (7)
- She liked the Swedish way of working and adopted (6) Sees personality differences greater as cultural differences (7)

**Attitude towards time**

- No difference in working time between Germans and Swedes (1)
- Swedes take time to communicate (2)
- Germans say that they do not have time and effort and Swedes sometimes blame them for it (4)
- Normally Swedes work less, but it is not a big difference (4)
- Swedes make time for customer requests while Germans say that they do not have time, during that time Swedes just decide to not do other things (4)

- Germans have always a tight time schedule and are under pressure (5)
- Germans are punctual (6)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Style</th>
<th>Internal Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Even if Swedes have little time they do not ask for more time and do things in a quick and dirty way this is more flexible, Germans strictly follow their time plan and things always take as long as planned (8)</td>
<td>- Germans are sometimes quicker when solving problems (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes think that if they do not solve something today they will solve it tomorrow, but they will solve it and do a good job (8)</td>
<td>- Cross-functional teams are common in Sweden (5, 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes continuously try to improve their working environment (1)</td>
<td>- In Germany teams are more homogeneous regarding the functions and he prefers that (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Germans are more efficient (2)</td>
<td>- Brainstorming sessions with people from different functions are common in Sweden (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cross-functional teams are common in Sweden (4)</td>
<td>- Swedes put emphasis on the experience exchange between employees (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- For extreme events Swedes quickly form cross-functional teams to find a solution, in Germany it is the expert (4)</td>
<td>- There are no big differences in the working style between Swedes and Germans (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Swedes listen more to experts and experienced people (8)</td>
<td>- Swedes are more flexible concerning working at home and combining motherhood and work (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience in multicultural teams</th>
<th>Experience in German-Swedish Projects</th>
<th>Experience in monocultural teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Daily work (2)</td>
<td>- long experience (1, 2)</td>
<td>- only Swedes yes (1, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Experienced (4, 8)</td>
<td>- experienced, works as a supervisor</td>
<td>- a lot of experience (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in German-Swedish Projects</td>
<td>(management/ budget level) (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in monocultural teams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- no experience(3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- One experience(6)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Other experiences with Britain’s and Americans, but professional experiences (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience in German-Swedish Projects</th>
<th>Experience in monocultural teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- project was first experience (5) but she took part in a trainee programme together with Swedes (6)</td>
<td>- experience exchange within the context of the long time project was first occasion (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Constitution of the team** | - 4 Swedes and 3 Germans (1)  
- 20, mostly Germans, 1 Swede (1)  
- Ca. 70, not only Swedes and Germans but also other nationalities involved (2)  
- 4-10 members, half Swedish half German (4)  
- 10 members from the company, sub-suppliers and the customer | - first project as an experience exchange (7)  
| **Profession of team members** | - Engineers, controller, human resources, environmental expert (2)  
- Engineers, controller, managers (4)  
- Designers and engineers (8) | Experience in monocultural teams  
| - Mostly men (2, 8) | - yes (3, 6, 7)  
- One female (4) | - daily work (5)  
| **Gender of team members** | - Human resources (5)  
- Engineers (3)  
- Human resources, technical, trade (4)  
- Very mixed, most had a background in mechanics (7) | - 10-15 Swedes (5)  
| **Project duration** | - 2 years (1,2) | - 6 Swedes, 8 Germans (3)  
- No distinct end or beginning, continuous (2, 4) | - 6 team members, Swedes, Germans and Britains (6)  
- ½ to 2 ½ years | - 60-80 people, but he was the only German (7) | - 3 months (3, 5)  
| **Language skills** | - Germans have good English skills but are not confident of speaking English (1)  
- English skills of Swedes are better than of Germans this hinders information flow (2)  
- English skills of Swedes are better than of Germans, but the Germans he works with have excellent English skills, Germans under 30 speak better English than over 40 (4)  
- German English is different than Swedish English due to education (8)  
- Swedes understand English well but do not | - The stay was 4 months, but the project lasted longer (6, 7)  
- She did not know Swedish but learnt during her stay to read and understand (6) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice so much in talking (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teambuilding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trip to the Oktoberfest (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cultural activities (sightseeing, general information about the region) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Visiting restaurants (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No setting of a common goal or working rules in the whole team, maybe discussions in parts of the team (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No teambuilding (2, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No setting of common goal or working rules in the team, rules are given by the company (2, 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Goals are unclear to most of the people because they change during the project (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sometimes they make something fun to get to know each other (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- They have a small meeting to talk about the goals (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success of project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In general goals are reached (1, 2, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In general goals are reached, but there are problems with the cost level (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key success factor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spreading of information to all the team members (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pointing out the teams abilities and achievements to motivate (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- You have to like your work (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Information has to be accessible, correct and in the right amount (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A project manager who constantly pushes the team to meet the goals (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| German team members spoke Swedish and very good English, but they have a strong accent (6) |
| Swedish speak English more fluently (6) |
| In the end of the project he was able to understand some Swedish and able to follow meetings in Swedish and also to communicate (7) |
| Swedes speak very good English this was helpful for him (7) |
| <strong>Teambuilding</strong> |
| - Speaking about expectations (5) |
| - No teambuilding (3) |
| - She does not know if there was teambuilding because she started to participate in the project in the middle (6) |
| - In the first meeting everyone in the team points out his/her strengths, according to this tasks are assigned (6) |
| <strong>Success of project</strong> |
| - Experience exchange was successful (3, 5) |
| - This part of the project did not have concrete goals (3) |
| - Project was successful (6, 7) |
| <strong>Key success factor</strong> |
| - Communication to the rest of the organization (6) |
| - Colleagues were open, very good working environment, open and valuable discussions (7) |
| - Taking away the fear, being reactive instead of active and by being a partner (3) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Factors</th>
<th>Conduction of project work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- First project co-location to Germany (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Now e-mail with a few monthly meetings with the project leader with some team members, lack of time for face-to-face meetings (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A lot of meetings and work over the internet, video calls, phone calls, conference system, e-mail (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Telephone meetings, videoconferencing, e-mails (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No co-location (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Weekly meetings by phone, monthly face-to-face meetings (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time ratio of project work to line work</td>
<td>- 40% line, 60% project (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 10% line, 90% project (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- More than 50% supervising projects, rest line work in the tool department (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 50-50 and is involved in 2-3 projects at the same time (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working language</td>
<td>- English (organizational language) (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- English (2, 4, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>- First project no evaluation after the part of a big project was completed (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Now evaluation about the project status in the form of a presentation by the project leader to the team members and asking the team members for lessons learned and improvements for future (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conduction of project work
- Mainly face-to-face, co-location to Sweden (3)
- Co-location to Sweden (5, 6, 7)

Time ratio of project work to line work
- Project work was extra to the normal work (3)
- 100% project (5, 6, 7)

Working language
- English (3, 5, 7)
- Swedish and English (6)

Evaluation
- Written benchmark report (5)
- Talking about improvements for the future (5)
- Every day talk about the current state (5)
- Evaluation about the hard facts (3)
- There was an evaluation after her participation about her task and her successes (6)
- At the end he made a presentation and a report as an evaluation regarding the technical things (7)

Training
- No training was provided from the organization, but self-preparation in the English language (5)
- Training is only important for shy people in advance (5)
- He thinks intercultural trainings are useful to have the right expectations about the culture (3)
- More important than training is getting to know each other personally, this should happen outside the office (3)
- No training, but she informed herself about dos and don’ts and learned Swedish during her stay (8)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Organizational influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Supposed to make an evaluation, but they are not good in doing it, he likes the idea of an evaluation to set an end to the project (4)  
- Lessons learned meeting in the end of every project about the hard facts, good and bad things are written down and can be checked in a database, this database can be used during the project (8)  

| - Training in German language and culture was privately organized (1)  
- No training is provided by the company, but the project leader is expected to train the project team members (1)  
- General lecture from an experienced person about cultural differences as early as possible (1)  
- First no training was provided, after request he received a training in business German and business relations in Germany for two weeks, he would like to get further training beyond language and believes that training is useful, training should take place after first experiences (2)  
- He had German language and culture training offered by the company (4)  
- He thinks it is important to have cultural understanding, but he does not see a training as important in German-Swedish relations as the cultures are not that different (4)  
- He wants to have a training at the beginning of the project to avoid major mistakes in the - She thinks a training gives only a good return if you work with the other culture for a longer period and if the cultures are not so similar as Sweden and Germany, she sees it as sufficient to inform oneself before the project starts (6)  
- He had some Swedish language training and after that he was able to understand simple texts (3)  
- No training, but did some Swedish training on his own (7) |

| - Department in the company that helps to organize the stay in a foreign country and organizes seminars, but he did not use the support (5)  
- Apart from training he thinks he can deal himself with intercultural matters (3)  
- The headquarters organized his stay and a flat (7) |

| He had some Swedish language training and after that he was able to understand simple texts (3)  
| No training, but did some Swedish training on his own (7) |
beginning (4)
- No training (8)
- He thinks that it is good to get some information how people are working, but he sees the difference between Germany and Sweden as not so big so there is no need to have that knowledge (8)
- He prefers that training takes place before the project, because already the first meeting can be a mess (8)

Organizational influence
- Human resources department supports the multicultural team with necessary information (1)
- Company wide IT-structure and access to common databases (1)
- Foreign colleagues support each other in cultural questions (1,2)
- Project overload affects the project work, as well as too much required reporting (4)
- Regular meetings to offer team members the possibility to bring their problems forward (4)

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**Internal and External Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Culture</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differs between small and big companies (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish industrial companies want the employees to actively contribute (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish companies value their founder (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common language (e.g. labelling of positions) and standard procedures throughout the company (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard procedure how the project is executed (4)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Culture</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German companies have a more hierarchical structure (6)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tutor**
- She had a close relationship to her tutor and she could always ask her questions when problems and misunderstandings occurred (6)
- He had two contact persons who organized his stay and who helped him during the project (7)

**Colleagues**
- Everyone helped him when there was a problem (7)
| Misunderstandings and Conflict | - Not enough communication within the team leads to misunderstandings (1)  
- Conflicts on the professional level about priorities and project versus line work (1)  
- Conflicts only on a professional level about time and budget (2)  
- Conflicts occur about resources (4)  
- No misunderstandings because Germans and Swedes are quite like each other, misunderstandings are solved by communicating again, if necessary face-to-face (8)  
- Conflicts occurred due to different knowledge (8) | - No conflicts occurred (3, 6)  
- Few and little misunderstandings occurred due to different cultures and language skills, these were solved by making sure how it was meant (6)  
- Few misunderstandings due to language, e.g. in the translation of positions in the company because of his long stay in Sweden (7)  
- No misunderstandings (5)  
- Conflicts due to different priorities (5) |

Chart No 5. 2 Interview Data source: own
6 Analysis of Empirical Data

In this chapter we set the results of our interviews into relation to our research model and the theories being presented in the theoretical framework. The analysis of the interviews is not representative but it shows tendencies. Since we want to explain the stated experiences, we have to make a selection of statements to be subject of our analysis. We present typical statements which were pointed out by several interviewees. At the same time we present also interesting and contradictory statements to show the differing points of views upon an issue and perceptions of our interviewees. If a difference is stated manifold we assume a cultural difference. The analysis of the statements of our interviewees with the help of our theoretical framework can just serve as an explanation for the statements of the interviewees and cannot be understood as a generalization for the Swedish and the German culture.

We analyze each factor separately, the analysis of each factor ends with practical consequences. The practical consequences highlight the problems and benefits which derive from the differences between Germans and Swedes stated by the interviewees.

6.1 Communication Style

Our interviewees pointed out differences in the non-verbal and verbal communication of Swedes and Germans. Formality in the German way to communicate was mentioned about the non-verbal communication and the verbal communication by several interviewees. This formal way of communicating of Germans can for example be seen in the clothing. “[…] he is more uptight, like always wearing a suit, and a tie and a vest and polished shoes […].” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). Swedes do not dress up in the workplace (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). Another non-verbal formality is the handshake used by the Germans to greet others. “[…] when Germans meet they always want to shake hands.” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). Several interviewees mentioned that also when addressing someone in Germany formality is important, Germans value the use of the “Sie”, titles and last names. The Swedes use first names when addressing someone and the usage of titles is not important in Sweden “[…] they don’t mean to insult you when just saying “hej” don’t say “god morgen” only they say or something. That is normal for Sweden […].” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager) “Here nobody cares if you are a doctor.” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). This observation of our interviewees fits with Lewis’ studies about the German culture. He also points out the importance of being correctly dressed in the workplace and the formal way to address others, this is the German way to show respect to others.335 In Sweden there might be different ways to show respect. Svensson

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for example writes that punctuality is a way to show respect to others in the Swedish culture.\textsuperscript{336} The formality in the German communication in the work place might also be connected to the specific borders Germans have between the professional life and the private life. Also Schroll-Machl points out this clear distinction between work and private life.\textsuperscript{337} Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) pointed out the usage of a correct language in Germany, in contradiction to Swedes who only say what they need to make themselves understood. This efficiency in the Swedish language was also mentioned by Svensson, she explained it as being a waste of time and energy for Swedes to talk more formal.\textsuperscript{338}

Another characteristic mentioned by three of the interviewees about the Germans is their direct way of communicating. Swedes are not so direct when communicating, they circumscribe things (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). “Only that the Swedes are actually always clearly more reticent in their formulations unlike this would have been the case for us. We go actually pretty direct to the facts […]” (Interviewee 3, male, German, in charge of settlements of projects). The German directness might derive from the preference of facts over face; politeness is valued as not so important.\textsuperscript{339} A contradiction to the less direct way of communicating in Sweden is the way to give commendation and critique, Interviewee 6 (female, German, recruiter) pointed out that in Sweden commendation and critique are used more often. In Germany not saying anything is already a commendation (Interviewee 3, male, German, in charge of settlements of projects), this is contradictory to the low-context communication in Germany which normally leads to explicit communication. That Swedes commend more often might relate to the femininity of the Swedish culture. A feminine behaviour might be to tell someone when something is good or to tell someone how to improve, while this might be different in masculine cultures like the German. On the other hand interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager) pointed out a way of commendation in Sweden which is similar to the above mentioned German way of regarding not saying anything as a commendation.

Five of our interviewees mentioned that Swedes are open for discussions, disagreements, critique and misunderstandings. Just interviewee 5 described that Swedes are not as direct as Germans in addressing problems and criticism. On the other hand for interviewee 3 the decision making process was not so open. “Mostly they isolated themselves, discussed it in the group and after one week they came back with the result, this was then watertight, […]” (Interviewee 3, male, German, in charge of settlements of projects). This matches with the opinion of interviewee 8 (male, Swede, product development manager)

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
who says that Swedes are quieter and think first before they talk. This Swedish openness might
derive from the concepts of fairness, honesty and reliability in the Swedish society. These
concepts lead to Swedes being open about things and staying quiet until they have made up their
mind.\textsuperscript{340} The Swedish way of being open for discussions and disagreements might come from the
preference for achieving consensus, for Swedes a decision with disagreement cannot be a good
decision therefore they like to exchange opinions.\textsuperscript{341} On the other hand two of our interviewees
pointed out that Swedes avoid direct confrontation, this also might come from the strive for
consensus in the Swedish culture which makes them feel uncomfortable with direct
confrontations, although we are not sure how strong our interviewees interpret the meaning of
the word confrontation.\textsuperscript{342}

Half of our interviewees see no difference in the way how Swedes and Germans discuss. But
interviewee 1 (female, Swede, project manager) pointed out that there is a difference in the way topics
are approached in Sweden. “They have unexpected questions, they associate more and they also bring in other
topics […]” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). One German interviewee described that
Swedes are more engaged in discussions (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). The similar
discussion behaviour of Swedes and Germans could be explained by Hall’s classification of the
two cultures at the low-context end of his scale. Low-context cultures discuss more to ensure that
everyone is understood.

All Swedish interviewees and one German interviewee pointed out that Swedes communicate
more than Germans. This includes communication in the team, communication between
employees, and communication across departments and hierarchical levels. “[…] we communicate a
lot more between each other than people do in Germany. […] and they can sit to each other and they don’t know
what the other guy is working with. […] that would have been sorted out five minutes after they arrived in Sweden
[…]” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). The limited communication of the
Germans could be explained by the masculinity of the German culture. In a masculine culture
competition is high. Since information gives individuals the ability to have an advantage
compared to the ones that lack it, information is demanded. This makes information a matter of
competition and therefore in a competitive environment information is not shared and
communication is restricted. In the low masculinity Swedish culture cooperation is valued over
competition. Therefore the sharing of information is more natural.

\textsuperscript{342} Åke Daun, “Swedishness as an Obstacle in cross-cultural Interaction”, in \textit{Intercultural Discourse and Communication},
Practical Consequences

The difference in communicating formally may offend the Germans. The less direct way of the Swedes to communicate and to take their time to make up their mind might make the Germans feel insecure about the opinion of the Swedish team members and might lead to a dominating behaviour of the more direct Germans in discussions and decision making processes. “[…] that Germans are even also yes how do I say this now without sounding negative are also a little bit sometimes firm and dominant are in some points, […]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). On the other hand the similar behaviour in discussions and the low-context communication in both countries might be helpful for the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams. As interviewee 1 (female, Swedes, project manager) stated, the lack of communication in the team can lead to misunderstandings and doubling of efforts.

The broader definition of a subject by the Swedes can be hard to understand for the German team members as they might think that they are loosing time when not sticking to their definition of the subject.

Since many of our interviewees said that the key for success in a team is communication and the spreading of information, the limited communication of the Germans might hinder an efficient conduction of the project.

6.2 Demand for Structure and Rules

Rules and plans exist in both cultures, but the way in which the rules are obeyed differs. All of our Swedish interviewees described that Germans follow the rules strictly and sometimes rather blame the rules instead of doing the task in time (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager), whereas Swedes only follow the rules when they want to and when it seems important to them. “[…] we have a lot of rules that we shall follow inside the company and I think we as Swedes we are applying those rules when we want to do it […] but there I feel, when Germans do it, when they apply the rules, then that's more important for them to follow the rules and they will less succeed in the task […] We work on our own head and don't think about the rules so much.” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager).

This stated difference can be explained with Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension. Germany has a much higher score in that dimension than Sweden. Germans have an affinity for rules and structure because it gives them security. Germans stick to the rules in all situations since they are universalistic according to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s research in order to avoid chaos. Germans do not like experiments (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager), whereas this is alright in Sweden. Interviewee 6 (female, German, recruiter) perceives the Swedes as more laid-
back and chaotic. Low uncertainty avoidance means that rules can be broken when necessary\textsuperscript{343}, just as our Swedish interviewees mentioned it about their country. This is contradictory to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s finding that Sweden is also a universalistic culture which means that rules are applied in all situations.

Three of our interviewees mentioned the strict borders between departments in German organizations; this is not so strict in Sweden. “[…] there is a tradition in Sweden to work cross-functional in this direction, and if you see that someone has a problem you go and help them. […] you are not following the functions that strict. In Germany my impression is that ok, I did this, I signed it and I put it there, I know he is dead, but I’m still putting it there, nothing will happen, but it’s not my problem.” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). The close cooperation of the departments in Sweden can be explained with the Swedish “jante” law valuing cooperation over competition.\textsuperscript{344} The descriptions of our interviewees about Germany are in accordance with Lewis’ findings about the strict organizational boundaries between the departments.\textsuperscript{345} From our own experience we can say that there is even a competition between the different departments for budgets and staff in German companies. This might explain why the cross-departmental cooperation in Germany does not work as well as in Sweden.

Meetings in Sweden and Germany are organized in the same way, there exists an agenda and this is followed. “That were in general meetings, as one knows them. An agenda exists and is followed and worked off.” (Interviewee 3, male, German, in charge of settlements of projects). Maybe this is the way of organizing meetings in business life which is used across cultures.

The tasks assigned in Sweden are broader and more focused on the goal, while the way how to get there is free. “This was actually very strongly left to the people, there was a goal, there was a specification, we want to go there and we look how we will manage to get there, but there were no strict rules or strict specifications.” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). In Germany more information about the task is demanded and given. “I am more explicit when working in Germany. […] they get a bit unsecure if I say it in a Swedish way you can do what you like. They need more support to say that this is allowed by the manager actually. I need, I can do it. So I need to support that team more.” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). This giving of clear instructions in Germany was stated by five of our interviewees, two Germans stated that


there are clear rules in Sweden and in Germany in the way how to execute a task. The higher demand of rules and structure in Germany leads to more instructions when assigning tasks, as well as the German low-context communication which demands a high amount of information and instruction. The low uncertainty avoidance in Sweden leads to a higher trust in the employee in Sweden for successfully executing the task and therefore fewer instructions are given.\footnote{Geert Hofstede, “Cultures Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations”, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2001), pp. 160-161.}

Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) pointed out the way in which Germans judge in two extreme categories, if they think something is good they will support it all the way, if they do not like something it is difficult to make them change their mind. On the one hand this makes Germans inflexible, but on the other hand it makes them reliable. This description of interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) can be supported by interviewee 6 (female, German, recruiter) who says that Germans do not change their point of view easily.

Practical Consequences
The different interpretations of rules could lead to arguments in the project team. The Germans expect every team member to follow all the rules strictly, whereas the Swedes have a more flexible approach to rules. On the other hand Swedes could benefit from the German reliability, whereas the Germans could profit from the Swedish flexibility. Also the German way to think in two extremes can lead to conflicts in the team since consensus and supporting the same goal is essential for a successful project and important for Swedes. Another cause of conflict might be that Swedes might feel restricted by the way in which the Germans assign tasks, whereas the Germans might feel insecure with the Swedish way. This could affect motivation of each of the sub-groups.

The experience of working in Sweden where cross-departmental cooperation is common, could help the Germans to have a different attitude towards other departments. This could reduce competition among German departments in the long run.

Similar procedures in the organization and conduction of meetings in Germany and Sweden lead to similar expectations how a meeting should be, this is beneficial for the course of the team meetings.

6.3 Importance of Hierarchy
The importance of hierarchy and the awareness of hierarchical structures differ between Sweden and Germany. This can be seen in the description that superiors in Sweden are more accessible
for the employees than in Germany. “[…] the leadership, the director and the other members of the leadership you can get easily in touch with them, […]” (Interviewee 5, male, German, HR specialist). One reason why the superior is more accessible in Sweden could be the “jante” law due to that law many Swedes strive to be like others. This also explains why Swedes are not scared to criticize their superior. “[…], you can more feel the level in Germany than you can here, I mean I think we have a managing director who comes from Germany and I mean if we think he is wrong we tell him that and if you are in meetings in Germany and there are managers on quite high levels nobody talks against the manager, […]” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager). In Germany hierarchical structures are more visible; the employees do not talk against their superior. Interviewee 1 (female, Swede, project manager) said that the Germans expect their boss to be able to answer all questions, this might derive from the communication based on facts, the German subordinates expect their boss to have more knowledge about the facts. Maybe this is the reason why it is difficult for the German boss to ask the subordinates questions as stated by interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager). That superiors are supposed to have an answer to every questions and do not ask questions to subordinates can be explained with the partly ascribed German culture in which a superior has to prove his or her status after gaining it. Half of our interviewees said that in Sweden the team makes the decision. “I think they did it all together in Sweden, […]” (Interviewee 5, male German, HR specialist), whereas others had different opinions. “[…], the decisions are taken by the boss, definitely, but that’s also the same in Sweden as in Germany.” (Interviewee 7, male, German, shift manager). The Swedish way of failing decisions in the team can be explained with the strive for consensus in the Swedish society. This strive comes from the “jante” law in which consensus is valued higher as competition. According to Hofstede both cultures have a similar score in the power distance dimension. This might explain why some interviewees see no differences in the decision making processes between Sweden and Germany.

Half of our interviewees see tasks assigned according to the competences of a team member in both cultures; only interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager) sees tasks as assigned by the team leader. “Well often the tasks were simply assigned according to competences and subjects.” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). This procedure can be explained by the low power distance of the two

countries. Power does not play a role in the task assignment rather competences. Concluding we can say that the descriptions and impressions of our interviewees about hierarchy do not differ between Germans and Swedes regarding their own and the other culture.

Practical Consequences
If teams are composed of members from different hierarchical levels, a German who is higher in the hierarchy than a Swede might feel offended, if the Swede criticizes him or her.

6.4 Cooperation versus Competition
Three of our interviewees pointed out that there is no difference in the effort and time Germans and Swedes invest towards the goal achievement, whereas two of our Swedish interviewees see a difference. They said that Swedes put more effort towards a good team spirit while Germans focus on the goal achievement. “I think Swedes put more effort for having a good atmosphere, Germans put more effort for reaching the goal.” (Interviewee 8, male, Swedish, product development manager). As feminine cultures value the quality of life this can explain why Swedes value a good working climate and team spirit over competition, because this enhances the quality of their work place. Another explanation why Swedes value cooperation is the “jante” law which leads to a higher value of cooperation. Interviewee 6 underlines this non-competitive way to working in Sweden with her statement about commendation “[…] but it was communicated that it was due to Mrs. X or what ever and her super super work well I found it nice, that even first just under four eyes but then even also in the team, without that rivalry or envy occurred.” (Interviewee 6, female, German, HR specialist). Germans on the other hand have a more masculine culture; masculine cultures value competition which leads to a focus on goal achievement. The German masculinity also explains why Germans focus on their career. “[…] what kind of decisions can I take to make a new step in the organization […]. […] I am thinking about to do the technical correct decision but this is different.” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). This is different in Sweden, “[…], but I think it’s also again a function of the Swedish culture that career is not that important in Sweden compared to Germany, […]” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). The German focus on career might also lead to a protective attitude of the Germans at work “I think in Germany you are better to protect your back to think more to find right way out you are more business minded so to say here it’s more straight honest but you don’t protect yourself in Sweden […]” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager).

Another characteristic of the Swedish focus on cooperation is that in Sweden it is common to help each other in executing a task as mentioned by three of our interviewees. Swedes also speak about private things in the work place and develop friendships. “[…] here you
are more speaking about private stuff you are more connected and then you are also more flexible because if a friend calls you on a Saturday evening you always say yes [\ldots].” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). Also interviewee 5 (male, German, HR specialist) described the relationship to colleagues as close. This is different in Germany, where people can also work with colleagues that they do not like as stated by interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). The German distinction between work and private life can be explained by the specific border between working and private life. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s research also the Swedish culture has specific borders between working and private life this is contradictory to the statements of our interviewees which lead to the impression that the Swedish culture is rather diffuse.

Practical Consequences

The competitiveness of the Germans can reduce their ability to work in teams. Swedes might not understand why the Germans do not help their team members as much as they are used to from monocultural teamwork. A benefit of this difference might be that Germans and Swedes complement each other well, when the first pay more attention to the goal achievement and the latter pay more attention to a good team spirit.

6.5 Group versus Individual

Already in the analysis of the cultural factor “importance of hierarchy” we mentioned the group focus of the Swedish culture which leads to group decision making processes. The group orientation of the Swedes can also be seen in the statement that more meetings and more teamwork take place in Sweden. Two of our German interviewees recognized this. “[\ldots] it was a totally different way to work well much less alone in front of the computer but much much more in meetings, workshops and small groups, [\ldots]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, HR specialist). Teamwork seems to be a more natural working environment for Swedes, this can be the reason why they integrate quicker in teams and also help others to integrate as stated by interviewee 6 (female, German, HR specialist). Teamwork is not as common in Germany as in Sweden. Swedes also understand working in a team differently than Germans, they do not only understand the team as a place where information is shared, but they work closely together in a team. “Basically almost everything is done in teams and a team does not mean we exchange what the other person is doing but we work actually closely together [\ldots]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, HR specialist). When a decision is failed in a Swedish team, this decision is supported by every team member even if a team member does not agree with the decision. One of our Swedish interviewees mentioned that “[\ldots], sometimes in Germany it feels like working against the programme that’s my experience, [\ldots].” (Interviewee 8, male, Swedish, product development manager) and it is more common in Germany that a team member goes his/her own way
(Interviewee 8, male, Swedish, product development manager), unlike in Sweden, where team members help each other in executing their tasks. “[…] there is a tradition in Sweden to work cross-functional in this direction, and if you see that someone has a problem you go and help them, […].” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). As already mentioned in the analysis of the cultural factor “cooperation versus competition” this cooperation between employees in Sweden can be explained by the Swedish femininity. The group focus of the Swedish culture is a contradiction to Hofstede’s findings of Sweden being an individualistic culture about which he says that the best performance of employees is reached when they work individually. According to Hofstede employees in collectivistic cultures will act to fulfill the team’s need even if it is not in their own interest. The descriptions of our interviewees show rather a collectivistic orientation in the Swedish individualistic culture. Also Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner categorize Sweden as an individualistic culture in which information is not shared and in which the achievement of individuals can be singled out and individuals should distinguish themselves from others. These characteristics of an individualistic culture are contradictory to the descriptions of our interviews. This contradiction also holds true for the categorization of Germany as a communitarian culture in which consensus is highly valued. In Germany teamwork is not as common as in Sweden; this might derive from the high individualism in combination with the competitiveness in the German workplace. Sweden also has a much longer history in teamwork than Germany, as stated in chapter 3.1 about multicultural teamwork; this might be another reason which explains why for Swedes it is more normal to work in teams.

Three of our Swedish interviewees saw team rewards as a good way to give rewards to project teams, whereas the Germans had a more differentiated point of view. Two Germans said that they would prefer rewards given according to the contribution to the project work, either to an individual or to the team. The Swedish team focus in the rewarding can again be explained by their cooperative culture. The preference of the Germans for giving rewards according to the contribution can also be found in the way wages are in general determined in Germany. They are determined by the level of responsibility and since only to a few members in the organization responsibility is assigned and not to every member, our German interviewees did not prefer team rewards. Unlike Swedes they might not even be aware of the possibility to give a reward to everyone in the team.

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Practical Consequences

For the Swedes it might be difficult to understand that Germans are not so used to teamwork, as it is common for Swedes. Germans may not see teams as natural as the Swedes do. Maybe they are therefore not so conscious about what is important when working in a team as compared to when working individually. As teamwork is more natural for the Swedes they also might unconsciously know what is important and might not be able to imagine that the Germans are not conscious about this. It might help the teamwork that the Swedes have the ability to integrate themselves and others quickly and well into the team. The Germans might experience the frequent meetings in Sweden as a waste of time since group decisions take more time than individual ones. In order to shorten the time spent for meetings the Germans may be dominant and impatient. Swedes might wonder why Germans do not want to invest time in meetings and why they are so dominant.

6.6 Open-mindedness

Except from one German interviewee, all of our interviewees had expectations about the other culture. Interviewee 7 (male, German, shift manager) mentioned that his expectations influenced his experience. “[…] I didn’t really expect to see big differences, might be that that’s the reason why I didn’t see any cuz I expected there to be not big differences.” (male, German, shift manager). Most of our interviewees changed their view about the other culture after or during their working experience some even adapted practices and others varied their attributes after the multicultural teamwork. “It was also very good for me as a Swede I became more confident as a leader because the sickness I had in Sweden, the fault is maybe that you are too friendly as a project leader you don’t see how to affect people and that you can be angry and you can be fight things […] but in Germany I saw another style of leadership and it works sometimes.” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). “[…] you come back, you are more calmly in your reactions.” (Interviewee 5, male, German, HR specialist). These developments of our interviewees can be called open-mindedness. Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) and interviewee 3 (male, German, in charge of settlements of projects) emphasized that they learn most about the other culture outside the workplace. In general our interviewees did not expect great differences between Germans and Swedes. “[…] one expects that almost neighbour countries that there can’t be so different, […]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). The majority of our interviewees also mentioned that they do not see big differences between the German and the Swedish culture. This projected similarity might be like a self-fulfilling prophecy, that when one does not expect differences one also does not see them and thus does not experience differences. Due to the geographical closeness of the two countries one might expect that they are similar in many aspects. But there are differences which cannot be recognized at first sight and which made it for interviewee 6
difficult: “[…], but well I found it partly yet yet more difficult for me […].” (female, German, recruiter).

Practical Consequences
The open-mindedness of our interviewees helps the multicultural project work, as they all are not afraid to get in touch with the other culture and to adapt practices of the other culture in their own environment. This is definitely an important requirement for successful German-Swedish project work.

6.7 Attitude towards Time
There is no difference in the working time between Sweden and Germany (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). But Germans often say that they do not have time while Swedes make time available when needed. “[…], that’s when they say we don’t have time, in Germany. And we think damn it, we have to do this, we have to make time for that. […] I think we just decide not to do other things.” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). This observation can be explained by the German dislike for interruptions. Germans prefer to do one thing at a time and want to finish it before starting with something new. Otherwise Germans feel easily stressed. Germans perceive time as sequential according to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner or monochronic according to Hall this means that one thing is done at a time. This can be explained with the high uncertainty avoidance in the German culture, which leads to stress at work. This again fits with the statement of interviewee 5 “I think that German people have always a tight time schedule, they are always under pressure.” (male, German, HR specialist). The low uncertainty avoidance of the Swedes makes them take life more easily “[…], but we try to struggle and solve the task during the day or if we don’t solve it this day we solve it tomorrow, but anyway we will solve it, […]” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager).

Practical Consequences
The different attitudes towards time and the higher level of stress among the German team members compared to the Swedes who are more relaxed could lead to a more balanced level of stress in the team. A balanced level of stress is could be a benefit for the project work since it can enhance efficiency.

The German attitude of not having time for things that appear unscheduled could either lead to

the Swedes doing the work or to a delay. This behaviour of the Germans might frustrate the Swedes.

6.8 Working Style

It is a common practice in Sweden to use cross-functional teams, according to our interviewees. These are not only used in project teams but also to find quick solutions to problems and for brainstorming sessions. In Germany teams are more homogeneous. “I recognize that in Sweden, that projects are coming from different departments, there is a managing employee and a technician and they are coming from different, the group is not so homogen like in Germany.” (Interviewee 5, male, Germany, HR specialist). In these cross-functional teams exchange of experiences can take place, according to interviewee 6 (female, German, recruiter) Swedes put emphasis on these exchanges. Exchanges of experiences might also lead to another characteristic of the Swedish working style: Interviewer B: “Okay, so they continuously try to improve?” Interviewee 1: “Yeah, and than they clearly see their role as that they have an important task in that they can improve they can contribute in that way.” (female, Swedish, project manager).

Germans are quicker and more efficient when solving problems as stated by interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) and interviewee 5 (male, German, HR specialist). This might derive from the content orientation of the Germans and their direct and fact oriented way to communicate. Swedes have a wider definition of subjects as stated by interviewee 1 (female, Swedish, project manager), which might lead to broader discussions and they strive for consensus in the group which might take up more time.

Practical Consequences

Swedes try to broaden the subject whereas the Germans stick to the facts and keep the goal in mind; this can be beneficial as it might lead to a more elaborate decision. The cross-functional composition of teams in Sweden might lead to a wider variety of views upon a subject and therefore again to a more elaborate solution. The different ways of making decisions that Swedes discuss more in the group mixed with the German preference to reach the goal within the time plan can lead to a more efficient decision making process.

6.9 Internal Factors

All of our interviewees are experienced in teamwork; even if it was their first multicultural experience they at least had experience in monocultural teams. All of our Swedish interviewees

had long experience in multicultural teams. Our German interviewees had less multicultural experience and for all of them it was the first time to work in a German-Swedish project team. Maybe the high level of experience in teamwork is the reason why so few conflicts occurred during the project work.

The main characteristic of the project teams our interviewees participated in is that they were constituted mainly of engineers and other technical professions. Maybe this is the reason why males were the dominant gender in the project teams. This was not expected by us since in Sweden the majority of the women is working.358

Half of our interviewees mentioned that Swedes speak better English than Germans. This hinders the information flow according to two of our interviewees. “[…] it was also due to the fact that our colleagues in the German sites could speak English relatively bad and when you don’t have the language the basis for communication is missing.” (Interviewee 3, male, German, in charge of settlements of projects). The good English skills of the Swedes helped interviewee 7 (male, German, shift manager). Interviewee 4 had a differentiated view of the English skills of the Germans “[…] in Sweden they speak English, in Germany it’s not that sure that they do, depends on the age, if they are 40+ it’s maybe not that typical, but everyone that is below 40 speaks English and everyone below 30 speaks well […]” (male, Swede, product development manager). Two of our German interviewees were able to read Swedish documents and to follow meetings in Swedish.

Half of our interviewees stated that no teambuilding at the beginning of the project including setting up goals and rules how to work took place. Two interviewees mentioned that at the beginning of the project activities to get to know each other and to get an impression of the local region are carried out. “We have collected all the team members and make some fun thing, and had some dinner or something and slept over somewhere, so trying to know each other well before we start doing the work.” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager).

Five of our interviewees see the spreading of information within the team and communication in the team and to the rest of the organization as the key factor for success. “[…] the information flow is the most complex part of our project. And it is the most important thing and it is the hardest to do in a good way. You never have the right level of information, you never have the right information to flowing, it’s always too much, to less, or wrong information.” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). Unlike interviewee 4 “Key factor is probably a programme manager that is really really active.” (male, Swede, product development manager) who sees an active project manager, who constantly pushes the project team

to meet the goals, as the success factor for a project.

Practical Consequences
Teambuilding activities at the beginning of the project can build up trust between the team members; can be used to set up rules how to work with each other, to define roles of each team member and a common goal and expectations of the team members can be exchanged regarding the teamwork. Therefore teambuilding can increase team effectiveness.\textsuperscript{359} The establishment of trust can reduce conflicts\textsuperscript{360} and the exchange of expectations decreases the probability of misunderstandings during the project work.

Teambuilding can enhance the communication within the team. When the rules for communication are set from the beginning on it can increase the communication within the team. This is important because communication was mentioned as a key success factor by our interviewees and because: “[…], one of the problems with the German team is, that they do not communicate within the team unless it's, unless they are told to communicate exactly like that, […]” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager).

Since communication and information spreading is the key success factor the lower English skills of the Germans could be a problem in the communication and therefore for the project work.

6.10 External Factors
For all our Swedish interviewees the teamwork takes place mostly virtually with only a few meetings on a regular basis. “We have a lot of work over internet. We have a lot of video calls, phone calls. We work with all available medias, we have this conference systems, so we can, if I have a colleague in Brazil for example, we can open the same excel sheet or whatever and we can work together on the screen on the same sheet.” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). This was different for our German interviewees all of them worked in Sweden during their project. This might have been the case because two of our German interviewees took part in an exchange with Sweden. Although the two countries are almost neighbour countries virtual communication combined with regular meetings seems to be common. Maybe this is the reason why few misunderstandings and conflicts occurred in the project teams our interviewees worked in. The lack of personal contact might lead to fewer opportunities for misunderstandings and conflicts.

\textsuperscript{359} Christopher P. Earley and Ariam Erez, “The transplanted executive: Why you need to understand how workers in other countries see the world differently”, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 100-102.

Five of our interviewees had an evaluation after the project was completed or during the project work. All of these evaluations focused on the task. “[…] more about the hard facts to understand what went good with the programme, what went wrong and try to specify that, so we don’t do the same mistakes again, so more about hard facts […]” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager).

All of our interviewees except interviewee 8 (male, Swede, product development manager) did not receive any kind of training for the German-Swedish project work. Interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager) had training provided by the company whereas interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) received training by the company due to his initiative, all the other interviewees prepared themselves for the multicultural teamwork. The German interviewees had language training in the Swedish language and interviewee 5 (male, German, HR specialist) prepared himself for speaking English. Interviewee 6 (female, German, recruiter) also studied dos and don’t in Sweden. Of our Swedish interviewees only interviewee 1 (female, Swede, project manager) and interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) had some training which combined the German language and culture. Three of our interviewees liked the idea of having an intercultural training. “[…] I went there for two weeks to study business relations, business German, so I, how to, how do you expect to behave, how do you write a business letter in Germany, […]” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). Three others do not see the need for intercultural trainings in German-Swedish projects as the countries are not so different. “[…], well I think an intercultural training as one knows it from the book is I think for the countries that are so similar as Sweden and Germany not so necessary, […]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). Half of our interviewees would like to receive intercultural training before the multicultural teamwork starts. “Before, definitely, so that I go in with open eyes and understand what I should do, I mean it can be be first meeting that you make a mess of it I think.” (Interviewee 8, male, Swede, product development manager).

Three of our interviewees had access to organizational support for the multicultural project work. Two of them were supported by the human resources department, interviewee 7 (male, German, shift manager) was supported by the headquarters. Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) mentioned his foreign colleagues as sources for support. Interviewee 1 (female, Swede, project manager) also sees the company wide IT-structure and access to common databases as a help for the team members. Interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager) mentioned project overload and too much reporting as inhibitors for the project work. “Well, influencing yes, workloads from other projects, […] everyone is involved in several projects running parallel in different phases, and that has an impact, because sometimes you are overloaded.” (Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development
Since the senior management can influence the project work positively it is surprising that none of the interviewees mentioned it.

Practical Consequences
It seems as if the German-Swedish projects are treated as monocultural ones. Project team members have almost no possibility to learn about cultural differences and to bring problems forward that they experience in the project work which do not concern the project goal and project execution. Due to the rare meetings and missing intercultural training, that does not seem to be a common practice, the multicultural project team members might not even be aware of cultural differences and therefore not recognize misunderstandings. If the team members are not aware of misunderstandings they might also not see the importance of intercultural trainings, which could enhance the awareness of the own culture and other cultures.

The non-existing evaluation of cultural differences could lead to a repetition of mistakes in multicultural projects. This can reduce the efficiency of German-Swedish projects and therefore lead to losses of time and money. Also the fact that team members do not have an established setting which offers them the opportunity to state their problems which occur due to cultural differences and that these occur over and over again, might lead to frustration and lack of motivation.

6.11 Internal and External Factors
Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) and interviewee 4 (male, Swede, product development manager) mentioned the standard procedures which help them to conduct the project work. Interviewee 2 (male, Swede, industrial engineering manager) also mentioned the common labelling of positions throughout the company. “[…], he has also that template, he is working, he is thinking in the same way, and if I say that I, if I say QC, where is the QC-guy, he knows […] what I mean with the QC-guy and he has a QC-guy in his plant, because it is build up after the same.” (Interviewee 2, male, Swede, industrial engineering manager). This common way of conducting a project and the common labelling of positions can make the project work easier as the team members know the way in which the project is conducted and they have common expressions for the same things and positions.

Two of our German interviewees had tutors during their stay in Sweden. These tutors helped them a lot, they did not only assist in task related matters, they were also available to discuss cultural misunderstandings and questions. “[…] I think my tutor supported me […]” (Interviewee 6, female, German, recruiter). Tutors for the team members are a good and helpful practice for the assistance in multicultural teams. Especially for co-located team members a tutor of the other
culture to talk about emerging problems can be of great help for a successful project work.

Practical Consequences

There might be a difference in the demands of virtual teams and co-located teams when it comes to support during the project work. For virtual teams a common language and understanding is proper, whereas for co-located teams tutors for the team members might be more suitable than for virtual teams. But of course also the co-located teams can benefit from an organizational culture which supports common understanding.

6.12 Misunderstandings and Conflict

There occurred only a few misunderstandings in the project teams of our interviewees. The main reason for misunderstandings was language and a lack of communication. Interviewer B: “Do you think in your project team there is enough communication between all the team members?” [...] I: “I judge it by misunderstanding or I judge it by when I am supervising or asking about a task maybe I say did you speak with him? Did you have you heard that? Because she is working on almost the same thing have you spoken to her? No I have not.” (Interviewee 1, female, Swede, project manager). Misunderstandings were solved by communicating again and making sure what the other team member meant as mentioned by interviewee 8. “[…], communicate again in some way and usually during meetings and if you don’t understand each other than its face-to-face meetings.” (male, Swede, product development manager).

As well as the occurrence of misunderstandings also the occurrence of conflicts was rare. Three of our Swedish interviewees mentioned resources as the main reason for conflicts in the project work. “Resources I would say, or at the end money. But definitely human resources key problem, […]”(Interviewee 4, male, Swede, product development manager). Interviewee 8 (male, Swede, product development manager) also mentioned different knowledge of the team members as a source for conflict. All of our Swedish interviewees mentioned the occurrence of conflicts in the project work, whereas only one of our German interviewees mentioned this. This might be explained by different definitions of what conflict is between the two cultures. The causes of conflicts mentioned by our Swedish interviewees sound for us as Germans rather like “just” differences in opinion about a certain topic; therefore it might be that Swedes identify a conflict earlier than Germans. This might be related to the fact that Germans expect counter arguments and are prepared for them. 361 The Swedish strive for consensus and avoiding conflicts might make

Practical Consequences
Swedes might feel more at ease with disagreements, when procedures how conflicts are treated would be decided on during the teambuilding.
In an intercultural training the way in which the other culture discusses, communicates, treats and solves conflicts could be covered should take place. This knowledge can help the team members to develop a mutual understanding for the interaction of the team members from the other culture which reduces misunderstandings and conflicts.

7 Conclusion
At the beginning of our research we raised two research questions:

1. What are the problems and benefits among German-Swedish project team members due to cultural differences?
2. In which way can problems be coped with and benefits be enhanced?

7.1 First Research Question
Regarding our first research question we found problems among German-Swedish project team members deriving from differences in the communication styles of Germans and Swedes. Another difference between Germans and Swedes which might lead to problems is the Swedish focus on cooperation in the team whereas the Germans are more focused on the task. Problems could also arise in the project team due to differences in dealing with rules; these differences can be recognized in the different ways of assigning tasks.
Most of the differences our interviewees mentioned concerned the different communication styles. Since communication was also mentioned as the key success factor by our interviewees, communication style is the cultural factor which most attention should be paid to, since problems in the communication between the team members can lead to difficulties in reaching the project goals.

After analysing the cultural differences between Germans and Swedes, we conclude that in the German-Swedish collaboration the broader definition of the subject by the Swedes while the

Germans stick to the facts can be beneficial, this complements one another. Another benefit in German-Swedish project teams might be that Swedes focus more on team spirit and Germans more on goal achievement, these different foci also complement one another. The open-mindedness towards the other culture of the German-Swedish project team members we interviewed has a positive impact on the collaboration in the team. The only benefit mentioned by our interviewees was the similarity of the two cultures when it comes to the discussion behaviour and meetings; this eases the German-Swedish project work.

Most interviewees mentioned that the similarities between the German and the Swedish culture simplify the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams; this statement was not further specified. Other benefits were not mentioned by our interviewees.

Before starting our research we expected problems and benefits among German-Swedish project team members due to cultural differences. This expectation was not met to the expected extend. This might have been the case because either there are not so obvious problems and benefits, or many problems and benefits might not have been recognized by our interviewees, or might have been already forgotten as some were not involved in a German-Swedish project team at the time of the interview. Another reason for not recognizing problems and benefits might be a low level of cultural awareness of our interviewees. We also think that the duration of our interviews might have been too short to establish a trustworthy relationship between the interviewees and us to tell us about problems and benefits. Another reason could be that our questions were not appropriate enough to figure out the problems and benefits in German-Swedish project teams.

7.2 Second Research Question

Our second research question addressed the way in which the problems can be dealt with and benefits be enhanced. Therefore we developed a concept to succeed in German-Swedish project teams explained in the following.

Our concept addresses the coping of problems in German-Swedish project teams which occur due to cultural differences. As our interviewees only mentioned one benefit of German-Swedish teamwork, we do not present a concept to enhance the benefits of German-Swedish project teams.

The concept is presented in a chronological order in which it should be implemented. When implemented in the presented way, all of the practical consequences mentioned in the analysis of empirical data are addressed. Since every German-Swedish project team is different, our concept will not be universally applicable. But it should serve as a basis and inspiration for enhancing the collaboration in German-Swedish projects teams.
First Step: Intercultural Training
In general our interviewees had a positive attitude towards intercultural training, even though it was mentioned that intercultural training is not necessary for German-Swedish project teams as no big differences are perceived between the two cultures. In our opinion there is a potential that intercultural training can enhance the teamwork in German-Swedish project teams. Since a lot of the project team members are also involved in projects with other nationalities, we recommend an intercultural interaction training which is not specific for one culture but increases the awareness for cultural differences and one’s own culture. Consequently the training would as well be beneficial for other multicultural projects. A combination of intercultural informational training together with intercultural interaction training would in our opinion be the most suitable kind of training. The trainees would first receive information about culture and cultural differences in general and afterwards in the interaction training they would give the opportunity to apply the previously gained knowledge. After gaining a general awareness of culture the trainees should receive culture specific information about the other culture especially concerning communication style, about which our interviewees mentioned differences, and the dos and don’ts in order to prevent major mistakes. This culture specific information can be delivered either in a lecture or as a written guideline for self-preparation to the trainees. The described mix of trainings should be conducted in the German-Swedish project team. This can serve as a teambuilding activity to get to know each other without talking about project related matters. Therefore the intercultural training is already a first step in the teambuilding process and can ease it. According to our interviewees an intercultural training should take place before the project starts.

Second Step: Teambuilding
We strongly recommend a teambuilding activity after the training in the first official team meeting. After the team members got to know the different national cultures and each other in the intercultural training, the teambuilding can help to establish a team culture within the team. During the teambuilding the team members should agree on a common goal and on rules how to work with each other throughout the project; these rules include communication procedures and ways how to deal with misunderstandings, disagreements and conflicts. The team members should also exchange their expectations and the different roles should be clarified and assigned.

Third Step: Mentor System
Another tool that helped some of our interviewees in dealing with cultural differences and to clarify working procedures was the help of a mentor. We developed this idea further and
recommend a mentor system in the project team. Every team member should have another team member as a mentor. At the same time each mentor is mentee, so team members are paired up. Ideally each Swedish team member has a German counterpart as mentor and the other way around. If that is not possible experienced team members have to take several mentees, but each mentee receives only one mentor. Through this mentor system mutual understanding for the other culture and the culture specific behaviour can be developed. The system can also help to solve cultural misunderstanding since those can be addressed in a face-to-face conversation after their occurrence. The main advantage of the mentor system is that every team member has another team member who is attentive towards him/her. This mentor-mentee relationship can build up trust, even to such an extent than if one of the partners feels uncomfortable the other one might sense it. This mentor system should be introduced at the first team meeting after the intercultural training is conducted. The first criteria for pairing up the team should be the intercultural experience of the team members. An experienced team member should be the mentor for a less experienced one. If this is not possible the second way to pair up the team should be to draw by lot.

Fourth Step: Internal Intercultural Advisor Team
As another concept for success we recommend for German-Swedish project teams the use of an internal intercultural advisor team, which is a modification of the intercultural coach and the intercultural mediator. An intercultural advisor has to be experienced in working with members from other cultures. The internal intercultural advisor team should be composed of a German intercultural advisor and of a Swedish intercultural advisor. The intercultural advisor team should be built up of members from the organization that are not members of the project team. The intercultural advisor team could either be built up of members of the multiculturally composed senior management or the multiculturally composed human resources department. This should give the intercultural advisor team a neutral position towards the project team members. Our suggestion for the choice of the internal intercultural advisor team is that the project team leader chooses two advisors with whom s/he is able to cooperate, but of course there are other possibilities for choosing the advisors, like the project initiator deciding it. The intercultural advisor team should be informed about the current state of the project and the situation within the project team for example by setting it on the mailing list. With this information the advisor team is able help in solving misunderstandings and conflicts within the project team with respect for the specific situation. The intercultural advisor team should be introduced to the team project team members during the first official team meeting.
Fifth Step: Cultural Evaluation

A cultural evaluation should take place hand in hand with the evaluation for hard facts in the project team. During this cultural evaluation project team members are given the opportunity to articulate their personal impressions about the cultural components and cultural problems of the project work. This cultural evaluation will help to further smoothen the project work. The project team members also have the possibility to state their suggestions to overcome the problems. The outcome of the cultural evaluation should be documented and serve as a basis to develop future intercultural trainings and as a help for other multicultural projects.

Figure 7.1 shows the concept with its five steps in a chronological order clockwise.

![Figure No 7.1 Concept for Team Collaboration](source: own)
The concept itself consists of five steps, which do not necessarily have to be implemented in the suggested order, but which could also be executed independently. If steps are executed independently, especially then they have to be modified to fit the situation. For example when the first step, intercultural training, is left out the teambuilding should include getting to know each other within the project team.

The main advantage of the first step of our concept “Intercultural Training” is that the training can be applied in organizations of all sizes. Larger organizations can have their trainer in-house, whereas smaller organizations can buy the training from outside. The main advantage of the second step “Teambuilding” is that it might enhance the efficiency of the project team. The third step “Mentor System” is low in costs for the organization as it does not require further resources. The fourth step of our concept “Internal Intercultural Advisor Team” does also not require further resources, “just” the time of members of the organization who serve as intercultural advisors. The fifth step “Intercultural Evaluation” leads to a learning process of the team members and through the documentation also to learning of the organization. This can enhance the future multicultural project work in the organization. Our concept is that it cannot only be used to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams, but that it can also serve as a basis and inspiration for multicultural project teams composed of other nationalities than Germans and Swedes.

7.3 Future Research
We recommend further research on German-Swedish project teams and collaboration in the team. This research should take place in one team to work out the different views upon the cultural differences in the same project and the same issues. Further research should also include attending team meetings in order to observe communication, collaboration, misunderstandings and conflict between the team members. After analysing interview and observation data, an even more adequate concept can be developed to enhance the collaboration in German-Swedish teams.

Another field of further research which would focus more on the improvement of the collaboration in German-Swedish project teams would be to research the implementation of our concept.
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APPENDIX I
Interview 1 (Swede): 11.04.07, face-to-face interview, BBS, 13.00

This was our first interview which was transcribed word-by-word.

B: “We had the idea to write our master thesis about Swedish and German project team members and what are the good and bad things about the cultural differences and how can you minimize your problems in those teams and how can you enhance the good things and are there some tools how you can do that. That’s the major goal of our thesis. Yeah, and we are very glad that you made it here, and that you take the time for an interview I don’t know would you like to know anything more about us or about the project?”

1: “Yeah, I would like to know you’re, from where in Germany do you come, is this a complete Swedish project you are making at the Baltic Business School or are you also making the thesis parallel in Germany?”

W: “No, it’s a, we studied in a master programme here at the Baltic Business School, we both finished with our studies in Germany.”

1: “Ok.”

W: “And the, so this is only from the BBS.”

1: “Ok.”

W: “Yeah, our final thesis for the master programme at the BBS.”

1: “And what do you want to do when you are ready with your thesis. Do you intend to work here with Swedish people?”

W: “Me, not so much I think, I would like to start working in Germany and then I will see how things develop, maybe I will end up working with Swedish people, I don’t know.”

1: “Because I think it is an interesting topic, because Germany is the biggest export partner for Sweden, but very few Swedish learn about Swedish culture and know the language. So I think that the knowledge is needed.”

W: “We hope so.”

1: “From were in Germany are you?”

B: “I am from the northern part, from the Baltic coast, it’s like 30 kilometres from Lübeck.”

1: “Yeah”

B: “But I studied in the middle of Germany, in the former eastern part, in Jena.”

1: “That’s very famous.”

B: “Yeah, for optical things. And I want to, yeah, my dream is to work as an international human resources manager, so maybe I can organize how those teams are build together and select the members and maybe prepare workshops, so that is my dream. So we will see, and yeah, it would be nice to work with Swedish people.”
1: “Yes, yes, what my first experience in Germany, maybe that is one of your questions, I’m basically, I lived in south Germany, in XY, and ahh, today when I work in the project I am working with XY [city in the Western part of Germany], but for me it is also visible the differences between northern Germany and southern Germany.”

B: “Ok, yes.”

1: “Even, if I think most of the time I I am reminding, or my German colleagues remind me, when I work in southern Germany they say ok, they are from the north, they work in the north, and they say oh, did you, could you stand living in the south. And so, so it was very different for me the differences, even in Germany.”

W: “Yeah, I think there is always a little conflict about where you are from.”

1: “Yeah, yeah, so, but, please proceed with the interview.”

B: “Ok, maybe you can tell us a little bit about you, how long you are in the company, and what you do there exactly, and your age, and?”

1: “Yeah, ya, yes, my name is X, I am 41 years and I have been in XY for almost three years now, when I worked in Germany, I worked for another company. So it was another company, but today, in XY, I am working in projects and in XY, so I have two experiences. Maybe you want to focus on one of them or maybe on both of them, or in general. But today I am working basically in Sweden, and my department is technical documentation for the whole division, and the the particular thing with our department, that is that it is divided into three sites, one person is situating in XY, and today three persons are working in XZ, and in XX three persons are working, so I have a team consisting of four Swedes and three Germans, we are in the same company, and my colleague, I could say the organization is build like a sandwich, because my boss is German and his boss is Swede.”

B: “Ok.”

1: “So this is how we are working, because the background to this fusion that is, that XX in XX was bought by XX two years ago and then we mixed together and we have a continuous working going on to let us getting know each other, work together and so, so it is very conscious that we shall work in the same department. So that is my role today, and what I am doing in my job, I am giving directions for the technical documentation. I am involved in construction, in law, also juridical things, in writing topics of course, system development, how to get all the systems to work with construction and business system, and so on. So I travel a lot in my work, I spend maybe half of my time in XY, and the other half divided in XZ and XX.”

W: “Ok, always on the go.”

1: “Always on the go, so that is about me then.”

B: “Yes, so the next question was that we wanted to know what is your experience in international project work? So you have those two experiences, or do you have more experiences in international project work?”

1: “No, I just have this experiences internationally.”
B: “And how long, it’s since the last two years you are working with the people in XX together?”

1: “Hmm.”

B: “So for two years it’s now.”

1: “Yeah, and the other experience in south of Germany it was also for two years.”

B: “Ok.”

1: “And that is also project were I very much had the role which you are now are producing science for, because I am was really an interface between a German colleagues and other colleagues in Finland. So I have to translate their country codex because maybe, that was not my basic work I must say, project leader, in the project, but I also have to explain for them what is typical, because the German colleagues for example, they were very nervous when the Finns did not speak. And then I needed to translate, yeah, it is normal in their culture, just wait and see, it will be fine.”

B: “And you were the only Swede in that project.”

1: “Yes, yes, I was the only Swede, but we have one Finn, of course.”

B: “And how many Germans were in that project?”

1: “A lot of them.”

W: “Ok.”

1: “I could say maybe actively working in the project maybe twenty.”

W: “Ok.”

1: “It was a big project. I made a documentation part, we were fewer on that part, but you have a big interface.”

B: “And do you have also experience in monocultural project work, like just working with Swedes in a project?”

1: “Do I have, I yes, I have, but they are not very advanced experiences, they are in Sweden, a long time ago.”

B: “So you are used to work in teams?”

1: “Yes, yes, that’s my profession.”

B: “And, where was the project located? The one project was located in south of Germany for the, for you, the Germans and the Finish person?”

1: “Hmmm.”

B: “And the project now, you meet regularly, or you travel to all three places, XZ, XX and I forgot the other name”
1: “XY, XY, it is outside Stockholm.”

B: “And or, how does it work, the teamwork, where do you work together?”

1: “Ja, everywhere, we are working basically with internet. Working with e-mail to another, we give on a task and of course it is a problem not to see each other that often, but it is not possible. So it is not one project, we always have small projects going on in building and so on. We are making many things at one time.”

B: “And how, can you guess how often you meet your colleagues?”

1: “Yeah, I I, meet them, I go to Germany once a month or once every second month, it depends on other things, like Christmas, Eastern and so, then you don’t travel, so then it is more seldom, but often once a month I come to XX.”

B: “And how long do you stay?”

1: “I stay two to four days a time.”

B: “And do the Germans also travel to Sweden, or?”

1: “Yes, but not as often as I am, because I am the project leader, I have the obligation to travel to them, so that they make their daily task, they more have performing work and I more have a managing role, so I always travel with my e-mail telephone and everything, and manage, so but they have stationary working places.”

B: “So you travel mostly by yourself, not with the three other Swedes?”

1: “No, no, mostly not, but always, I always make an effort to make people meet, so if I have an occasion I always I can see, to to to say, it would be easier in German, because when I speak about Germany, I always think in German, I invite to meetings and let people meet, so if I go to Germany I often say to that I take one colleague with me. And make him, he or she, meet other colleagues in the same project. So I am working very progressive to make, to create small projects and cooperation around the task. I always say that if you have a problem here you should meet your colleague in XX, you should meet your colleague in XY. And I always have ideas about, yeah, but make this together, it would be easier to say to me, that I said to two Swedes that ok, make this task, but it is not as funny, it is better that they come to another, because then they can also help another and have the contact already in other situations where I am not with them to supervise them.”

B: “But was there one occasion where all of you seven met during the last two years?”

1: “Not yet, because two of them are completely new, they were employed yesterday. But, but yes, twice a year we meet, all of us, in the department. But then we have also colleagues, we have a lot of interfaces to other departments and I think, we will never meet at one time. So.”

W: “Ok.”

B: “And those two new colleagues they are in XX [Germany], or in XZ [Sweden]?”

1: “In XZ [in Sweden]. It is very, extremely interesting, because on of them is going to divide her
time between XZ [Sweden] and XX [Germany]. So I will really have to guide her, I’m very interesting to see how this will work out. Because it is also a cultural task.”

B: “And you are fulltime project leader? There is not, or you have also the position of running that department at the same time?”

1: “Yeah, I am both, I am fulltime manager for technical documentation but I am also res right now responsible project leader for one big project, and besides I am involved in other projects in different positions then.”

B: “So, when you divide your working time, how many percent is the project work and how much is being the head of the department?”

1: “Hmm, I think being the head takes about 40 percent of my time and the project consumes 60.”

B: “Yeah, now we can already move to the second.”

W: “The language, in which you work in the project is German, or?”

1: “English.”

W: “English, ok. Sorry Beate, was one more question in the list.”

1: “Oh, but but that is a good question because when we are working in our daily work we have to work in our native languages because it would be too a big obstacle to describe even very common things in our log books and and internal documentation in any other language than our native languages, because we always communicate with other parts of the organization, and we cannot ask every person to communicate in English in every thing. But in the project it is very clear that I stay to English. But that is a problem, not in Sweden, but in Germany it is.”

W: “Ok.”

B: “Why it is a problem?”

1: “It is a problem because, the people they don’t rely on their own knowledge in English, we have English as our organization language, but it could also be like this that, that you are not in that particular part of the firm used to use English in every occasion and therefore it is an obstacle to communicate everything in English. But they are very open minded and positive to it, but it’s also the mass that I support them a lot.”

W: “So you think their language skills are not as good as the skills of the Swedes?”

1: “Yeah, I have very, I have big confidence in their language skills, I think they are better than they think.”

W: “Ok, but maybe they are scared to speak in.”

1: “Yeah, yeah.”

B: “And in the other project, did you also talk English, or German?”

1: “Always English, English was no problem. Ok, in the daily work we always talked German, but
all documentation even in some very small small tasks was always in English.”

B: “At the beginning of your project, did you have team building activities, or did you do something like this with your team?”

1: “Yes, what, what do you do. We did, speaking about, in the south of Germany you could guess what we did, we went to the Oktoberfest, of course, yeah, anyway, because that was a good combination for that particularly project. Here in XX the activities have been that we make cultural activities, that is that when we have been in XX we have went to the mines for example and have guiding about education at all, and the people and the living conditions in the past and the background, why there is an industry in Ruhrgebiet. And in Sweden on the other hand we have been to Skansen and seen an elk, yes, and other things about, yeah, restaurants in XZ, look at the nature and the castle and so. So we try, we try to have a connection to the location, to the get to know the people.”

B: “And did you also do team building activities besides that for a defining the goal and how you want to work with each other?”

1: “Ahmm, no, we have not, not together, we have maybe divided, because there it is a difference, as I experience it at least, that it doesn’t work on both places. We have not have activities with the, how to work and what could be goals, but we have discussions about it.”

B: “During the entire project.”

1: “During the project. But now we are in this phase for example, what could we do, and I explain then that is the way I want to manage it and what, so I also tell the project members, I always push them to that they have a task, they have responsibility for, they are allowed to perform it and have very big room of action.”

B: “And do you make there differences how you give instructions about how you, what do you expect, and what are the goals for the Germans and for the Swedes, or is it the same way you do it?”

1: “I am more explicit when working in Germany. And I am more loosen when working in Sweden, and that is because my experience is, and I have also got a feedback on it, that the German team more experience, they they get a bit unsecure if I say it in a Swedish way you can do what you like. They need more support to say that this is allowed by the manager actually. I need, I can do it. So I need to support that team more. Do it, do it. But the Swedish they don’t need that support, that kind of support, they are more eager to that I more give them contact persons and software and such things and then they mostly manage things and then we can have a like philosophical discussion, how does it work, how are the roles, how is your relations in that departments and so. And speak in those soft terms about relations. But when working with a team in Germany I more feel that it is, has a bigger value for that team that I really speak out verbal what I mean.”

B: “And, maybe you cannot say it about the current project, but the one in southern Germany, did you have a evaluation at the end of the project work?”

1: “Actually, in that project about the, it was a very big project, and I only followed it for two years, so we did not have a follow up, a conclusion when it was ready, and that means that the project was going on for many years. But it should, I agree, it should maybe have been some conclusion like that, but you never had conclusions in that sense, but we had information that
this phase was done, well done, now we are ready to another phase, but we did not have so deep discussions about it.”

B: “And now, at XX, do you do that as a project leader?”

1: “Yes.”

B: “And how do you do that with your team?”

1: “That I have common for everyone, I make one English version and then I take it with all or if that is not possible I go myself and present the same presentation to all teams in person. And I say, well that is the project stand, and this is where we are now.”

B: “But do you also ask at the end of the project work the team members what they learned during the project, what they would like to improve for the next project?”

1: “Yes.”

B: “And in your projects, did you reach the project goals, or not?”

1: “Yes, we reach them, but we also have a very varying, the surroundings are not so stable, because technical documentation industry, marketing, everything is changing and that’s also our conditions are changing so we are not varying from or plan, because the plan is proceeding, but we have been put on hold because other priorities, but that is nothing I take too serious to the project, because things need to be done and there are good experiences when we are working further in the project.”

B: “And also the project in southern Germany, was a, you met the goal in the end for the variation that was acceptable?”

1: “No, we did not. Ahh, ya, you ask me as a project, even if I was a project leader for that part of the project, was a very big project, master project leader, it was his responsibility to do so, so I reported to this project leader, so that I don’t know what information came out of it, actually. It was another way of working.”

W: “So you never really got any feedback?”

1: “No.”

W: “Ok.”

B: “And, about the project that you are current in, and in the past, did you like the way how it proceeds in your project teams, how you work together?”

1: “Yes, yes.”

B: “And what was the factor, the key success factor that you met your project goal?”

1: “The key factors was that I, a information and proof. They are the two key factors. Partly information to all sites, because I am travelling so much, because I have the same presentation and I am eager to give it at every site at every occasion. This is one thing, information. And then to prove it. That is also, because the, I am very proud of the team members, I want to lift them,
because they make it, they make the prove because if I motivate them and instruct them and give
them the tools to do something, then they manage and then that is a proof, that we will succeed
in the project. That could be to create a standard for drawings for example, which I can convince
the technical development to use, could you use these templates, it is new but could you use it,
oh well, we’ll try, and then you just prove that we work more effective in the project and so on.”

B: “Ok, now we come to the cultural differences. Do you think there is a difference when you
work with Germans together instead of Swedes?”

1: “Yes, I think it is also a generation question, and a question about company culture, depending
on where you are because I am convinced that there are differences in different company cultures
that you have a small company in XZ, you cannot compare it with a big company in XX [in
Germany]. And and all kinds of mixtures, they are between. What I have met it is a bigger
companies, and bigger companies are often more difficult to move, and that I think what I have
seen. Because Swedish industrial companies they have a very strong pushy culture, they are very,
they want you to be active, and say your meaning, because it is built by only a few men, or by one
man in the past and that is the idol and the Vorbild for all people. But if you have German
companies I don’t know so much about the particular history, how they, they company was
created, you have XX of course in XX, who is Mr. XX, who has the XX and everything, so you
have one person, but also the company is very much divided in tradition, that this is the optimal
way you by, of building a company and it remains. So you have not only people, if you speak to
people it is very obvious at least in Germany in both projects that they speak about young people
and elder people, they make a difference.”

W: “That’s less in Sweden?”

1: “That they speak about, yes, yeah.”

W: “Interesting.”

B: “Was there more communication between members of the same culture of the project
teams?”

1: “What do you mean?”

B: “Or does the communication differ for example that in a German-Swedish project team you
have subgroup that the Germans talk more with each other?”

1: “Oh yeah.”

B: “And than there is a Swedish group and than somehow you.”

1: “Yeah.”

B: “You talk together.”

1: “Yeah. It is. You notice that because there are as there are different cultures because when we
are with together all of us are speaking English and we have one culture and one way of talking
but when the part of German teams or Germans colleagues from other departments go together
it is like with the language it also follows that new rules are put on the social life.
So they begin to say “Sie” and so even if they have make titles about the first name and job and
everything and than they switch to German oh I have to. So we notice that and are amazed about
it. And maybe we have a bit suspicion that they think we are rather strange. And we just go in and ja. So we notice that different cultures depending on what language we are talking. And of course as I am a Swede I don’t notice anything myself when I switch to Swedish but that is because I am Swedish of course.”

W: “Yeah.”

1: “It is my culture and”

W: “and you don’t”

1: “But I notice that German colleagues are different depending on what language they are speaking.”

B: “And when you think about yourself or about your Swedish colleagues do you recognize any differences too?”

1: “I think there must be but I don’t notice them because I am Swedish I cannot see my own culture like that. And therefore I am very grateful because they recruited now we have people at XY so that we experience people from other cultures than the Swedish culture. So such persons are very valuable to us of course because they can make us see us in another way and make us more smooth for the relation.”

B: “Do you think in your project team there is enough communication between all the team members?”

1: “No it is not.”

B: “How do you judge that? How would you like to improve?”

1: “I judge it by misunderstandings or I judge it by when I am supervising or asking about a task maybe I say “did you speak with him? Did you have you heard that? Because she is working on almost the same thing have you spoken to her? No I have not. She is your colleague. You had her since a long time. Call her and not. You do not need to go to me first. You can call directly. But I this is the problem because I think it is a new situation two years is not is not so much time when building one company out of two and than you take a XY group together. But I try to improve the communication one example is that I promote that they go to each other’s countries for a while. Someone is coming to Sweden for two weeks someone is going to Germany for one month or something to be with another for a longer time than just one kick-off day or so that in way get to know each other to meet another in the daily work and to also work with common task so one example would be to have two weeks here in Sweden and we are producing a new template for an instruction and we will build it from both team members from Germany and Sweden and this could of course theoretically be made at both sites they could sit there at their desks at home and think about what would be a very good manual and than make suggestions to another but that is not the way I want. I want them to go to Sweden now go to the laboratory and the factory and the facilities there and really try out the machines together because in practical work they will discover other ways of making this instruction and they will also have to formulate them to another in English and I think a better understandability will be created by that.”

B: “And do you recognize more differences when you think about the communication styles except when the Germans switch from English to German do you recognize other differences
also when you talk English to each other? Or maybe when you talk German with the Germans?”

1: “How do you mean that?”

B: “Maybe about criticism for example that it is open or not or about feedback is a part of communication or some people talk a lot maybe others.”

1: “Ah, no. I haven’t notice that I don’t notice any change in content in the way in the way what is actually communicated I don’t notice any such difference I think everyone speak when they have the confidence to speak in any language. What I meant when I said that I notice that the Germans colleagues are different when they speak German it is that they go into another way of communicating with another part who is going to speak first and so on but the content is the same and I think that that could be a problem for example people now coming from Sweden going to Germany if they come into the culture maybe not because of the language but they should be conscious about that there are cultural differences because then they become into that area they speak English but they are experience everyone speaking a language they don’t understand and suddenly change relations and that could be something that I have to observe in my profession that to disappear the Swedish people when they come there and that they know it and at the same way I try with all my fantasy to make the same preparation as for colleagues coming to Sweden and to say they are more laid back, they don’t mean to insult you when just saying “hej” don’t say ”god morgon” only they say or something. That is normal for Sweden and try to introduce that kind of relations we have.

B: And when you meet with your colleagues in Sweden or in Germany how do you proceed in your meetings? Is it the same way you do the meeting in Sweden with the Swedes and with the Germans in Germany or are there differences?”

1: “Yes there are differences. Partly because of the content because they have other relations between the departments they are not totally parallel built in the different department so we have a more close familiar relationship with the departments in Sweden it is so by tradition and that means that the information is more is actually more laid back in Sweden because we have a more family relationship with other departments around us. It doesn’t have to do we are Swedes actually because the situation in the structure itself in Germany where the relations outside my control are different the organizations are different they are more in content more information more facts which I have found out in advance.”

B: “And you have the same role like you are leading the meeting and the members is there a difference that maybe in Germany they like to discuss more or less?”

1: “No, I think that general experience is that German teams want more information and more to feel more secure about is this right they want to be more prepared and know exactly what should a meeting be about and not go around that. My general experience with teams in Sweden that is they are more open for discussion you can have a meeting factly about nothing you can say we have a interesting visitor here today he is from another factory and maybe we can see him and than we make something out of the personal experience just so spontaneously and I think that is not possible in Germany in the same way.”

B: “So you have more questions to answer when you do the same meeting in Germany?”

1: “Ja, as general I experience in Sweden that it is more okay that I say “I don’t know, I don’t know yet” but in Germany you can have very negative reaction if you say “I don’t know”. I must know and therefore I prepare as much as I can of course. To really know to foresee possible
questions.”

B: “Yes, so maybe you also the members would you say the team members in Germany during your meetings are more active asking questions want they a dialogue with you is it different than with the Swedish members or is just the topic that changes during the discussion?”

1: “No it is more like a the confidence in that a decision has been taken I will not say they are active in different ways in general because this is only general and this is about both projects so my experience is that in general German teams more ask “who said that?” “When was it decided?” and more concrete facts so that they have a map to navigate because like imagine that in some big companies in Germany than it is difficult to work in a active way you have to know who has the authority to do this who can I because the project crosses the line organization and you have to than to be allowed to ask a person maybe higher in the hierarchy about something that he normally would not bother to answer and therefore it is more important to know that it has been a decision that you have more secure that you can do that. But in Sweden it is more like no problem they don’t even are aware that it is a line organization that they should maybe not call the vice-president. But if they have to they do and it is more.”

B: “So how are the Swedes active in your meetings?”

1: “How are they active in a meeting? They have unexpected questions, they associate more and they also bring in other topics because if I present the question maybe yesterday I had a problem with this guy or this department this might fit in this and it is more they are more leaning to associate with thing of their daily work to bring in also suggestions for improvement.”

B: “Okay, so they continuously try to improve?”

1: “Yeah, and than they clearly see their role as that they have an important task in that they can improve they can contribute in that way.

B: “And when you have different tasks you have to tell people to assign tasks is the same way you do it with Swedes and Germans? Or is it also that you can volunteer for the task how do you divide the task in your project team?”

1: “It is we work all the same of the whole line in my project this is no difference it’s the only thing that differs how I support the person to do it if I have to speak to a manager for example or if I have to be a software tool or personal support or what it is that task gets performed the same way so we can perform another task.”

B: “But those different tasks you just go to the person say Emily you do this or Emily comes to you “What can I do next?” or something, how does it work? Or do you have a job description where it exactly says or do you define it at the beginning the person is always responsible for that and that that?”

1: “I have different roles in my team in my department now of course I have persons with competences special tasks but normally. What I want to do in my team because I’m working remote and I cannot and want not to control everyone all the time so I want them to be independent at the same time I have a big responsibility so that the whole department walk the same way and in the direction of the vice-president so the thing to solve this is that I tell the team members be open for new ideas and when people come to you I want this done in the documentation don’t say go to Monika or ask someone else but take it say okay I hear just say what you want to have and than they write this down and they report to me and than I see if I
can make a case of it and talk. I make the contact to different business line and construction and so on and see if I can make a task a case of it and the one the person who is free at the moment with special interested in this he or she makes the job so they are both bosses and they take tasks from me you could say because we are all responsible to make the department run.”

B: “How do you make the decisions in you team? Is it you who makes the decisions or?”

1: “Yes, but I take advices but the final I have.”

W: “But will you have a lot of discussions about these decisions or rather not? Or is there a difference between how much of discussion you have in Sweden or in Germany about decisions to be taken?”

1: “No.”

B: “And do you think there are differences in the effort of the team members they put into the project into achieving the project goal between Swedes and Germans?”

1: “No.”

B: “So they are all at the same level motivated?”

1: “Yes.”

B: “That’s great. And do you think there are different amounts the members spend different amount of time they spend for achieving the project goal?”

1: “Yes, because I know that. Because we have as we are on the project work apart from the line we make project report every second week to describe to another what we are doing in the project so I collect the reports and see where they are and how much time what is spent on the project and actually all cannot all the time spent that much equal equal much time on the project it depends on what they have else to do if their particular task is maybe they have focus one focus is on text one focus is on image and so on so if nothing is to do on image in this week of course their project will only that for that for that person.”

W: “But would you generally say that there is a difference between Germans and Sweden how much time each of them spends on the project?”

1: “No because that depends on me of course I put the tasks on them it does not have to do if you are German or Swede.”

B: “And do you have conflicts during your project work?”

1: “Yes.”

B: “And what is the cause or the subject of the conflict?”

1: “The conflicts are quite quite obvious because we are working in the line at the same time as we are working in the project so often it is the project conflict with the work in the line it could be a conflict. It could also be a conflict about how the ambition level of something how to prioritize things because that all the time what is important for the line what is important for the project.”
W: “But you would say that the conflict is always on a professional level?”

1: “Ja.”

B: “So the team members do not have conflicts?”

1: “No, not yet. Because cause I think that they will come too and it has to be solved. But as people are working at so distant sites they never have the time to make a conflict. They don’t come further.”

B: “And how do those conflicts between the line and the project how do they influence your project?”

1: “They it makes me of course consider what is the top priority and it makes me to seek other opinions about that. Some persons are involved from other interfaces of the project have important views not at least of the project owner. That is very important to see how to prioritize because I am most convinced that being a project leader remote is also that I see what is happening every time. And a person sitting in the middle of a production of something and than I come and say prioritize something else I think that this person working with the thing has an other point of view in that and it could be better to listen to that maybe it is more important actually or it is not and if it is if I judge it is not with all the knowledge I can get you have to see that you don’t hurt this person in his or her profession and try to make compromises because it is not so good working in the project if people don’t feel that they can express to to be relied on their own professional skills.”

B: “And do you more often agree with your Swedish colleagues about the priorities than with the Germans or there is no difference?”

1: “No it is no difference actually. Not to see to do with what nationality is it has to do with the situation.”

B: “And how important is it for you that you have a clear plan and structure when you work in a project?”

1: “Very important because that is the most than if something goes wrong somewhere that is the first thing to be put on it because the first thing you can notice a conflict maybe it will not remain a conflict but the first thing you can notice that a conflict may come that is that I can take it and that I can see that it was my information that was lacking. That is most of the cases. Of course I want to move always something some detail is missing and that is also why I want to travel so much to promote the people to all they said to me if something is wrong at the early stage. But when they want solve them mostly it is okay.”

B: “And for you personally what is more important is it a challenging task you want to have or is it a good working atmosphere or working climate?”

1: “As part of the project as my project is assist the project actually because eight people performing. Because it is important to succeed in the IT project because the IT has to succeed it has to be finalize it has to stay back that is only a small part of the project it is the easy part of the project actually. The hard part of the project that is to make people at distant try to meet and to fulfil one of the project task that we shall work in the same way at all site and that is the goal in the project. One is to implement the system two is to make the work in the same way and that
the a big thing and so of course both are very important but I would be very proud if I asked the project all the people in my department we performed the project everyone learned very much and feel that they develop as persons and today they are working as independent writers. And they are perfectly and they are very fine with that way and they like it to the job and they develop each day and see it as a common experience that is what …”

B: “And how does the reward system in your project teams work? When you have now two experiences is that every individual team member gets a reward when they perform very well or the team gets a reward all together?”

1: “We don’t have a reward. In my first project yeah. We had reward because we had cookies and we had Sekt and that was very nice. No we don’t have a personal reward in this project and we don’t have team reward which are really related to rewarding only and that is also I don’t want to set a price on that because that many things which we are making in this project are very hard because we are not always making people happy because it is difficult if we have start working in another way working in another way it is not always very positive. And you cannot have a celebration of that would be a bit like but we have a team meetings which I hope will support us as persons.”

W: “So you are not really for any reward at all?”

1: “No because to help each other and to make the team come forward there must be a common task for us all but I cannot promote a special person for making that or a special team for making that.”

B: “And those cultural differences you mentioned how explicit you have to be and some things would you judge them as negative or positive for the project work?”

1: “Yeah because I think we have it would be much easier to make it at one site which would maybe in Sweden or what in Germany it would be faster you would have a higher success rate there is no question about it but as we nevertheless we have to work in the same company even we would be the whole department in Sweden we still have to deal with that the big company is onto that and than we would have the problem anyway so that is as good as we make this problem in a small scale. That will contribute to better understanding.”

W: “But do you see these as working together of two cultures as positive for the organizations because it enhances the understanding of?”

1: “Ja.”

B: “And in the project in southern Germany what was there the motivation for the project and was is positive that you worked with Finnish, Swedish and Germans? Or did you see more problems due to that?”

1: “I think it was very positive I think all people we were very technical related but I think we were all amused about our cultural differences and that varies really to want make the project better. We had a lot of fun.”

B: “But besides the fun would you think that you performed better than just a German, just a Swedish just a Finnish team?”

1: “Ja, anyway. Well, did it contribute something it that project, you see, it was such a big project
and we have a different sights in Germany involved and it was so international so it was difficult
to say I fit would have been any difference.”

B: “And you probably, before you went to Germany for the first project and also now, you
probably had expectations about Germans and did they, like was it true what you expected or did
you change your point of view during your project?”

1: “It was worse than what I expected actually.”

W: “Why? What did you expect?”

B: “What did you expect?”

1: “Yes, but I have heard that it, but then I come to the south of Germany, no, but I heard it was
very strict and that you have to say “Frau” and so, and that was true. And I also experienced that
it was so that very much rules were required and that you were also expected to really obey the
rules and not do anything else but the rules. And in my working place in … it was actually that. It
was that. I was there as new, and I began in a position that I have to make coffee in the morning
as my first job, because I had to know about the, learn German at first, so I have to start at a
lower level, and it was really true that you have to do and you have a lot of correspondence, a lot
of bureaucracy and so they have to really fill in forms for many things and really physically save
the, what you call invoices, ähh “Belege”, and so. And it was really that, it was more than I
expected, than I ever had expected, but then some things were really good, and there were some
things I really liked, so I implemented them when I came back to Sweden.”

B: “What did you like?”

1: “Yeah, I liked well, the structure and that you have the rules for things, it was not so that I
wanted to implement their rules, but it could be an inspiration you could simplify it because it
makes it easier for everyone to work if you have some kind of pattern or so, these routines were
good. It was also very good for me as a Swede I became more confident as a leader because the
sickness I had in Sweden, the fault is maybe that you are too friendly as a project leader you don’t
see how to affect people and that you can be angry and you can be fight things, because in
Sweden you are very, you work very much towards the agreement in teams and everything but in
Germany I saw another style of leadership and it works sometimes. So, I think that I have been
able to use it in Germany my project now. I know that it is not so bad if I really say “no, this is
what we wanted to do”, I don’t care what other people think this is my decision, because I am
responsible and it is no bad feelings about this and I think that is a good experience. So some
things were very good, you can do those things in a nice way too. So I think it was a very good
experience for me working in Germany and also at a very old fashioned, in an old fashioned area
and so.”

B: “And now, during your project with XX did you change your expectations towards Germans?
Do you make different experiences now?”

1: “Yes, yes, they are totally different. I have understood that it doesn’t have to do what you have
in your passport as a nationality it is more like you are as a person and your company culture,
your age in Germany. In Germany my colleagues they speak about age, “junge Leute” they do
different, they do different. And I opened my eyes for that point of view and I can see that, it is
so, it depends on who you speak to. So my expectations have really changed and also my, I have
learned a lot about Germany, not only companies, I have read a lot, news. I knew, that it is not
one type or what, so. I am informed and I also try to inform others about it, because it is very
common to say in Germany you just have rules, but they are populations or groups who are totally out of rules, the opposite.”

B: “Are there, before we move to the next topic, are there any other cultural differences or phenomena you recognize during your work?”

1: “Yeah, one, not many, this is on the funny site. Maybe, yeah, I noticed, when Germans meet they always want to shake hands. So I’m also expected, that feels very odd for me, because when I come to my Swedish team, or Swedish group I just say “hello” and then we start. But in Germany it is very very important that when you come there you go to every room to every one you are working with hello, even when you say your first name and everything you need to take the hand. And that I find a bit odd. That is a big cultural difference, I have already thought about what do they think about me because it is difficult for me. I am Swedish, I am what I am, and I cannot become German, so I always thought about is that very important if I forget it or don’t do it because I don’t respect them less for that. So I I feel its still ….”

B: “And are there some things about, like how we Germans are or how we work how we behave that are really a challenge for you to except or to handle? Is there something difficult? Now you said there are some good things I like, that I as a leader can take a decision.”

1: “Ahmm.”

B: “But are there also some things you are like ohh, my stomach hurts a bit when I think about that?”

1: “Hmm, jaja, that is the need to that there is some good thing to have not proved to change something, that that is very good in one way, but sometimes I feel that it is too strict. You should allow more experiments. That would be good, because sometimes it is hard for me to take that something has to go up up up up up up up and in the hierarchy and decide it there, instead of just lets try something because it makes no harm. That I can feel sometimes, but the will to experiment is not so big.”

B: “So you would appreciate that they would try out new things?”

1: “Hmmm.”

B: “Now we would like to know something about how did you prepare yourself, or did you get any training before the project or during your project?”

1: “In what?”

B: “For example language training, or about German culture?”

1: “Yes, but not by my job. The first thing, I was very interested to work in Germany and when I went out. So I started with a class at the Swedish Folkhögskola. You have the Folkuniversitetet in Sweden and they have a school in München. And I went there for one semester. And there it was a combination course, you lived with a German family, in their home, like a small student, even though I was 35 and I also, we had classes in German language and also in German culture, we had literature classes and we had history classes, we read the news, and we also had it explained to us. Because all the teachers that we had, two German teachers speaking perfect Swedish and one Swedish teacher speaking perfect German and they always, they never spoke anything else but German to us, so we could not even know that our Swedish teacher knows Swedish, because
he very seldom spoke Swedish to us. We had to speak German for one whole autumn and that made good to us, I think. Because then we had such things explained to us and that was a very good training, we could ask really about things and so.”

B: “But this was your private initiative.”

1: “Hmm, it was.”

B: “And at XX there was also no training for you or the project team members?”

1: “No, because the reason why I came, I think, one of the reasons why I was recruited for this job is that I knew the German culture and that this was a cross-cultural project.”

W: “So they expect you to, like you said before, train.”

1: “Yeah.”

W: “Your project team members.”

1: “Yeah.”

W: “Yourself?”

1: “And I also, I had that in my CV for so, the classes in München, so I was trained, so I didn’t receive anything else.”

B: “Ok, and what would you recommend for a training for people who work in those projects? What should be the content of the training and when should it take place? When you already have to work together, or before?”

1: “Hmm, what I would recommend, I think it could be a good idea, we had something very nice at XX once and it was only for part of us and it was a general lecture with a person with very wide abroad experience, and she told us about how people are in Asia, in Europe, in the United States overall and make such a funny lecture of it. For several hour did it last, but it was very good. I think such information would be very good for any company who considers working internationally. So that you even before you go together with someone you can have such a lecture about someone in an easy way, to explain culture differences in a nice way. Not like that, “did you know that…”, but more tell about personal experiences. That would be good for any team and actually when you say it, maybe I should consult one for my team, because that could be quite funny. I think they could have big help from it.”

B: “So you would like to have it during the project, during the team has to work together, something like a mentor or a coach, that helps analyzing the current misunderstanding or explaining that situation now, if you would have communicated this, then you would have.”

1: “I think as early as possible.”

B: “Ok, hmm.”

1: “As early, before, even if a company considers even working abroad, I think it could be a good idea.”
B: “And, would you say that maybe your team does not have such a high demand of training, because they don’t meet physical so often? Or there is no difference if they were virtual together or physically?”

1: “They need such training. Clearly.”

B: “Ok. And, are there any other ways you think that could support the international project team, like yours is? The company, I don’t know, some special help from the human resource department, or I don’t know any other person in the company, except training. Could the help you in another way too?”

1: “They do. They do. Because we have separate human resources, we have human resources in Sweden, we have human resources in Germany. And what I turn to when it comes to serious questions, more serious questions than how you dress and if you say Frau, then I go to human resources and often they can explain things, they can if I have a question, they can solve it together and then come back to me.”

B: “Can you give us an example of such a questions?”

1: “No, but it could be, what could it be. Hmm, ach so, for me to me for example communicating, how you communicate with somebody, or where you find someone in the organization. And there could be a problem what are my authorities, because I am employed in Sweden, what person could I speak to in XX about things. That is such a question, which human resources can help me to solve. Because they have the whole picture of much more employees than I have. Because then you have the question, the question about the German system could be very complicated, about who is working were with what, and human resources could support me with that. And also of course how to behave in a different country, and how to behave, so how to dress or how to be and other customs. Who is paying what, for example. We are different cultures.”

W: “So for all that you go to the HR.”

1: “Yeah.”

W: “Ok. So they have someone there who is specially trained in these intercultural matters?”

1: “I don’t know, if they have that. I suppose so, because I get very wise advices, so it must be so. But they had international cooperation only working with personal questions.”

B: “And, are there any other things like technical equipment or something that you would like to have to enhance the communication between the team members.”

1: “Yeah, but we are getting that now.”

B: “Ok.”

W: “So what kind of equipment is it?”

1: “It is an equipment to makes it possible to work as a team in a common network. Because today we have different IT environments, that means that we have very few applications we can use together. So if you want to send files or so, we have to send it and so, you cannot access this directly. And that means that it is difficult to see each others things. But in my IT project we are
implementing a solution which makes this possible. Working as a team. We upload files in the same archive and so on. And we implement and electronic workflow also, which makes it possible to send, really to send and to allocate tasks for us. Because today I have to make it with each person and they cannot see another who has been allocated what in an easy way. So this will improve our communication.”

B: “Do we have more questions?”

W: “I think you can go on.”

B: “And during your project, are there any actions from the human resource department, without your initiative, how to enhance the project work, or what do you do as a project leader when you feel that they are not communicating between XX and XZ, is that the reason why you do this two week exchange? Or?”

1: “Yeah yeah, because I cannot be at all places at all times. It is not only I who have to communicate better, I also have to … the others, but the way to support it, that is to make, to collect them around tasks, if I have contact problems I am quite frank, so I ask, I simply ask the persons themselves, have you experienced a problem, what do you think about the cooperation, and so. Ask one by one, and if I see there is some misunderstanding I can often solve it at that level, after all we are all persons and understand things different. But as I also have a German boss I always can ask him. Cause he is also in the country context, if it is culture I can ask him as a reference. So that, that is good. And I’m also consulted other, the other direction, so I, we ask another and try to support another.”

B: “And do you miss something in your project work that could be better for working together for the collaboration, now except the IT system for exchanging the files, is there anything else, maybe a higher budget.”

1: “Yeah.”

B: “That all your team members can travel.”

1: “Yeah.”

B: “Or for training, or anything you would like to have to improve the collaboration?”

1: “Yeah, yeah, what you always want is time of course, the time, the cost is not so critical because it is quite in the big context it is quite easy and cheap to travel, but the difficulty is to get so many people at the same time, because if you have all in a team you cannot just remote them for one week or two to make a team building or something. But maybe you should do that, because many companies do that, they have one team and they go for a travel for one week and do something, if that would be a solution, but we cannot do that, we have to do that in other ways and one way I try to do is to that to take one by one or two by two to do something different together.”

B: “And at the end a question, would you like to work again in a German-Swedish project?”

1: “Yeah, yes, yes, because that, that is I think what I am good at. Yeah, I would like to develop this.”

B: “Ok.”
1: “But it would also be good to involve other nationalities that would also be very exciting.”

W: “Ok.”

B: “So you need a new challenge?”

1: “Yeah.”

B: “Yes, thank you very much for the interview and for taking all your time. And of course you can, in June or July we can give you a copy of our master thesis, what we figured out and what we recommend to enhance the collaboration between Swedes and Germans, if you are interested.”

1: “Yeah, yeah, very much, thank you. That will be interesting. Did you think you knew, I have answered all your questions, or do you have something that is unclear?”

W: “No, I feel quiet sure right now. I see something so very different from what I read so now I think wow. I think so very different than expected. But this is very interesting, because this was our first interview.”

1: “Oh yes. But if that would be anything you are welcome to contact me of course so.

W: Thank you very much.”

1: “No, but I think it is a very interesting subject. That is why I came, because it is important with the cooperation and I don’t think people see that there are difficulties at all. But there are. Because when I went to Germany to work many people said, but oh, that is the same as Sweden the same culture, it is nothing different. Why don’t you go to France or Spain, they have a different culture at least. But, you, well, so you have, and I think it would be more economic, if people could learn culture this way which you are making your thesis for because then you would have a market, because it is the biggest export partner and the interest should be quite big.”

W: “Yeah. But I also think that it is not realized that there is a big difference. And I must say that before I came to Sweden I also thought, oh it is, no, my father works in Sweden and he was always telling about all these troubles he has and, come on, it is the same. And now, since we are here, we both found out that oh, it is very different, it is not at all the same. But there is not literature about German-Swedish collaboration at all.”

1: “But it would also make it easier for you to handle other situations, it makes, I think it makes you smarter to work with other cultures, you find better solutions and so.”

B: “Right now it seems like people are more interested how to handle differences between Asia and Europe. And not to, how can you even make the collaboration in Europe better. Because it seems like Asia is the future market for everyone, but still, we are very close trade partners and we have to work together, of course it is working, but the fact that it is working does not mean, it cannot be better.”

1: “Yeah.”

B: “And the differences are maybe at first sight not so visible.”
1: “No.”

B: “But when I go to Japan maybe they are so much visible to me that I think oh I have to do something and maybe between those two countries I don’t feel that high demand.”

1: “But one example could be, and I’m very glad that Sweden has changed their mind, because when I studied it was not common even that you made your Abschluss. In Germany, when I applied for a job I thought it was insane, that was the most strange thing I found, that you always have to write in your CV Abschluss, Abschluss mit Diplom oder Abschluss mit dies und das. But in Sweden it was not so very important if you have Abschluss or not. So in my generation actually, and I am 41, it was not critical if you made an Abschluss at all. It was not a name for it either.”

W: “Wow.”

1: “Because they didn’t have a name they confiscated it some time in the sixties and then you had a university studies and if you specially applied for it you could have a paper of course with what you have done, but Abschluss, why that.”

B: “Wow.”

1: “And that is, so, before I came to Germany I really made my Abschluss, actually see it, then I had studied for three years, and I went back to the university to do my Abschluss because I realized it would never work else. And now we have changed in Sweden, so now they have Abschluss important and they even have notes, because I didn’t even have notes, it was very seldom you even were eleven, you had two levels, and it was, in most classes I did, you could always have, either you were approved, or you were not approved. And than you could make the course once again. But today they have at least changed that in the university. And I think you have to have that to be able to work abroad. On the other hand if you come from Germany to Sweden also you can think what are these crazy people, they don’t have notes and they present maybe themselves in the wrong way, they have this level I made an excellent Abschluss here, but maybe that doesn’t, it is not important for a Swedish employer, so I think it is very good that you have those European CVs now on the internet and so that is very good way to direct it.”

B: “And do you meet now your team members here in Sweden?”

1: “Yes, I have two new ones, these two new employees, so we have three people sitting in XZ this week and having introduction and already in two weeks we will make the first journey to Germany.”

W: “Ahh, how nice.”

1: “And introduce them, new colleagues. So that will also be a culture preparation once again, and I will see what can I make better. Because I think at least at the start, when they get to know another, one mistake I made it is to put all together and say ok, have a discussion, that doesn’t work, because the Swedish they, you know a bit shy, they have a lot to discuss, but the others want to discuss the topic and the Swedes want to discuss what weather it is or something. And it isn’t, it doesn’t work. I have to prepare better this time about the subjects and so. But once, when you get to know another, they like each other actually.”

W: “That’s good.”
Interview 2 (Swede): 13.04.07, face-to-face interview at the company site, 14.00

42 years old male
French company with more than 60,000 employees worldwide in the automotive industry. Interviewee is the industrial engineering manager, he is in charge of the process, the technical part of the production within the worldwide product range, he is also responsible for process innovation were he sends teams out all over the world. He works since 9 years in the company. He works daily in international project teams, 90% of his workload are outside Sweden and 75 outside Europe. Daily work in projects is 90%.
In the projects there are more nationalities involved than just Germans and Swedes. He works with South America, USA, Asia, France and Germany.
The duration of the projects differs, but projects are up to two years long. It is more a continuous work, there is no distinct end and beginning of projects.
Next to the project works he has a German boss and a German subordinate.
The project location depends on where the product is produced.
Working language of the projects is English.
Mainly works with engineers, and in Sweden and Germany those are mainly men. There are also people working with an environmental questions, a controller and an HR person.
Projects usually take place within his company, and not with other companies, if then it is in cooperation with research institutions like universities and development institutions for innovations or supplier relationships.

In one project about 70 people participate.

W: “So when you work there you usually have regular meetings at this place, or you work virtually over the internet, or?”

2: “We have a lot of meetings. We have a lot of work over internet. We have a lot of video calls, phone calls. We work with all available medias, we have this conference systems, so we can, if I have a colleague in Brazil for example, we can open the same Excel sheet or whatever and we can work together on the screen on the same sheet. So this is very nice, and at the same time we are working we have a phone connection also, so you can simulate more or less being in the same room.”

W: “So would you say your personal meetings are more than what you work virtually? Like, do you see each other more than you talk on the phone or?”

2: “No, no, talk on the phone we more or less do on a daily basis. So speaking on the phone is still the most common, but also e-mail, a lot of e-mail. Each day I receive up to 70, 80 e-mail. […] This is a French company, French company structure, I don’t know if you know that they are build up like this [shows a straight structure with his hands]. You should report, report, report, and then, so you spend a lot of time just to send reports, more or less on a daily basis.”

B: “How often would you say you meet your colleagues during the two years and how long are the meetings?”

2: “It depends on the stage. Let’s say we have a project that runs for two years. […] In the beginning there are a lot of meetings […] [first 3-4 months] then not so many meetings, but in the beginning of the second year more meetings take place, and the in the end when the production process starts a lot of meetings take place.”
…”

To give you an example, I’m going to Brazil because next week we are supposed to produce the first part in a new line for a new product, that we are going to ship to customer in week 17, so that’s why I’m going to Brazil now, and two weeks ago the industrial engineering manager from Brazil, he was here, so now I have a very tight situation with Brazil, cuz we are in a launching stage for the moment. But then it can be two or three month before, where we only send a few e-mail together. So it’s, normally in three for months there is a very tight relation, and then we have nothing for maybe 2-3 months, and then it comes a new step in the project where we need to work a lot, so it a, it goes up and down.”

…”

“…The project is build up with a lot of, we have a lot of functions, we have with acronyms, this is a French company they love acronyms, if we let the names, we have a function called […]. And all of these functions are pieces of a complete cake and we normally have one people from each of these areas in the team. And then hopefully the output should be something like a mix.”

…”

W: “So you always work on the project and also in your usual position as manager of this department, or you only do project work?”

1: “Yeah, I’m not so much, I’m not the project leader, but I have project leaders and then I’m more or less inside where I’m needed. So it is more, I’m more discussing with the engineering management in the plants and take samples, general position, so more overview. But then sometimes something needs to be done, I do it, because we have to solve it, have no one suitable person that can do it for the moment. So I have to do it.”

B: “So you are more like a project team member, or you are helping the project leader with the project?

2: “I’m, I see myself as a project team member, but I’m not actually doing so much work concrete, I’m not the one that doing, that makes the time plan. But I’m the one that says we need to do a time plan. I check if the time plan. But I’m not the one that makes the work, but I’m in in the team. So when everything is running I’m less involved, cuz I’m mostly going inside to see is everything ok, but then the project never goes, it never runs, this is an ideal world that do not exist, so there are always issues and discussions, delays, budget issues, so, yes, I’m project member, but you don’t find me, if you look at the organization chart of the project you don’t find me in it. Because I may be in there, but if the project is running I should, I don’t need to be.”

W: “So you might have some kind of a coaching position?”

2: “Ya, more or less.”

W: “When you usually start a project, do you have some kind of team building activities?”

2: “No, not really. We have a maybe a meeting. Today a project is, within automotive industry, it is not so clear borders now you start, now you stop, it is more floating. So its, its, suddenly you start to discuss about this project, and suddenly you have to spend some work, but it’s not so distinct. Because today a development time for a car is very short and they are always trying to do it shorter than they can do. So the time plan is more, very often, maybe not in the beginning of the project, but very soon it will be as soon as possible, everything is as soon as possible. So there are no distinct line, we cannot plan, ok in June 15 we have a kick-off, because when we know this we should already have started. So yeah, and then we have the profitability in automotive industry
today is not very good, so we have not these margins […]”

W: “Ok, but do you set yourself like a common goal, or rules how you want to work in the team at the beginning of the work?”

2: “Yes, we do. We meet in some way, but its more like we meet together in management and we say that […] we take this share, and we say ok, we take this share or the responsibility, and then we set up a team here and we set up a team here, and we merge the teams together.”

W: “So you don’t discuss this within the team? To make them decide what kind of rules the team members want to work?”

2: “Yes, then, after that the team members they are very free to work. So I don’t tell them how to do it as long as it runs. Maybe I can say we need a time plan, we need to solve this issue, more like making priorities, cuz there are always too much questions and the time is always too short and money is always too less, so there is always a question of priorities.”

[…] 
[For the planning and the project work there exists a detailed plan with all the stages and with checkpoints on how the project is going on. Under this plan which is divided into 5 stages, within these stages about 100-200 activities are to be done.]

2: “So it is very controlled, so I don’t say nothing, cuz I don’t need to say nothing. Just read the paper. But then, when something happens, when we are late, we don’t have the money, we have a big discussion, how should we solve this thing.”

W: “So do you like this way of having this strict structure of how to do it?”

2: “I don’t know if I like or dislike, but there is no other way. This is a company with 60.000 employees and plants, tech-centers, business all over the world. […] So this is the only way, because if if someone is working together with us in China, we cannot sit all the day and explain that we must do this and this, he has also that template, he is working, he is thinking in the same way, and if I say that I, if I say QC, where is the QC-guy, he knows […] what I mean with the QC-guy and he has a QC-guy in his plant, because it is build up after the same.”

B: “So you have like a company language which helps you to orientate?”

2: “Yes, we have a very big part of the company that’s traits procedures, standard procedures after all.”

W: “So during your projects, do you reach the goal, are the projects successful?”

2: “We have to reach the goal, cuz if not there will be no no car, so we always reach it, in some way, or we loose the business. But we don’t, we don’t walk the line, the project is always like this, the ideal, once again, project does not exist. In the beginning, everything is structured […] but after three four month, the time plan is gone, the budget is gone, the the product is cracking in test, the design has been impossible change by the customer, and we disagree about the prize and it’s all a mess. And this happens, every time.”

W: “But do you like this way in which the projects go on, you do think it’s kind of exciting, or would you rather prefer to be more structured?”
2: “This cannot be more structured, I don’t think so, of course you can avoid mistakes like this, but there are a lot of other mistakes that you cannot, and, yeah. I like it, it is a challenge, because you know that two months from now it will be chaotic probably, but it is a challenge, yeah, and two business case, they are never the same, they are completely different, its like you're starting from zero again. So I like it, what I don’t like is all these reports hours, to send due to the French company structure.”

[...] [It is too much information which we have to send around, and no one can actually read it because there is not enough time.]

B: “But isn’t that one thing you could point out in an evaluation after a project, that maybe the information procedure could be changed, or?”

2: “This is the real base for French company structure, to report, to have a very, you never trust the people that’s working for you. This is typical for their way to work, so it is, to do that would be to challenge the French way to run a company and I don’t think I am the one that can change that. So, yeah, and I don’t know, maybe it works in France, because they see it in another way, they handle it in another way. But with the culture that we have here and I definitely know it is the same in Germany, we we don’t see this reporting. It is nothing but waste of time. [...] But I have learned to live with it, but I haven’t accepted it.”

W: “But you still always, or most of the time succeed in your projects. What do you think is the key for that, even though you have all this?”

2: “The key is to like what you do. For me, as I said, it’s a challenge to work with people from different countries and to learn, because if I go as a tourist to Germany, I see a lot of things, but I don’t understand German, or the people, not at all. But if I go, for example, to my colleague in XX I, I’m coming like a colleague to him, we go out, he shows me his favourite places, I go home to him, sit down with his family and eat dinner and I see a completely other side, I see the real country. [...] I’m accepted, they know me. [...] When I come it’s like a very old friend. So I learn a lot about cultures, different cultures, that I think you must stay 6 to 12 months maybe in a country to explore the same. That I find in three days. [...]”

W: “And, when we stick to Germans now, do you find it different to work with Germans as compared to working with only Swedish people?”

2: “Yes, it is different.”

W: “And why? Or how could you describe where you see the differences?”

2: “In Sweden you have no, [...] prestige. You have no prestige, for example you see how I am [he is wearing a sweater and a pair of jeans]. If go to Germany to a meeting, I cannot dress like this. If I come as a manager to a German, this would be it. So, and my boss, as I said he is from Germany, the first six months he shook my hand every morning. And then he realized that he was the only one who did that. And then he changed it, he does it sometimes, because no one does it anymore. There is a very big difference. You are who you are in Sweden, you don’t are the one that you dress like, so it doesn’t matter how you look, its also, of course if you go to a institute, for a meeting you take a suit and if you have foreign companies coming, people from Germany comes, external, for example, I always use my suit, because I know this. Its very prestige, no not prestige. And I can imagine another time I worked together with a Doktor XY, you have Doktors, a lot of Doktors in Germany, XY is a very nice guy and we don’t care about if we are a Doktor. First thing to be a Doktor in Sweden you have to spend a lot of more studies,
then it’s a lot easier to get, you can be Doktor Doktor Doktor […]. Here nobody cares if you are a Doktor. And I went to a meeting in a, in XX, there were ten people around the table, and the only empty place, I was late, the only empty seat was next to Doktor XY, as I know him very well, he knows me, and he’s a good guy, so I couldn’t resist it. So I sat down and I said, smashed his back, hello Christian, I said. And all the people around the table, he is dead, but he, he know me, and he laughed and hello he said, and how could he do this and get away with this, they didn’t understand, so everyone was red in the face and what will happened, and very nervous. And, but, we don’t care about this. So, this is a very big difference.”

W: “And the way you work together, is there some different way in which you do the work, or anything else in the team that you could point out?”

2: “Generally, from Germany, they are very secured, they are doing everything in the right way. And and they are very black and white, I used to say, you know, if they see something, if I have a proposal and they see this is a bad proposal, its very very bad. But then maybe I can prove that it is good, and than it’s very very good. There is no grey area. In Sweden this can be quite good, it can be we can use it sometimes. But it’s black or white, so its, I don’t know if you recognize this, but I see it very often. If you convince the German people they will support you very hard, because then they really believe. There is nothing in between, not so much.”

W: “Within the project team, do you think there is communication differences that maybe members from the same culture communicate more, the Swedes maybe communicate more with each other than Swedes communicate with the Germans?”

2: “Yes. Not in that way, but we in Sweden, we communicate a lot more between each other than people do in Germany. For example, in […] a big office in XX [Germany], sitting maybe 50 people in the same office, and they can sit next to each other, and they don’t know what the other guy is working with. This that would have been sorted out five minutes after they arrived in Sweden because we communicate a lot more. Then it is an advantage or a disadvantage that’s not up to me, but we can communicate. […] We are easier to speak with. […] This is a clear thing for me.”

W: “Do you think that you have enough communication within the team?”

2: “No, never, it’s very yeah, the information flow is the most complex part of our project. And it is the most important thing and it is the hardest to do in a good way. You never have the right level of information, you never have the right information to flowing, it’s always too much, to less, or wrong information. People that don’t do what they are supposed to do, because they haven’t received some information, have received the wrong information, and. Yeah, information is the most important, is the key to succeed in the projects especially when you have a lot of different countries.”

W: “Do you see a difference in the communication styles between the countries?”

2: “Yes, in Sweden for example, my boss, once again as an example, he says, he is trying to learn Swedish, if I read, I can read quite much, and I can come quite well, but then when you speak, I don’t understand, nothing, because you don’t say the complete sentence. We for example, you, once again in Germany, you speak very correct and use words, and you use no at least almost always der die and das, and the right, it’s a big mess for me, and you speak very correct, even when you know each other very well and you are sitting together, you speak very correct. In Sweden you only say two or three words, that you need to say to make yourself understood. So this is a big difference, also. And then its very easy for me, I’m very hard to speak other languages
because I have to think all the time to use all the words and, so we are not so once again, we don’t have any prestige in the language, we just say what we need to do and that’s the difference. […]”

W: “When you meet with your team, how do these meetings proceed, do you have a special agenda, do you have a time when all of them are supposed to speak, or nothing like that?”

2: “Normally we have an agenda, yes. We need to plan travels, accommodations and so we build up an agenda, these are the points and we send it out, normally, one week ahead, before, and feedback if there are things to add and things like that. And then do the time plan that we never follow, but we have it, we have something. So yes, 99 %. […]”

W: “And you usually stick to the agenda, not the time plan but maybe the agenda?”

2: “To the points and the last points we have no time for. That that’s the fact.”

W: “When you have a discussion in the meetings with Germans and Swedes, would you say there is a difference in how they discuss and how they contribute to the team discussions?”

2: “No. The way we work I think we work, we do the procedures more or less in the same way. So, and this is, there is a business way you might say for Europe, how to handle, how to do this, so we, it is more or less the same.”

W: “When you build up the team in the beginning, everyone gets a certain task, do you, does the project manager assign the task to the persons, or do the persons more come up and say I would like to do this and this task, or does work you say?”

2: “It’s different. It’s very often that the, for example the engineers, they belong to a team, for example, especially in Germany we have an X team, we have a Y team, so its. And when there is a business opportunity for X for example it’s the X team that works with it. So this is already decided in the structure. So it’s never argument who is doing what. The structure already exists.”

W: “And when these tasks are assigned, are they usually very specific? Or are there members of parts of the team very free in the way they conduct the task?”

2: “In that case you have a difference, in Germany it’s very strict, this is my area, this is your area and so on. Here it is more, still we have this, but it’s more that we communicate together, ok I can do this, and you do this for me and things like that. So it’s more up to the individual. In general the people in Sweden they are more free. A project member is more free to work as it is on their own mind, then they are in Germany. They are more strict, but it’s not a big difference, but it is still a difference.”

W: “When you have to fail decisions in a team, how do you usually fail them or you fail their decisions on how to work? Who makes the decisions?”

2: “It’s also a difference; here it’s more a team decision. So, here I I more or less ask questions. If you ask a number of questions and ask them why you see that, the people understand what they are speaking and suddenly someone came up lets do like this, everyone agree, and then you have a decision and it is implemented in all people. In Germany it is a little bit more strict again. It’s more like saying you will have to do that and that. But this way in Sweden is not always working, sometimes you have to say that ok, you have to do this and this. […] So this is how I try to do it [by asking questions], that’s the first, first option.”
W: “Yeah, but have you tried to do it like that in Germany?”

2: “I tried, but it’s not so easy. But but you don’t you expect more or less someone to tell you.”

W: “Now when you work together do you think that there is a difference in the effort that Swedes or Germans put in reaching the goal?”

2: “No, I think that both puts the effort that’s needs. They are very how to say they are very good at see we must do this to solve the issue they are doing so they are spending putting their efforts so in that case I don’t see a difference. I see a difference is that it’s easier for for someone from Sweden to come in Sunday to spend a few hours if necessary. In Germany they are more when they are out of office they are out of office. They are not so flexible. They are putting the same efforts.”

W: “And how is about the time the people spend for reaching the goal?”

2: “I think that the people in Germany they are more efficient. And they follow the time plan that we have better most ….. So when I all points I have said is not necessary disadvantages. In this case it is an advantage because it would be more efficient it would be better according to time plan….”

B: “So do you have to spend more time because you are not so efficient and they spend less time or?”

2: “Yes. We speak more as I said we have information flow but it takes time so it’s you have the most strict business relation in Germany than you have here. You speak more about private things and other things in Sweden. In Germany you can work together for seven years without really knowing what the other guy is doing private. But here you know this after two weeks. So yeah, and of course it takes time so it is a good information flow but it takes time.”

W: “In your teams did conflicts occur during the teamwork?”

2: “Always.”

W: “Okay, and what is the cause most of the time?”

2: “It’s a cause of not in the time plan I mean time flies, we are not in the budget we are not someone else each time when we have a issue we have also a big discussion especially we have a lot of different countries but it’s never personal but it’s you are supposed to do that and especially in Asia […]. Never personal, you can say it is on a higher level.”

B: “Is it the same way of solving a conflict in Germany and in Sweden?”

2: “I think in Germany you are better to protect your back to think more to find a right way out you are more business minded so to say here it’s more straight honest and but you don’t protect yourself in Sweden because this is all a game more or less you are playing each day in a big organization level so it’s all about how do I protect my back how do I what kind of decisions can I take to make a new step in the organization things like that so political questions all the time and in Germany you are a lot better in political to handle political issues than we are here. We don’t see this as important we don’t have. I don’t know what my next step in the organization will be to do that I will have to leave Sweden so I don’t know maybe but it’s nothing I really fight
for I don’t take decisions so I can hopefully take another step you know outside Sweden this is nothing I do but especially in France […] I am thinking about to do the technical correct decision but this is different. And than Germany is a little bit between it’s not as much as in France but it is more than in Sweden.”

W: “So you think people are more people wants more to move their career up in the hierarchy than in Sweden?”

2: “Ja, they are more focused. We have very flat organizations in Sweden […] when I joined the company it was I started as an engineer and than I have a manager than I have the managing director that was the level and than when we joined XY we did that in the year 2000 they asked us for the names of the people that has have the capacity to go four steps up in organization. And we told them we have no four steps from the shop floor to the top it’s three they didn’t believe so yeah it is different yes.”

W: “We talked later that the working language is English and do you think there are differences in the language abilities between Sweden’s Swedes and Germany?”

2: “Yes, we are better than Germans in English we are for example when I’m in Germany sometimes I see John Wayne speaking German and you don’t see this in Sweden he speaks his original voice if I go to France […] So this is a big advantage for us and I see this when we work together with North America I see this a lot because people in the US they speak a lot with expressions they for crying out loud they say something that soft they say it is like peanut butter and the people in France and Germany butter? What does have butter to do with this matter? Because they don’t know the expression but we have seen it have heard it we know it so sometimes I spend half the meetings by translating. I’m translating between the American people and the French people especially in France […]. First time I went to Germany middle eighties the English was about as good in Germany as it is in French now so you are about 20 years ahead of France.”

W: “So these differences have a strong influence on the project?”

2: “Yes, very. Because it once again is information flow that is the link of this.”

W: “Anything else problems in the understanding what the other wants or?”

2: “Yeah, the cultural differences occur more when you are outside the office. In the evening when you go for a restaurant I see this American colleague once […] I try to adapt a few words all countries I go to I try to to take the culture as it is and I try to understand a few words so I asked in China once […] Actually you don’t learn about culture in the office you learn it in the evenings and outside of the hotels.”

B: “And the different language abilities is there also a difference between the verbal and written communication when you have all these reports? Do you feel it that the ability to write English is also hindering you to figure out what they want or is it just when you meet?”

2: “No, the difference is less for writing again it is … for speaking because you write more proficient English let’s say than you speak so it’s easier it’s a much less difference when you write but once again the North American people is a little it like us they write half the sentence and than they say always […]”

W: “So the differences we talked about now which do you see as cultural or also personality
differences or maybe in the organizational culture between the Swedish and the German sub team?"

[…]

2: “No, it’s not. This differs not personalities so much it’s more like it’s not how you are it’s more like how you act so to say it’s what it’s not from the beginning when you are born just born I think it’s more or less the same but than you are raised in a different way so it’s not how you often mean it’s how you become because people have told it have told you in this way for example you cannot do nothing on a Sunday in Germany everything is closed here it’s seven days per week so but that is not depending on how you are that is depending how you become how is the standard procedure.”

W: “Now we have a more general question when you work is it important for you to have a clear plan and a clear structure in your work?”

[…]

2: “I say it should have been important yes but it isn’t yeah for me as a person it’s not important I am not a very structured you saw my desk yeah you yeah it’s not yeah but normally I’m improving but I am not a very structured person no and I don’t plan more than one day I still plan for the trip I will do tomorrow I am going to Brazil tomorrow yesterday evening I start to thinking I need a car and I always fly with the … class because business is closed is always full because I am late so no I’m not structured.”

W: “And what would be more important for you that you have a good climate in your team a good atmosphere or that you have a challenging task?”

2: “That’s a good question. Normally the answer is both but it’s I think the last one to have a talented task because the team is a little bit up to you all people can be they are more or less skilled in something it’s about finding the right the right person to do the right job for each … I think the team is up to you it becomes what you are doing what you are creating but you must have challenges.”

W: “During the project you have do you have a rewards given to the members or to the whole when something is achieved?”

2: “Yes we have not when it’s achieved more like personal rewards awards for example […] So XY as a company they have rewards but we have not my department we have not.”

W: “And do you like this procedure of giving these awards?”

2: “Yeah I do it should not due to a certain limit because it should not be that they go focus all the day and say I need to do this and this so I can get 100 extra Euro about the end of the month than it’s wrong they should work because they like to work because they are engaged in the work but than still you can have it but it should not be the main purpose the reward so it’s about to use it in the right way.”

B: “And you prefer credits for the individual and not for the whole team?”

2: “Can be both we have awards from the customer for for programmes that have been … for fulfilled customer expectations than also a customer can send an award to the programme team.”
W: “But what do you like more if the individual is pointed out or if the whole team?”

2: “It depends once again because is it because he’s expert he is an expert in a certain area he is the real expert we have in this he is travelling independent on someone else …. to travel solve issues all the time this is an individual action activity and this should also be awarded individually but if it’s a project that runs out very well with the project team members should be the team so it depends on what kind of what is awarded. So but for me no internal work should be really awarded but for teamwork never point out even if one in the team has made something extraordinary it’s still in the team and mainly as backup for someone else so it’s in the team when it’s a teamwork always team awards.”

W: “The differences between the cultures we discussed which would you point out as positive and which as negative for the successful project work?”

[...]

2: “I see as positive positive means that I can always rely on them they are very reliable in Germany they as I said they are black and white if you if you have an idea you have convinced them that it is a good idea than it is white and than they support you all the way. You know that because they believe in this and they work for this and this is very good that means that they are easy to work with cause you know where you have them all the time and as I said they are efficient they are following if you have a time plan they are trying to follow it and the opposite is that they don’t spread any information … they don’t speak to each other there can be a mistake made by a people sitting two meters away someone has the information and the last disadvantage is they are also inflexible because if they have if they don’t believe in something it’s not so easy to change if they are on vacation and the management team here for example when I’m at home I was out of office two days last week for Easter I was home I was on vacation two days and I spent five six hours working during those two days because we are flexible but than maybe I take normally that are I don’t know the working hours are not fixed I have to do my job if it takes 20 hours a week or sixty that might just but we are flexible but you can go to Germany and you have someone home for vacation he will not answer the phone when someone is calling. Here you can always reach the manager here for this company sometimes he calls me on Saturday evening he needs to speak with something it will not be possible in in Germany so my boss he is trying to improve sometimes he send me a SMS during the weekend we talk and answer yes and than he calls.”

B: “So you also like the procedure in Sweden that when you are out of office you still are engaged in work?”

2: “Yeah you are flexible no prestige of course it comes to a limit you are not supposed to work every weekend but if a colleague here is more like a friend you have a very hard time to work together if don’t like each other that’s what I meant when I said earlier when I said you are more business minded in Germany you can always work with the guy even if you don’t like him and here you are more speaking about private stuff you are more connected and than you are also more flexible because if a friend calls you on a Saturday evening you always say yes so that’s the difference good or bad. Sometimes it’s good sometimes it’s not so good it’s different.”

W: “And something that we do it really call maybe negative for the project work of the Swedish culture is there anything you could point out or?”

2: “Yeah we are not so strict in terms of following the time plan sometimes in a project outside
toward customers I think it’s the same that the internal we are more free and there is always someone does not maybe give the right priority to the project than we are out so this is sometimes happening . . . .”

[...]

W: “When you came the first time to Germany, you probably had some kind of expectations about the culture, how are the Germans, and so on, and was this fulfilled, or did you change your view of the Germans after you worked with them?”

2: “No, it was fulfilled, but it was not as obvious, it was not, the base was there, but not as much as, you know, I don’t know how to explain this, I thought it should be more clear, it should be more than it was, it was not so much, but the picture was, and it was not negative, it was just that I had a picture and it was there but it was not so, the difference how I expected a big difference between Sweden and Germany, but its really not.”

W: “And what did you expect? What were your expectations?”

2: “It is, the expectations was more or less what we have said today. That it, the picture I had was a big big gap today I know it’s a lot smaller. But you don’t see that the first time, you have to either work together or you have to spend as I said 6 months to 12 months. [...]”

W: “Ok, now we come to the last part of the interview. It’s about training, before you did your project, did you receive any training, like culture training, or language training?”

2: “No, no I studied German in school, but it was before I started to work, so, and I, so I had forgot most of it. But I don’t know two, three, two years after, I went on a training, to in Rendsburg […] I went there for two weeks to study business relations, business German, so I, how to, how do you expect to behave, how do you write a business letter in Germany, its very complicated, you must use both, she and he all the time and sehr geehrter, und, it’s a lot of things, so I spent two weeks.”

W: “Ok, but then it was your personal idea?”

2: “No it was, yeah it was my personal idea, but it was managed by the company.”

W: “Ok, ok.”

2: “After my request.”

W: “Do you think that there would be any kind of training, or this kind of training that you received would be good to enhance the teamwork?”

[...]

2: “Yes, it is very useful.”

W: “But the other members of your team usually don’t get this training?”

2: “No, no no, that’s only me. For my request.”

B: “And would you also like to have further training, more than language, more about culture and
conflict and to understand patterns that you have in behaviour, or is it enough to have the language?”

2: “No, I need more, definitely, cuz I, but it’s always a matter of time. […] So yeah, I would really like to do it.”

B: “And when would be the right time for the training, because you said you did it after two years? Would you like it during the project work? Or before?”

2: “Not before, because you must be do a feeling before you can adapt to it and get information. But not before, but maybe make some kind of project first and then, or in the end or in the middle of the first project. […]”

W: “And are there other factors apart from training, which you don’t have how the project work is supported by the company, maybe the HR department helps you, or you have some, like you said this technical equipment that helps you?”

[…]

2: “No, not directly, HR is helping me to find education if I like for myself, but they are not skilled in any way in relations. Not at all, so they don’t know more, they know less than me.”

[…] But the colleagues of the team in the other countries help him to understand the culture better and he can always ask them.

W: “And when you have the project work, is there any action taken by the company to enhance it, or not at all, like you said human resource, because it only helps you if you ask for help, is there anyone coming to help you, or watch over the project?”

2: “Yes, I said earlier, we have a lot of internal functions, and they are there, they are available. Then if you get someone’s help, its not always the case that it really can help you, but we have functions and they are supposed to help you, but its very often too late, very often they don’t have the resources, maybe the right resources in the right time. We have it but it does not work. […]”

W: “Ok and how do you think the project work could be improved?”

2: “Information flow, further information, that’s the key, all the time.”

W: “Do you have any idea how to enhance the communication, because if you tell people enhance communication probably nothing will happen?”

2: “If I turn it around to a question, do you know how to get over cultural differences, because this is what this is about, to, and I am not the one to do that. I can be aware of it, I can push people to send the information and to make it more, cuz it’s not only to to, the information flow, it’s also to make it, when you know something its very clear for you, you can explain it in one sentence, but people sitting in China, they think in a different, different way, and they don’t understand you single sentence, you must write very clear and say this is this and this and this, and this, that part can be done by telling the people that you must be very clear, but how to do so that you can explain it for China with one sentence, how does it work, it’s a cultural difference. […] For this I have no solution, you have to take the issue time by time. But you have to, you have to be alert, you have to see that, cuz if you don’t see that, then you get the problem later.”
W: “So maybe some cross-cultural training would be good to improve the awareness of people that there are such differences?”

2: “Yeah. Absolutely, but I don’t have a solution how to avoid them. It’s more to make people aware of it.”

W: “All in all at the end to sum it up, do you like working in German-Swedish project teams?”

2: “Yes, I have no problems with that. Yeah, Germany is the culture where I have the least amount of problems I say this is the country that is closer to us for the culture side.”

Interview 3 (German): 16.04.07, telephone interview, 9.00

The interviewee wants to conduct the interview in German since he is not sure if he is able to express details well in English.

Interviewee works since 1990 in the company (electrical industry), the Swedish site is part of the company, he is in charge of settlement of the projects.

44 years old male

He has not more project experience in international teams just right now a project with England is starting, before he was working in mono-cultural German teams, the German-Swedish project was for the exchange of experience so the interviewee was send to Sweden for three months. The exchange took place in a project lasting for 5 years in Sweden (object security project), the exchange of experience itself took already place one time during the project but without the interviewee, the project in Sweden is conducted face-to-face, in this case a virtual collaboration is also tricky because security documents cannot be sent around by e-mail. The working language was English, in general the team members are engineers, no women in the project team, one German woman marginally involved, the project team consisted of six Swedes and eight Germans and is an internal company project, three Swedes were involved fulltime in the project the others were halftime involved, for the Germans it was extra to the normal work

No team building activities at the beginning of the project, no training.

3: “Das war so ich bin dann eines Tages das war im August letztes Jahr nach XY das ist auch kein Pappenstiel hab mich da dann bei den Hauptabteilungsleitern vorgestellt und bin dann eigentlich so durch die Organisation durchgerutscht. Das war der Beginn und den Erfahrungsaustausch in Deutschland hab ich dann so organisiert, dass ich dann mit meinen Schweden zu den deutschen Anlagen gefahren bin und habe die dann da vorgestellt. In der Diskussion, das kam vor aber es war nicht wirklich formalisiert in der Gruppe. Namentliche Vorstellung Name, Vorname, Position, Tätigkeit in der Anlage und … dann sind wir eigentlich schon zu den technischen Details gegangen.“

B: “Und am Ende des Projekts oder des Erfahrungsaustausches gab es da eine Evaluierung?”

3: “Also wir haben nein bei den einzelnen Maßnahmen nicht in den Folgestatusgesprächen die wir für eine Anlage organisiert haben machen wir das jetzt, dass wir in XY einmal hier in Deutschland in XY bei XY mit diesem Projektteam zwei-dreimal jährlich treffen da ist natürlich so‘ne Art follow up mit drinnen. …“
B: “Und wer ist da involviert in dieser Evaluierung und wie läuft das ab? Geht es da nur um die Hardfacts oder auch dass man darüber spricht wie das im Team funktioniert hat miteinander?“

3: „Bisher eigentlich nur um die Hardfacts nur am Rande wenn man sich abends so im Restaurant trifft dann reflektiert man schon mal kulturelle Unterschiede, aber eigentlich steht das nicht im Vordergrund.“

B: “Und wer ist da involviert in dieser Evaluierung, oder wie läuft das ab? Geht es da nur um die hard facts oder das man darüber spricht wie das im Team funktioniert hat miteinander?”

3: “Bisher eigentlich nur um die hard facts, nur am Rande, wenn man sich Abends dann irgendwo im Restaurant trifft, dann reflektiert man schon mal kulturelle Unterschiede, aber eigentlich steht das nicht so im Fokus. Es geht im Wesentlichen um die harten, um die technischen Details.“

B: “Und, wenn Sie gefragt werden, ein Tipp für zukünftige Projekte zu geben, hätten Sie da nen Tipp?“

3: “Also man sollte vielleicht schon, wir haben das jetzt zu England gemacht […] dieses interkulturelle Training. Erstmal belächelt man’s ja, denkt man naja, eigentlich muss man ja mit den Engländern auskommen, mit den Älteren, man meint das die ziemlich anders sind, aber mit den Engländern müsste man ja eigentlich auskommen. Aber es gibt doch schon ne ganze Reihe von interessanten Informationen die man da bekommen kann. Und erst so ist man in der Lage bestimmte Verhaltensweisen wirklich dann einzuschätzen. Also zum Beispiel war schwierig war mit den Schweden, dass die sehr selten im persönlichen Gespräch sehr direkt auf die Dinge gekommen sind. Meistens haben sie sich zurückgezogen, haben das in der Gruppe diskutiert und kamen dann ne Woche später mit dem Ergebnis, das war dann auch hieb und stichfest, aber man so im direkten Gespräch Entscheidungen herbeizuführend, da taten sie sich relativ schwer ist halt nicht so deren Mentalität wie ich das so mitbekommen habe. Dann ist es schon ganz gut das vorher zu wissen. Man denkt ja erst, man hört ne Woche lang nichts von denen, was ist denn mit denen überhaupt los, interessiert die das gar nicht, was ich da gesagt habe, was ich da angestoßen habe, das sind zum Beispiel Dinge, die kann man sicherlich vorher klären.“

B: “Und haben Sie während des Projekts das Ziel erreicht? War das Projekt erfolgreich?“

3: “Das Projekt das läuft über fünf Jahre, also wenn man die technische Ebene betrachtet, da gab es jetzt in diesen drei Monaten keine konkreten Ziele. Für die, was die Organisation des Erfahrungsaustausches angeht denk ich schon, wir haben jetzt nen Erfahrungsaustausch zwischen XY und XX, das läuft auch jetzt in diesem Jahr weiter und weitergehend haben wir für die Projekte in England ein Expertennetzwerk geschaffen in denen auch die Schweden ne Rolle spielen. Und da würd ich sagen ist eigentlich die Integration schon gelungen, ja.“

B: “Und hat Ihnen das persönlich gefallen wie das Projekt vorangeschritten ist?“

3: “Ja klar. Absolut. Das war ne unheimlich interessante Erfahrung.“

B: “Und was war der Schlüssel für den Erfolg?“

3: “Also, einmal die Schweden, es ist ja so, XY gehört zum Konzern in XZ, und nen bisschen war das für die Schweden, naja sie werden von den XZlern geschluckt. Und deshalb gab es auch nen bisschen Skepsis uns gegenüber, so nach dem Motto die kommen jetzt hierher und schreiben
uns hier vor was wir wie wann wo zu tun haben. Und der Schlüssel dazu mit denen richtig ins Gespräch zu kommen war die Angst zu nehmen. Wenn man sich immer ganz vernünftig verhält, bisschen zurück nimmt, auf die, auf die technischen Fakten konzentriert, und dann nicht sagt, also komm wir machen das mal eben so, das wird hier nur kopiert und dann ist alles gut, das man also in diesem zwischenmenschlichen Bereich da als Partner fungiert und da vernünftig vorgeht.“

B: “[…] wir würden dann jetzt gerne mit Ihnen über die kulturellen Unterschiede sprechen, die Sie während der drei Monate, oder vielleicht auch noch davor oder danach wahrgenommen haben.“

3: “[…] Einmal hat ich's ja genannt, das Probleme einmal nicht so ganz direkt angesprochen werden, das hat mich überrascht, das die so sind, ich dachte schon, das die Schweden sehr direkt sind, ist da offensichtlich nicht so. Dann sind sie sehr gruppenorientiert, sie sprechen das ab und haben dann ne harmonisierte Regelung und dann geht’s mit der auch voran, also das funktioniert dann schon sehr gut. Und was halt wirklich sehr erstaunlich ist, die Durchlässigkeit der Hierarchiestufen. Da sitzen sie tatsächlich mit dem Geschäftsführer abends mal irgendwo im Restaurant und quatschen da über irgendwelche privaten Dinge oder so, also das ist schon sehr direkt, der Kontakt ist schon sehr direkt. Also diese Ausprägung der Hierarchiestruktur so wie es bei uns ist, so ist es da nicht so, für mich nicht so zu erkennen gewesen.“

B: “Und konnten Sie feststellen das es zwischen den Teammitgliedern, zwischen den deutschen Teammitgliedern und auf der anderen Seite zwischen den schwedischen Teammitgliedern, irgendwie in der Untergruppe dann mehr Kommunikation gab, als in der ganzen Gruppe?”

3: “Ne, eigentlich nicht, das lag aber auch daran, dass unsere Kollegen in den deutschen Anlagen relativ schlecht englisch sprechen und wenn sie die Sprache nicht haben fehlt die Basis für Kommunikation. Ne, also eigentlich gab es da keine Untergruppen die sich da irgendwie emanzipiert haben. Gut, man muss ja sagen, wir sind ja insgesamt nen Jahr zusammen gewesen, also das sind ja nur einzelne Besuche, die dann nen Tag dauern und sonst, dann geht man ja auch schon wieder auseinander.“

B: “Und fanden Sie das es genug Kommunikation in diesem Projektteam gab?“

3: “Also, wie gesagt, allein wegen der sprachlichen Schwierigkeiten an einem deutsch schwedischen Austausch, und der Tatsache das eben manche relativ schlecht da sind und der Tatsache dass das Projekt in Schweden natürlich schwedisch umgesetzt worden ist wo ich dann dran teilgenommen habe, war es hält immer irgendwo begrenzt, also man musste immer Sonderaufwendungen fahren um sich da zusammen zu kommunizieren. Also das war eigentlich schon ne Schwierigkeit.“

B: “Und, abgesehen von der sprachlichen Barriere haben Sie da noch andere Unterschiede im Kommunikationsverhalten, im Kommunikationsstil zwischen den beiden Kulturen festgestellt?“

3: “Also nur das die Schweden eigentlich immer deutlich zurückhaltender formuliert haben als das bei uns so der Fall gewesen wäre. Also bei uns geht man eigentlich schon ziemlich unverblümt auf die Fakten zu, und sucht da auch die Auseinandersetzung, also ich meine, das ist kein Problem, das ist auch den nächsten Tag erledigt. Und das meiden die Schweden denk ich eher.“

B: “Und die meiste Kommunikation im Team war face-to-face, oder auch viel am Telefon?“

3: “Im Wesentlichen face-to-face.“
B: “Und wie sind denn die Projektteamtreffen abgelaufen?”

3: “Das sind im wesentlichen Besprechungen gewesen, so wie man sie kennt. Es gibt ne Agenda, und nach der Agenda wird vorgegangen und dann wird das abgearbeitet.”

B: “Und da gab’s auch keine Unterschiede, wie viel zum Beispiel die Schweden oder die Deutschen diskutiert haben, oder?”

3: “Ja, also wenn man das, die die sprachlichen Probleme mal ausklammert dann eigentlich, nö.”

B: “Und wie wurden denn die Aufgaben in dem Projektteam verteilt?”

3: “Ja, eigentlich klassisch, ne, es gibt bestimmte Projekte, das ist halt ne komplexere Geschichte, dann gibt es bestimmt Fachausrichtungen und entsprechend waren dann die diese Stellen besetzt.”

B: “Also hat sozusagen der Projektleiter das entschieden?”

3: “Naja, gut der Projektleiter entscheidet das eigentlich nicht. Das entscheidet eigentlich die Hierarchie in der Organisation, also entscheidet die Linie wer in das Projekt geht, und der Projektleiter hat ja mehr ne koordinierende Funktion, also der hat keine Führungsposition.”

B: “Und wie spezifisch wurden die Aufgaben verteilt, oder war das dann das man viel Freiraum hatte, gab es da Unterschiede?”

3: “Ne ne, kann ich nicht sagen, ich meine die haben das genauso aufgezogen und abgewickelt wie bei uns auch. Da gibt es ja auch klare vor allem und Leittechniker für die bautechnischen Aufgabenstellungen.”

B: “Und wie haben Sie Entscheidungen in dem Team gefällt?”

3: “Also ich fand das bei den Schweden das schon deutlich mehr diskutiert worden ist. Bei uns läuft das meist so ab, dass derjenige der das Fachgebiet bearbeitet einen Vorschlag macht, dieser Vorschlag wird diskutiert und auch manchmal ganz kontrovers diskutiert, und das war’s dann. Und bei den Schweden ging es dann doch mehr so darum das das die Gruppe da allgemein, … da hat dann jemand gesagt das.”

B: “Und wer hat die Entscheidungen dann gefällt, das Team, oder Einzelne?”

3: “Also im Wesentlichen das Team in der Diskussion, gut es gibt natürlich die mehr politischen Entscheidungen die kommen aus der Hierarchie, aber wenn man sich dann das tägliche Arbeitsumfeld ansieht, dann sind es eigentlich Entscheidungen, die sowohl bei den Schweden als auch bei uns eigentlich im Team gefällt worden sind.”

B: “Und haben Sie bei dem Engagement was die Projektmitglieder gezeigt haben, Unterschiede gesehen zwischen Deutschen und Schweden?”

3: “Nein, das ist individuell. Ich hab gute Schweden gesehen, ich hab faule Schweden gesehen, und das Gleiche natürlich auch hier. Es gibt faule, die Dienst nach Vorschrift gemacht haben, sie müssen die 36 Stunden in der Woche vollkriegen, aber das haben sie bei uns und das haben sie in Schweden.”
B: “Und dann, das war auch die nächste Frage, ob Sie da beim Engagement oder auch bei der Zeit Unterschiede sehen, die die Leute investieren um das Projektziel zu erreichen?”

3: “Ne, das nicht. Ich hab nur den Eindruck, dass die Leute das besser bezahlt bekommen. Die kriegen tatsächlich, also bei unsern Kollegen in Schweden, ist das so, ich kann ja nur dafür sprechen, das die tatsächlich ihre Überstunden und so weiter angerechnet bekommen während man in Deutschland das so eher über AT-Verträge regelt, und die Überstunden werden dann damit abgegolten. Aber in der persönlichen Motivation, sprich persönlichen Einstellung, sehe ich da keinen Unterschied.“

B: “Und gab es Konflikte, während der Projektarbeit?”

3: “Eigentlich nicht. Wobei ich natürlich, es musste ja kein bestimmtes Ziel erreicht werden, und von daher war man da flexibel, wenn man tatsächlich ein Projekt ein Hardwareprojekt, da umsetzten will dann sind natürlich Konflikte immer vorprogrammiert. Das war ja, ich hab ja für die Hardware, für die Technik, mehr so Informationen geliefert. Das Andere, was die Organisation des Erfahrungsaustausches angeht, da weiß ich nicht, wo da eine Konfliktsituation herkommt.”

[…][Wie haben die Unterschiede in den Englischkenntnissen die Projektarbeit beeinflusst?]

3: “Die hat es natürlich schon beeinflusst, dieser Erfahrungsaustausch war an sich relativ langsam als das ich teilweise die Äußerungen meiner deutschen Kollegen übersetzt habe. Da können Sie sich vorstellen, dass die Effizienz dann schon bisschen den Bach runtergehen.”

B: “Und die Unterschiede die Sie jetzt genannt haben, zwischen den Schweden und den Deutschen, welche würden Sie denn als kulturell davon bezeichnen, und welche als persönliche Unterschiede?”

3: “Also die Orientierung auf die Gruppe hin würde ich als kulturell betrachten, ich denke das ist allgemein so. Also das geht ja los mit der gemeinsamen Kaffeepause, wenn man da mal nicht erschienen ist, weil man sich am Telefon verquatscht hat, dann haben die ja schon böse geguckt.“

B: “Und haben Sie auch Unterschiede was die Organisationskultur angeht?”

3: “Ja, es ist bei uns ausgeprägter diese Unterscheidung einmal in Abteilungen, einmal in die Hierarchiestufen, das scheint da alles nicht so zu sein. […]“

B: “Und dann haben wir eine Frage für Sie persönlich, wie wichtig ist es für Sie, dass Sie einem Plan und eine Struktur haben wenn Sie in einem Projekt arbeiten?”

3: “[…]Ohne eine konkrete Struktur und nen schönen Terminplan, bin ich fast arbeitslos.“

B: “[…]Was ist wichtiger für Sie, dass Sie eine gute Atmosphäre im Team haben, oder dass das eine herausfordernde Aufgabe ist, die Sie im Team zu lösen haben?”

3: “Ja, das geht ja zusammen, das ist ja kein Gegensatz. Wir haben uns ja früher in den alten Projektteams auch ganz viel an die Köpfe gehabt, und wir machen das jetzt alles nen bisschen anders. Wenn man dann wirklich ne herausfordernde Aufgabenstellung hat mit einem guten Team, das gut integriert ist, […] und abends dann auch noch zusammen Spaß hat, das ist sehr wichtig, das geht so Hand in Hand. Eine herausfordernde Aufgabenstellung bringt richtig viel
von den Teammitgliedern, weil die natürlich für die schwierigen Aufgaben die besten Leute zur Verfügung stellen, wenn sie die dann vernünftig integrieren, und ihnen die Möglichkeit geben so ne harte Nuss zusammen zu knacken, dann kommt auch ne super Stimmung auf.”

B: “Und während der Projektarbeit, wurde da die Leistung des Einzelnen, oder des ganzen Teams belohnt?”


B: “Sind Sie damit zufrieden wie man das in Deutschland macht, nichts zu sagen?”

3:”Mir ist das, mir ist das recht, sagen wir mal so, das Lob vom Chef [...] das ist nicht ganz so wichtig, also ohne geht es normalerweise auch...”

B: “Und in dem Projektteam, ist Ihnen das wichtiger, dass dann da Einzelne hervorgehoben werden, die was Tolles gemacht haben, oder das das gesamte Team, wenn ein Zwischenziel oder das Endziel erreicht wird, dass das ganze Team dann zusammen belohnt wird?”

3: “Naja gut, kommt drauf an, wenn sie ein komplexes Projekt haben, ne komplexe Aufgabenstellung haben, dann haben sie halt mehrere die da auch zusammenarbeiten müssen, da nützt es ihnen eigentlich wenig, wenn da nen Einzelner was macht. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es auch innerhalb eines Projektes immer wieder so harte Nüsse oder einzelne Teile zu knacken, die dann auch der entsprechende Fachverantwortliche machen muss. Das eine steht dem anderen nicht im Weg finde ich.”

B: “Und die Unterschiede, welche Sie zwischen den Schweden und den Deutschen wahrgenommen haben, welche davon würden Sie als negativ, welche als positiv davon für die Projektarbeit bezeichnen, beurteilen?”

3: “Also die Schweden sind sehr tolerant, sie sind gruppenorientiert, das hilft natürlich im Projektteam immer, was natürlich schwierig ist für uns, ist das sie nicht so mit ihrer Meinung so richtig herausrücken. Das sie der Konfrontation aus dem Weg gehen. Ja, das kann schwierig sein, da kann es durchaus passieren, das durch irgendwelche Formulierungen Probleme praktisch schon angesprochen wurden sind, die aber für uns, weil Sie so weich formuliert sind, gar nicht als Problem erkennbar sind, dass sie auch nicht entsprechend angegangen werden können. Also da würde man sich schon manchmal wünschen, dass sie mal mit der Faust auf den Tisch hauen und sagen so, das ist aber hier der Punkt oder das Problem das müssen wir angehen.”

B: “Sie hatten ja sicherlich bevor das Projekt mit den Schweden begann Erwartungen wie die Schweden sind, oder wie sie sich verhalten. Und haben die sich erfüllt, diese Erwartungen, oder haben Sie vielleicht auch Ihre Meinung geändert während des Erfahrungsaustausches?”

3: “Also eigentlich ist es deutlich besser gelaufen als ich es erwartet hab, denn ich hatte ja gesagt, XX und damit die Schweden sind aufgekauft wo rden von den XZlern und ich hatte schon den Eindruck, dass sie sehr ablehnend waren gegen eine solche Tätigkeit da in Schweden, da können einem die Kollegen das Leben schon ziemlich zur Hölle machen wenn sie das wollen. Und das ist Gott sei Dank nicht eingetreten, das ist sehr positiv ausgegangen zu einigen habe ich auch
persönlich ein sehr angenehmes Verhältnis, also da war ich sehr positiv überrascht.“

„Naja, wie gesagt, das meiste ist nicht ganz so unbekannt, ich war vorher schon nen paar Mal in Schweden und das was man da so kennt, ja na gut, das hat man wieder erkannt, wieder getroffen, und jetzt bin ich nicht so tief eingerudert, dass ich da nun alle Unterschiede mich auskenne, irgendwelche Festivitäten die sie haben, da bin ich nicht so eingedrungen. Von daher gab es da keine Überraschungen in positiver oder negativer Hinsicht.“

B: “Und Sie hatten ja schon gesagt, dass Sie vor dem Erfahrungsaustausch kein Training hatten.“

3: “Korrekt, nen bisschen Sprachtraining, aber kein interkulturelles.“

B: “Und wie lang war dieses Sprachtraining?“

3: “Eine Woche intensiv, und dann war ich nen bisschen in der Lage so den ein oder anderen Text zu lesen, nur das Sprechen war arg schwierig und die haben dann sofort in Englisch geantwortet.“

B: “Und das war ein Englischtraining, und das war speziell“

3: “Nein nein, das war ein Schwedischtraining.“

„Und dann war ich in der Lage einfache Texte zu lesen, so ungefähr zu wissen worum es geht, und man konnte dann durch Nachfragen sich das noch so ein bisschen erarbeiten. Aber mit der Aussprache in Schwedisch, das war schon nen bisschen schwierig.“

B: “Und hätten Sie sich gewünscht, dass Sie auch Englischtraining haben, also wenn das auch die Arbeitssprache ist?“

3: “Ja gut, es hat ja funktioniert, man hätte das sicherlich verbessern können, aber das hat im Prinzip funktioniert, das war eigentlich so ganz gut.“

B: “Und was hätten Sie denn am Liebsten für ein Training davor gehabt, oder hätten Sie vielleicht lieber ein Training nicht davor, sondern während des Projekts?“

Er hat versucht einen Sprachkurs (Schwedisch) zu organisieren, aber das ist dann an Missverständnissen bezüglich der Kostenübernahme gescheitert.

B: “Und so ein interkulturelles Training […] hätte das vielleicht geholfen?“

3: “Das wäre vielleicht gar nicht so schlecht gewesen, dann hätte ich mir schon vorstellen können, dass die so nen bisschen um die Sache, um den heißen Brei herum reden und das nicht ganz so direkt formulieren, wie wir das machen. Dann hätte man ja entsprechend nachfragen können, klar.“

B: “Und gab es noch andere Stellen im Unternehmen, die Ihnen geholfen haben während der Projektarbeit, also zum Beispiel die Personalabteilung, oder gibt es X weit die gleichen Begriffe für irgendwelche Sachen, also ne globale Organisationskultur, die einem hilft sich überall zu verständigen, oder, dass man überall die gleiche Software und so weiter hat?“

3: “Ja, das ist im Aufbau, also weitgehend funktioniert das schon, bei den Schweden in XY grad nicht.“ […]
B: “Sehen Sie denn, weiß ich nicht zum Beispiel in der Personalabteilung, dass die in solchen Projekten zwischen zwei oder mehreren Kulturen mehr helfen könnten, als Anlaufstelle?”

3: “Also ich sag mal so, so ein interkulturelles Training wie wir's jetzt für England hatten, wo man so ein bisschen auf die Probleme hingewiesen wird, dann müsste man eigentlich damit einfach selbst zurrecht kommen[…].”

B: “Und wenn man jetzt die Prävention von solchen Missverständnissen betrachtet, gab es während der Projektarbeit irgendwelche Handlungen damit man den Erfolg garantieren kann, also wurde da schon mal eingelenkt, oder wurde da was geändert?”

3: “Naja gut, das Verständnis musste erarbeitet werden und wenn man’s dann hat funktioniert es ja, aber das lief dann so auf der zwischenmenschlichen Basis ab, wenn man mit einander Zeit verbringt, das hab ich getan und das haben die schwedischen Kollegen auch getan. Meinen sie jetzt irgendwelche flankierenden Maßnahmen meinetwegen von der Personalabteilung oder so?”

B: “Ja, oder das der Projektleiter irgendwelche, weiß ich nicht, zum Beispiel wird der Ablauf von den Diskussionen geändert, oder irgendwelche Regeln wie man miteinander arbeitet, das könnte man ja ändern, wenn man merkt es läuft nicht so gut.”

3: “Ne, das nicht. Was wir gemacht haben, und das ist eigentlich auch sehr gut, wir sind dann abends mal zusammen Essen gegangen, […] das schafft so ne persönliche Basis und das ist unheimlich viel wert. Also im Vergleich dazu sind diese interkulturellen Seminare sag ich mal eher zweitrangig. Den persönlichen Draht zu den Kollegen zu bekommen, das ist eigentlich entscheidend. […]”

B: “Gab es irgendwas im Projekt was Sie vermisst haben, und was man vielleicht verbessern kann?”

3: “[…] nein, nur fachlich, also keine interkulturellen.“

B: “Und würden Sie gern noch mal in einem deutsch-schwedischen Team arbeiten?”

3: “Sofort.”

Interview 4 (Swede): 17.04.07, face-to-face interview at the company site, 9:20

39 years old male
Manager of the product development department, tool and machine design and building. He works in the company since 1999, and has experience in international business with Europe, the US and Asia.
He has shop floor experience, and works today in projects with mainly France, Germany and the US. He has a lot of experience in only Swedish teams. On the level he is at now there is some international connection in every project.
He is involved with the budget and strategic planning and in this the Germans and the French (headquarters) are always involved.
He has no day to day project work in German-Swedish project teams.
In projects with Germans he is involved and supervises on a management level, he is mainly responsible for the investment and headcount budgets.
During the projects he stays usually in Sweden. The communication is via telephone meetings, videoconferencing or e-mails. English is the working language.

In the projects he works together with engineers, controllers and managers, there is just one female in the team. The project team normally consists of 2-5 people from each country Germany and Sweden.

He spends more than 50% of the time supervising projects, the rest of the time is spend for line work in the tool department.

W: “Our first question is about teambuilding activities okay you maybe not so much involved in the teams but do you have something like that?”

4: “I know we had once for a huge programme they had like a team building kick off where people from Germany, France, Britain came here and they had like a big kick off get to know each other but otherwise I would say not common practice to do like that.”

W: “But are like common visions, common goals or rules for the teamwork set at the beginning?”

4: “Yes fairly well but not decided by the team they are decided by upper upper upper upper management XY rules are sort of pushed into the project or programme. And I think that the goals are pretty unclear to most people. Because they are changing faster than during the lifetime of a programme it could be one, two, three, four, five years you would see several different goals because they will change over time. And the corporate memory is very very short. And they don’t remember what they told us last year. The problem is that we are normally not quick enough to react to the new rules until they change them again. So you can’t say that in programme A I have this goals in programme B I have these goals if you talk about real over all goals of course as a process engineer I have a budget and you know the exact number this is the amount of money I can spend on equipment and this is the cycle time I need to reach in my production line this is the number of people I can have in it. Those down to earth goals they are quite clear for my people I would say. So that was an ambiguous answer to a perfectly simple question.”

W: “And at the end of the project is there usually a project evaluation?”

4: “Should be is not. There is a lessons learned white book meeting supposed to be but I think we are really bad in that. “

W: “But could you give any advice for future projects if you were asked?”

4: “The thing you just asked I think it would be a very good thing to do to have a closure session or something like that and you go through some details and what was the goals, what did we achieve, what people did wrong, what did we do good, what can we improve. I think the problem I don’t know if it’s typical for the XY distance that we are in that we don’t really see an end of the project. It starts now because we get a request from a customer to put in a quote for a new product. Can we do that? A couple of weeks, a month, two months that we loop that around and around for maybe one year sometimes and than we get an award of business. Okay thank you, you will produce this for us one million parts for XY and that is a very definite kick off of a programme. But when is it stopped you never know that really okay we launched everything you have production and than there is a small change you launch again you change something always go up and down there is a new market service parts so they never really stop.”

B: “But do you have some milestones during your programmes after which you could look back
we did good or bad?”

4: “Yes there is something called gate four the last gate in the programme system at least at this
site we are extremely bad at closing gate four we we typically don’t meet the target so we can’t
close it so we just keep on keeping it open five years no problem. And I know that focus from
upper management now has changed they are really they allowed us to do that cause nothing
happened and now they’re looking at it change behaviour. So the question is will we have time to
change behaviour before they start looking somewhere else. I don’t know that yet. But it’s a
problem between the tech centre where I normally work and the plant and the other plants that
we don’t come to an agreement. Okay we close the project. Project is done. The plant is doing
this: the project is done we can have the closing meeting. We can do the lessons learned and
everything but you can’t really do that until you are finished because it doesn’t feel right. And
than it just fails out like this and it dies and every month there is something popping up and the
project is alive again and it fails again so we we have gates and we do respect them from gate one
to gate two A, two B, four not. So that is something we should improve.”

W: “Okay. So our next question was about if the projects are usually successful? Now you already
said.”

4: “It depends on how you see it. Successful yes in the sense that we normally meet time lines, we
normally don’t hurt our customers by delivering too few parts or bad quality or something like
that. We normally have problems meeting cost levels for instance we put too many people in the
line we have instead of 48 seconds it’s 49 or 62 or something like that. So that is why we have
problems closing gate four because we really don’t meet the costing, we don’t really meet the
investment budgets and that it can always be discussed of course why is it like that we are
squeezing it too hard at gate one to get the business and than we can’t really perform as well as
we hopped.”

W: “But do you basically like the way that your projects go on?”

4: “Mostly yes, there are some items that I would like to change but it’s business of course there
is someone else sitting in another function thinking that I am spending too much money. I would
like to spend a lot more money ‘cause I think we are often not spending enough on the
equipment so we don’t have the capacity so we are having problems at gate four but someone
else is making the budget target and it’s hurting production later on. But I know it’s a fight of
course but it’s more successful than unsuccessful I would say.”

W: “Okay, so when it is successful what would you see as the key factors for being successful?”

4: “Key factor is probably a programme manager that is really really active.”

W: “Ok, so it’s all dependent on one person?”

4: “No, but it’s a key person.”

W: “Ok.”

4: “And the fact in this company, and I think it is, yes it has to do with both Swedish and
German culture, is that you you can’t just put something on a action list and think that Mister X
will do it. But you really have to chase him, mail him call him mail him call him mail him call him,
mail his boss, call his boss, mail him again call him. Have you done it have you done it have you
done it, yes. Ok. Don’t think that if you put week 48 it will be done week 48. Some programme
managers think that and then they say it’s his fault. And maybe it is yes, but a, so the single factor
I think is programme management. And of course it’s the, in the ideal world project management
would be very simple if the team always did their job, but I think the teams are either not trained
well enough or not educated or or not experienced or not motivated or overloaded. So that they
will start to either slow down or they will start to prioritize something else, because there is
always some programme manager shouting that they should do it.”

W: “And now we come to German Swedish differences, do you find it different to work with
Germans as compared to working with Swedes?”

4: “I would say that typical, maybe it’s a cliché, but my experience from a Swedish programme
manager or even more maybe Swedish none, lower down in the hierarchy, there are, there is a
tradition in Sweden to work cross-functional in this direction, and if you see that someone has a
problem you go and help them, if you see that ok I need to, this needs to be done and its that guy
that should do it but he is not there, so I will go over there instead. It’s more, what should I say,
you are not following the functions that strict. In Germany my impression is that ok, I did this, I
signed it and I put it there, I know he is dead, but I’m still putting it there, nothing will happen,
but it’s not my problem. And eventually his boss might find out and something will happen, and
another typical to me German reaction is that I have a problem, I don’t go see my boss, I don’t
go to some other persons boss to discuss something, or or I’m just doing my job and letting it
take the time it will take, I’m not pushing it, I’m not forcing it, I’m not trying to shortcut, I’m not
trying to do anything to make things move ahead, because this is not my problem [makes with his
hands a box around his eyes] it is someone else’s problem. Putting it blunt, but there is a
difference, that can upset Swedes. Why are they doing it like this again, and I’m quite sure that
the opposite is thought in Germany. Why are they taking the shortcuts again, why are they not
doing it the way we agreed, why are they. But that is a difference, and my only experience of the
Germans is from Bavaria, I’m quiet sure that you know that there is a difference between Bavaria
and Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, and so, I don’t know, I have never worked with XX in Cologne,
so I don’t know.[[…]]”

W: “And within the teams, do you think there is a difference in communication, that maybe the
Germans communicate more within each other than they communicate with the Swedes, or the
other way around?”

4: “Difficult questions. I think, as I mentioned before, one of the problems with the German
team is, that they do not communicate within the team unless it’s, unless they are told to
communicate exactly like that, they don’t communicate in that direction, they might, they
definitely communicate in that direction, downwards, but not and maybe up to their boss, but
not to someone else’s boss and maybe not to any other department. But on the other hand I
think that in general communication was quite well with our German colleagues, we have been in
the same company now since 2000 and we know each other quite well. It’s not a major problem,
definitely not, it works quite well.”

W: “So you would say that there is enough communication within the team?”

4: “Yes, its probably enough, and its down to individuals I would say, that one two people they
don’t communicate very well and they sometimes don’t communicate with some other people on
the other, in the other side, but I think we have the same problem here, I’m sure we have.”

W: “And would you say that there are differences in the communication style between the two
cultures?”
4: “I don’t think it’s a big difference as long as we are talking about normal project members. It’s a hierarchy level again, in Sweden we have very few hierarchical levels and communication is very soft, I mean we don’t go around and say good morning Herr Direktor every morning. And I think that if I go to the division manager in Germany, that is also managing this sight, he is more uptight, like always wearing a suit and a tie and a vest and polished shoes and, but its not a problem. That’s what we expect really, I know that the operations manager for Europe, a German guy, was here a couple of weeks ago, and he didn’t wear a tie, and I immediately thought, hmm, why but he probably thought that hmm, I’m going to Sweden, I’m not taking my suit, I wanna look like they do. But I’m, it’s a signal, and he was probably trying to get friendly with the plant manager or something like that, and everyone was suspicious. But there is a difference, Swedes really don’t dress up at work. I’m sure that my counterparts XX and XY would look completely different. I know that they are looking different at work.”

W: “And when you communicate, you say there is a lot of phone calls and so on, could you say a little bit more about these kind of mediums that you use for communication?”

4: “Its, we use telephones, I mean person to person, but also telephone conferences, video-conferences, I don’t see any communication problems at all. I think that the Germans are quite structured and and … so that works absolutely ok … its ok.”

W: “So when you actually meet in person, how does it usually work, you have some kind of agenda, some kind of plan who talks, or is it more unstructured?”

4: “Normally when I meet my German counterparts its on their initiative, because they are bossing me, so they make the agenda normally, […] its more an agenda that these are the topics that we want to to discuss, this is something I want to highlight, and this is the amount of time we have, do you miss anything. […] But it’s not like that, it’s not like Germans speak Swedes keep quiet, definitely not.”

W: “Do you usually follow the agenda, or do you have?”

4: “We do, normally we do I would say.”

[...]

W: “And when you have discussions, within the meetings, do you think that there is a difference within the contribution or the way, how people discuss, between Germans and Swedes?”

4: “Nothing, nothing really big. But I think, if we are 10 people, 5 Swedes, 5 Germans different positions within a project or a company, I think there, the likelihood of the older Swedes speaking is quite high, and the likelihood of the German top guy speaking is quite high. It’s partly a language thing, because most Swedes speak better … English than Germans. So that contribute that the lower you are in the hierarchy, the lower experience or you have less experience of speaking in English I would guess, but I think that there is also a hierarchical structure in German behaviour that makes, first of course you listen to what the boss says and you try to get some informal approval of speaking up, but you can sense it, but its not really important I think.”

W: “But that is different for the Swedes.”

4: “Yes, and I would say the few, on the few occasions that I have been with German customers its more obvious, […], but that is because we don’t know each other so its more a formal
occasion, we are discussing a business proposal or something like that and we are on one side of
the desk and they are on the other side of the desk and everything is a little bit secret like this,
than its obvious, the boss on the German side is speaking and it will be the same on the Swedish
side, its more likely that the top guy will do the talking and the other ones are just supporting, but
as I said, I think that we know each other since 8 years now and its, we are getting family.”

W: “And when you assign tasks in the team, is it usually done by the team leader or manager
assigning the tasks, or do you have tasks and people say, I think I want to work on this. How
does this work?”

4: “Normally it’s the first, but I mean if someone puts their nose up and says I want to do this,
they will probably be chosen, because they have they do that because they have the experience,
they have the time, and they want to do that, so why not.”

[...]

W: “And when tasks are assigned are they usually rather specific or rather broad, or is there a
difference between how you assign a task for a German or a Swede?”

4: “There shouldn’t be, because we are forced to follow the XX procedures, they are the same
worldwide. In reality it’s slightly different, but I can’t really say if it depends on size of the site or
if it’s on the way we work. I would say that it’s broader in Sweden than it is in Germany. But it
could also be that we are 100 and they are 200, so you have to take to jobs on one person, they
are more specialized in Germany, and I think its partly because of size, that they can do that but
its also a little bit this, I am the one that does this job, and I don’t care if it fits with the other I’m
just doing this.”

W: “When you make decisions in the team, how are they made, through team discussions, or as
you said earlier by the management?”

4: “It’s a mix. I think it’s very much up to the team, and if the team agrees no management
involvement. Normally the team doesn’t really agree and then there is some kind of management
involvement, programme management I would say, they don’t, usually they don’t involve
functional managers like me, they are doing it themselves. And if I talk about my cooperation
between Sweden and Germany, where I am involved, it’s also again if I meet budget targets, if I
basically follow the framework that I have, it’s up to me and my counterpart, but normally we
don’t, so it’s my boss and his boss like in any other company, I’m sure, like I can’t see any real
difference in the way it works in Sweden and Germany.”

W: “And the way people work would you say that there is a difference between the effort people
put towards the team or the goal achievement between Germans and Swedes?”

4: “Not really, we sometimes blame our colleagues in Germany that they say that they don’t have
time and effort to do this and this, but I think that actually they could, that is something that we
say, and I’m sure that they are stating the same, so it’s a little bit typically we and them, it could as
well be between here and Stockholm or whatever, because you know its their fault that we didn’t
get this business.”

W: “And do you see a difference in the time spend for this?”

4: “Depends very much I think on the position, if we, but normally Swedes work less, I would
say, but I don’t really know that for sure.”
But it’s not a big difference.”

W: “And when you, in your team or in the teamworks do conflicts occur?”

4: “Of course.”

W: “And what is usually the cause?”

4: “Resources I would say, or at the end money. But definitely human resources key problem, because we are different sites involved in development of one single product that will be produced somewhere else, it will probably not be produced in, we don’t have that many plants in Germany anymore and we only have this plant in Sweden, and not much is being done here anymore, so Sweden and Germany is developing for someone else. And if we have a borderline case who is paying for that, another test, who is paying for it, and maybe not so much the money, but the head count, XX does not count the amount of money that it takes to employ, or not employ a person, they just count the number of heads. There are supposed to be 82 people, but we need to be 83, because we have so much work, no, 82. And then if we need to put resources on a programme that we didn’t budget, we have one guy short that is I think a typical problem between Germany and Sweden that we don’t have resources, they don’t have resources and fighting about that takes one resource.”

W: “Yes, how do you usually treat these conflicts or how do you solve them?”

4: “Our opinion of course is that, again, we have to do it. But we don’t remember the times when the Germans had to do it, because that just disappears. I think, again, that if we see a real need of fixing a problem, we will try to find a way to fix it, someone who is working in department A is stepping in department B for six months, or whatever to fix it. But in Germany, no, no no. Less flexibility I would say, I don’t know if it’s true, but it’s my opinion.”

[...]

W: “We already talked about the language differences or the language abilities between Germans and Swedes, and what influence do you think they have on the project work?”

4: “Not much really, I think that the Germans that we work with in programmes most of them speak excellent English, a lot better than I had expected before I met them. If you go to for instance a CAD-designer or something like that, in Sweden they speak English, in Germany its not that sure that they do, depends on the age, if they are 40+ its maybe not that typical, but everyone that is below 40 speaks English and everyone below 30 speaks well I think [...].”

W: “The differences that we talked about so far which would you think are cultural differences and which would you think are more personality differences?”

4: “That’s a good questions. Unfortunately that I don’t have deep experience of any other German company than XX I don’t know what to say there actually. I mean we have, there is a big influence that in XY we are working with a small segment of the XX business and in Germany and France and the rest of the world they are working with a big segment, so we have a unique know-how, a unique process a unique product, so its difficult for the Germans to really point at us, saying this is how you should do it, because they don’t know that and they know that they don’t know and they know that we know that. So we are done with the fighting about that, you know we don’t. So that has an influence on how they behave I’m sure, if we were doing
exactly the same thing, automatically the office in Germany would know better, they would have the opportunity to know better at least. Of course I could find a few individuals that that are acting more German than others, but I don’t think it is of any great importance, really.”

4: “Do you see organizational culture differences between?”

4: “Yeah, definitely, again we have mentioned it before, the German organization is more like this, its more levels and more specialized functions, that’s good and bad. But it’s also partly explained by their size, they are bigger than we are. And the reporting structure is also more like that. But I’m not sure that they, that my functional manager in Germany really thinks or wants us to do like they do, there is no huge, apart from last week, where there is an organizational change going on where they actually are pushing us a little bit into that way of doing, but the change is so small and its so seldom that they ask for anything like that its very obvious I would say.”

W: “Now two personal questions for you, how important is a clear plan or structure when you are working?”

4: “As a human animal you are functional of your surroundings, and I’m sort of used to have basically zero structure when I work, because everything, every day is oh, I didn’t plan this. So no, it is not that important to me.”

W: “Ok, and what is more important for you, that you have a good team spirit or working climate, or that you have a challenging task?”

4: “I think team spirit to me.”

[…]
“It’s a personal question, but I think its also again a function of the Swedish culture that career is not that important in Sweden compared to Germany, […] but I think that team spirit and some kind of a team cooperation is important for Swedish people and on the opposite then I think that in Germany that is not so important.”

W: “Are there usually rewards given to the team, or individual team members?”

4: “No, no no no, there is a inverted reward that if you don’t get any blame or someone shouts at you, you should interpret that as a reward, that’s how it works.”

W: “If there were rewards, would you prefer that they were given to an individual or more to the whole team, when the goal is achieved or a milestone?”

4: “Team. Because it would be possible to sub optimize your own work or your task and then the rest would have to pay for that, you could definitely destroy other people’s work but still do your own. That would be quite easy, and then if there is a reward there is only one that didn’t fail, so they get the reward. Definitely on a team basis.”

B: Do you recognize a difference about organizing the time between Germans and Swedes and how it is treated as a resource?

[…]

4: “Typically, if if we do an example here we get a request from a customer that we need to quote something for them, then there is some kind of predevelopment for them, we need to make some kind of study and things like that, that’s when they say we don’t have time, in Germany.
And we think damn it, we have to do this, we have to make time for that. And I don’t know if it’s flexibility of if it’s in Germany that they are to rigid to work exactly with their tasks, or if it’s likely that we can sit together. In Sweden I think that we can sit together as a team, top manager, middle managers, contributors, CAD-engineers, production engineers and really think like this, and come up with a suggestion that we all agree, that this is feasible 55 Euro. But in Germany there is the boss, he doesn’t know, how can he make a decision, he has no clue, he is good at numbers, budgets, headcounts, things like that. He needs help, but he can never get the guys from the bottom to tell him what to think because he’s the boss. So I think that is why they are working slower when it really comes to quick-and-dirty things, put together something, estimate, guess, do you agree yeah, it seems, up a little bit, down a little bit. I can’t really imaging Dr. X sitting here with his manufacturing engineering guy and the product development guy and some CAD-engineers for a whole day session doing that.”

B: “So you also think they spend their time for different things?”

4: “No, not really. In the extreme event that we do something like this just put everything else aside and forget the normal running projects, forget production, pull out the telephone, and then we do this as a task force team in-out, like this. And I think that inherited in the Swedish culture of informal cooperation between different individuals and levels you could achieve that and it will be more difficult in Germany, unless they have an expert of course, who is in this field, can do this. Normally it’s a cross-functional team, and it takes time and we don’t have time and we don’t have resources. So they say ok, I have eight hours for Mr. B that I can spare and twelve on Mr. X, and there is something missing, so we can’t do it, sorry.”

B: “Do you think Swedes have more time than Germans?”

4: “No, I think we just decide not to do other things. […] The general answer is no, I don’t think we treat time differently.”

W: “The differences you talked about now, are there any that you would see as very positive or negative for the project work?”

4: “No I think it works quite well actually, we don’t have any huge problems with the Germans.”

[…] 

W: “Before you went the first time to Germany and worked the first time together with Germans you probably had some kind of expectations about Germans and were these fulfilled, or did you change your views?”

4: “I definitely changed my views a lot, because I was very disappointed, it has nothing to do with XX, it has to do with a customer, because in my world Germans, and you’re Germans, I can say this to you, you know walking, straight ahead, good plans, nothing left to coincidence, everything is really really strict, like this. But they had no clue, really. They put an order with us, 500000 parts per year, and then, after a couple of years they realized ups, there another plant that needed parts, we need 150000 more in two weeks. They make huge mistakes, they had not clue of what they were doing, and that sort of just broke my ideas about Germans. […] This cannot happen in Germany, and it happened and happened again. It could be company problem not a cultural problem. It could also be that they are very focused again, so that department A might be knowing exactly what was happening, but they didn’t tell anyone. Someone must have known they had another plant somewhere, but there is no communication. Eventually they thought, there is nothing coming from XX, why, ahh, we didn’t tell them, ok, that’s why, big problem. But
apart from that, I would say that that was negative, but there is a positive side of that, that they are not as rigid and as stiff and as difficult as I thought they would be. They are actually quite human.”

W: “Before or during the project did you receive any kind of training?”

[...]

4: “Well, yes, actually, we had a like a, I have never studied German, so we had a like a German class evenings were everyone who wanted could participate. Not much, but a little and there was also a little bit of German culture, how do you introduce yourself, and do you say Herr, or do you not, how do you choose if you should or if you shouldn't, so yes, very little.”

W: “What kind of training would you like to get that would help the project work to be more successful?”

4: “Train the Germans instead. No, actually I think they have understood over the years, so I’m sure that they are, as X did, that they are adapting. I think that it is important to get some kind of cultural understanding before you do international work, especially if it’s the first time you do it. People that work in Sweden and in Germany today, they have done before, they know each other or they are not the only ones. If it is one new, there are two old ones, so it works quite fine. And German and Swedish culture they are not that different. And my guess is that it is becoming less and less different, television, travel and so forth, so I don’t see any extremely importance in that in Swedish German relations.[...]”

W: “And do you think this training should be at the beginning at the project work, or during?”

4: “Beginning. I don’t know, some kind of training or briefing like that just to, not to, to avoid major mistakes or at least get some understanding why they are acting in the way they do.”

W: “And, during the project work, are there any other factors that influence or support the project, maybe the HR department helping, or the technical equipment?”

4: “Well, influencing yes, workloads from other projects, the the projects as you said in the beginning are fairly small. So basically no one is in only one project, everyone is involved in several projects running parallel in different phases, and that has an impact, because sometimes you are overloaded.”

W: “Ok, so you rather see the negative impacts, nothing really positive coming from the organization to support.”

4: “No, definitely not, there are tons of rules and reporting to do for the projects, and way to much to be productive I think, especially on programme management or project management people, they have a lot of reporting to all kinds of functions and we really don’t understand why.”

W: “After or during the project work were there any projects taken to enhance the project work, to ensure that it is successful?”

[...]

4: “I can’t really give an example of that. Of course, if there is a resource problem again, if the project should highlight this. We have these monthly programme reviews, and every programme
isn’t up for review every months, but when something has happened or will happen it’s up for review and then you can highlight if you have problems and that system I think works quite well. We are all part of a huge organization and we are running fairly small projects and we are forced, as I said, to communicated reporting and key numbers on a weekly, monthly basis, weighing the project down by this workload, but on the other hand in this monthly meetings you can also raise a red flag say hey, I need help, I need resources, I have a certain department which is not doing its job, I have a customer who is doing something, whatever, supplier is not up to speed, and maybe you can get some management attention by doing that, or you will get management attention. There is a risk that it will get back on you, but this, ya, there is a system that you can use.”

W: “Is there anything that you miss in the project work and that you would like to have to improve?”

4: “Well, it’s not a German-Swedish thing, I would like to decrease the reporting, I think its way too much. But it’s a, if this would have been a Sweden France investigation, I could do a lot of talking about that because I think it has to do with the French way of managing people. That you should control exactly everything. But then the French mentality is that you shouldn’t care about anything, so, I think it hits Swedes and Germans a lot more, because if a French guy puts something on a paper, that you should check blablalbalbalbalbalba, the French guy sits there ahhh, cross cross cross cross. But in Germany, uch hmm, question number one. And we react a little bit similar in Sweden, if it’s on the paper you are supposed to do it. So, if they say 100 in France they do 20, but in Sweden we do 80 and in Germany they do 90. I think they suffer more then we do really from that. If they, of course you learn after a while to play the game, but it’s still confusing. How am I supposed to do this. And every now and then a French guy says, this one we really meant. Why didn’t you answer properly. So, but it has nothing to do with German Swedish culture, it, of course it is individuals again. I have problems with some people, but it’s because they are who they are.”

W: “All in all, would you like to work in German-Swedish projects teams again?”

4: “Yep, no problem with that. Except for the investment budgets, I don’t like that.”

Interview 5 (German): 18.04.07, Telephone interview, 10.30

Interviewee agrees to have the interview in English

Interviewee is responsible for the human resources in a company with over 70.000 employees, he is responsible for the whole HR in this site of the company. Applied for a management exchange program in Sweden last year and due to that went to Sweden for three months. He wanted to do this, this was his own idea. He didn’t have any special tasks in Sweden, he was more observing the work of the Swedish colleagues, finding out about their problems and their daily work. Today and also before the exchange he is not working together with the Swedish colleagues anymore.

B: “And can we ask you how old you are?”

5: “Yes, 21, oh no, it was a joke 44.”

Works in the company since 1988 in the HR office but changed sites in between within
Germany. This was his first experience in international project teams and therefore the Swedes were the only nationality he worked with so far. But right now he is involved in a project in the Netherlands.

In the end of his stay he wrote a report about his experiences.

His daily work is in German project teams and in several projects. English was the working language.

The professions of the Swedish colleagues were mainly HR people and their manager. He worked with both genders.

Worked with 10-15 colleagues.

He did not have to do work in his usual position in Germany while he was in Sweden.

B: “Did you have, well in a classic project you would call it team building activities, but did you have a meeting where you were introduced to your colleagues and how long you will stay and what you will do?”

5: “Yes, yes, ok, it started so that I introduced me to the colleagues and sit together and we talked about other expectations and about our person, and all the people were very very polite and helpful to me, and every people in Sweden, especially in the company, the were very very helpful and it was a pleasure for me to stay there.”

B: “And at the end of your exchange, did you evaluate the exchange also with your colleagues, or was it just the report that was delivered then in Germany?”

5: “Ok, there are two things, the first thing that I wrote down my experience for the benchmark report, so that colleagues from me in Germany have basic to evolve some next steps. And after my time in Sweden we came all together and we talked about the time I spent in Sweden together and they made a nice party for me. A present, we will never forget you, and things like that. The whole HR department was crying. No, this was a joke. It was quite amazing for me because it was a new experience, because I thought oh, that they would be very happy when I would go back to Germany, because it isn’t easy, it isn’t easy when you have to do your tasks and your business and there is a person questioning you, oh can I help you, what can I do, and things like that. And for me I sometimes, it was a balance, it was not easy for me, because on the one hand I didn’t want to pressure anybody and on the other hand they have to recognize that I am there, and not that some people ask me after two months. Hey, what are you doing here, who are you. So and when I come there, it wasn’t a holiday for me, I was there to come in touch with the culture and the company, so it was important for me to do something and I did it, and so we talked two hours, three hours a day with different employees.”

B: “And were you asked to give advices for future exchanges?”

[…]

5: “There is a permanent exchange in Sweden between the companies, there are I think when I stood in Sweden there were two other guys coming from Germany, they were working there. And we have, our company we have a program so that we have a, there is an exchange between Eastern Europe, and England and America and we have a department in our company who is responsible to organize the exchange, expatriates and things like that, so we spoke about that topic and talked about what can we do in the future and what can we improve some things.”

B: “And what kind of advice would you give for future exchanges?”

5: “Ok, the main thing is there have to be exchange, so it is important that people do the same
task in Sweden and in Germany so that they are able to speak about the same topics. Then you can compare the same tasks in the countries that is very important. I think it isn’t a good idea to send a managing director in a technician office. So we have the same topics in the HR department. In the HR department the tasks, the duties and topics are always the same, you have to hire employees and you have to fire employees and when you can do it in Germany you can do it in the same manner in another country, sometimes it is according to the different laws and orders, but the ground is the same.”

B: “And would you call the exchange you did as a success?”

5: “Yes, in any case. The first success is my own success because for me it was a very good experience to come in touch with complete different situations and to have, you know, oh I am XX, I am the colleague coming from Germany. What are you doing here, oh, I don’t know, lets see. And then you are staying there in another environment and in another language. Yes, it’s like you, when you remember your first day coming to Sweden it's the same. You have to to look how solve I my personal problems, like where can I wash my clothes and things like that, when you have an accident or incident with your car, where is a garage, and things like that. And how can I work in a team, you have to arrange with the other people and to see how is my impact and things like that, so I think, and that is the last sentence I wrote in my report for our company paper […] I wrote an article in that paper […]. And as few as a personal HR manager, I have to say that it is very important for a member of leadership to go in a foreign country, and for those people who like to become a member of leadership I think it is a duty to go to a foreign country, to making that experience, because then you are worked in an exchange program and you come back, you are more calmly in your reactions. Sometimes we are aha, at ten o’clock I have an interview with two students from Sweden, 10.30 the next meeting, and this and this and this. And sometimes in former times it feels strange, and now you know oh, it is no problem, I can solve any problems. And that's that’s one of the results of the exchange program. And on the second hand there are some things I that I recognize for me, in the different ways they do their business. And some things you can’t do in Sweden, you can do, you have to do in Germany, because the way how they are working is another way, its more easy going. […] In Sweden in XX they are not so formal like in Germany, in Germany you always say können Sie, and they are using the first name, and the leadership, the director and the other members of the leadership you can get easily in touch with them, when the managing director of a big company has a question to a craftsman, then he gave him a call. You know what I mean. And in Germany the director asks the deputy, can you manage that, or can you solve that problem. The deputy, every time it is a line beneath the next line, and the director in this company would never sit together with the blue collared people in the cafeteria, and in Sweden they are all together, it’s no problem. X asked the director of the whole company hey, Ole, can I introduce Andreas, he is coming from Germany, and it is no problem. And in Germany its more formal, also the clothes. In Germany we wear ties and suits and not so much in Sweden, they are more casual, and I think in Sweden its more a question with, in Germany its more a question of status sometimes and the contact is not direct from level to level. That a big, a very big difference.”

B: “And did you recognize more differences when you work with Swedes together compared when you work with Germans together?”

[…]

5: “Yes, the first was that it was more easy to come in touch with the people, it was no problem. […]”

In Sweden you get into personal touch with the colleagues very quickly. “This would never never
happen in Germany, you have to work for 2, 3, 4 years before you come in touch with your colleagues in private.”

B: “Did you recognize differences in the communication styles between the cultures?”

5: “Yes, they are not so direct like the Germans, in Germany you can when things are going wrong then you can agree ok, that was not correct, or that was your fault, or something like that. And then in Sweden you can’t be so direct. […] And also when we in Germany have to solve a problem, then we are sometimes more quicker, more direct and in Sweden the it’s I think the Germans are more organized and we produce a lot of paper. And in Sweden you don’t need the paper, they solve the problem without paper, and a Swedish colleague said to me, when I have to introduce a new project, then I need five power point slides, and when I present the same project at the headquarters in Germany, then I need 50 slides of power point. So, we produce a lot of more paper, but it is according to our laws. In Germany when you work in X this kind of business you have to write anything down, and you have to record it and in Sweden they are more flexible in that kind. It isn’t so that you can work freestyle, that isn’t the case, but you have to produce not so much paper than you have to do in Germany.”

B: “And were there differences in the language abilities between you and the other Germans and the Swedes?”

5: “Well, it wasn’t a big problem, well Swedish people […] they can speak English, most of them can understand me, some of the older ones avoid it to repeat in this language, they speak Swedish or ask a colleague to help them, but to that, for my daily business it wasn’t a problem. […]”

B: “And, when you had meetings, how did the meetings proceed?”

5: “Ok, the leader of the meeting in X introduced me as a colleague coming from Germany and then he asked the other colleagues if it is ok that he continues the meeting in English, so that I can follow the meeting. […] For him it wasn’t a problem to switch from Swedish to English, that wasn’t a problem. And at the end of the meeting the Swedish some of them asked the leader if they could continue in Swedish because they are not so fluent in English and time was running away, so they did it in Swedish. […]”

B: “Did you recognize differences between meetings in Germany and Sweden, for example how much is discussed, and if they have an agenda, and how much time is spend?”

5: “No, that was nearly the same. One thing I could tell you is in Germany, when we have a meeting, especially when managers come together […] there is coffee and water and juice and cola and biscuits and fruits on the table and in Sweden nothing. There is an automat and you can go there and fetch your coffee, but nothing is prepared for the meeting.”

B: “And you also think that they discussed as much as Germans do, or maybe in a different way, or not?”

5: “I think they do the same kind of business, in the same way but in Germany, when there is a project leader the other still have more respect, but respect isn’t the right word, you know, I think in Sweden it isn’t important what your status is, in Sweden it is more important what you are as a person, you know. In Germany you have, you can recognize often in the meeting when the director is speaking everybody is listen and nobody is tough enough to ask or to to criticize him, and in Sweden they are more open.”
B: “Our next question is about the assignment of tasks, I don’t know if you recognized there something, how did they assign the tasks for people, was it very specific, or was it wide, that everybody had freedom how they execute the task?”

5: “I think in Sweden the main thing is the result and you are free how to do it, and in Germany it is not so wide sometimes, and in Sweden I think, when there is a question, then the answer is ok, then we have to make a project. And there are a lot of employees in a project for a long time in Sweden, and I think that that is a difference to Germany.”

B: “Is it in the same way that they decided who is doing which task or was there a difference compared to Germany?”

5: “I think, I’m not sure, but I think in Sweden it’s more free how to do it.”

B: “And in what way did you make the decisions in the team?”

5: “I think they did it all together in Sweden, and in Germany I recognize when I notice a task, and over my working in the HR department, that often the voice of the project leader and the manager is more decisive then in Sweden.”

B: “And would you say there is a difference in the effort Germans and Swedes put towards the team and the goal or task achievement?”

5: “I recognized that in Sweden, that projects are coming from different departments, there is a managing employee and the technician and they are coming from different, the group is not so homogen like in Germany. In Germany, when they have to solve a technical problem, than in the most projects are only technicians, and if we have to solve a problem in business, then we are only business staff, like controller and HR responsible person and things like that” […]

B: “Its more cross functional, the team?”

5: “Yeah, yeah, I think it’s a good solution, because you have another point of view on the topic when the people are involved in different departments.”

B: “And do you see a difference in the time Germans and Swedes spend for achieving the goal of the project or spending time for the team?”

5: “I think that German people have always a tight time schedule, they are always under pressure.”

[…] 

B: “Do you see a difference how time is perceived and organized in Germany and in Sweden?”

5: “Not really.”

[…]

B:”Did misunderstandings in the team or between you and the Swedes, during the exchange occur?”

5: “No.”
B: “And did conflicts occur?”

5: “Yes, I had problems to connect my laptop to my German desktop and the IT employees said to me, ahh, no, before I came to Sweden I said to X, X, I want to bring my laptop with me, it is very important for me, so that my deputy can send me some documents and e-mails and things like that. Ok, I have said it before I came to Sweden, and when I arrived in Sweden in September, I noticed that it didn’t work. So I said to him what about the problem. And he said, oh, what problem. And I said to him we talked about the IT problem Oh, yeah, no problem I will give a call to the colleagues and then they would solve the problem. And it takes time and time and time, and after two or three weeks I said to X, in Germany we would give you an answer on the second day and the answer is we can do it and than it works at least on the other day, or we can’t do it. So why in Sweden you can’t give an answer in that direction. And I think that was not polite from me because that are the differences between Sweden and Germany. In Germany you are quite frank, but not in Sweden, you have to be polite and so. Oh, can it be that there is a problem and do you think they can solve it, and things like that, you cannot confront them so direct. They solved the problem after six weeks. So that is the difference, in in Germany we have another way of business. When we have a guest and a guest asks for a solution, then we do it, it is our first task to give an answer and to make the guest calm and satisfied. You know. And that is the difference. You know, when X come to me and he would ask me can I connect my computer to your IT structure, then I would clarify it before he is here and sort things our, and not when he is here and to give him an answer some day today, because that is very very embarrassing for me.”

B: “And the difference you told us now, which would you see as cultural differences and which would you see as personality differences?”

5: “Ok, a cultural difference is the form you speak to each other, it’s more formal in Germany. And a cultural difference is the clothing you wear in the job and a cultural difference is I think the office from a German director is more expensive and with nicer furniture than in Sweden, and another differences is that when I have a when I have to travel the hotels for me are much better than for the craftsmen, and in Sweden X said to me, we are staying in one hotel together. That is culture.”

B: “Did you recognize differences in the organizational culture?”

[...]

5: “I think on the paper it is the same, but in living they are more more indirect again, not so strong.”

B: “And which of the cultural differences, which do you see as positive and which as negative for the cooperation in the team?”

5: “Ok, I think its very nice to be every time polite to each other and without difference between the levels of employees, that’s quite good, but when you have time pressure or things like that then I think it is more straight when there is a culture like in Germany when there is sometimes one person who decides ok, now we do it in that line. And I think when you have time it is more easy and more fun to work in Sweden in a project, and when you have pressure then the organization in Germany is maybe better, I don’t know.”

B: “And you probably had expectations how the Swedes are before you went there, and did those
expectations change during your stay there, or were they fulfilled?”

5: “Ok, when I come as a visitor or as an ambassador to another country, then my opinion is it is better to have no expectations, because then everything that happens is a reward to you. So, when I have expectations and things go in anther line or in another way then I’m disappointed. So I am a person, when I go in another place or another country then I have no expectations, so that I can switch and decide from situation to situation. So I wasn’t disappointed, and for me it was a pleasure to stay there and to make the new experience, so that I, it was not necessary that I had to change my expectations.”

[…] 

B: “How important is a clear plan and structure for you in your working environment?”

 […]

5: “For me it is important that my director, when he has a task to me and he asks me to do something and to solve a problem, then I ask him for a solution, what do you want to have, and he describes it, and then I like it to have my free opinion in doing it. And I don’t like it to give strong advices and to describe the way in which to have the solution. And I do the same to my deputy, I say ok, I go to Sweden and now when I am in Sweden, you are the chief in Germany and don’t ask me how you have to do it, just do it and do it in your own way. And when you do it in your own way, then you feel what is right or wrong and you have always the feeling. I have to give a call to my boss and ask him if it is ok and things like that, or not, then it can’t work. And when I come back, maybe I will say to you, ok, in that situation I have done it in that way, but it isn’t important. So that’s my way of doing it. In Germany I say, when you give a task to another person and say please, do it for me or do it for the company, then you have always to give the responsibility for that away, you know, otherwise it couldn’t work. And the you can create free people, free employees with their own ideas.”

B: “And what is more important for you, a good team spirit or a challenging task?”

5: “I think when it comes to the situation and to the task, sometimes you have to decide how much time we have how much money we have, how much people we can engage in that project and things like that, and I wouldn’t give an advice to that in general you have to decide it from situation to situation. Sometimes it is better to reach the goal when you are working in a team and sometimes it is better when you have a strong organization.”

B: “And now we want to talk about training. Did you receive any kind of training before or during the exchange?”

[…] 

5: “No, I did it freestyle. The only thing was ok, I know you have to speak in a foreign language, in English, and I prepared my self that I have to speak English, before I go to Sweden. But all the other things I yeah, freestyle.”

B: “And would you have liked to receive training before, or during the exchange?”

5: “No, no, then you have. Well, it depends on the person, for some people it would be very very helpful to train some situation. But my point of view is when you are every time and it is not depending what you are doing, if private or business, when you are in every situation honest and
polite, then nothing can happen. And that are things that you cannot train in life, you have to be it and you have to live it. So and when there are people which are a little bit shy to come in touch with other people then it may be helpful to train some situations in advance.”

B: “And do you think there are other factors in the company that can support those exchanges, like a strong corporate culture, senior management, or the HR department you are part of the HR department, or technical equipment, or a certain budget?”

5: “I mentioned it at the beginning from our interview. We have a department especially responsible for people exchange and they organize all the seminars and the exchange for the people. They organize the living rooms and support them in any questions about the other country and maybe they give some advisor or tutor in the other company or things like that.”

B: “And that department helped you to?”

5: “No, I didn’t ask them. The way I came to Sweden was I said to my managing director, Mr. X, I would like to work some time abroad, because I think it is very important for me personal and my CV that I have spent some time abroad. And he said to me ok, what do you like.”

Explanation follows about how the managing director got the job for him in Sweden, this happened very quickly.
“Ok and then I go for a weekend in August 2005 to Sweden and we solved the things and then in September I started. That was it. And there was no other department which helped me.”

B: “Ok, and during your exchange, did you have a in the middle for example, did you discuss with X how it is going on with the exchange?”

5: “Yes yes yes, nearly every day, when there was a question or a problem then we did it.”

B: “Ok, so you always fixed it right away.”

5: “Yes, there was a very honest and open exchange between X and me. I asked him sometimes is it correct for you when I do things like that. It was very very honest.”

B: “Did you miss anything during your exchange that could be improved?”

5: “No, not really, no.”

B: “To sum it up, would you like to work in Sweden again for a while?”

5: “Yeah, not only in Sweden, everywhere and I’m looking forward to my project in the Netherlands now.”

Interview 6 (German): 19.04.07, telephone interview, 10.00

The interview was at the request of the interviewee conducted in German.

28 years old female
She works since 2005 in the recruiting department of the company.
One experience in international project work, this included little smaller projects not one big
project, it was about personnel development because of a change of the organizational structure. She was a project team member, the project included also English team members next to Swedes and Germans. She has experience in German project work. Her participation in the project lasted four months, but the projects lasted longer. She stayed in Sweden during that time. The working languages were Swedish and English. She could not speak Swedish but learned during the stay to be able to read and could understand written documents. The project team was a mix between women and men. Different departments were involved the technical, trade and HR departments. The team consisted of in total six team members. She did not have to do line work in Germany during the project work.

W: “Dann würden wir gerne wissen, gab es am Anfang der Projektarbeit so ne Art teambuilding activity? Wurden da irgendwie Ziele festgelegt oder Regeln wie man zusammen arbeitet?“

6: “Gab’s mit Sicherheit da war ich allerdings noch nicht da ich bin so mittendrein gesetzt worden und auch dann wieder ziemlich am Ende wieder rausgerissen worden. Insofern wurde ich dann auch schon integriert und hat es jetzt nicht noch mal irgend ne Team building Maßnahme gegeben.“

W: “Genau wurden Sie nur allen Leuten noch mal vorgestellt oder wie?“

6: “Genau.“

W: “Und das wissen Sie dann jetzt wahrscheinlich auch nicht unsere nächste Frage wäre gewesen am Ende des Projektes oder vielleicht am Ende Ihrer Zeit, die sie da waren, gab es da ne Art Evaluierung?“

6: “Ja die gab’s auf jeden Fall: Also was jetzt…. meine Aufgaben, meine Erfolge sag ich mal in Anführungsstrichen und was in den vier Monaten passiert ist das wurde dann natürlich schon evaluiert und bewertet.“

W: “Okay und was würden Sie für so’n Rat geben für zukünftige Projekte?“

6: “Wie meinen Sie das jetzt genau, also wie man an die Projekte rangeht, was man besser machen kann?“

W: “Was könnte man ja was hätte man besser machen können?“

6: “Also meiner Meinung nach ist das Projekt soweit eigentlich ganz gut gelaufen, dafür das es natürlich ein paar kritische Themen sind ist es so schwierig dass auch ich sag mal positiv zu verkaufen, weil natürlich diese ganz sehr persönlich betroffen sind dadurch deprimiert und … sind da muss man eben gucken das man die Spannungen relativ gering hält, das es jetzt nicht irgendwie ausartet. Ich glaub das ist sehr, sehr gut gelungen, dadurch das die Information wirklich up to date zu halten und permanent regelmäßig immer wieder auch über jede Kleinigkeit zu informieren die einfach derzeit passiert damit die Mitarbeiter auch das Gefühl haben sie sind da involviert und integriert und es wird nichts über Ihren Kopf hinweg entschieden natürlich schon klar irgendwo aber …. vollständig in die komplette Informationskette involviert und das finde ich ist eigentlich sehr sehr gut gelaufen. Man hätte wesentlich früher mit der Information anfangen können.“

W: “Also würden Sie sagen, dass ach so Tschuldigung.“
6: „Ja nicht das man so vor vollendete Tatsachen … es stand ja schon fest, dass was passiert wies passiert. Und erst dann wurden ja eigentlich wurde informiert und kommuniziert was eigentlich genau passiert und ich glaub das wir weniger Widerstand aufgetreten wenn einfach von Anfang an einfach mehr kommuniziert wird und informiert worden wäre.“

W: „Okay zu den Mitarbeitern?“

6: „Ja.“

W: „Also Sie würden aber schon sagen, dass das also jedenfalls in der Zeit in der Sie da waren das Projekt erfolgreich war.“

6: „Ja.“

W: „Gut und was würden Sie als den Keyfaktor sehen also den Schlüsselfaktor eben diese gute schnelle Kommunikation dann während des Projektes oder gibt’s da noch andere Sachen?“

6: „Also auf jeden Fall die Kommunikation das ist ein ganz wichtiger Punkt um einfach auch gut den Mitarbeitern vorzugereffen und denen auch Unterstützung zusichern ne Hilfestellung zu geben oft ist keine Hilfe da wenn irgendwo irgendwelche Probleme sind. Ihr könnt …. Ihr wisst was jetzt die nächsten Schritte passieren das ist der aktuelle Stand da kann sich jeder konzentriert drauf einstellen was auf ihn persönlich zukommt. So wie ich mich auf meine gesamte Stelle eingerichtet wo man auch dann als Betroffener eben Anregungen, Verbesserungsvorschläge, Wünsche, Beschwerden und sonstiges hinrichten konnte …. quasi und die wurde auch sehr sehr stark genutzt und ich glaube das war ein ganz essentieller Faktor auch, weil doch viel besonders was so von oben nach unten kommuniziert wird ist halt doch immer ein bisschen was anderes was man dann vielleicht auf gleicher Ebene jemanden hat und sich einfach austauschen kann."

W: „Okay, finden Sie es denn anders mit Schweden zusammen zu arbeiten als mit Deutschen?“

6: „Ja auf jeden Fall. Also der Unterschied in also der größte Unterschied, den ich jetzt für mich ausmachen konnte also ich glaub da hat jeder so seine eigene Meinung war schon der, dass in Schweden ganz anders gearbeitet wird. Es wird wesentlich mehr kommuniziert, es wird wesentlich mehr auf tatsächlich auf Team wert gelegt. Es wird eigentlich fast alles im Team gemacht und Team heißt da nicht wir tauschen uns nur aus über das was der andere macht sondern wir arbeiten tatsächlich eng zusammen und es werden auch bei verschiedensten Themen Leute aus Projekten, Fachbereichen dazu gezogen es wird Brainstorming gemacht es werden neue Ideen gesammelt was ich ne ganz wertvolle Sache fand, das eben nicht nur der eigene Bereich da involviert ist wo man ja doch … so ne gewisse Brille auf hat in diesem Schema einfach auch denkt und eben vielleicht auch mal jemand aus einem völlig fremden Bereich involviert wird und das war ne ganz andere Art zu arbeiten also wesentlich weniger alleine am Computer sondern viel viel mehr in Meetings, in Workshops, in Kleingruppen, also sehr sehr viel ich sag mal ja praktischer, aktiver und wesentlich mehr mit Kommunikation.“

W: „Wo wir gerade bei Kommunikation sind in Ihrem Projektteam selber gab es da mehr Kommunikation zwischen den Deutschen oder zwischen den Schweden als zwischen den verschiedenen Kulturen?“

6: „Die Kommunikation der Mitarbeiter untereinander?“

W: „Ja genau. Also jetzt in Ihrem Team würden Sie da sagen Sie haben jetzt mehr mit den Deutschen kommuniziert als jetzt zum Beispiel mit den Schweden oder anders herum?“
Nee gar nicht, aber im Gegenteil glaub die Deutschen, die da waren, die sprechen ja auch alle Schwedisch und Englisch sowieso und insofern wurde eigentlich auf Deutsch kaum gesprochen es sei denn man war dann Abends irgendwie privat was trinken, aber alles was mit den Arbeiten, mit den Tätigkeiten zu tun hatte, das lief alles entweder auf Schwedisch oder auf Englisch und das war auch gut so. Also es gibt ja auch etliche Schweden, die Deutsche sprechen und da war’s dann aber auch so das man einfach dann wenn Deutsche und Schweden und Engländer eben noch dabei waren ist es ja logisch wenn wir auf Englisch reden.

W: „Und würden Sie sagen das in Ihrem Team genug Kommunikation war nach außen hin sagen Sie da war genug Kommunikation aber wie war das im Team?“

Ja, gut manchmal hat es dann auch so ein bisschen an Kleinigkeiten gehakt, wo der Austausch also ich glaub das ist einfach wo der Austausch nicht ganz 100% geklappt hat, was vielleicht auch einfach an den verschiedenen Kulturen und an den verschiedenen auch den verschiedenen Sprachkenntnissen irgendwo auch mangelt, wir waren natürlich der Engländer hat was erzählt und jeder hat das vielleicht auch anders verstanden oder anders aufgefasst genauso war’s wenn nen Schwede was berichtet hat oder wenn ich dann als Deutsche was erzählt hab also da glaub ich gab’s natürlich schon so gewisse Ungereimtheiten ab und an mal oder es kam zu Missverständnissen oder der eine hat’s eben anders verstanden als das gemeint war. Da musst man dann halt noch mal nachhaken und nach nachträglich noch mal ja sich vergewissern, wies denn gemeint war. Also da war’s dann doch ein bisschen schwieriger, aber die Kommunikation als solche war natürlich schon da.

W: „Gut, und das haben Sie auch gerade schon so ein bisschen auf die nächste Frage hingedeutet, die in der Art zu kommunizieren im Kommunikationsstil wie würden Sie da die Unterschiede zwischen den oder sehen Sie da Unterschiede sehen sie ja, haben wir ja gerade schon besprochen, wie würden Sie die Unterschiede zwischen Schweden und Deutschen darstellen?“

Also ich glaube Deutsche sind direkter in der Kommunikation, die sagen halt einfach was sie denken und Schweden sind da manchmal ein bisschen höflicher sag ich mal, umschreiben Dinge manchmal ein bisschen, sagen aber schneller was so die Meinung ist, also sind offener was jetzt auch so Meinungsverschiedenheiten oder so was angeht. Ja integriert sich mehr ich glaub Deutsche sind am Anfang etwas distanzierter also das lag im gemischten Team vielleicht auch wegen der Sprache ich weiß es nicht, halten sich da manchmal eher ein bisschen zurück. Die Schweden sind da eigentlich schon direkt aktiv dabei.

Ja wo wir gerade bei der Sprache waren, waren da Unterschiede zwischen den Deutschen und den Schweden in den Englischkenntnissen?

Also ich sag mal die Schweden sprechen natürlich wesentlich flüssiger da merkt man weniger, dass es eigentlich keine keine native Speaker sind, aber es gibt natürlich auch sehr viele Deutsche, die sehr sehr gut Englisch sprechen eben bei manchen Deutschen, die auch gut Englisch sprechen, merkt man hält nur vielmehr den deutschen Akzent oftmals beim Englisch reden, aber also die Deutschen, die ich dort kennen gelernt habe, die waren eigentlich sehr fließend.

Ja und in Ihrem Projektteam hatten diese Unterschiede Einfluss auf die Projektarbeit?

Nein, nein.

W: „Gut, wenn Sie ein Meeting hatten wie lief diese Meeting ab gab es da ne gewisse Agenda, wer spricht wann oder war das alles etwas weniger organisiert?“
6: „Es war zum Teil etwas chaotischer, ich glaub das wir Deutschen etwas durch organisierter sind. Es wurde am Anfang auch immer erstmal so n bisschen Smalltalk und bisschen Witzchen gemacht und und erstmal gequetscht und ich mein klar der Projektleiter hat natürlich dann immer das Wort und ist dann auch irgendwann zu der Agenda übergegangen und dann ist man da auch sehr ja einigermaßen strukturiert und dementsprechend auch vorgegangen.“

W: „Ja und wenn Sie Diskussionen hatten sehen Sie da nen Unterschied in wie Deutsche oder wie Schweden diskutieren im Diskussionsverhalten?“

6: „Also ich glaub das Schweden sehr viel engagierter diskutieren und auch weniger Rücksicht ohne das jetzt negativ zu meinen weniger Rücksicht auf die Hierarchieebene nehmen. Also da wird mit einem Seniormanager oder sogar mit dem CEO oder Geschäftsführer wird da lockerer diskutiert als das bei uns der Fall wär. Da lässt man sich bei uns vielleicht zu arg einschüchtern in Anführungsstrichen und jetzt ja also da glaub ich ist ein großer Unterschied wo Schweden lockerer miteinander umgehen in der Diskussion auch und die da auch einiges glaub ich sachlicher nehmen was jetzt auch so Kritik ausüben im Argumentationspunkt angeht. Das ist bei den Deutschen der Fall auch.“

W: „Okay, wenn in Ihrem Team Aufgaben verteilt worden wie wurden die verteilt, wurde da ne Aufgabe gestellt und der die Aufgabe gerne erledigen wollte hat sich dafür gemeldet oder wurde die direkt von oben herab auf die Teammitglieder verteilt?“

6: „Es war eigentlich so ne Mischung aus beidem, aber bei vielen Aufgaben war es eher so wer will’s machen und der Teamleiter hat halt nen Vorschlag gemacht, wenn jetzt gar niemand sich freiwillig gemeldet hat wen er prädestiniert dafür hielt und wenn dann gar nichts kam und keinerlei Feedback von den Teilnehmern, dann hat er natürlich auch dem entsprechend an diesen delegiert, das war aber auch selten der Fall. Also oft hat die Aufgaben einfach nach Fähigkeiten nach Gebieten ja selber verteilt.“

W: „Und diese Aufgaben die da verteilt wurden, waren die sehr genau detailliert strukturiert oder war’s mehr zu den Leuten selbst überlassen wie sie die Aufgabe erfüllen?“

6: „Das war eigentlich sehr stark den Leuten selbst überlassen, also es gab halt nen Ziel, es gab ne Vorgabe da wollen wir hin und wir gucken da halt mal wie wir es schaffen dahin zu kommen, aber es gab jetzt keine strikten Regeln oder keine strikten Vorgaben manchmal gabs’n bisschen wenig Vorgaben, da musste man halt nachhaken, aber man war der sehr stark sich selbst überlassen und konnte auch selbständig agieren.“

W: „Ja, erleben Sie das in Deutschland anders?“

6: „Ist abhängig vom Vorgesetzten es gibt auch es kommt immer auf die Aufgabe an. Also es gibt auch Aufgaben da ist man sehr sehr frei und es gibt Aufgaben, die sind von sich aus schon sehr stark reglementiert, wo man sich natürlich an gewisse Vorgaben zu halten hat. Aber ich glaub, dass wir in Deutschland trotz allem eher dieses Delegationsprinzip haben und auch eher striktere Anweisungen jetzt in Anführungsstrichen also das es einfach auch strukturerter ist als in Schweden. Da wird halt ne Aufgabe einfach mal so in Raum geworfen eher so als Schlagwort du dann kann sich da jeder eigentlich selbständig Gedanken drüber machen.“

W: „Okay, wenn Sie Entscheidungen getroffen haben im Team wer oder wie wurden diese Entscheidungen getroffen, oder wer hat diese Entscheidungen getroffen?“
6: „Das wurde eigentlich völlig gemeinsam in der Diskussion getroffen, wenn mal der A keine, also wirklich wenn jeder ne andere Meinung hatte und man sich überhaupt nicht aufn Punkt kam ja gut dann muss natürlich der Vorgesetzte oder der Teamleiter in dem Fall auch mal ein Machtwort sprechen und sagen gut also wenn wir das demokratisch nicht lösen kann und man auch irgendwo nicht einer Meinung ist oder nicht zu irgend nem Ergebnis kommt, dann muss es halt auch mal ein Schlussstrich geben und dann dann entscheid ich jetzt so und so machen wir’s. Aber der Prozess hat sich oft sehr lang hingezogen, weil ich hab die Erfahrung gemacht, dass es bei den Schweden sehr lange dauert bis einer wirklich sagt so jetzt entscheide ich, weil wir kommen hier nicht weiter, also es wird wirklich bis zum bitteren Ende versucht da in Kooperation und in Diskussion und in demokratischer Abstimmung ne gute Lösung herbeizuführen."

W: Im Team und um das Ziel zu erreichen sehen Sie da nen Unterschied wie viel Aufwand die Teammitglieder in diese Zieleerreichung betreiben für diese Zieleerreichung betreiben zwischen Deutschen und Schweden?“

6: „Es gibt mit Sicherheit Unterschiede, aber ich würd’s jetzt nicht werten wollen was besser und was schlechter ist.“

W: “Ja das müssen Sie auch nicht.“

6: „Also ich glaub, die Schweden, die machen das eben sehr sehr viel mehr da dauert manches länger bis es zur Zielerreichung kommt, weil einfach sehr viel mehr diskutiert wird und sich ausgetauscht, Erfahrungen werden gesammelt und es wird viel mit Kommunikation eben mit mit Erfahrungsaustausch gearbeitet, während man in Deutschland öfter mal schneller zu ner Lösung kommt, weil man vielleicht gar nicht so viele Meinungen einholt und weil man sich nicht so viel austauscht. Insofern ist natürlich nen Prozess noch mal in Deutschland schneller als es in Schweden der Fall ist. Auf der anderen Seite gibt’s n Deutschland sehr viel Bürokratie, was so’n Prozess dann auch wieder aufhalten, den es in Schweden nicht gibt. Also ich glaub mal das Engagement der Mitarbeiter ist anders, aber ist nicht weniger und mehr in Schweden als in Deutschland.“

W: “Okay, und für die Zieleerreichung oder das Team sehen Sie da nen Unterschied in der Zeit, die verbracht wird immer um ein Ziel zu erreichen?“

6: „Ja das war eigentlich jetzt gerade fast was was ich eben schon meinte, dass in Schweden eigentlich vieles länger dauert , was entschieden wird aber vielleicht von mehr Leuten getragen wird weil eben von mehr Leuten so beschlossen wurde dort trifft man dann vielleicht auch danach auf Widerstand, weil eben ganz … eingeholt wurden, aber ein Entscheidungsprozess dauert in Schweden oftmals länger als es in Deutschland der Fall ist.“

W: “Ja, und würden Sie jetzt nen Unterschied sehen wie Zeit betrachtet wird oder wie die Zeit organisiert wird zwischen Schweden und Deutschen? Das haben die Schweden das Gefühl sie haben mehr Zeit und diskutieren deshalb länger als es bei uns der Fall ist, weshalb man bei uns vielleicht schneller Entscheidungen trifft?“

6: „Ich glaub es ist einfach eine Kulturfrage und zum andern ich glaub auch nicht, dass man vielleicht man kann’s nicht immer verallgemeinern ich glaub das ist natürlich oftmals auch ne Typsache, aber man kann jetzt auch nicht sagen, dass das Schweden trödeln und ihre Zeit uneffektiv nutzen in diesem Teil also jetzt auch grad was die Arbeitszeiten angeht ich glaub da könn wir Deutschen uns … ein ganz ganz Großes Stück in Schweden abschneiden, gerade auch was Frauen und Mütter angeht und die normalen Arbeitszeiten wo man hier in Deutschland auch
nen anderes Verständnis dazu hat, also so jetzt in Schweden als solches wird so was flexibler gehandhabt wird also auch was jetzt mal arbeiten von zu Hause und so angeht und ich glaub die Zeit, die sie mit Kommunikation manchmal vielleicht ein bisschen verfröndeln, die holen sie aber dann durch qualitativ oder durch die Qualität der Entscheidung, weil es eben von so vielen getragen wird wieder rein. Hier in Deutschland dann oft eben danach eben noch sehr starkes Kämpfen haben, eben mit Kritik und aber auch Widerstand, weil die Entscheidung halt jetzt vielleicht so genau von unten durchgesetzt wird und ich glaub, dass die Schweden schneller in der Umsetzung sind, wenn mal eine Entscheidung getroffen wurde."

W: “Ja gut in Ihrem Team da haben Sie vorhin schon kurz Missverständnisse angesprochen die gab es also."

6: “Ja."

W: “Und gab’s auch richtige Konflikte, die daraus entstanden sind?"

6: “Nein, also da hab ich jetzt überhaupt kein Einzigen erlebt."

W: “Und als Grund für diese Missverständnisse sehen Sie die kulturellen Hintergründe können Sie das noch etwas tiefer versuchen zu erläutern?"

6: “Also, die Erfahrung, die ich jetzt gemacht hab war, basiert eigentlich auch wieder nen bisschen auf diesem die deutsche Pünktlichkeit, die deutsche Ordentlichkeit, die deutsche Strukturiertheit …… und von A-Z und alles läuft nach Plan halt und bei den Schweden ist alles halt eher n bisschen so ja lockerer sag ich mal. Also das ist manchmal auch etwas chaotisch das neigt zum Chaos man tut sich manchmal schwer Sachen zu finden also es ist … und ich glaub natürlich ist das für nen Deutschen manchmal schwer man geht ja davon aus so fast Nachbarland, das kann ja nicht so’n Unterschied sein, aber also ich fand’s zum Teil schon schon schwieriger für mich erstmal so auch nen bisschen dieses ja ich tausch mich mit allen und jedem über alles und alles aus und dann sag ich dann halt mal irgendwie was aufs Blatt Papier oder …. Und dann gucken wir halt mal und dann tauscht man sich noch mal aus und dann macht man mal das erste Konzept und das ist alles so’n bisschen so unstrukturierter und da hat ich natürlich am Anfang als Deutscher schon erstmal Schwierigkeiten und ne andere Schwierigkeit mit der ich jetzt anfangs auch so’n bisschen zu kämpfen hatte war ich hatte auch das Sprachliche ein bisschen unterschätzt also weil ja jeder in Schweden so super Englisch kann und das ist auch überhaupt kein Thema sich da ich sag sich zu verständigen und irgendwie zu überleben und auch seine Freizeitleben zu gestalten, aber es ist noch mal was anderes, wenn man ein bisschen was von der Sprache kann, weil es ist ein Stück Kultur und zum andern sind die Schweden wirklich so, die sehen da glaub ich auch nicht so den Zwang drin jetzt nur Englisch zu sprechen, weil da jetzt halt ein oder zwei Deutsche ja mit dabei sind, also insofern sind natürlich auch viele Dokumente auf Schwedisch und man hat schon nen Vorteil, wenn man die Sprache nen bisschen kann."

W: “Ja, und wenn es da jetzt ein Missverständnis gab wie sind Sie damit umgegangen?"

6: “Ja ich hab versucht dann das natürlich dementsprechend auch gleich offen anzusprechen, ich hatte ja meinen Supervisor oder eine Betreuerin und mit der hatte ich ein sehr sehr enges und inniges Verhältnis und wenn es dann irgendwie Missverständnisse gab oder ich vielleicht mal ein Problem hatte oder ich mit ner Arbeitsweise nicht so ganz klar kam, weil ich vielleicht die Angaben, die ich bekommen hab irgendwie nicht nicht detailliert genug waren und ich nicht so genau wusste, wo fang ich jetzt an und wo soll ich jetzt eigentlich in die Tiefe und was genau soll ich eigentlich tun, dann hab ich nachgefragt. Also ich man darf in Schweden nicht schüchtern
sein, sondern es ist halt viel ne Holschuld und das find ich auch in Ordnung und dann muss man sich halt den Input den man braucht muss man sich holen und wenn man ein Problem hat muss man’s aber auch offen ansprechen. Und da haben die Schweden aber auch immer ein offenes Ohr, da hab ich auch das Gefühl, dass die Schweden sehr sehr offen sind auch was Kritik oder eben nen Missverständnis oder so was angeht, weil sie’s selber vielleicht gar nicht merken, wenn sie das jetzt irgendjemand mal auf die Füße getreten sind oder vielleicht falsch gelaufen ist oder so und wenn man das dann gleich offen anspricht dann trifft man da eigentlich auf ja auf sehr positives Feedback auch.”

W: “Und es wurde von allen im Team dann so gehandhabt, dass man das eigentlich alles offen besprochen hat?”

6: “Ja.”

W: “Die Unterschiede, über die wir jetzt gesprochen haben welche würden Sie denn als kulturelle und welche als persönliche oder Identitätsunterschiede persönliche Unterschiede Tschuldigung beschreiben?”

6: “Also ich glaub die kulturellen Unterschiede sind wirklich so diese teilweise auch diese Klischees, die halt nen bisschen vorherrschen, dass eben Deutsche wesentlich direkter sind, das Deutsche halt auch ja wie sag ich jetzt ohne das es negativ klingt auch ein bisschen mal standhafter oder dominanter sind in manchen Punkten, das Deutsche eben auch dieses Ordnungsgefühl haben, diese Strukturiertheit, und in Schweden halt irgendwo oder die Schweden als solche eben was ich auch Anfangs sagte auch nen bisschen distanzierter sind ein bisschen zurückhaltender zurück haltender, eben auch ein bisschen dauert die Leute kennen zu lernen es ist alles am Anfang ein bisschen oberflächlich, also man kommt sehr leicht mit den Leuten ins Gespräch aber eben eher so blabla und das die Schweden eben wesentlich mehr auf … arbeiten, also das finde ich eben also das glaub ich ist ein kultureller Unterschied. Ist natürlich schwierig wenn man nur in einem Team oder nur in einer Firma war … auch nicht das Gefühl, aber das war jetzt die Erfahrung, wo ich sagen würde das ist ein kultureller Unterschied, ein persönlicher Unterschied kann ich nicht sagen, weiß ich jetzt gar nicht, also wenn dann kann ich das nur auf meine Person beziehen und ich bin mit den Schweden super gut klargekommen. Also ich hatte ich fand ich fand Schweden sehr sehr hilfsbereit, die waren immer immer für mich da. Haben mich von Anfang an auch integriert, ich kam mir jetzt nicht so auf verlorenen Posten vor, gut es war manchmal ein bisschen schwierig eben was die Sprache anbelangt, grad wenn man in großer Runde sitzt und alle um ein herum sprechen Schwedisch, fühlt man sich ein bisschen ausgeklammert. Aber ja aber wie gesagt wenn man den Willen zeigt und sich da in die Sprache und in die Kultur rein denken und reinfuchsen will und die Schweden auch sehen, das man da wirklich mit Engagement dabei ist und da einfach versucht sich so’n bisschen etablieren, dann ist es ganz ganz hoch angesehen, also wer speziell mitbekommen hat, dass ich privat Schwedischstunden nehme, der war hell auf begeistert und die fanden das alles ganz toll und haben sich … gezeigt.”

W: “Und sehen sie Unterschiede in der Organisationskultur zwischen der schwedischen und der deutschen Firma?”

6: “Ja also in Deutschland ist alles nen bisschen hierarchischer strukturiert auch ein bisschen formeller also hier ist es mit dem du was halt auch in Schweden einfach nicht gibt da reden sich alle mit Vornamen an, da sitzt halt auch der Geschäftsführer mit am Tisch wenn irgendein ich sag mal wenn einfach nen Workshop ansteht, wird in Anführungsstrichen bei einem banalen Thema was eigentlich als solches also bearbeitet, da sitzt also der Geschäftsführer auch als normales Teammitglied dabei so was würde man in Deutschland gar nicht erleben. Also ja diese
diese Hierarchieebenen sind da schon mal ganz anders aufgeteilt und so dass dann einfach der Geschäftsführer mal ins Büro kommt und und hier bei dem Workshop mitmacht das gibt’s hier nicht und der Umgang miteinander ist wesentlich lockerer in Schweden als es bei uns hier der Fall ist.”

W: “Und die Unterschiede zwischen den Kulturen die wir jetzt besprochen haben, welche würden Sie denn als positiv und welche als negativ für Ihre Projektarbeit bezeichnen?“

6: “Also was ich sehr positiv fand, was für mich ungewohnt war ist das man wirklich in diesem Projektteam am Anfang quasi sich erstmal vorstellt und zusätzlich zu seiner Funktion und dem Bereich, in dem man tätig ist tatsächlich auch so sagt und meine Stärken sind oder ich bin gut in was weiß ich im Organisieren, im Kommunizieren, ich kann toll irgendwelche Exceltabellen aufstellen, ich kann Präsentationen vorbereiten, jeder hat erstmal so die Punkte genannt wo er seine Stärken sieht, wo ich erstmal mir dachte, dass ist für deutscher mehr so ganz ungewohnt zu sagen Hallo mein Name ist X und ich bin besonders gut in wo irgendwie ja ein bisschen ja auch komisch ein komisch berührt erstmal wo man gar nicht so genau weiß wie geh ich denn damit jetzt um hallo mein Auto, mein Pferd, mein Haus irgendwie kann ich das jetzt verstehen. Das war eigentlich ne ganz tolle Sache weil jeder ohne das das jetzt prahlend ist, was ein Deutscher am Anfang erstmal so den Eindruck macht, sondern es ist einfach nur ein Statement ich bin gut in und dann weiß ich jetzt erstmal okay der Herr Meier ist gut im Organisieren, der macht also, der organisiert die Meetings, der stellt die Agenda auf, der kümmert sich um dieses ganze organisatorische Thema und dann gibt’s die Frau Schmidt, die ist super im Umgang mit den Mitarbeitern, die kann Konflikte irgendwie gut entschärfen, dafür kann man die gut einsetzen. Man weiß am Anfang schon wo die Rollen so sind, man hat, so kann man Aufgaben, die einem liegen typgerecht verteilen, was ne Sache natürlich oftmals wesentlich einfacher macht, gerade im Projekt zu arbeiten. Das fand ich sehr sehr gut im Team. Ja negativ, ja negativ war was für mich persönlich am Anfang jetzt was ich grad auch meinte mit der Sprache, das ich mich da zum Teil ein bisschen ausgegrenzt gefühlt hatte, aber es würde einem Ausländer in Deutschland nicht anders gehen, also ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, was wenn da ein Schwede nach Deutschland kommt und kein Deutsch spricht, dass dann jeder hier Raum immer so mit vielen Leuten zusammen sitz immer nur den ganzen Tag Englisch spricht. Also ich es ist mir schwer nachvollziehbar insofern kann ich’s verstehen, es war für mich am Anfang etwas schwierig, weil man sich natürlich ausgeklammert fühlt und dass ist … als alleine zwischen Leuten man ist ja neu, man muss ja irgendwie überhaupt erstmal finden, seinen Platz finden. Dann ist es natürlich schwer, wenn man das Gefühl hat, ich versteh fast gar nichts, aber sonst, es gab eben keine Person oder keine Charaktereigenschaft der Schweden als solche, wo ich jetzt sag, das hat mich jetzt nen bisschen negativ aufgestoßen würd ich ich finden nen bisschen schade, ich hatte sehr sehr engen Kontakt in Schweden, wurde da auch sehr stark integriert, seit ich wieder weg bin, ja ist es so’n bisschen aus den Augen aus dem Sinn. Was auch da glaub ich nicht, dass es auf ne schwedische Kultur oder die schwedische Art zu kommunizieren ist.”

W: “Okay, bevor Sie nach Schweden gekommen sind haben Sie ja sicherlich so’n Bild des typischen Schwedens irgendwie gehabt, wurde das denn erfüllt als Sie in Schweden waren, oder hat sich das geändert durch die Arbeit hier?”

6: “Also optisch auf jeden Fall. Ja gut ich muss sagen, ich kann’s nicht nur auf die Männer beziehen, ja also echt das Highlight war immer, da ich saß im Straßencafé und war erstmal gucken, das war unglaublich. Also das Klischee hat sich tatsächlich zu 100% bestätigt, ich muss wirklich sagen, außer dieses das hab ich gehört oder das Schweden halt so modebewusst sind und das es also vom Vom Feeling her ganz anders ist als in Deutschland und das es was was neuer in Schweden ist erst nächstes Jahr nach Deutschland kommt und und diese Schiene kann ich eigentlich auch nur bestätigen, also es ist Geschmacksache, ob’s gut ist oder nicht gut ist, aber
es war schon noch ein großer Unterschied noch mal erkennbar. Auch was jetzt das Englisch angeht die die Sprachkenntnisse, hat sich das total bestätigt, das also wirklich jeder sogar die Kassiererin in der Supermarktkasse spricht perfekt Englisch. Ja, also ich sag mal dieses Bild was man sich so aufbaut so ja so blond, blauäugig, hübsch, gut durchgestylt und ja so der typische Schwede hat sich schon bestätigt. Was die Zusammenarbeit anging da hatte ich jetzt kein Bild, also ich mein ich kannte schon vorher einige Schweden, die bei mir ich hatte ein Traineeprogramm durchlaufen, die bei mir im Programm waren und so schon kannte, insofern hatte ich einfach schon so‘n bisschen ne Ahnung davon davon das die eben zum Teil sehr stark sich auch häufig in Diskussionen sehr viel mehr engagieren als Deutsche, die immer eher so zurückhaltender, dafür ist es ich sag mal normalen Leben manchkmal schon wieder schwieriger mit Schweden ins Gespräch zu kommen oder in Kontakt zu kommen, weil die irgendwo eben bisschen distanziert sind oder eben in ihrem Kreis sich bewegen und da jetzt erstmal nicht so offenherzig mit einem Fremden umgingen, wie’s vielleicht in Amerika der Fall wär, wo man mehr hier ich mein es ist zwar auch nur oberflächlich aber man wird zu mindesten erst mal zugetextet und das war natürlich in Schweden nicht der Fall.“

W: “Okay jetzt noch zwei persönliche Fragen wie wichtig ist für Sie ein klarer Plan und Struktur, wenn Sie arbeiten?”

[...]

6: “Ja mittlerweile weniger wichtig, also ich muss sagen ich hab schon versucht, weil ich’s eigentlich ne sehr schöne Arbeitsweise finde mir da aus Schweden einiges abzugucken und ich war auch vorher schon eineinhalb Jahre in Neuseeland und da ist eine ähnliche lockere Atmosphäre mit weniger Struktur, aber also ich brauch zumindest nen Ziel, ich muss irgendwo nen Eckpunkt haben, der Weg dahin, den hätt ich aber schon gern für mich selber gestaltet. Also das man hält schon immer wieder so Zwischenfeedbacks dann sich einholt, ob ich noch auf dem richtigen richtigen Weg bin oder auf der richtigen Spur, aber ich find’s schon wichtig, dass man da auch seine eigenen Ideen umsetzen kann und erstmal total freie Hand hat.”

W: “Okay und was ist wichtiger für Sie, dass Sie einen guten Teamspirit haben, oder dass Sie eine herausfordernde Aufgabe erledigen?”


W: “Jetzt wieder zurück zur Projektarbeit wurden in Ihrem Projektteam Belohnungen vergeben an das Team oder an die einzelnen Teammitglieder, wenn vielleicht ein Zwischenziel erreicht wurde?”

6: “Also jetzt nicht im Sinne von Bonuszahlungen oder so was, aber es wird in Schweden sehr viel mehr auch mit Lob und Kritik irgendwo gehandelt, also wo man schon auch öfter mal dann hört Mensch super ist ja toll, wir sind ja jetzt schon so weit und ist ja ganz toll und wir werden viel früher fertig viel schneller eigentlich viel besser in der Zeit als wir dachten oder das ist ja ne super Idee: Also da kriegt man wesentlich mehr positives Feedback, was ein dann natürlich
anspornt, was ja irgendwo schon auch ne Belohnung ist. Also jetzt nicht im materiellen Sinne also Austausch von kleinen Geschenken oder irgendwie sonstigen Sachen."

W: "Und dieses Lob wurde immer an das ganze Team gerichtet oder an individuelle Personen?"

6: "Beides also wenn’s jetzt Sachen war’n, die wir als Team erreicht haben irgendwie nen Zwischenziel gab es dann Ansagen oder auch am Ende ist natürlich das gesamte Team logischer Weise im im Fokus, aber wenn’s jetzt irgendwie von einem Teammitglied ein super Input gab oder irgendwelche neuartigen Softwarelösungen eingeführt wurden oder irgendwas spezielles dann war’s eben natürlich auch nur diese eine Person die dort eben gelobt wurde. Und es wurde dann auch öffentlich vor dem Team also jetzt nicht das Mitglied als solches angesprochen aber es wurde dann schon kommuniziert Frau X haben wir’s zu verdanken oder was weiß ich und hier super super Arbeit, also das fand ich auch ganz schön, das es eben dann zwar zuerst unter vier Augen aber eben auch so im Team, ohne dass jetzt Konkurrenzkampf oder Neidgedanken aufkam."

W: "Und haben Sie da oder was finden Sie besser, dass man das so individuell macht oder im Team oder eben die Mixtur aus beidem?"

6: "Also ich glaub, dass die Mischung aus beidem ganz ganz wichtig ist, grad wenn’s eben um Teamarbeit geht wo man man kann nicht nur die einzelnen Teammitglieder loben, sondern es ist ja im Endeffekt ne Teamarbeit insofern muss auch die Teamarbeit als solche gewürdigt werden und auch kritisiert werden, also je nachdem was eben ansteht. Aber ich find manchmal lässt sich’s ja auch nicht so ausmachen von wem kam jetzt welcher Input und ich fänd’s auch fatal zu sagen, wir versuchen da jetzt auszuklammern welches Teammitglied welchen Input geliefert hat und dementsprechend kriegt der eine mehr Lohn du der andere weniger, weil meiner Meinung nach dann der Teamgedanke irgendwann verloren geht. Aber wenn’s jetzt irgendwas ist wo man wirklich sagen kann, das war ne herausragende Leistung von einem, dann kann man natürlich auch mal würdigen."

W: "Jetzt ’n ganz anderes Thema bevor Sie nach Schweden gegangen sind haben Sie da irgendeine Art Training bekommen ’n Sprachtraining oder ’n interkulturelles Training oder etwas Ähnliches?"

6: "Nein, gar nichts von beidem.

W:"Ja gäbe es denn da eine Art Training, die Sie gerne bekommen hätten oder die Sie für vernünftig halten würden, um eine erfolgreiche Projektarbeit durchführen zu können?"

6: "Also ich hab mich natürlich vorher informiert, es gibt ja Leitfäden es gibt so Sachen wie die to do oder die dos and don’ts und nach und sich informieren kann ich hab ja vorher auch schon Kontakt zu einigen schwedischen Trainees, die ich daher kannte insofern wusste ich schon was da jetzt auf mich zukommt, also ich war jetzt nicht völlig unvorbereitet, ich glaub es ist auch noch mal was anderes, wenn ich jetzt heut als Expatriat für drei Jahre nach Schweden gehen müsste oder dürfte oder würde dann zum einen ist es ein ganz anderes Vorbereitung gegeben vom Unternehmen zum anderen ist es noch mal ne ganz andere Ausgangssituation als wenn ich für vier Monate wo hingehe. Also ich glaub für vier Monate da würde sich nen Training in dem Sinn gar nicht auszahlen und dann wirklich rentieren, weil die Zeit eigentlich wirklich zu kurz ist. Aber wenn man jetzt wirklich mal für längere Zeit dahingeht, dann find ich macht das schon Sinn und auch da vorab sich ’n bisschen ich weiß nicht, also ich glaub ’n interkulturelles Training so wie man kennt aus Lehrbüchern ist glaub ich bei Ländern, die einem doch so ähnlich sind wie jetzt Schweden Deutschland nicht so notwendig, wie wenn ich heut nach Japan gehen würde,
weil die kulturellen Unterschiede sind ja doch wesentlich mehr in Grenzen gehalten nicht so dass klappt für die Vorbereitungszeit richtig, aber die muss meiner Meinung nach auch nicht so umfangreich sein wie wenn ich jetzt in ein völlig fremdes Land geh wie eben Japan oder auch die osteuropäischen Länder, wo ja tatsächlich die Uhr noch mal völlig anders tickt.“

W: “Und wenn es dann so ne Art Training oder Vorbereitung gibt, wann würden Sie dafür ’n guten Zeitpunkt sehen ganz am Anfang oder vielleicht während der Projektarbeit?”

6: “Also ich denke es ist ganz gut sich vorab schon mal zu informieren, bevor ich da überhaupt hingeh dass ich zumindest so’n bisschen eben die dos und don’ts weiß. Das ich weiß wie geht man denn nun in Schweden miteinander um, was sind so die Manieren sag ich mal, die die informellen Regeln, die man vielleicht einzuhalten sollte grad auch in in Projektarbeit oder bei überhaupt Team …Dann denk ich es wär vielleicht auch schon ganz gut das Projektteam als solches wenn’s denn interkulturell oder multikulturell oder international auch dem entsprechend noch mal zu schulen des Projektes, also ich glaub zwischen, ich weiß es nicht.”

W: “Und gibt es irgendwelche anderen Faktoren, die Ihnen während der Projektarbeit geholfen oder Sie unterstützt haben wie die Organisationskultur oder das vielleicht gewisse Ausdrücke gibt die in beiden Firmen gleich sind oder die gut da saßen Sie jetzt selber im in der Personalabteilung aber vielleicht irgendwelche das Budget oder die Zeit oder die anderen Kollegen, die geholfen haben?”

6: “Also geholfen haben natürlich viele Leute sowohl jetzt aus meinem Bereich als auch aus anderen Bereichen, die auch sehr hilfreich waren also in einigen Punkten. Es ist ja einfach schon schön, wenn man sich mal austauschen kann, ohne dass man jetzt gleich ein Problem hat, aber einfach eben dann drüber zu sprechen hilft ja auch schon, wenn man einfach mal jemanden hat, der da auch zuhört. Ansonsten ja fand ich ich hab für mich einiges aus der Zeit gewonnen einiges an Erfahrung auch gewonn und hab da auch schon einiges gelernt, also für mich war’s ne sehr positive Erfahrung, ob mir da jetzt irgendwas, ich glaub mir hat meine Betreuerin hat mich sehr unheimlich unterstützt und auch sehr stark gefestigt, das ist auch in vielen Dingen glaub ich so zurecht gestutzt dag ich mal in einigen Punkten und bin ich ihre eben sehr dankbar für: Es war für mich auch ne lehrreiche Zeit.”

W: “Und danach oder während der Projektarbeit gab es da irgendwas was getan wurde, um die Projektarbeit zu verbessern oder den Erfolg zu garantieren?”

6: “Ja gut, das kann ich jetzt schwer beurteilen, weil ich ja da schon nicht mehr da war, deswegen weiß ich gar nicht inwieweit das …dann nachträglich noch vorhanden war beziehungsweise vielleicht verstärkt wurde. Also ich weiß nicht, es wurden eben einige Projekte implementiert und die laufen sehr gut, da wird natürlich immer noch wieder ein bisschen was verbessert, aber im Großen und Ganzen war das sehr erfolgreich, insofern geh ich davon aus, das natürlich immer wieder geguckt wird passt´s noch oder muss man irgendwas anpassen, wenn ja wo hapert´s grad, wo müssen wir ansetzen, ich glaub da haben die ’n sehr wachsames Auge drauf, aber so an sich ist alles gut angelaufen und es war jetzt wenig Verbesserungsbedarf da. Das war jedenfalls so meine Ansicht.“

W: “Und zwar gab es jetzt wenig Verbesserungsbedarf, aber vielleicht wissen Sie ja doch irgendwas, was Sie in der Projektarbeit vermisst haben oder was man hätte besser machen können?”

[...]

178
6: "Ja gut für mich, was man für mich persönlich hätte ’n bisschen verbessern können war natürlich schon, dass es einfach ungünstig war was jetzt den Zeitfaktor anging, dass ich so mittendrin rein kam und so mittendrin wieder zurück musste, das fand ich für mich ’n bisschen unglücklich, weil man einfach den Anfang verpasst. Man ist erstmal damit beschäftigt aufzuholen wie ist der Stand der Dinge und das Ende eben nicht so wirklich aktiv mit, das ist natürlich Schade, weil man irgendwie ja nicht so richtiges Projektmitglied war, dadurch, dass man den Abschluss auch nicht mitbekommen hat. Also da hätte man vielleicht versuchen müssen oder können das irgendwie ein bisschen anders zu timen."

W: "Okay unsere letzte Frage wenn man über alles so nachdenkt würden Sie gerne weiterhin in deutschen-schwedischen Projektteams arbeiten?"

6: "Ja total gern.“ [...]"Ja ich könnt mir auch mal vorstellen in Schweden für ein paar Jahre zuarbeiten."

W: “Ja, das hörte sich auch alles sehr positiv an. Ja, vielen Dank für das Interview.“

**Interview 7 (German): 20.04.07, telephone interview, 10.30**

36 years old male
Interviewee works for the company since 1999.
Works inside a power plant as a shift manager and is responsible for everything that goes on during the shift. He works as a shift manager since 2003.
He went to Sweden for an experience exchange and stayed in Sweden for the period of 4 months.
Other experiences in international teams were during his studies in Manchester for one year and a four months job in the United States. But he has no other experience in international project teams in the professional life.
The project team was only him and other Swedish people.
He has worked in monocultural project teams with Germans before.
Exchanges and projects within power plants are very difficult, because regulations differ a lot among countries.
The experience exchange included finding ways where the Swedish colleagues are better than Germans, in order to bring these best practices back to Germany.
The experience exchange is still going on and he has still contact with the Swedish colleagues.
The working language was mainly English. But in the end he was able to understand some Swedish and able to follow meetings in Swedish.
The professions of the team members were very mixed because he looked into areas with very different tasks. But most of the people worked in the operation department of the power plant and had some special education for working in the power plant, most of them had a background in mechanics.
The Swedish colleagues were mostly man. But the percentage of women working in a power plant in Sweden is higher than in Germany, but it is still quite low.
He had contact with about 60-80 people but most of the time for exchanging experiences and not so close contact. But it is difficult to quantify the number of people he actually worked with.

W: “But in the beginning, when you went there, maybe this is a little bit difficult to say because it was not a real project team as we know, but did you have some kind of team building, getting to know each other, where you discussed how your stay will be, how you will work together?”
7: “As you said, it was not really a project team as you know, […] but I had actually two persons, to contact persons as you might call them, one from the operation department and the other from the maintenance department, so they introduced me to the people I needed to know, they organized things for me, like the different permits I need at the beginning, for example to get access to the computer system and all this kind of stuff. We were out for a dinner, and a couple of times we had lunch at the power plant so I had some kind of, I had actually two persons that were there to care a bit about me, if I had any special problems or whatsoever. So I had a plan with different tasks, different times for which time to look at which organization, at which people and they organized that before I came there, so this kind of schedule was quite fixed, but always open to change, when it seemed to be interesting to deeper look into something or whatsoever to change something. But concerning this schedule I had always the possibility to ask these two persons, but in practice it was never a problem to talk to anyone and get some help from anyone else, who might, so everyone who might be able to help me, I was able to talk to them, ask them and they tried to fix something for me, whatsoever.”

W: “And at the end of your stay there, was there some kind of evaluation, about how things went?”

[...

7: “I did some evaluation concerning the technical stuff, so I did not really say ok, so I did not really evaluate the way I was treated there, but concerning the the main task of my job, this kind of experience exchange there, there was of course a presentation of me, so I made a presentation for the people there in Sweden and tell them what I think where we might be better, things where I think they are better, things where there are differences between the two different power plants, so that you have basically the same aim, but you have different ways of reaching them, without any of them being really better, so out of traditions you would rather stick to that kind of way you have developed during the last years, cuz there is no advantage of changing to some other, so this kind of report and presentation in the end I did, so if that’s what you would call evaluation, then ok.”

W: “Ok, and is there any kind of advice you would give for future exchanges?”

[...

7: “Concerning people coming from Sweden to Germany I think now they have quite a good basis to start with, at least concerning the operations I was looking at. Probably they got some impression of differences where we work differently in Germany, they can take profit from things mentioned in my report, where I think we are better, so they can try to focus a bit more on these things. And in addition of course the discussions we had when I was in Sweden. It was not just just, when I worked there and when I looked at the people how they did the work, if I thought oh, we might work in a different way, in most cases it was interesting for them also to see, hey, do you really work in the same way or do you work differently. So then we had some kind of discussion about differences how we work and how they work, so I guess at least for a few main topics there will be a basis for them, where they see, ok, there we might learn something, so when we send someone to Germany he can look at this and that and that and that.”

W: “So you would say that your exchange was successful?”

7: “From my eyes yes, so we did not have such a broad exchange so far, so as I said, the German power plant was quite focused on the German way of operating a power plant but now at least as
far as I can see now, there is a better exchange between the different traditions, as you might call them, so from my point of view it was very successful, not only for me personal, but also for the power plants.”

W: “And did you like the way that this exchange went on?”

7: “For me it was probably the best way to get an insight into another power plant, because you need some time until you are able to understand the way how they work. Because if you are, if you have a special aim to, so in this case, to operate a power plant, there are so many different ways of doing it, and to make a fundamental or substantial comparison between different ways of reaching the same aim, it takes some time until you get an impression of how they work, because sometimes it is different, they reach the same goals, just on a different way, and you cannot, its hard to judge what way is better or not, so you need at least to understand the way how they work, to really say ok, this is better or this is not better, you ask them saying or, this is different, cuz that’s in most cases quite obvious, that it is a different way, so from my point of view it was hopeful that I had three or four months there to really get an impression how they work, so it was a good idea to send someone for quite a long time, rather than having a lot of meetings over say a year or two and then you got there just a week or a few days and discuss something. It makes it difficult.”

W: “Yes, so what would you say as the key for the success, only the length of the stay, or is there something else that was really important why this was so good?”

7: “Important was from my point of view definitely also that the people in the power plant were open, so you could really discuss with them, how are you going to do, or what are you going to do in this case or that case, how do you work and it was a really really good working environment, so you could talk to the people and since I have some experience from the way we work in my power plant and we had at least a common basis to start work, but that is not enough if you just have the basis and you don’t know how the people, what they are doing, for example they might have perhaps thought oh, there is someone coming from the German headquarters and now he is going to tell us how we should operate our power plant, or something like that, then you are not so open, you try to at least in that case you might try to hide perhaps a little bit, or be very careful what you tell them, but from my experience it was an open and valuable discussion. That’s that’s at least one very important point for this kind of success.”

[...]

W: “And do you find it different to work with Swedes as opposed to working with your colleagues in Germany?”

7: “No, no, as I said the relationship was was very good, trustful, so it was a really really easy to work with them, so I no, I would say it was really easy to get into that, to the groups that worked in a special area and, no, so in Sweden it was quite easy for me, there are no big differences between Swedish and German groups, at least not for me.”

W: “And do think that there are differences when you communicate with the Swedes in the style that they communicate in compared to how Germans communicate?”

7: “No, no, not really, I wouldn’t say there are big differences, at least not in the way like for example I have the opinion if you go to perhaps south East Asia there are much more differences, but I don’t think there are so big cultural differences between Swedish people and the Germans, so the communication was very similar.”
W: “And did you see differences in the language ability between Germans and Swedes, when it comes to English?”

7: “That’s quite easy, no definitely there are huge differences, the Swedish people they are very good in English, it was very helpful for me, cuz I could speak English with most of the people there in the power plant so for me that was very helpful so that I was not handful, so very few and specially selected people to talk to, just just the people who speak English. In my case it was very easy because I could speak to nearly everyone and at the end in Swedish even with everyone, but at the beginning it was very helpful for me, that at least nearly everyone understands English, and if they don’t want to speak English, than so, because they feel not very sure, they can at least understand it. They have a lot of practice due to TV and cinema, they are used to listening to the English language, so most of them will at least understand if you say something in English. So that is definitely by far better than in Germany.”

W: “Ok, so you would say that their good language abilities had a very positive impact on your stay?”

7: “Yes, it made it much easier in the beginning, it took me about, yeah I would say three months until I was good enough to be able to talk to the people even in Swedish, that did not want to speak English, or to whatever reasons. In the beginning it would not have been successful, it would not have been a proper discussion with them. So that was very helpful at the beginning, definitely.”

W: “When you had meetings, how did they proceed, did you have some special kind of agenda, or was it rather free on how the meetings went on?”

[…]

7: “The Swedish meetings I would say there were quite, yeah in most cases quite formal, so they had an agenda, and most of the meetings, they belong to a special type, like everyday morning meetings where you discuss the technical situation of the power plant during the last 24 hours and this kind of stuff, and there are weekly meetings where you focus on the bigger things that might have happened, bigger projects going on and something like that, but for most of the meetings there is an agenda, and they follow the agenda from the beginning to the end. But that’s not much difference from the way the meetings are done in Germany, and I would say its quite helpful to have an agenda to stick on and go on point for point, what they, what might be a bit different is, I don’t know if it is typically Swedish or whether it is typically the power plant, for some kind of meetings they had prepared the meetings quite well, so they had written a report in the beginning with the most most part to be discussed, at least with basic facts, so they go into the meeting with a report and then they discuss about them, and then either they change it, or they say ok, that’s good the way it was written, so I would say the preparation might be slightly better in Sweden than in Germany in some cases. But its not a really big difference, generally the meetings go on as in Germany, although I would say they have a bit more in Sweden then we have in Germany.”

W: “And when there were discussions in the meetings, do you see a difference on how the Swedes discuss on how this is in Germany?”

7: “No, also no, I would say they are pretty much the same. The discussions I had they were open, everybody was able to give his own opinion, so it’s not just the bosses that talk and the rest of the people would sit there and mainly keep quite, just give some facts if they are asked, no it
was a very open discussion, where actually everyone was involved.”

W: “And do you find the same in Germany?”

7: “In most cases yes.”

W: “Ok, when there were tasks assigned to the people in Sweden, were they rather specific very detailed in how to do, how to complete the tasks, or were they more free in that people work free in how to execute it?”

7: “In that case we are probably a bit special in power plants, at least concerning the parts I was looking at, when we look at operation, the tasks you get, they are very regulated, so you don’t have a lot of possibilities to change something. So in this case the tasks were all very specific, very tracked but that is exactly the same in Sweden as in Germany but that is mainly due to the fact that we work in a power plant, so there is not, most of the power plant are regulated, so there is not much to vary a little bit.”

W: “When there were decisions made, like at the meetings, who made these, the management, the boss, the leader, or was it more from the people?”

7: “No, the decisions are taken by the boss, definitely, but that’s also the same in Sweden as in Germany. If you have a discussion, as I said, everyone is invited to give his own opinion, there is no discussion about that every idea must be talked about, but the actual decision is definitely taken by the boss and even if most of that is prepared by special groups for example, who prepare the meeting who did some kind of research about something and they present the result, the actual decision whether it is done it that way or not, is definitely take by the boss.”

W: “And do you see a difference in the effort that people do to achieve the goal they want to achieve in their job?”

7: “No, no, I mean obviously there are different efforts concerning to different people, some are a bit more enthusiastic then others, but I would say the differences between people are much bigger than the differences between Germany and Sweden.”

W: “And do you see a difference in the time Swedes compared to Germans spend on achieving these goals?”

7: “That’s difficult to answer.” “No, I have no idea, I mean small things they mainly depend on the persons themselves they work really hard in the beginning, or whatsoever, as I said how enthusiastic they are and bigger things they are no, it is difficult to say cuz there are so many influences from outside concerning regulations, concerning the authorities and all this kind of stuff.”

W: “Ok, and when you work together with the Swedes to you see a difference on how the perceive time and how the organize time, compared to Germans?”

7: “Also that is quite difficult to say, it seemed to be a bit bit more structured in Sweden, so the way they are planning the different jobs, it seemed to be a bit more structured, but on the other hand it seemed to be as they are more comparable jobs in Germany, so it’s more difficult to structure them in the same way. But I would not say that this is depended on perhaps some kind
of Swedish culture or German culture, I would say it is more about different company traditions, rather than cultural differences between Swedish and German people.”

W: “During your stay there, did any misunderstandings occur?”

7: “I mean, you can never say there have been no misunderstandings, because you never know whether you really got everything in the way it was meant, so I cannot be sure that there were no misunderstandings, but since I had time to look at the way they work and trying to understand the procedures and the tasks the persons have, I think there have been very few misunderstandings, but this is something that would have been much more difficult if you have, if you are not able to stay for such a long time. […] Cuz for example there was one position, that we have in Germany, that they don’t have in Sweden and but if you, they have a slightly different, the position is completely different, but the name is quite similar, so since we tried to compare them, both the Swedish and the Germans both translated their position they have into English, and they ended up with one, or the same translation for these two different position and the translation is perfectly alright, but what it means is completely different. So I have, if I have at the beginning, if I have heard oh this person is a, and then this Swedish position name, I had thought he would be in a different position, if I would have translated that with my German background I would have ended up with a completely different position. And since I had some experience and I was able to learn about the different position, before I needed to translate everything, there was not misunderstanding. So for this I would say the time has helped and there is the risk of misunderstanding, but for me personally I would say there were quite few.”

W: “And when there was a misunderstanding how did you deal with it?”

7: “In my case, I wouldn’t say there were major misunderstandings because since I had the possibility to search, look and hey, what are you doing what are you working with, how are you working and at the end trying to compare, that was much easier or much better concerning misunderstandings then trying to compare with two different background and then find out after the differences. So I had the experience of both ways before I had to compare both ways, so I would say there were no big misunderstandings.”

W: “Ok, so what we talked about now, you see more personality differences rather than cultural differences, during your work?”

7: “During the work yes, yes, I would say so.”

W: “There is nothing you would point out as a cultural difference?”

7: “No, at least not that […] for the work, the difference between different individuals for me seems quite a lot bigger than cultural differences during the work.”

W: “And did you see differences in the organizational culture?”

[…]

7: “I would say its exactly the same thing as the individuals, I got some quite big insight on how they organize their company, that operates the nuclear power plant and I see the experience of how we organize the nuclear power plant that I work in in Germany and they are different. They are quite, yes they are very different I would say. But the reason is not really a cultural difference between Swedish and German companies, its more due to the fact that in Sweden they have 3 nuclear power plants at one site, at one place, and I work in a nuclear power plant were there is
just one power plant in one site and differences in the organization, they are much more due to the fact that there are three plants at one site and if you had in Germany three plants at one site you would probably organize the company very similar to the organization here in Sweden they have now.”

W: “Before you went to Sweden, you probably some expectations about how are the Swedes, and how is their culture, did you change these during your stay, there, because like you said you recognized oh, they are the same as we are, or?

7: “It did not change that much, because I actually didn’t expect them to be very different, I have been in Sweden for a few holidays, I don’t know three or four, all of them just for a week or two, and being there for a holiday is different from working there for a few months, of course, but the differences are smaller than for example the difference between Great Britain and Germany and I didn’t really expect to see big differences, might be that that’s the reason why I didn’t see any, cuz I expected there to be not big differences. The only thing I was surprised about at the beginning was that it was so similar, I expected to see differences in some places, but I didn’t really see that many. The only big differences is the language actually, but I knew about that before and I’ve noticed on my holiday sometimes when I got in touch with Dutch people that they could speak very good English and they explained that it is because of TV and cinema that they listen to English quite a lot, and I have heard on the other international experience exchange at my power plant, where two Swedish persons as well, and what we talked about was that they said exactly the same, in Sweden they speak quite good English because of TV and cinema, so they have quite a good knowledge of English.”

W: “Now two personal questions, only to you, when you work, how important is a clear plan or a structure for you in your working environment?”

[…] 7: “I personally like to have a quite structured schedule, that’s a, that’s it makes it easier, I mean this schedule you always have some open time for things that just turn up, but the general structure is quite a good idea for me.”

W: “And what is more important for you a good team spirit or a challenging task?”

[…] 7: “Difficult to say which is more important from my point of view I would say, you cannot really work without one of these two, you need at least a little bit challenging task and you would need, at least I would need quite a good working environment, so I need to get along with the people I work with, but I do need a little bit of both. I would not say its one of the extremes, you just go for I have a challenging task and I have that I don’t care about the people around me, even if I don’t like them it’s no problem, difficult to say.”

W: “During your stay there did you recognize if there were any rewards given to the people and if yes were they given to teams or to individuals?”

[…] 7: “Yes, definitely. For example when I was there they had some quite extensive work going on in the unit I was and when that was finished and the unit was connected to the grid the manager of the site, he at least send around letters thank to the people and he organized some cakes or so, something like that, to give them and say hey, good work, just come together and have some kind of small, I don’t know some small party or what you might say, so at least some small stuff. But
at least they acknowledged and said ok, that was a lot of work, thank you for that, and I
don't know whether there are any more for special groups or something like that, its not that I
saw that there were special rewards but for good bosses I would guess there are at least a few
small things.”

W: “Ok, and did you like this procedure of having a party when something went very good?”

7: “Yes, definitely, it’s a, at least in that case it was a quite a long time and the people hat to do
quite a lot of work and it was a nice and the end just to say thank you, it was not a big cost,
nothing really big, it was just a small thing saying thank you, and for me it was perfect, really well
done.”

W: “You personally, in a team, would you prefer individual rewards or team rewards?”

7: “It depends on who has the most impact on something, if you have a task that you can only
manage in the team, than an individual reward would not be a good thing, cuz it would tell the
others hey, he has been very good and all the other did not help so much in the project. But if
you have individual tasks and you have someone that fulfilled an individual task very well, then it
should be possible to give him a small reward, it does not always have to be something big, it
does not always have to be money or whatsoever, but just as I said, like this thing, just giving,
yeah, asking the people to come over for a piece of cake and a cup of coffee that’s really not
nothing big, its just an acknowledgement ok, you have been doing good work and in that case it
was definitely the whole group, all the people working at that unit had their work and their part in
finishing that kind of work, so that was a good idea to reward everyone. But if there for whatever
task that special, there is something specially well done by an individual, why shouldn’t you give
him a small acknowledgment.”

W: “Before you went to Sweden, did you receive any kind of training, like language training or
something like that?”

7: “No, because the people in XY thought ok, you can go on with English, and because they
knew that I speak English there was no language training, I did some on my own before I went
to Sweden, because I at least wanted to have the possibility to understand and to get along even
when not at work, but since the working language was English and it was intended to be English,
there was not need for a language training.”

W: “And do you think that some kind of training would be helpful for successfully working with
Swedes?”

7: “It depends on what you want to do, for me it was helpful that I started before a little bit and
that I had people there to speak Swedish with me, on a very basic level to start with, but for me
to get some practice and to get me to a point where I was at least sure enough of my Swedish
that I would be able to talk to the people, but this is not necessary for someone who goes there
for perhaps a months, or even shorter, so if you have a short meeting with someone the language
will be definitely English and not Swedish. So it makes only sense if you are there for a long time
and in my case I could have done the same thing just with English, perhaps not that I would have
been satisfied with that, I would have always the feeling, hey, I missed something, but when
looking back even four months would have been possible just with English.”

W: “And were there some kind of other factors in the company that supported your stay there,
maybe the management or something like that?"
7: “Yeah, they had some contacts before, so this was a rather official programme or something, that people from the headquarter wanted people from a German power plant to go to Sweden and there was some support from that, so they organized everything, they have talked with the Swedish counterpart like XY and they have tried to fix first the schedule, the main tasks, what might be helpful for me to look at, they have organized a flat for me to live in, and all this kind of stuff, so there was help before, and when I was there it was mainly the Swedish people I could talk to.”

W: “And during your stay there, were there any actions taken to enhance your stay and to ensure that it will be a success, like maybe a regular check up meeting, or something like that?”

[...]

7: “With the Swedish people I was in regular contact since I had these two contact persons or whatsoever, so there was no, there was at any time a discussion that it might not be successful or that I, I don’t know or that I just try to make a holiday out of it, or whatsoever, that there are major problems that I could not get along with the people or with the way they work, or whatsoever, I think to turned out quite quite quick that there were no problems concerning, having a look at the way of work at the people.”

W: “Ok, and was there anything that you missed during your stay and that could have been improved?”

7: “No, I don’t think so beside the connection between XY and my home in Germany, so for me the biggest trouble was that XY was not at the end of the world, if you say like that, quite far out and it takes a long time to reach XY and get back.”

[...]

W: “Would you like to work with Swedes again?”

7: “Definitely, since my impressions in Sweden were very good I would like to stay in touch and perhaps in the future do something more again, for example someone from them comes to Germany or I go back to Sweden again, no, definitely, it was a nice environment, not only from the nature but also the working environment.”

Interview 8 (Swede): 24.04.07, face-to-face interview at the company site, 14.00

38 years old male
Responsible for the product development department, he works in this position with engineering: production engineers, development engineers, test engineers and programme managers.
He works with Asia, South America and Africa.
Has been in the company (automotive industry) since 12 years.
He has a lot of experience in multinational project teams, has been working with Japanese, Korean, Chinese, American and Europeans and a lot with Germans.
He has also worked in only Swedish teams.
The German-Swedish projects last between ½ till 2½ years.
The location of the projects is in Sweden and in Germany, this changes from project to project.
The team members are split up, some are in Germany and some are in Sweden. They have weekly meetings by phone and every month a face-to-face meeting with differing locations.
The face-to-face meetings are usually one day long, but effective working time is around 4 hours.
The working language is English.
The project team members are designers, CAD-engineers, production engineers and test engineers.
Works mostly with men.
The project teams are employees from his company, the customer and sub-suppliers.
Normally a project team is composed of about 10 people and from time to time other expert functions join the team for support.
He is in varying positions in the team member or programme manager of the teams.
He is usually involved in 2-3 projects at a time and he works in internal side-projects in the company and he works in his function in the company as well. The time division between project work and work in his function is 50-50.

B: “And in the beginning of the projects, did you have team building activities?”

8: “In the beginning of the projects, sometimes yes. But not often.”

B: “And what did you do there?”

8: “We have collected all the team members and made some fun thing, and had some dinner or something and slept over somewhere, so trying to know each other well before we start doing the work. That is together with the different X sites and also with the customer.”

B: “And did you also talk about the project goal, or your expectations and how you want to work together, or was it just getting to know each other?”

8: “That is more a small small meeting, but not that concentrated talking about the goal, often we have a meeting either before or after that session where we talk about the project goals. Often we have that in the hand already when we receive our … and things like that from the customer, then we know the situation which direction in the future we should fulfil.”

B: “And in the end of your project did you have a project evaluation?”

8: “Yeah, lessons learned we call those and that is also together with the different sites and also with the customer involved as well.”

B: “And how does the evaluation take place and who is involved in that, do you focus more on the hard facts or do you also evaluate how you worked as a team together?”

8: “No, more about the hard facts to understand what went good with the programme, what went wrong and try to specify that, so we don’t do the same mistakes again, so more about hard facts and the people that has been working in the teams, they are like they are its more working with the what we have done.”

B: “And if you were asked to give an advice for future projects, what would that be?”

8: “Its important to set up some kind of rules how to work with meetings, that you have meetings every week or every second week, that you don’t try to find new times after each meeting, I mean its better to have set dates for meetings and spread all the information, those who wants to have information they call in for meetings or come to the meetings, those who not can stay away, can stay out, I think, but not fiddling around with time and that sort of thing, because that costs too much time. Set up fixed meetings and meeting dates for each week.”
B: “Did you have a chance to also to mention this in the evaluation?”

8: “Yeah, yeah, that is on the positive side, we usually try to set one on one date for one or two hours and we have taken conferences were everyone can call in with a telephone conference new that we will have time, I think that’s important. Because everything with programmes, the most important is communication, that everybody has the right communication.”

B: “And during your projects did you reach the goal, are your projects successful?”

8: “Yes, they are. I mean often there are maybe goals that are too high when you set them, but as long as we have in the end a project that we can sell to the customer I see that as a success in the project, and that we also earn some money in the product of course, so yes, I think they are successful there is no programme that is stopped of course by the programme team.”

B: “And do you like the way how those projects go on?”

8: “Yeah, of course as I said before there are different people working differently and that is something that you can’t do anything about. People are different from each other, some people they give everything they have for a programme, others are more relaxed and think it will be solved anyway, so that’s more on the team member level that it can be a problem.”

B: “And what would you see as the key for success in your projects?”

8: “Number one spreading information and understand and see that everybody has the same information, I think that’s important, see that everybody has information, I mean.”

B: “And do you find it different to work with Germans as compared with colleagues from Sweden?”

8: “Yeah, sometimes yes. Because in Sweden we have a certain way of living and it differs to the Germans and I think there are some problems, cultural problems, sometimes.”

[...]
“I think we in Sweden, we are very open to each other, we say what we want, what we think, and so on. And if you don’t totally disagree we try to struggle on the same road, on the same direction, but sometimes it feels like if you don’t feel like the decisions taken together in the meeting, sometimes in Germany it feels like working against the programme that’s my experience, also if we security aspects, here we talk very open, doesn’t matter if you are a worker or a manager they can communicate quite open, and that I don’t think, its not the same way in Germany. There you have different levels and you should know your position in the company. Here it is more open, we have, I think it is easier to communicate, it is easier to split all the information between us.”

B: “And do you think there is more communication between the members of the same culture that maybe the Germans talk more with the Germans and the Swedes talk more with Swedes?”

8: “Yes, definitely. But I mean that’s also culture and that’s also language, I mean of course it’s easier to talk with a Swedish guy because we talk in Swedish with each other and the same with Germans, they talk in German to each other, they understand each other better and I mean, my English is not perfect, and the German guys is not either perfect, so there will be misunderstandings and everybody maybe is a little worried about talking in a different language and I, so I think the language can be a barrier between those working with the same programme.”
B: “And did there often misunderstandings in the team between Germans and Swedes occur?”

8: “No, no, I mean there are no, Germans and Swedes are very, in a way quite like each other, we have French people in the company, we have Chinese people in the company, Korean, and there we don’t understand each other at all sometimes, so German people are the most simplest one to work with and maybe it is the language which is the barrier.”

B: “And in case of a misunderstanding how do you solve that?”

8: “I don’t, I again, communicate again in some way and usually during meetings and if you don’t understand each other than its face-to-face meetings.”

B: “Do you think there is enough communication in the team?”

8: “I hope, I hope of course there are mistakes when we don’t communicate everything, I don’t think it’s a meaning that we try to keep information by ourselves, but it’s due to what is happening in the programmes, how much is happening in the programmes how stressed it is and something. We of course, we miss some part of the information between us.”

B: “And do you think there are differences in the communication style between Swedes and Germans?”

8: “No I think in the end, I think, we sort everything out quite well. Of course there are misunderstandings when you are talking to each other and so on and so on, but we not, I don’t think we will stay with these mistakes, after a while we will communicate and understand what are the points.” […] “I mean if we got a result, that we don’t understand or we don’t want we ask for it again and try to explain with that what actually we want. I mean it’s also we are used to do things here in X which there is quite common for us which we make maybe everyday, so maybe we explained it to bad for others in the programme who hasn’t done it before, I mean it can be as simple as that. And than it will be mistakes of course. But we sort it out, but I don’t think we sort everything out with the Germans.”

B: “And do the Germans also think in that way that they maybe explained something not so good or do they have a different perception of that when they are not satisfied with your work?”

8: “Yeah, I think that then they call us and ask us how we are doing it, so I don’t think we have a lot of unfinished things.”

B: “And you already mentioned language, do you think there is a difference in the language ability between Germans and Swedes in English?”

8: “I think German English education is not like Swedish English education, I noticed that because in Germany they use some different words which we are not used to use in daily talk, so that can be some mismatch, but often we understand each other.”

B: “So the influence of those differences are not very big?”

8: “No, no.”

B: “And you already talked about meetings, when you have meetings how do you proceed at the meetings, do you have an agenda or who is mainly talking?”
8: “Often we have an agenda, the one who is mainly talking, I think we are more more shy and quiet in Sweden then you are in Germany. And yeha, that’s what I feel, we are more listening and try to think before we talk we think maybe a couple of steps ahead, and I think that’s more due to the how you act indifferent regions in Europe, I mean in France in Spain it’s a they can take over complete meetings, why Germans, again Germans and Sweden are more common there, I mean I feel more difference to France even more difference when it comes to Spain.”

B: “How did the Germans handle it when you are sitting there so shy?”

8: “Not so shy, but I think they accept us, I think they have easier to accept us more than French people do.”

B: “So they don’t ask hey X, what is actually your opinion, you haven’t said anything so far.”

8: “Can do, can do, but not often. It’s also depending on the people, but this is also maybe, everybody says that we are quite good in English in Sweden, we are, we understand quite well but we don’t practice much by talking. We learn a lot from TV and more and more by internet and newspapers and so on, but we don’t practice in talking before you come into your professional life.”

B: “And during discussions, do you recognize any differences except that Germans maybe talk more than you do?”

8: “No, in discussions, when I agree then I don’t, then I think it maybe some differences, I don’t say anything because I agree. So if I disagree, then its an ordinary discussion, so maybe there I see, maybe then, maybe they think well if I, yeah, …

B: “And when we talk about your tasks in your team, in what way are they assigned, can you volunteer, oh I will do this, or the team leader assigns?”

8: “In a team often you have different different tasks, I mean as I said two production engineers and two designer and so on, so I mean it’s quite clear what you shall work with I would say. So that is not a big question.”

B: “Ok, and when you receive a task, is it specific with explanations how you should do that or are you free in the way you do it?”

8: “Depends on the task, I mean we have a lot of rules that we shall follow inside the company and I think we as Swedes we are applying those rules when we want to do it, when we see, we can conform really quick, but there I feel, when Germans do it, when they apply the rules, then that’s more important for the to follow the rules and they will less succeed in the tasks I would say, so there I see more difference. We work on our own head and don’t think about the rules so much.”

B: “And when you have been a project manager do you have to explain the tasks more specific for Germans than for Swedes?”

8: “No, no, I think the knowledge in Germany for engineers and so is good, it’s very good.”

B: “And in what way do you make decisions in your team?”

[...]
8: “Yeah, there is a difference, in Sweden we discuss it and come to a conclusion in the team, while in Germany sometimes a person who is quite strong in the group takes the decision and maybe don’t have the other team members with him.”

B: “What do you mean by strong?”

8: “As I say, strong is by taking decisions, talk a lot, so it’s more and more a leader.”

B: “It’s more the personality of the person or more the position in the company?”

8: “More it’s personality. “

B: “And you already mentioned it a little, would you say there is a difference every team member puts towards the team or the goal achievement between the cultures?”

[...]

8: “I think Swedes put more effort for having a good atmosphere, Germans put more effort for reaching the goal. That’s my idea.”

B: “And do you see a difference in time that Germans or Swedes spend for reaching the project goal?”

8: “It’s hard to say, it’s very hard to say, I mean we don’t know if they are occupied with other tasks, so they can be occupied with a lot of different things, so I don’t dare to answer that. But if a probably due to what I have said before, Germans don’t think of having the goal or end of the task quicker if they should jump over the rules. They are more concentrated on the rules and if that takes longer time it doesn’t matter for them. Why we try to make it quicker, sometimes even dirty and quick, but I mean we want to see that we are moving forward, I think that’s important for Swedes.”

B: “How do the Germans react when you try to overrun the rules? Or when you already did?”

8: “Well, I don’t know if I have any comments on that. I wonder, yeah, maybe I should ask them.”

[...]

“Well, I know, German young people are different, I mean we have some people which I think is more like a Swedish guy than a German guy, so I think it’s a matter of different persons.”

B: “But it’s not a matter of discussion when you meet the next time?”

8: “No no, I mean as long as we have fulfilled the task and agree to have all the papers correct filled in it works, we have reached to them to agree and I mean that is the most important.”

B: “And do you see a difference in how time is perceived and organized between Sweden and Germany?”

8: “Yeah, I think, as I say, if we have little time here to do something in Sweden, we do it anyway. We don’t ask for more time, but it will a quick and dirty way, and that in Germany, I think they write their time plan and if they think they need two weeks for doing that it will take two weeks … I think we are more flexible there, but of course the result can vary, we maybe don’t do all the
steps.”

B: “And did any conflicts occur during your projects?”

8: “Yes, it has, of course, I mean different people understand different things and they have different knowledge.”

B: “And what is the cause of conflict?”

8: “Is it due to different knowledge, that different people know different things about different tasks.”

B: “So it’s on the working level, there are no personal conflicts?”

8: “On the personal level I would say if we have quite strong persons who doesn’t have the knowledge, they are just strong and take decisions, then the level of hierarchy will decide what’s right, in those case I think Swedes they take one step back and they say ok, we do it your way but you also have to take the consequences, that’s my feeling, we don’t, I mean if we believe in something we will really really strongly of course we will go for that, but if we thing that this is something stupid that starts to happen, then we will take one step back and let the other person take the decision.”

B: “And in what way do Germans solve such things?”

8: “It’s hard to explain, do I have an example. Not something I can think of right now, but it’s I think we are, in Sweden we are quite customer focused and if we think that decisions come up or discussions come up with German people that goes in the wrong direction as I say we back up and lack a step and stand aside and let them go to the customer and take their presentation or present what they want to present but we will still support them, I mean we are in a situation her in X where we are moving business from X to the Czech republic and so, and that is a decision taken in Germany, which we don’t agree on some cases yes, but not in all cases, and then there are of course discussions, but we stay to the decision, we follow it and support the decision in the end, but we also tell our colleagues that ok, you take the decision with the customer and explain what they should gain or what shall be worse in the programme … because I mean it’s hard to support a decision that you don’t agree on of course, but we are still doing it, but the fight with the customer is then their task.”

B: “And the other way around, do the Germans also when they disagree with a decision do they also stand behind the decision you took, support you?”

8: “I hope so, I hope so. I mean we are in the end, we are smaller site and also the hierarchy level are lower than it is in Germany, so we are underneath them, so, but I think they support us when we come with some clever things they support us, yes. Also it depends on personality, there are different, of course with different persons who doesn’t care what you say and they go their route anyway. But and I think you can find more of those people in Germany than in Sweden, I think we listen more, as a Swedish person on different experts and on experience, than you do sometimes, but I mean different persons.”

B: “Yeah that already leads to the next question, which of the differences you mentioned between Germans and Swedes would you call cultural differences and which do you think oh, there are just some people that have that point of view now.”
8: “The first I think is the hierarchy, different hierarchies, you can more feel the level in Germany than you can here, I mean I think we have a managing director who comes from Germany and I mean if we think he is wrong we tell him that and if you are in meetings in Germany and there are managers on quite high levels nobody talks against the manager, so there is more respect about the hierarchy.”

B: “And do you also see differences between the organization in Germany and Sweden?”

8: “Yeah, more managers, more steps in Germany than we have in Sweden, we are more flat, definitely.”

B: “Ok, and which of the differences you have stated before do you see as positive and which as negative for the project work?”

8: “The positive is as I said good knowledge in Germany they really burn for the thing, while we also want to have some free time, often they stay at work until 6 or 7 o’clock in Germany, at the project centre there, while we try to come home to our families and so on earlier, but we try to struggle and solve the task during the day or if we don’t solve it this day we solve it tomorrow, but anyway we will solve it, but also there is, it also depends on the which group of people that you are working with in Germany, some people who is working with a certain customer they leave at 5 o’clock, when the working time is over, some people where they have a strong leader maybe more respectful in the hierarchy, they stay until 6, 7 o’clock in the evenings, so different groups of people you can find staying at work in Germany at different groups working until their time is over, but I think we in Sweden we want to have some free time, but anyway we want to do a good job, hopefully.”

B: “And is there anything else that is positive or negative?”

8: “Negative I said is sometimes when if the Germans go by the book it can take longer time and blaming the rules instead of doing the job in time, right or wrong, I don’t know, its ok, as long as it is not the third part that got gets in trouble sort of say, and if you don’t miss a due date to the customer or something. If the third part is not involved it will be ok, but blaming on rules or regulations, internal company regulations and yeah, letting the customer suffer, I don’t like, or the third part, if its internal work, it’s ok. But sometimes you need to be flexible.”

B: “And before you worked together with Germans in a project team you probably had expectations how Germans are and how they work, did those expectations change during your time working with Germans?”

8: “Yeah, for some of the people just, because as I said some of those people are very very like us in Sweden, and some I don’t know, that the sort of a German should be.”

[…]

“Strong, maybe a little rough sometimes.”

B: “And now we have some questions concerning you, personally. How important is it for you to have a clear plan and a structure, when you work?”

8: “Quite important, but it can be quite flexible, it doesn’t need to be totally strict, if its totally strict its easier to miss something also you build up a standardization of the way of working and that can also be dangerous because you follow the rules you don’t look at the side, beside.”

B: “And what is more important for you a good team spirit or a challenging task?”
8: “Both are important, I mean it’s important to have a good team spirit, otherwise you don’t want to go to work and, but if you don’t have an exciting task it’s the same, you don’t want to go to work either, so work should be fun, it should not be something to survive for the money, it should be something that you like to do, I think that’s very important.”

B: “And during your project work were there rewards given to the team or the individual team members?”

8: “Yeah, to actually to the team once.”

B: “And do you agree with the way you do it here?

8: “Yes, of course.”

B: “You don’t get a reward when you do something outstanding?”

8: “It was quite outstanding I mean we … did connect different areas in the world from Sweden, I mean we are a small site far away up north and that’s probably what they say, but we made one programme to a very good success, and so, yeah, I agree, it was good, it was good because it was not a greater exhaust, it was the total, the seating, interior and so, we got to one programme reward and that’s good.”

B: “And now we want to know something very different from you, did you receive any kind of training before you worked in international teams?”

8: “No. What do you mean by training, is experience training.”

B: “Like make a language education or an intercultural training or some does and don’ts, what you should do in Germany and what you should not do.”

8: “No, no, no not for working with the Germans, some, just a speech before we went to Japan or Korea how to react in that.”

B: “And would you like to receive some training or more information?”

8: “No, just some information, I think its good to know how are people is thinking, I mean I don’t know how a Japanese guy is thinking and I don’t understand the culture really.”

B: “So would it help you for example if you could talk to colleagues who worked with Japanese before?”

8: “Yeah, cuz then I had a speech with people who have been working with Japanese before, before I went over there and they told me how I should be dressed and how I should act in front of a customer and those cultural things, don’t do things so they will loose their face and yeah, and it’s also, it’s hard to change the culture, I mean we are honest to each other here and not being honest to them and also then you miss lots of your message that you want to give them if you don’t push them and maybe let the loose their face sometimes, I mean if they don’t understand they will never react, but on the other way, if you pose them a question if they understand, but they don’t understand then they will loose their face and … . But the difference in the culture between Sweden, Germany I don’t feel it is that big so we don’t need to have that knowledge anyway, I think also German people are quite strong people they manager to take if we don’t do
things.”

B: “And when, or maybe other nations, when would you like to receive the training, before or during the projects?”

8: “Before, definitely, so that I go in with open eyes and understand what I should do, I mean it can be the first meeting that you make a mess of it I think.”

B: “And are there any kind of other factors that supported the project work, like your organizational culture, that there are some things clear all around the world, or that the senior management provided some help, or the HR department, or technical equipment, other colleagues or a certain department?”

8: “No, what I mean what I think about is that our colleagues that we should work with in Germany they need to understand how we work in Sweden, what we believe how we want to act, and so on that I think that’s important, but no tools or things like that, I hardly see it, but maybe give them a lesson to understand what’s important for us. I mean as I say family life and you only have some light hours during the winter time and you see that you have some light outside and that is little, we have three months in Sweden which are nice, June to August and we want to have as much free time as possible in those months and the rest of the world they are working, we don’t see the sun that much, we don’t have it, of course. I think that is important for other people who comes here and make them understand, that has been one part with our managing director, he doesn’t understand why we stop and go home in time because that is not really the way in Germany often you stay one or two hours extra in some cases. Maybe not cause of you need it, but to do that little extra.”

B: “After or during the project were there any actions taken to enhance the work or to ensure that the project will be successful?”

8: “Yeah, this is what we call lessons learned, we have a lessons learned meeting with all the team members that’s been involved we are writing down in a database everything and collect everything which was good or bad, excuse me, we collect everything that was bad and needs to be improved, so we have a white book, or yeah and something were we can also go in and see what we did good well in the programme, mistakes we are recording in the database.”

B: “You do this already during the project or just at the end?”

8: “At the end.”

B: “So during the project there is nothing?”

8: “No, no not in the schedule for, and that is built in to our programme management system that we should have this in the end. What is build also in the system is that during the programme we should go into this database and look if we can find something that we can use for our programme from other programmes that have been performed as well.”

B: “You should do that or you actually do that?”

8: “We do, we do, that is build our … system.”

B: “And is there anything you miss in the project work that you would like to improve?”
8: “I don’t know, of course you see things when you are in it, but it’s hard to say, you need to be in it to see that, of course there will be lot of things, but I can’t put a thing on right now.”

B: “And now we are already at the last question, would you like in the future to work in German Swedish project teams again?”

8: “Yeah, it would be a stable job. And as I say we are very like each other and than we are to when it comes to France, definitely.”