In this chapter we will define culture, intercultural communication and Global Citizenship. Culture is learned. Culture influences the way we think, feel and behave. It even shapes our perception and influences our judgment of others. We are not always aware of the impact of culture on the way we communicate. The aim of this chapter is to become more aware of our own culture, how it influences our communication, and how we can become better intercultural communicators in an interconnected world, as true Global Citizens.

1.1   What is Culture? Visible and Invisible Culture

According to the interculturalist Edgar Schein, culture consists of layers, like an onion.

1. Artefacts of Culture
2. Norms and Values
3- Basic Assumptions

1. The outer layer, or material culture, we call *artefacts of culture*. Artefacts are the first things you notice when entering a new country. Foreigners arriving in the Netherlands notice: the bicycle lanes, large windows and open curtains, the tall people, and how they dress. They notice that a lot of Dutch people eat bread and drink milk at lunchtime. The first time you enter a new company, you'll notice the artefacts: company logo, company house-style, and whether or not the employees wear ties. Artefacts are easy to perceive, and they're nice to know, but intercultural communication is not going to be about artefacts.

2. The second layer we call the *norms and values*. They are written and unwritten standards of correct, desired behaviour. ls it the norm to arrive in class a few minutes early, exactly on time or is it the custom to be a few minutes late? Is 3 minutes late acceptable and 10 minutes not? These are examples of norms. Values express what we think is good or right. For example, is it good to stand up for an elderly person on a crowded bus? Is it right to send a card or make a phone call to a classmate who is ill? Norms and values are not as visible as artefacts. It takes some time to notice, let alone learn them. But with the necessary effort and observation, they can be learned.

3. The deepest layer is that of the *basic assumptions*. They are abstract and invisible, we learn them very young- before we are 7-and we are unaware of their influence.

Yet the perception of the world around us, and the judgements we make about others, are very much shaped or distorted by the basic assumptions of our culture. Intercultural communication is about bringing basic assumptions of our own culture to our awareness and to recognise the basic assumptions of other cultures. This is in order to communicate creatively and more effectively with people from other cultures, to use cultural diversity at work as a source of inspiration and growth, and to achieve cultural synergy. In chapter 5 of this book we will present a 3-step strategy on how to achieve cultural synergy.
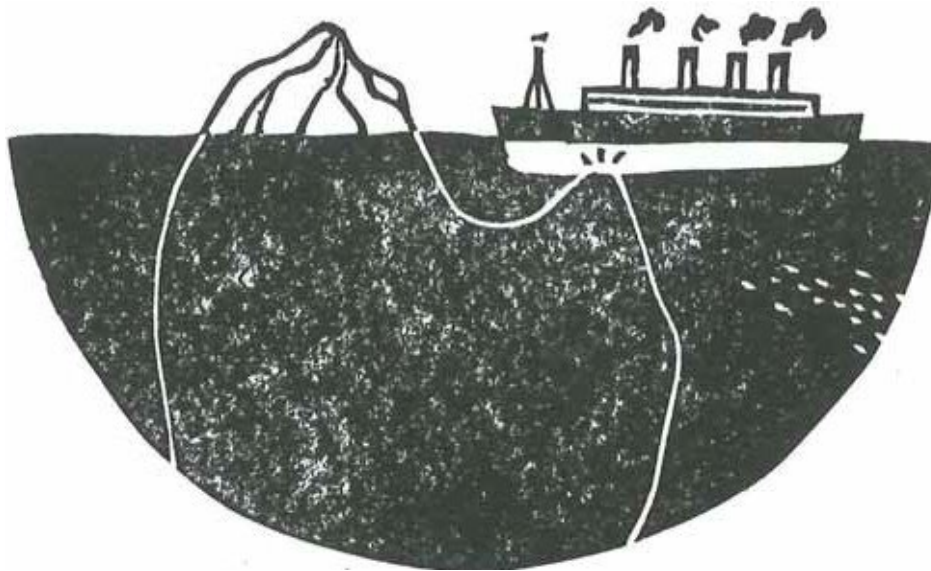
Cultural iceberg

1.2 Definition of Culture

This book is not going to be about Culture with the capital C such as literature, art, music, theatre, museums and architecture. It is about culture with the little c. It is about the familiar way we think, feel and behave. How we learned this and shape the meaning of it with other members of our society. The list of definitions of culture is endless. The table below gives four definitions. We have chosen this short definition by interculturalists Geert Hofstede:

> *"Culture is the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one group (…) of people from another."*

Some Definitions of Culture

1. Edgar Schein defines culture as... "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and Internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." (Schein, 2004)

2. Mijnd Huijser defines culture as ... "a group's set of shared norms and values expressed in the behaviour of the group's members." (Huijser, 2006)

3. Fons Trompenaars: "Culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems." (Trompenaars & Hampden Turner, 1998)

4. Geert Hofstede: "Culture is the collective programming of the human mind, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." (Hofstede, 1991)

1.3   Cultural Programming

Culture is learned. Hofstede calls it *programming*. You could also call it 'learning', like Edgar Schein does. We are programmed through upbringing, socialization, norms and values, and perception.

A lot of programming comes with our *upbringing*. Take a simple handshake. There's nothing natural about it. No child would dream of shaking hands unless it was programmed to do so. "Be a good boy, be a good girl now, shake hands." This is repeated and drilled so often that you end up thinking that shaking hands is normal.

A lot of other things we learn through *socialization,* by interacting with others. To stay with the handshake, do you give a limp handshake? A firm one? A crunch? Through socialization you learn just how firm a desirable handshake is, and even the right smile and amount of eye contact to go with it. ln Europe, a firm handshake is desirable. And you would associate a limp hand with weakness of character. ln many Asian countries, firm handshakes are seen as aggressive, and people find a modest, gentle handshake more polite. We are also programmed through norms and values. If we value showing respect for older people, and the norm is to give your seat to an elderly person on the bus, you will feel good when you stand up for someone older, and feel uneasy if you don't. In some countries the norm is to give up your seat to children, because children are small and vulnerable.

Finally, part of the programming happens through *perception*. Just by looking around us we make conscious or unconscious choices about how we want to behave.

Does programming reduce us to cultural robots then? No. Regardless of culture, each person is a unique individual and makes choices, for example, to follow or to deviate from the cultural group norms.

There are three levels of programming:

Individual
Cultural
Human Nature

If we haven't eaten for days, human nature makes us look for something to eat and devour it with our hands! That we decide to put the food on a plate and eat it with fork and knife is our cultural programming. However, individuals may choose not to use fork and knife, regardless of their cultural programming or what society thinks. Similarly, in some cultures, your programming teaches you always to share food with others and never to eat on your own. There too, individuals may choose to eat it up all by themselves, regardless of the community's disapproval or possible sanctions.

Now let's move on to the word *collective*.

1.4   Culture and Subcultures

If "Culture is the connective mental programming of the human mind", *collective* indicates the group or subgroups we belong to. It does not mean that the whole country is one big group, or shares one set of cultural patterns. On the contrary, there are a lot of subgroups or subcultures we belong to: a regional culture, middle-class culture, or company culture, each with their different programming.

Here is a list of possible subcultures:
   A continent (Asian culture, American culture)
   A country (the Chinese culture, the Somalian culture)
   Ethnic (the culture of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, such as the Indonesian, Surinam, Moroccan or Turkish culture)
   Regional (for example the Andalusian, the Basque or the Catalan culture in Spain)
   Urban or rural culture

Religion (Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist culture)
Social class (middle-class culture, for example)
Gender (the culture of men, women, the LGBT culture)
Age (culture of young people, of the baby-boomers, or the pre-war generation)
Profession (health-care, engineering, or economics and management culture)
Hobby (the culture of hockey, soccer, stamp collectors, chess-players, salsa dancers, gamers or gardeners)
Corporate (differences between cultures of the Utrecht University and Utrecht University of Applied Sciences.)

The list is fairly complete, but not exhaustive.

It is good to be aware of differences as well as similarities and overlaps in our subcultures. And to have an open attitude for understanding multiple identities and a collective identity. Dutch and international students at the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, involved in a management simulation game called lntopia, found that their professional interest was such a uniting factor, that it helped them transcend their initial national and regional cultural differences. They worked together outstandingly.

Culturally diverse teams. Are they the worst or the best? Both. If left unmanaged, and when cultural differences are ignored, culturally diverse teams can have a lot of problems understanding each other and coming to an agreement. If managed and trained in intercultural sensitivity, and when cultural differences are appreciated, they tum out to be the most creative and dynamic teams. We will expand on this in chapter 8.
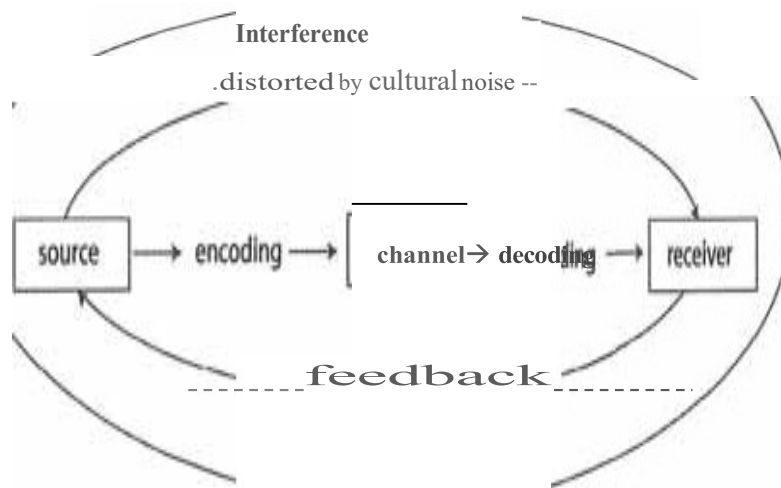
1.5   lntercultural Communication

Communication is the exchange of meaning. If you want to give information to another person, *you* are the source. Your information is encoded by using the appropriate language, gestures or nonverbal expressions. It is transmitted through a channel, which is the medium for communication. In face-to-face verbal communication it is the air and the space between you, if it is written communication it is paper, with e-mails the medium is electronic. The receiver decodes your message and responds or gives feedback, once again encoding the response. You decode it. The whole process of communication is an on-going, circular process.

All communication takes place within a context, for example, in a business context or a family context. A crisis situation is another context. And an international setting has an intercultural context.

Intercultural communication is the communication between sources and receivers from different cultures, and good intercultural communication requires an intercultural sensitive attitude, cultural knowledge, as well as skills in frame-of- reference-shifting. In short, it requires intercultural competence. Because culture has its impact on every point in the communication circles: encoding, decoding, feedback and choice of medium. A well-intended message, well coded in one culture, can have a totally different meaning, even a very rude one, when decoded in another culture. Or when transmitted through the wrong channel - for example by e-mail instead of face-to-face. We are often unaware of this, because it involves cultural differences in the deepest, invisible layer of culture- the basic assumptions. Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this book bring these cultural basic assumptions to our awareness, as key concepts, as values and as dimensions. Chapter *6* contributes to developing intercultural sensitivity and frame-of-reference-shifting skills, so that we can communicate in international settings with greater intercultural competence.

Sometimes misunderstanding is caused by what we call 'noise' in the communication.

Intercultural communication