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Culture, Negotiation and Politics - A Youth Perspective -

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Introduction

The following essay grew out of a series of seminars held at University of Bayreuth on “Negotiation and Mediation” by Prof. Dr. Schüssler and Gina Fritsche in the fall of 2004.

During the seminars, we discussed in detail the Harvard Concept of Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patton¹. The book offers guidelines for successful negotiation. In my own experiences in youth politics, I had the feeling that some of the recommendations given by the Harvard Concept were useful, but it did not address how much culture influences our perceptions of negotiation.

With politics as a particular field of negotiation, I want to explore how culture influences negotiations in a political context, or in other words, I discuss the culture-politics link. Three methods are used: a political analysis, an abstraction from observations and a research through a survey. Each method is used to highlight different aspects of the culture-politics link. I also hope to avoid methodological and theoretical fallacies through using each of the methods.

In the first chapter of this essay, I describe the development of the science of negotiation and why culture is sometimes neglected. The chapter connects the above-mentioned seminar and this essay.

In the second chapter, I give an overview of definitions of culture and recent research on that topic. The chapter shows the dilemma of any social scientist in the field of cultural research.

In the third chapter, I describe the connection between culture, politics and negotiation. The chapter describes the dualism of culture and politics and motivates my methodology.

The fourth chapter analyses the ASEM process to illustrate the culture-politics links. My own personal experiences and the literature on ASEM hint at strong cultural differences between Asia and Europe which the political process unearthed. The chapter gives arguments for a strong culture-politics link.

In the fifth chapter, I discuss my own experiences with negotiations in youth politics and the role of culture. The chapter lists my doubts concerning a strong culture-politics link and serves as an argument for a weak culture-politics link.

In the sixth chapter, I present the results from the survey are given and discussed whether the results support a strong or a weak culture-politics link.

Two remarks before I start. First a technical one: All comments used in the essay are either references to other literature (footnotes) or personal remarks (endnotes). A detailed appendix gives more information on the survey.

¹ Fisher (1991)

My second remark concerns the people that I would like to thank www.takingitglobal.orgⁱ for hosting the survey and supporting me in the implementation of the questionnaire. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Gabriele Cappai of University of Bayreuth for valuable comments on the questionnaire and Gina Fritsche for good advice for literature to get started on the topic as well as for her patience with the implementation and analysis of the survey. I very much appreciated the help of various organisations and youth NGOs who distributed the survey in their networksⁱⁱ. And finally, I am grateful for many valuable comments by friends and family.

1. Development of science of negotiations

Motivation of negotiation science

At the heart of many social sciences is a central question: “Why and how do people decide things they way they do it?”

To answer this question, psychology (and cognitive science) examines the *intrinsic* motives and sociology the *external* motivation of people (individually or in a group). Decision and game theory provides a framework for assessing the decision of *rational* agents, anthropology on the other hand has looked at how much tradition, customs, and other *non-rational* behaviourⁱⁱⁱ, are shaping decisions.

The science of history deals with how decisions were obtained in the *past*, while political philosophy (and philosophy as such) discusses how decision ought to be taken in the *future*, both academic fields were influenced by the aforementioned sciences. Political philosophy especially answers to the question of the *desired institutional framework* of political, economical, and individual decisions. Political science and economic science analyse *existing institutional frameworks* and their impact on decisions.

In the last century, two new fields of scientific research have unfolded. Both are relevant to the topic of this essay. The science of leadership focuses on the *decision-makers*, while the science of negotiation focuses on the *methods* of decision-making.

The science of leadership emerged at the beginning of the 20th century. It was inspired by the attention of 19th century historians on historic persons. Personal character traits of political, cultural and economic leaders and how these leaders shaped their environment were discussed. In the second half of the 20th century, the science of leadership concentrated on the methods of leaders to implement decisions.² This gradual shift of attention opened the path to create the science of negotiation. Less the individual persons in negotiations, but more the methods used in negotiations (preceding decisions) are of interest.

The science of negotiations gives valuable insights in problems in negotiation and

² Antonakis et al. (2004), pp 6n, provides an overview and a history of leadership research.

solutions for overcoming these problems, but from a scientific point of view most of the literature does not offer valuable conclusion. The Harvard Concept does not give scientific evidence for its guidelines. None of the advices of the authors was proven in systematic research, for example through monitored group discussions psychologists and sociologists use.

The book consists of a melange of common-sense guidelines, mixed with invented or real examples. Unlike other negotiations guidelines, it refrains from advising the reader to manipulate discussions (or outcomes of discussions) through threats, coercive behaviour or other trickery.

Instead it shows the advantages of win-win-solutions, it helps to develop a different negotiating style by focusing the attention on common goals of the negotiators.³

Intercultural Negotiation

The Harvard Negotiation Project provides universal guidelines for negotiations⁴, but negotiations are embedded in interrelated contexts (such as culture, but also political and economic frameworks).

The Harvard Concept advises negotiators to separate the solution of problems and the relation to the other human beings. According to the authors, human relations should not be forgotten, but treated differently than the to-be-resolved problem.⁵ Negotiators in conflict situations should try to 'step into the shoes' of the counterpart, attempting to see the conflict from their perception. They should analyse the communication between the negotiators and consider the available choices of both parties.⁶

In intercultural contexts these advices are sometimes difficult to follow. All of us are born into a specific culture; most of us grew up in that culture, many of us work and live in their culture. To see an issue from the perspective of another culture needs first-of-all knowledge about that culture, but even more it needs the ability to 'think and feel' from that cultural perspective, which is a demanding task for many people.

It helps that other cultures are fascinating; therefore negotiation guidelines for different cultural contexts⁷ were developed and absorbed by negotiators. The amount of literature on negotiations in cultural contexts multiplied; books and articles on "How to negotiate with ..." (insert any nationality and cultural group imaginable) were published.⁸

Yet again, from a scientific point of view, the literature does not meet scientific standards. Hypotheses are not validated through systematic and scientific research, the theoretic background remains vague. Most sociologists agree that 'culture' is very difficult to describe and to model, but the negotiation literature often adopts a very simplistic understanding of 'culture', 'values' and 'behaviour'. The Harvard Concept (and other

³ Fisher (1991), p. xviii

⁴ Fisher (1991) is advertised on the back cover as "a straightforward universally applicable method for negotiating personal and professional disputes".

⁵ Fisher (2002), pp.45n

⁶ Fisher (1996), pp. 19-66

⁷ Weiss (1994a) specifically discusses approaches of adopting negotiating style to another culture.

⁸ Salacuse (1998b), p.222 points to a bibliography of such literature at Salacuse (1991)

intercultural negotiation literature) does not provide a comprehensive understanding or scientific discussions of culture, or even a coherent theory of human interaction in a given context.

The criticism is valid, but misses the point. Negotiation literature provides hands-on tools and strategies to become aware of cultural differences and overcome intercultural barriers.⁹ Such an aim allows restricting an analysis to a rather narrow-minded definition of 'culture' and adapting methods to that aim.

2. Culture and Negotiations

Definition of culture

Culture has been at the heart of many researches in social sciences, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science.¹⁰ It is very difficult to find a coherent definition of 'culture' or even a consistent use of the term.¹¹

Some scholars have tried to distinguish between the academic use and the pragmatic use of the term 'culture'.¹² Others have made a distinction between the aspect of 'culture' that relates to values and beliefs¹³, and the aspect that relates to behaviour¹⁴. Others have defined 'culture' negatively by stating what 'culture' is not, for instance 'culture' is not biologically inherited¹⁵. Still some others have connected the definition of 'culture' to the function that it has for society¹⁶, for an individual¹⁷ or for the scientific community¹⁸.

The concept of 'culture' is difficult to describe because of its ambiguity¹⁹, its explanatory

⁹ Janosik (1995), pp. 243-244

¹⁰ Theorists have been using culture to explain social and political life for over 2000 years. Almond (1990) cited in Lockhart et al (2000), p. XV. An overview of a few hundreds concepts of culture can be found in Kroeber et al. (1952), cited in Kim (1964), p.313

¹¹ As Kaplan (1964) points out, this is not a problem since different definitions allow researches to explain various different dependent variables. Kaplan (1964), cited in Lockhart et al (2000), p. XV

¹² Janosik (1995), pp. 243-244, Salacuse (1998b), p.222

¹³ Lewicki (2003), p.201; Faure (1993), p.3 cited in Salacuse (1998b), p.222

¹⁴ Weiss (1994a), p.51, Leschke (1999), p.519 defines culture as an extended set of informal rules that together with the formal rules channels individual behaviour

¹⁵ Salacuse (1998b), p.222 points to Hoebel (1972)

¹⁶ The different functions of 'culture' for *societies* are diverse and would normally deserve a chapter of their own, but due to space I will only provide a few examples:

- Conflict-Solving: Schein says statement "Culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas." Schein (1985), cited in Trompenaars (1997), p.6.
- Definition of Boundaries: Ross argues that culture defines group boundaries and organizes actions within and between them, cited in Lockhart et al (2000), p.45
- Mobilisation of Resources: Ross explains that culture provides resources for political organisation and mobilisation, cited in Lockhart et al (2000), p.48

¹⁷ What was said on the functions for *societies*, can be said about the different functions of 'culture' for *individuals* as well, there is not enough space in this paper to provide an elaborated discussion, but here are a few examples:

- Connection of individual identity and group identity: Ross argues, that culture links group identities and individual identities, cited in Lockhart et al (2000), pp.44n
- Shaping individual identity: Janosik explains how culture can function in a dialectical way, when opposing cultures shape an individuals identity, Janosik (1995), p. 239 points to such explanations in American culture (Kammen (1973)) and Japanese culture (Blaker (1977))
- Provide guidelines for perceiving behaviour: Hanges argues that initially culture provides only a guidance to perceive and interpret behaviour of other persons thus reducing the amount of cognitive resources required for understanding, but after many repetitions these patters of perception become so self-enforcing that they shape behaviour. Hanges et al. (2000), cited in Antonakis et al. (2004)

¹⁸ David Elkins and Richard Simeon argue that culture can explain why two groups with the same economic, religious and social characteristics differ, cited in Lockhart et al (2000), pp.24n

¹⁹ Lane (2002), p.23

importance, its generality in application²⁰ and its diverse usage in ordinary language. The meanings of 'culture'^{iv} are for example:

- a) personal dispositions of individuals ('Vietnamese people are shy')
- b) values and beliefs ('Malaysians have a great respect for family structures')
- c) motivation for behaviour ('Italian men always want to flirt')
- d) individual behaviour
 - I. unbiased individual behaviour ('I know somebody who has a British humour')
 - II. biased individual behaviour ('She's a woman of culture, she knows etiquette.')
- e) group behaviour and traditions ('Scottish like Bag-Piping')
- f) artefacts
 - I. individual artefacts ('Vine and cheese are typical for French culture.')
 - II. group artefacts such as political institutions ('Hierarchies are typical for Asia')
- g) individual identities ('I am proud to be American')
- h) group identities ('Europeans belong to the occidental culture.')

As Depending on the aim of the research, the term 'culture' is employed consisting of one or several of the above aspects.

Research of intercultural negotiations

There is not sufficient space to provide a summary of the past research on intercultural negotiation; only a categorisation will be attempted here.²¹

The literature on intercultural negotiation can be divided into four parts: literature dealing with a specific culture ('How to negotiate with...'), cross-cultural comparison of negotiation styles, discussions on the theoretical background of intercultural negotiation, and methodological discussions of intercultural negotiation research.

'How to negotiate with...'-literature²² is mostly using a dwell-and-tell-method^v, that is authors who have lived in another culture or dealt consistently with people from other countries, will tell their individual stories and try to draw general conclusions about that culture from these experiences.^{vi}

Cross-cultural comparisons contrast the cultures of two different nations, regions and continents, or are aimed at worldwide assessment of culture. The theoretic foundation for global cross-cultural comparisons was given by the anthropologists Kluckohn and Strodtbeck²³ who identified five categories of problems. These problems were identical in all cultures, but the solutions to these problems were different in each culture.

If 'culture' is represented by solutions to problems, then the next theoretical step is

²⁰ Kim (1964), p.314 cites Kroeber et al. (1952)

²¹ An overview of intercultural negotiation research, but linked to leadership research is given by Hartog and Dickson in Antonakis et al.(2004), p. 249n

²² Salacuse (1998b), p.222 points to a bibliography of such literature at Salacuse (1991)

²³ Kluckhohn/Strodtbeck(1961) cited in Trompenaars (1997), p. 26 The five categories are: relationship of individual to others, temporal focus of human life, modality of human activity, human being's relation to nature and character of innate human nature.

obvious: culture is seen as shared values, behaviour patterns or both of these. In most of the world-wide cross-cultural comparisons this simplified understanding of culture is applied.

The next methodological step is to identify several dimensions of culture, these dimensions are tested on the basis of questionnaires, the answers grouped by nationality, averaged and ranked in terms of their score on each dimension.^{vii}

This technique avoids the subjectivity of the 'dwell-and-tell'-method and made comparisons between cross-cultural studies possible, but there are three major disadvantages of this technique:

- Through identifying dimensions of culture, it is necessary to define culture explicitly. Using the dwell-and-tell-method, the reasoning for a certain understanding of culture is implicit, even a certain cultural bias is accepted. The explicit definition exposed the conceptual problems of the term 'culture'.
- The employment of a questionnaire is linked to a number of methodological problems: the translation of the questions might change the meaning; questions grouped together are more likely to be answered similar by respondents; the method of questionnaires is more familiar and accepted in some cultures than in other cultures etc. The detailed preparation and pre-testing of the survey methods were necessary in order to avoid unwanted biases.
- To obtain meaningful conclusions, the number of respondents needed to exceed a certain minimum number, however it is difficult to contact and interview from different cultural contexts. Only recently means of communication through the internet were developed, for instance in the 80ies all respondents needed to be searched by normal mail, which is very difficult in some countries. Even with internet and email today, already a sample of five hundred respondents is difficult to achieve, but most major cross-cultural comparisons have a sample of at least several thousand respondents.

A few studies tried to overcome these theoretical and methodological difficulties.

One of the first one to identify dimensions of culture was the study of Hofstede²⁴ in 1980 (and later in 1991 and 2001). He questioned about 100.000 IBM employees from 40 countries. Academically innovative was the idea to study whether certain values were correlated and examining whether there are clusters of values and behaviour which are similar across cultures. Hofstede identified four such clusters or cultural dimensions. In his study he showed that each country had a cultural profile represented by the positions on the cultural dimensions.

One of the criticisms was that Hofstede did not consider cultural change²⁵. In 1981 and in 1990, the World Value Survey²⁶ by Ronald Inglehart addressed this criticism and aimed at showing the link between cultural change and political change. The sample consisted of about 600.000 people representing 70% of the world population. The World Value Survey shows

²⁴ Hofstede (1980)

²⁵ Antonakis et al (2004), p. 256

²⁶ Inglehart (1998)

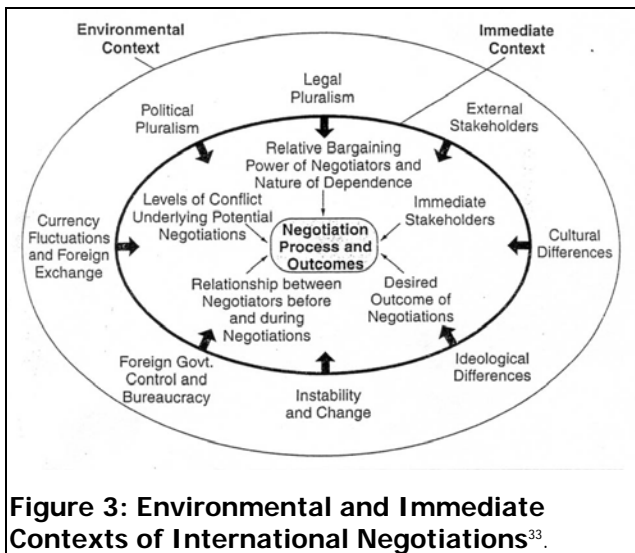
The researcher on cross-cultural comparisons faces a dilemma: literature offering pragmatic guidelines to cross-cultural comparisons hardly fulfils scientific standards, but literature fulfilling these standards is virtually useless to people facing intercultural negotiations.

One possible way out of this dilemma is to combine several methodological approaches and use a comprehensive definition of 'culture'. I propose the following definition: culture is a multidimensional, multi-stage, interactive process that enables humans to reduce oral and written communications by organising perceptions of themselves and others, and use these culture-filtered perceptions to identify conflicts, solve problems and motivate behaviour.

3. Connections between culture, politics and negotiations

To explain the culture-politics link in detail, one would need to burrow deep into political philosophy and sociological theory. The culture-politics link connects to a series of other theoretical issues. The relationship between individual and society; the modes of identity of individuals; the project of modernity and its supposed transcendence into post-modernity; traditional, secular or post-materialistic value patterns; the assumed predictability and determinedness of cultural, political and economic change; the claim of cultural conflicts and an alleged clash of civilisations; these are only a few keywords that would have to be described and discussed, but this essay cannot provide the space for such a discussion.³²

Instead I focus on the direct impact of culture on negotiations in a political context, which allows me to considerably narrow the discussion. As explained in the last chapter, the impact of culture on individual behaviour is widely confirmed. In particular, culture in a



negotiation context plays a vital role, but it is not the only determinant. Other factors also shape individual behaviour in a negotiation context. Phatak and Habib divide these factors into two spheres, the environmental context and the immediate context. The immediate context includes "factors over which the negotiators have influence and some measure of control", while the environmental context includes "forces [...] that are beyond the control of either party".³⁴

The authors place culture in the environmental context because culture is to some extent beyond the control of the individuals. This framework understands cultural similarities functioning like a 'silent language' in which individual behaviour can be meaningfully

³² Ingelhart(1998) provides a good theoretical discussions how studies like the World Value Survey confirm a modern version of the classic Modernisation Theory developed in variations by Marx or Weber.

³³ Lewicki et al (2003), p. 205; Phatak (1996), pp.30-38; Salacuse (1998a), pp.5-13

³⁴ Phatak(1996), p. 30, cited in Lewicki et al (2003), p. 205

interpreted. For instance in Western Europe we interpret a nodding of the head as a sign of consent.^{viii} In such a framework, cultural differences are seen as an obstacle to successful negotiations (consider for instance the different meanings of the phrasing “Yes” in Japan or in America, in America it means approval, in Japan it only indicates understanding).

Culture as an extrinsic factor of the negotiation procedure is used in most literature on negotiation, most often because it is a pragmatic one. But it should not be forgotten that culture itself can be an issue to be negotiated. If two people sit together at a table to discuss in a polite and rational way a conflict between them, it implies already a cultural assumption: ‘a debate based on rational arguments is the best way to solve a dispute’. This does not need to be true; maybe a good screaming at each other, a hug or a bottle of whiskey will settle a dispute just as well.^{ix}

With an extrinsic understanding of culture, the connection between politics and culture is not completely described. If ‘politics’ is defined as a process of negotiation in a political context then politics is only a particular instance of negotiations; culture would influence politics similar how culture influences negotiations. From this can be inferred that culture is something that politics cannot influence or control, which in turn implies that culture cannot be changed by political activities.

However, is this true? Admittedly, there have been attempts to change cultures through political actions, but these attempts were not very successful or had to rely on violence and terror. On the other hand, consider a country where politics are subject to bribe and corruption; would that not influence the culture of that country? Or is the political corruption the result of a corruptive culture?

The confusion arises from the fact that politics belongs to the environmental context of a negotiation process (where politics would be represented for instance in the political and legal system), but also belongs to the immediate context.

The culture-politics link has two sides: on one side culture influences both the negotiation process and thus influences politics as an instance of negotiations. On the other side, it has its impacts on the environmental context as well. It influences the design of institutions, it influences personal relations between people in a social hierarchy, it influences how people interact, and it influences their aims and many other factors in the negotiation process.

Unlike most negotiation literature, I do not see the culture-politics link as one-dimensional, but unlike most sociological and philosophical literature I refrain from describing a multi-dimensional culture-politics link, simply because a two dimensional culture-politics link is a more meaningful tool for my discussion. To describe the culture-politics link, I use three different approaches: a political analysis using the example of the ASEM process, an abstraction of my observations in youth politics and an international survey concerning the expectations of

youth activists towards youth conferences to reflect the different political cultures.

The benefits are clear: The political analysis is not as subjective as my personal experiences and does not rely solely on statistical data. My experiences are subjective, but provide a personal dimension that neither the survey nor the political analysis can give. The survey is more objective and neutral, but lacks the theoretical background of the political analysis and the pragmatic approach of my observations. Each method is unique in what it can academically achieve and what it cannot. Only all three of them together can avoid the dilemma discussed at the end of the second chapter.

4. The culture-politics link in ASEM

The Asian-European Meeting (ASEM) is a meeting of head of states of the European Union and of ASEAN, the Association of South-East Asian Nations.^x ASEM has changed over the years, from an informal symbolic meeting to strengthen the ties between the two continents, to a formal meeting with a specific agenda and increasing intergovernmental cooperation.³⁵

In the literature on the ASEM process it is argued that in the beginning of ASEM, the informal symbolic structure was asked for by the Asian countries.³⁶ This Asian method of intergovernmental cooperation is characterized by informality, consensus, pragmatism and flexibility; lean cooperation; and regional resilience³⁷. Rüländ claims that "ASEAN has cultivated a highly informal negotiation style that seeks to avoid tough bargaining, confrontations, embarrassments, and majority decisions."³⁸

This is said to "reflect the region's political culture which accords a much stronger role to the executive and political leaders"³⁹. Political leaders from Asia prefer to cooperate on personal basis and are reluctant to give power to supra-national organisations. The main function of ASEAN is to coordinate and technically prepare the meetings⁴⁰, it has very little to say on the policy-making of its member states. ASEAN meetings are staged to convey an image of friendship, solidarity and cooperation among the member states. There are political disputes, but these disputes are usually solved in a so-called "track two"-process, an informal dialogue between academics, senior officials and diplomats organised by the regions Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), which allows the debate of sensitive issues without damaging official relations.⁴¹

Alternatively, the European approach to cooperation is characterized by codification,

³⁵ Yeo (2003), pp. 67-82

³⁶ *ibid*, pp. 72n, Yeo Lay Hwee mentions the different expectations that political leaders from Europe and Asia had, Europeans wanted to discuss a number of controversial issues, such as Human Rights, Trade Politics and Foreign Politics, while the Asian leaders wanted to confirm and strengthen existing agreements on Economic issues. The agenda agreed upon reflected more the Asian expectations.

³⁷ Rüländ (1996), p. 11. See also Footnote 45

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 11, cf. Dosch (1994)

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 11

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 12

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 12, on the "track two"-process. Rüländ mentions Kerr, Pauline (1994): *The Security Dialogue in the Asia Pacific*, in the *Pacific Review*, Vol.7, No4, 1994, pp. 397-409; Ball, Desmond (1994), *A New Era in Confidence Building: The Second Track Process in the Asia Pacific Region*, in *Security Dialogue*, Vol 25, no 2, June 1994, pp.157-176; Ball, Desmond (1993), *The Evolution of "Second Track" Process in a Regional Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific Region (CSCAP)*, Kuala Lumpur 1993

institutionalisation and supranationality.⁴² The European Union has an immense influence on the policy making of the member states, which have agreed to transfer power on substantive issues to the supranational level. The political dispute is often carried out through the public sphere, especially through media. For example, the French president Jacques Chirac said on the dispute between 'Old' and 'New' Europe on the Iraq conflict: "They [the new member states of the European Union] have missed a good opportunity to keep their mouth shut"⁴³. Such a direct affront would not have been possible in Asian politics, because it implies an insult to political leaders of other countries.

According to a range of scholars, the differences in intergovernmental cooperation in ASEN make the differences between Asian and European culture visible. Negotiation style and political institutions in Asia and Europe are strongly influenced by the Asian and European culture,⁴⁴ a strong culture-politics link is claimed. Accordingly, Asians focus more on furthering the aims of collectives, while Europeans focus more on the aims of individuals⁴⁵. Asians value themselves as part of a collective and are hesitant to disvalue a collective through open dispute, Europeans value themselves as individuals and have no problem to disharmonize a collective by furthering their interest. These cultural findings seem to be supported by some of the cross-cultural studies mentioned in the second chapter.

However, some scholars are very hesitant about this kind of one-dimensional characterisation⁴⁶, they point to the history of collective culture by socialist movements in Europe or the upcoming individualist business culture in Asia.⁴⁷ I will discuss some sceptical arguments concerning cultural differences between Asia and Europe in chapter 5.

But even if Asian and European culture are not as distinct as assumed, the notion of European and Asian values remains as a powerful tool in politics to shape public perceptions of political processes. When it comes to political conflicts, it is easier to adhere to a conflict between 'arrogant' Europeans or 'totalitarian' Asians than admitting diverging economical interests, for example. I think, Political scientists should be aware of manipulative side-effects in accepting a strong culture-politics link.

⁴² Rüländ (1996), p.7

⁴³ The original remark delivered at the press conference after the EU Summit in Brussels on February 17th 2003 was: „Donc, je crois qu'ils ont manqué une bonne occasion de se taire." which translates into „Well, I believe they missed a good opportunity to remain silent.", but given the rough tone delivered at the press conference, the other translation conveys the meaning better. URL: http://www.ambafrance-ro.org/article-imprim.php3?id_article=467 [2005-03-30]

⁴⁴ Lim (2002), pp.3n, Lawson (2002), pp. 2n

⁴⁵ G. Almond cites in Lockhart et al (2000), p.14 a study by Lucian Pye (1985) who showed that Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam to paternalistic and consensual political patterns throughout Asia, which would in my opinion result in a consensual negotiation style as described above. But on the other hand, Donald Emmerson (cited Lockhart et al (2000), p.119) quotes from the study of Trompenaars (1994), pp. 51-53, how ambiguous such a claim is. In Trompenaars' study people are asked whether they rather support an individualist position or a communitarian position. Most Asian countries ranked communitarianism over liberalism, and most Western countries ranked individualism over communitarianism. But some countries of Asia and Europe didn't fall into that pattern: more people from India valued individual freedoms than in France, the percentage was almost equal in Germany and Japan, and individual freedom was less valued in Switzerland than in Hong Kong.

⁴⁶ Bernstein (1991), p. 93: "We must always strive to avoid a false essentialism when we are trying to understand the traditions to which we belong or those alien traditions that are incommensurable with 'our' traditions. For frequently discussions of East-West lapse into such a false essentialism where we are seduced into thinking that there are essential determinate characteristics that distinguish the Western from the Eastern 'mind'. This false essentialism violently distorts the sheer complexity of overlapping traditions that cut across these artificially simplistic global notions", cited in Lawson (2002), p.4

⁴⁷ Lawson (2002), p.7

The ASEM example shows that culture is used by political scientists as an explanation for differences in political institutions, decision-making structures and negotiation style. In the next part, I want to add to this picture my own perceptions of the link of culture and politics, especially in youth politics.

5. The culture-politics link in Youth politics

Similarities and differences of 'youth'- and 'adult'-politics

There is no global definition of youth, therefore a clear distinction between 'youth'-politics and 'adult' politics^{xi} is difficult. In the United States and in Qatar, 'young' are people below 18 years called, in Japan young people are those above the age of 20. In Micronesia youth starts at age 6, in Malaysia it ends at age 40, in some countries there are official definitions of youth, some countries refrain from such definitions.⁴⁸

Different definitions of youth result in different ages of people who are active in youth NGOs and who are in contact with each other. If a youth council from Asia meets a youth council from Europe, the difference between the two age averages is sometimes fifteen years.

For my definition of youth politics I will employ the youth definition of the United Nations which says that youth is between 15 and 27 years of age. Youth politics are all political negotiations by actors in that age bracket (yet, to the survey I also admitted respondents younger than 15 and older than 27).

I relate to experiences in youth politics, because I was (or still am) active in Student Organisations, Youth Press Organisations and International youth organisations. I personally think that 'youth'-politics are similar to 'adult'-politics in many ways:

Both take place in an organisational context with explicit and implicit rules for the behaviour of the individuals.^{xii} These rules are especially relevant for the making and implementation of decisions within the organisation.

The implicit rules often determine *who* can influence a decision. For instance, in most organisations formally all members of an organisation can run for posts, but only certain people have a realistic chance to be elected. In political organisations (and in youth organisations as well), elections only confirm the informal hierarchy in an organisation.

The explicit rules often determine *how* decisions can be influenced, for example through agenda and voting procedures. Both explicit and implicit rules affect each other. There is no sharp divide between the domains of each set of rules, both shape the political process.

In a political organisation, there is at least a partial and temporary consent of the separation between private and public sphere. Certain areas of behaviour, thinking and values remain within the realm of the individual, certain areas are regulated by the organisation through explicit and implicit rules.^{xiii}

In general, a political organisation has both vertical and horizontal structures,

⁴⁸ See Appendix D

sometimes with different functions within that organisation. Explicit rules clarify which structure is principal and which is agent. Usually this reflects a hierarchy among the individuals, which means that some individuals are elected to have a certain amount of power over other individuals.

The political organisation is formed with a certain aim, the members of such an organisation cannot (or only with difficulties) achieve that aim on their own. The reason is usually a lack of financial or personal capacities to achieve that aim. Individuals transfer some of their own resources to the organisation. To ensure that individual interests are fulfilled and that the limited capacities are effectively used, the above-mentioned decision-making- and decision-implementation-procedures are established.

The aim is a political one; its goal is maintaining or changing a certain aspect of society or human interaction. The political organisation acts as a catalyst for change of the individual interests of the members. Usually, the aim is undisputed, but the methods how to reach that aim are heavily disputed and results sometimes in the break-up of organisations into fractions, coalitions and wings.

The political process of both 'youth'-politics and 'adult'-politics is determined by state institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but the division between state and private actors has weakened. In Asia and Africa, National Youth Councils are almost semi-governmental. Important government officials serve as the presidents or senior advisors of such youth NGOs. In Scandinavia, the youth NGOs are endorsed by the government for taking over some of the duties of the government, such as youth education programmes.

Youth politics is not only of interest to the youth, though it is only one of many policy areas. But there are some countries where youth politics evolved into a major policy area and receives significant public attention.^{xiv}

The main differences between 'youth'-politics and 'adult'-politics are the amount of available resources and the motivation of the members. In most countries, youth NGOs have difficulties to support themselves^{xv}, however this does not seem to hinder the motivation of the young people to pursue their goals.

I go at these lengthy comparisons to motivate the following discussion of my own personal experiences. I have given reasons why there are considerable parallels between 'youth'-politics and 'adult'-politics and I discuss now how culture plays a role both in youth politics.

National level

The first time I heard the phrase "Those have a different culture, and that is why they act different" was not in international youth politics, but in national youth politics. Since age 17, I was active in school student organisations and most of it during my last years of high school and my year of Civil Service where I was elected into the the board of the school student body of one of the federal states, Rhineland-Palatia.

In Germany, schools elect a so-called SchülerInnenvertretung, a school students' body

to represent their interest in discussion with the teachers and the school administration. The details vary from one German federal state to the other, but in general, the students' bodies at school level elect representatives to the regional and state level, which in turn elect representatives to the national level.

Since education politics is a concern of the state level in Germany, the coordination between the school student organisations of different states was infrequent. Efforts were made to cooperate more closely and restart a national school student body, the BundesschülerInnenvertretung. While discussing the institutional framework of the national organisation, differences between the different state school student bodies occurred.

The most controversial issues was whether the new national body should have a say on other things besides school student issues, whether it has an "Allgemeinpolitisches Mandat" or just a "Schulpolitisches Mandat". Proponents argued that a school student bodies should be able to form an opinion on all kinds of issues which affects school students, such as racism, gender policies and even foreign policies.^{xvi}

The opponents claimed school student organisations were solely for expressing the views of school students on education and related issues, they argued that we were not elected for claiming general political views.

Some people claimed that the dispute resulted from a different culture. Most of the opponents came from the East-German-states, where assumedly a different political culture existed which shaped the views on this particular issue. Coalitions were formed, consisting of a few West-German states on one side and the East-German states on the other side. These coalitions were not only opposed on the issue of the mandate, but also on election procedures, on the statutes of the board and a range of other issues. The strong differences seemed to confirm a strong culture-politics link.

I had my doubts. For one, I was born in the East and saw the points in both arguments, but found the proponents side more convincing. Secondly, the opponents were soon supported by other organisations, from Schleswig-Holstein, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. It rather seemed that culture did not matter after all^{xvii}. Nevertheless, in the negotiations on the statutes, this assumption was very prominent, especially in private talks between the delegates during breaks. The alleged 'different cultures' were just a convenient way of ensuring discipline within a coalition.

European level

Compromises were finally found, the BundesschülerInnenvertretung was launched and I was elected to represent the BundesschülerInnenvertretung on the European level within OBESSU (Organisational Bureau of European School Student Unions), which is the umbrella organisation^{xviii} of European School Student organisations.

A number of issues were relevant for our European work, among them the establishment of a European strategy for education. OBESSU wanted to express its view on education through a European Manifesto for education. The drafting process displayed the

differences^{xix} between the working style and political agenda of the European school student organisations and partly this was explained by culture.

Roughly, there were four blocks within OBESSU: the Southern countries like Italy and Spain; the Eastern countries consisting of most of the former Soviet Countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Macedonia, the Western countries

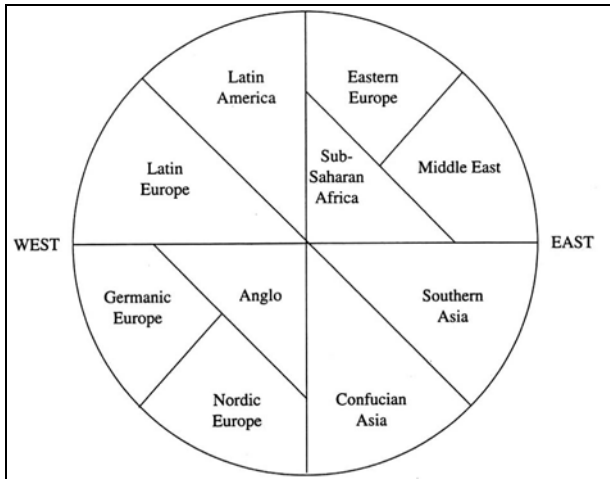


Figure 4: Culture Patters identified in the Globe Survey⁴⁹. According to the distances on the cultural dimensions the researchers identified culture patterns and mapped the relative distance between each cultural pattern.

including Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries with Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland.^{xx} These blocks also roughly match the cultural clusters proposed by the GLOBE Survey.

These blocks represented different approaches to education politics and school student organisations. The Eastern countries had introduced only a few years ago democratic school student structures and were very reluctant to give OBESSU a mandate to express views on education politics. They argued for OBESSU as a platform for coordination.

The delegates from the Southern countries were in favour of a strong European school student organisation with a strong position on all kinds of political areas. In Italy and Spain, this is a successful method for their own organisations.^{xxi} The Italian and Spanish school student organisations wanted the Manifesto to be a powerful statement against all kinds of injustice and intolerance.

The Northern countries use a different method, but just as successful. The northern countries were also in favour of a strong European school student organisation and supported the Manifesto as well, but they wanted the Manifesto to propose radical educational methods. In their own countries, they were accepted by their governments as partners in the reform of the school system due to their expertise on school issues and their will of cooperation.

Youth NGOs in the Scandinavian countries are supported by their governments, reforms are brought about in an atmosphere of cooperation. Youth NGOs in southern Europe use public conflict to reach their goals.

With that picture in mind (cooperation in the north, conflict in the south, scepticism in the east), the school student organisations of Western Europe faced a dilemma: advocating for a strong OBESSU statement, but at the same time not knowing which method would be the best to support.^{xxii}

The North-South dispute was discussed repeatedly in the conferences and seminars, on email-lists and in private talks between delegates. Often delegates would shrug off the differences by claiming, that the differences are because of different cultures. Again, looking back at those disputes, I find the importance of culture much exaggerated.

⁴⁹ House (2004),p. 201

Take for instance the Eastern countries: when it came to political issues that affected them heavily, they had no problem in promoting a strong statement from the European umbrella organisation. Take the Southern countries, when it came to issues where they agreed with the government, they had no problem in cooperating closely with government agencies. Take the Northern countries, when the Norwegian government threatened to cut funding of school student projects, they had no problem in staging an open conflict with the support of all other Scandinavian countries. The culture-politics link was valid on the European level, in their home countries all organisations implemented successful practices from all Europe cultures.

Culture was used as an explanation for behaviour and a tool to form coalitions and align delegates from the different school student organisations according to their geographical background, but these did not necessarily reflect the real practices in their country.

International level

This is not to say that culture has no role to play at all in youth politics. As mentioned before, there are significant differences how youth politics work in different countries. These differences express themselves on the international level often enough.

In the years following my activities in the school student organisation and after the start of my studies, I was active in a couple of international organisations. I was elected to the International Youth Parliament in the year 2000. The International Youth Parliament does not work like a normal parliament, it is more a network of young people devoted to social change, who communicate by means of the Internet and develop together social action plans.

The International Youth Parliament is an open forum aiming at bringing young people together, and is very different from the hierarchical structures of other international youth organisations.

On behalf of the International Youth Parliament I participated at two Asian-European meetings of youth activists, called Asian-European Youth Dialogues. They were supported by the Asian-European Foundation, founded by ASEM. The topic of the first youth dialogue was "Youth and Globalisation" and was held in Hillerod, Denmark; the topic of the second one was "Causes of Conflict and the role of Youth", held in Cebu, Philippines. At these meetings I had the chance to observe differences in European and Asian practices during those conferences.

The Asian European Youth Dialogues had fifty to seventy participants, lectures by experts in the relevant field aimed at giving background information, and the participants were asked to work in groups to draft a statement representing their views on that particular issue.

During the discussion process of the first ASEM meeting, my attention was not so much focused on the final statement, but on the discussion itself. In the working group on education, I wanted to provoke an interesting argument by stating some 'radical' arguments (which shows my inexperience and naivety with Asian culture). I said that education should be free of charge and students should not have to pay for education, knowing that most of the delegates came from countries where education did cost quite a bit.

Surprisingly, this did not provoke a very vivid response, especially from the Asian

delegates. One of them said: "Well, Karsten, thank you for your statement, I agree with it fully, but please consider that in many of our countries we would not have an education system if people would not pay for it." So instead of a counterargument, I was politely asked to reconsider my statement. Later on I was told by one of the Asian delegates, that my statement was not rude, but at least impolite, because of its straightforwardness.

Asians, I was told, would not openly disagree, but rather affirm an opinion and add a little "...but consider this.." to an answer. Asian would first consider the person advancing an argument, and secondly the argument itself. Europeans on the other hand would openly debate an issue, thinking first of the argument and then of the person behind the argument.

I was repeatedly confronted with this categorization and my own experiences confirmed it. But on the other hand, Asians also debate very hard on issues which concern them very much. Especially during my second Asian-European Youth Dialogue, which as I mentioned took place in the Philippines, I had the feeling that the Asian delegates felt they were 'on home-ground' and spoke their opinion very openly. Maybe simply the specific topic of the second dialogue made the participants more concerned about the outcome of the discussion.

Arguments for a weak culture-politics link

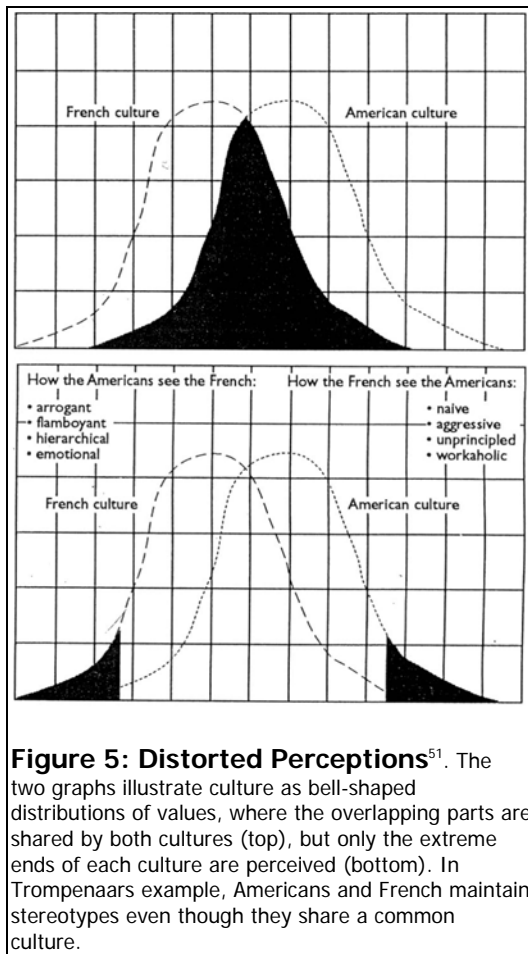
Some scholars caution against an over-estimated influence of culture on politics.⁵⁰ I am inclined to follow their hesitant approach. Culture influences politics not as an extrinsic factor, it serves as a tool to reinforce a position in a political context.

Culture is not only a convenient to ensure discipline in a coalition, but already serves in the creation of coalitions. At international conferences, the first people that I talked to were people from my own culture. Either I travelled with them, or I met them at other regional forums, or I simply heard them speak my own language.

When I met people from my culture which were active in the same organisation, then the conversations revolved around hotly disputed issues of our organisation or discussions on who is running for posts. Sometimes during these conversations I was confronted with arguments in favour or against an issue, but before I had been neutral about that issue. When I then talked to somebody from a different culture, I was already prejudiced on that issue. Rational actors would probably consider both arguments and choose the opinion which convinces them, but I was not neutral anymore. People are often open-minded towards the first opinion on a subject, but when they hear a second, contradicting opinion on the same subject, they will be very reluctant to admit that their first reasoning was wrong. If the person from the other culture spoke first somebody from my culture about that issue, then spoke to me about it, he found that two people from one culture agree on that issue. He must have had the impression, that the view on this issue is determined by culture and when he speaks to participants from his culture, he might assert that view, which results on two fractions first only

⁵⁰ Patricia N. Limerick, cited in Lockhart et al (2000), pp.71n urges us to be cautious with the concept of culture. In her essay called "The startling ability of culture to bring critical inquiry to a halt" she gives many examples how culture is being used as tool to withdraw attention from other critical points, I think her arguments for social science resemble much my experience in youth politics.

divided by opinion on an issue, but now apparently divided by culture. The described mechanism is responsible for the almost organic creation of coalitions and fractions along lines of geographic origin.



Through selective membership choices by individuals, this process is intensified. When I have a choice of two organisations which both furthered a particular aim, but the first organisation has a 'culture' unfamiliar to me, while the second organisation has a 'culture' that I am comfortable with, then it is very likely that I will choose the second organisation. For outsiders it might seem that culture shaped these organisations, instead the culture evolved over time through selective membership choices.

Trompenaars gives another explanation for the perception of cultural differences⁵². He thinks of culture as a distribution of values around an average, almost like a bell curve in statistics. People from different cultures may have a large portion of the curve in common, but only perceive those parts of the other culture which is different to their own culture. The cultural filter only perceives extremes,

differences of culture receive more attention than similarities.

All of these mechanisms support the claim of a weak culture-politics link. In the following chapter, I will discuss whether the data from the survey confirms or refutes that claim.

6. Survey on the culture-politics link

Motivation

The last chapter discussed my own experiences with culture in a political context. Yet, for scientific purposes, relating to personal experiences is not sufficient. Anyone can *recollect* intercultural experiences.

The survey is aimed at *researching* intercultural experiences, especially in a political context. Different approaches are possible. One could analyse the communication of organisations from different cultural backgrounds, e.g. compare political statements drafted by

⁵¹ Trompenaars (2004), p.25

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 24n

political organisations from different countries and see whether there is a different style in the statements. One could analyse the financial priorities, have a look at how much is spent on public relation, internal education or administration within organisations from different cultural contexts. One could analyse the institutional framework, e.g. look at the statutes of different organisations and compare how they reflect cultural values.

My method was to analyse the expectations that young people have towards youth conferences, especially youth activists who have been to a number of international youth conferences. I reasoned that these youth activists have had their own intercultural experiences. Maybe some even experienced political conflicts in those international conferences and maybe thought of them as intercultural conflicts. Maybe they would have a strong opinion on the culture-politics link, claiming for instance that those conflicts were caused by culture.

The survey openly asked "Have you experienced differences in the approach to international youth conferences from participants from different countries?" It also asked the respondents to rate certain aspects of international youth conferences. My hope was that cultural differences show both in answers to the direct question as well as in different ratings on the closed questions.

Design and Procedure

The survey consisted of ten questions: three open questions and seven closed questions. The possible answers to the closed questions were: "Very important", "Modestly important", "Barely important", "Not important at all" and "Don't know". Additional questions concerned age, nationality, gender and email address.⁵³

The survey had three parts, first the individual information, then questions concerning the procedure of international conferences, then questions concerning the follow-up of international conferences were asked.

The closed questions related to certain aspects of international youth conferences, such as transparency (Question 1), cooperation (Question 2), participation (Question 3), social exchange (Question 4), concrete results (Question 6), media attention (Question 7) and networking (Question 8). I thought that these different aspects would be differently valued in different countries. Two questions (Question 5 and Question 9) were aimed at asking for further aspects of international youth conferences through an open question.⁵⁴

The last question (Question 10) was directly related to different approaches to international youth conferences by participants from different countries and formulated as an open question.

The survey was online at the survey site of TakingItGlobal, the URL was <http://surveys.takingitglobal.org/survey.html?SurveyID=22>. It was available for four weeks, started on March 16th and data was gathered on April 13th.

Via email respondents were invited to answer the survey. Unfortunately, it was not

⁵³ See Appendix B

⁵⁴ See endnote xxv

possible to link the survey from the starting page of www.takingitglobal.org, therefore I send an email to some 2000 people, asked them to fill out the survey and forward my email to other youth activists. I knew these people were or had been active in youth organisations.

On the Homepage of TIG, it is also possible to send instant messages to members and during four or five days I contacted some, gave them the link to the survey and asked them to answer it.

I am aware that both the design of the survey and the implementation procedure arouse criticism from empirical researchers. I want to address a few of them:

- **Sample size:** the sample size is not large enough to make reliable statements on cultural differences because from most countries I had only one or two respondents, different results could be simply due individual differences.
- **Sampling:** it was possible that people answered the survey without knowing because the survey was published on a number of email-lists. However, I think that most of the people who answered the survey are directly (or via one other person) known to me. It is possible that there is a bias in the answers of respondents knowing that I will read their answers.
- **Anonymity:** I indicated to TIG that it would not be necessary to ask for the email address. The programmers insisted on the email address in order to ensure that nobody answered twice. This maybe resulted in distorted answers because people would be hesitant to give away their email-addresses or doubt that they would remain anonymous.⁵⁵
- **Ambiguity in phrasing:** some of the phrases in the questionnaire have different meanings in different cultures, such as cooperation or participation.⁵⁶ This might result in the answers less reflecting the respondents answer, but the respondents understanding of a phrase.
- **Ambiguity in concept:** the concept of a youth conference was never explicitly explained or defined. There are a number of different styles of international youth conferences, ranging from meetings of five to ten people, through seminars of thirty to fifty people to assemblies of some five hundred people.⁵⁷ These different conferences have different aims, methods and purposes – maybe the responses remain vague because respondents were not clarified on the type of conference.
- **Ambiguity in method:** questionnaires and other means of empirical social research

⁵⁵ From a youth activist at ACC I received the following email: "I went to the takingitglobal-survey and I can see you need to add your name and e-mail OR a TIG-name. Honestly, I personally wouldn't fill in such a thing, because of the danger to receive spam from whoever gets the list."

⁵⁶ Den Hartog and Dickinson discuss how participation can be understood differently: "In the West, participation usually refers to having influence on the outcome of a decision by taking part in it in one form or another, [...], in Java refers to a cooperative form of decision making; in Japan to the consensus-oriented approach", Antonakis et al. (2004), p 250, citing Heller et al (1987) and Heller et al (1988)

⁵⁷ There are also a number of different purposes, as a youth activist from Australia pointed out: "Most of my answers were thinking about a specific sort of youth conference. For instance, the importance of media coverage definitely would depend on what sort of conference it was. The importance of producing concrete outputs comes down to whether the conference is more exploratory and discovery oriented or if it is production/goal oriented. Sometimes the cultural exchange or sharing ideas internally is an end in itself." [Received by email on 22nd of march]

imply that the social reality of individuals can be explored by means of a question-answer-game: the scientist asks, the respondent answers truthfully. The concept relies upon a cultural pattern that according to some scholars is deeply engraved in European thinking.⁵⁸ It presupposes that the respondent has a moral obligation to answer truthfully to the questions. However, in some cultural contexts this obligation is only valid in a given social context. It might even be acceptable to lie to strangers or people who are inferior with respect to the social hierarchy somebody lives in. This criticism can also be targeted at other intercultural surveys, such as Hofstede's research or the GLOBE study.

These criticisms could only have been met by a detailed preparation of the surveys⁵⁹ and other sampling methods, but given the limited time and the limited funding that I had for organising the survey, this was not possible.

Results

In total 287 people from 84 countries answered the survey, however as can be seen only 31 countries had at least three respondents. To avoid subjectivity, I only used these 31 countries for the averages, but I used all 287 responses for the discussion of question 10.

Country	#	Country	#	Country	#
Afghanistan	1	Guinea	1	Nigeria	9
Albania	1	Hungary	1	Norway	1
Argentina	1	India	6	Peru	3
Australia	6	Indonesia	1	Philippines	4
Bangladesh	1	Iran	2	Poland	9
Belgium	5	Iraq	2	Portugal	1
Benin	3	Ireland	2	Romania	9
Bhutan	1	Israel	2	Russia	4
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	Italy	4	Senegal	2
Brazil	3	Jamaica	1	Serbia & Montenegro	4
Cameroon	1	Japan	1	Slovakia	2
Canada	6	Jordan	1	Somalia	1
China	1	Kazakhstan	1	South Africa	1
Colombia	1	Kenya	6	Spain	3
Congo	2	Kosovo	1	Sweden	2
Cote D'Ivoire	1	Latvia	1	Switzerland	3
Croatia	2	Liberia	1	Syria	1
Czech Republic	2	Macedonia	5	Tajikistan	1
Denmark	3	Malaysia	1	Tanzania	1
Egypt	7	Mali	1	Tunisia	2
Estonia	9	Malta	1	Turkey	13
Ethiopia	1	Moldova	2	Uganda	1
Finland	8	Morocco	1	Ukraine	2
France	4	Mozambique	1	United Kingdom	10
Germany	40	Namibia	1	United States	12
Ghana	2	Nepal	4	Uzbekistan	2
Greece	3	Netherlands	15	Venezuela	2

Figure 6: Respondents by Country. A total of 287 responses from 84 countries.

135 female respondents and 148 male respondents were counted, 4 did not give their gender. The distribution in the age brackets was: 10-15: 1; 16-20: 29; 21-25: 156; 26-30: 71; 31-35: 17; 36-40: 6 and 41+: 7. About 75% were young people according to the United Nations youth definition (15-27). All in all a fairly balanced sample with respect to gender and age, but with more answers from European (156) than from Non-European countries (131).

⁵⁸ Matthes (2000), p.25

⁵⁹ Compare what the researchers of the GLOBE study did: "They did pilot tests, they used double translations, they checked the psychometric characteristics of their instruments, and they eliminated responses biases. They used multiple measurements of the constructs. They checked reliabilities and construct items and dropped more than half. [...] They measured organisations and societal culture with different forms of the instrument. They developed unobtrusive methods for the measurement of some of the constructs. They analyzed the data with multilevel confirmative factor analysis and hierarchical linear modelling. They addressed the reverse ecological fallacy and identified clusters of societies and patters of outstanding leadership." House et al. (2004), pp. xv-xvi

As said before, only 31 countries out of 84 were selected to avoid subjectivity. For each of these countries and for each of the closed questions the average was computed ignoring those answers saying "I don't know". Although I hoped that cultural differences would show in the answers, almost all averages were in a range between 3 ("Modestly Important") and 4 ("Very Important"). The only question with a wider spread was question 7 ("After the conference, the conference receives good media coverage."), with mostly African and Southern European countries in the top 10, and nine Northern European and Anglo-American countries in the lowest ten.

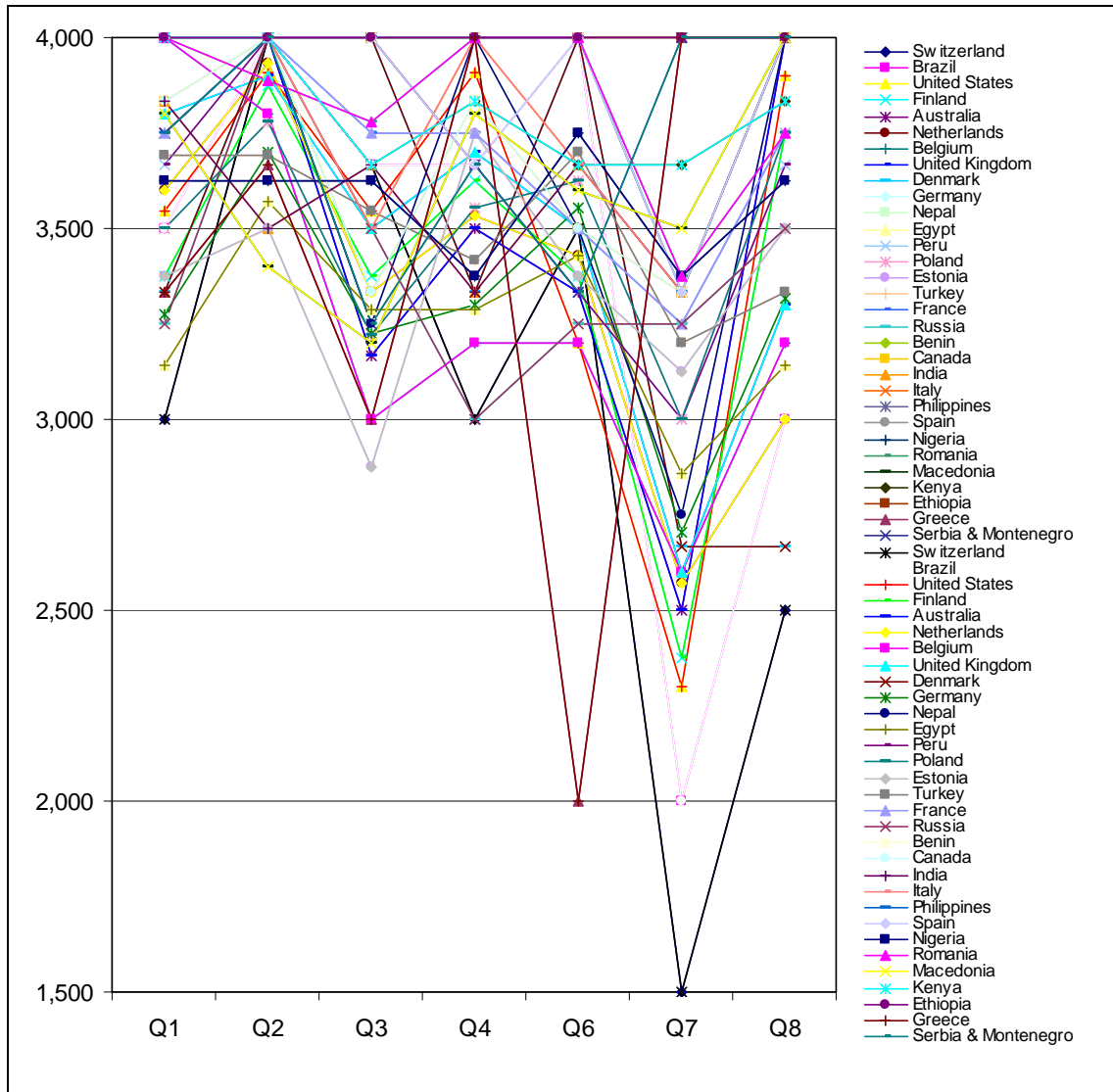


Figure 7: Averages by Country. The only variation is question 7 (Media Coverage) with African, Southern and Eastern European in the upper ten, North-European and Anglo-American countries in the lower ten. The data can be found in Appendix C.

The data does not support the conclusion that culture plays a role in the expectations of young people towards youth conferences. The different averages could have resulted from mere chance and they show no pattern. Originally, I wanted to use these averages in comparison with Hofstede's work or the GLOBE survey. I wanted to determine whether there is a correlation between one of the aspects of youth conferences and the cultural dimensions of the above studies. Since the answers to the questions are within a small range, such a

comparison would not yield meaningful conclusions.

I calculated the correlation value⁶⁰ for each pair of the seven questions (total 21 correlation values) and seven showed correlation at a significant level: transparency (#1) and social exchange (#4) at $r=.534$; transparency and networking (#8) at $r=.610$; cooperation (#2) and participation (#3) at $r=.491$; participation and concrete results (#6) at $r=.650$; social exchange and media attention (#7) at $r=.453$, social exchange and networking at $r=.668$; and media attention and networking at $r=.669$. Again, the correlations could easily result from the design of the survey or random processes due to the size of the sample.

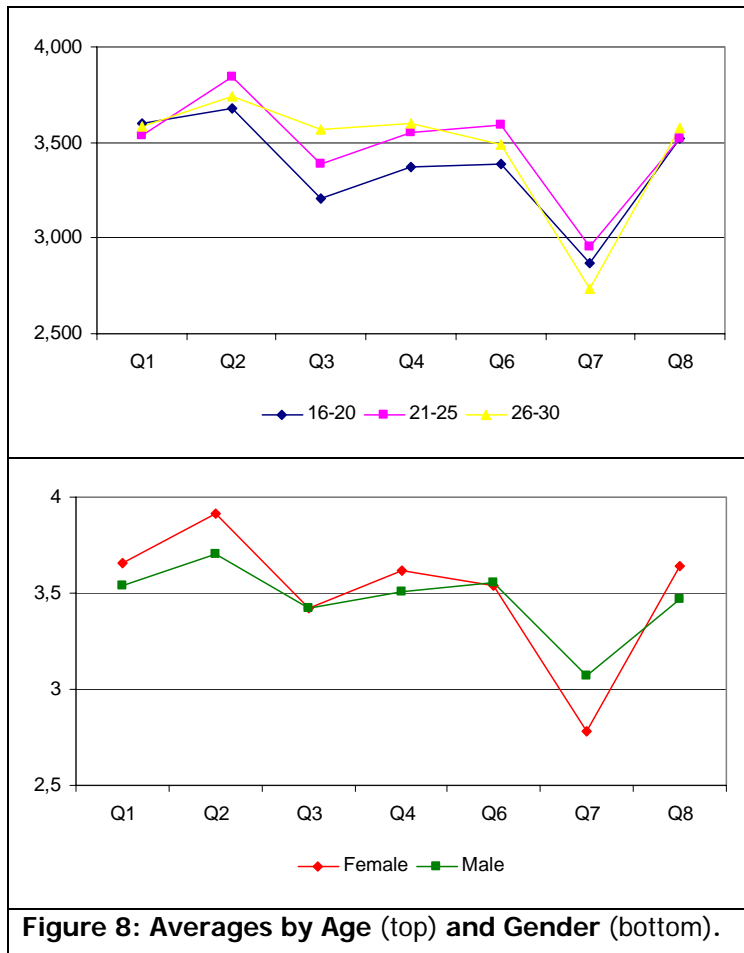


Figure 8: Averages by Age (top) and Gender (bottom).

on chance or subjectivity, therefore it is doubtful if conclusions drawn from that method would have been valid.

To summarize the responses from the closed questions, one can assert that the data do not support a strong culture-politics link in youth conferences. However, they also do not support a weak culture-politics link; the lack of a cultural pattern is most likely due to the design of the survey.

Interestingly, the open question (#10), which directly asked for the culture-politics link, did indicate a strong culture-politics link. About half of all respondents answered to open questions, more than half of them confirmed the existence of different behaviour by people

⁶⁰ See Appendix C

from different cultures.

In the following paragraphs I will quote some of the respondents' answers to illustrate how cultural differences are perceived.

Some of the respondents reflect on different negotiation styles in Europe. "Some countries (for example Germany, Norway, Italy) are pushing hard for getting political results, other countries (for example Denmark, Belgium, Holland) see a congress more as an information-exchange.", states a young man from the *Netherlands*.

From *Estonia* a young woman mentions different communication patterns: "There are three ways of communicating throughout the conference - during daytime, during the night and using both. With Nordic countries it is necessary to spend time during the official part, with Eastern European countries during the unofficial time. Nordic people are more concentrated on hard work while eastern people emphasise unofficial discussions."

A young woman from the *Netherlands* emphasizes different discussion styles in Europe: "Sometimes the southern Europeans were not so strict on the agenda, but are very active on discussions. People from Western Europe are usually stricter on the programme, but don't give most priorities to the existing discussion."

A youth activist from *Germany* refers to different personalities: "Polish appear in a suit and are serious. Swedes are satisfied if decisions are taken by a clap of hands and are superficial. East Germans are always worried. The stereotypes are not so far away from reality." And a young man from the *Netherlands* adds: "Italians come to party, Macedonians come to drink, Dutch people come to every black spot of Europe, Romanians are very serious and well prepared, French never apply, and Albanians don't have the money to travel." From *Greece* a youth activists says: "Of course there are differences. Mainly in the workshops! The Dutch speak good English and insist on agenda and negotiations, the South Europeans are always more passionate, the Scandinavians are the ones with the more progressive ideas, the eastern Europeans often seem lost and sometimes they give the impression that they couldn't care less."

A young woman from *Germany* points to the differences in the participation of women, a youth activists from the *UK* supports her point: "Mainly Male/Female attitudes in Eastern Europe are the differences. Nordic Girls are more forceful and less likely to be cowed by Eastern European Guys." A *Spanish* youth activist also says that there are differences in sexuality and treatment of female participants.

A young *French* activist points to the style of conferences: "In Poland and Romania, conferences were more academic and informative, as if real life and debates were two different things: the first one concrete, the other one theoretical. Denmark was more focused and building something together."

From *Russia* a young woman adds her view on differences in attitude between East and Western Europe: "Some of the Eastern-European students are less committed to participation than those from Western Europe." A youth activist from *Estonia* thinks the opposite: "People from the new members states usually seem to be more eager to achieve some good results.

The old countries representatives seem to be more relaxed, which does not mean they are not seriously minded." A young *Norwegian* woman explains why: "In countries where there have been problems in communicating with the government, the participants are sometimes not as eager all the time. East-European countries have developed better communication channels during the last years and their commitment and interests have increased."

The non-European respondents also confirm cultural differences. A young man from *Qatar* refers to the different aims of participants: "Some focus only on a declaration and some focus on action projects and their implementation." A youth activist from *Brazil* names three reasons for those different expectations: "Importance to his/her career, expected level of gained knowledge and cultural differences related to communication and discussion."

A young man from *UK* points to the different background of participants: "The level of involvement of the young people at local level will differ greatly depending on which country they are from. Young people from the UK tend to be involved in youth groups run either by youth focused projects or the local government. But young people from Mediterranean regions such as Turkey or Egypt are most like to be University students or members of uniformed organisation like the Scouts."

Some respondents talk about the status of participants, for instance a young man from *Nepal* is concerned about the participation of youth from developing countries: "The organizers give lot of priorities to the youths from developed countries and the voices of the participants of developing countries are least heard."

Some respondents from Asia comment on their own specific participation style. A young woman from *Malaysia* states: "Asian participants are usually more quiet compared to their Western counterparts and dare not to voice their opinions during the meeting. They'll usually discuss among themselves after the meeting ends." This view is confirmed by a young *Philippine* youth activist: "In Asia, attendees are less aggressive compared to those in other continents, though it is harder to convince them to open up. American attendees tend to lord over the discussion, sometimes to the detriment of the whole activity." And an *American* youth activist says on this matter "Some participants may be shy out of respect, but all should feel that their voice is as important as anyone's."

A young man from *Bangladesh* is worried about the clustering of participants at international youth conferences: "In some cases the participants from US/Canada and from Latin American Zone form groups of their own, which is not good at all." A youth activist from the *USA* gives a possible explanation for these clusters: "There is always a slight language barrier; native English speakers usually have an edge".

Some respondents discuss different understandings of certain political concepts. A young woman from the *USA* says: "Participants from different countries have different interpretations of the purpose of the conference. Sustainable development conferences generally involve dramatically different definitions of what sustainable development is. Youth from some countries focus on the development part, while youth from other countries focus on

the sustainable part.”

Most youth activists indicated awareness of cultural differences but saw them as challenge. “The most important thing is to reach a consensus at last.” says a *Romanian* youth activist. A youth activist from *Macedonia* believes “Cultural gaps are overcome in the free time during conferences.” A young *Finish* woman adds: “The desire to meet new people is common to all the participants.”

Cultural differences could be overcome if the organisers of youth conferences are aware of them, says a young man from *Egypt*: “It’s all based on the criteria on which participants are chosen. If all participants are really interested in the topic and are really serious about participating, then there will be no big differences.”

While about two thirds of the answers were confirming cultural differences, one third was sceptical. A young woman from *Poland* says: “At the conferences I’ve been to, participants were very devoted and I have never noticed differences in the approach.” A youth activist from *Ukraine* proposes age as an explanation: “I would say it more depends on the age of the participants - the older the more motivated to participate in decision making process and achieve certain results upon the end of the conference.”

A young *Australian* woman points to individual character of participants: “Different people from different countries have different ways of working - some are very focused on the task at hand and need to have that made very clear from the beginning and need to know where they are heading, while other people prefer just to float around for a bit. The challenge for the organisers is to cater for all cultures and participation styles by giving opportunities for structured discussion, free discussion, progress reports, reflection, social interaction and sharing stories.”

Some respondents were unsure whether cultural differences exist, but indicated that the aim of youth activism is to overcome these cultural differences. For instance, a young man from *Nigeria* says “Culture will certainly influence a lot of things like choice of food and the choice of cultural events. But it is really amazing to know that youth across the world virtually share the same thoughts when it comes to planning for an international youth conference. The reality of globalisation makes it possible for ideas and opinions to be shared and replicated at the speed of light, literally.”

Especially the last quote illustrates the ambiguity in perception of culture by young people going to international youth conferences. On the one hand, the same expectations towards international youth work are shared; on the other hand cultural stereotypes exist, are sometimes reinforced, and sometimes embraced.

To summarize: the data of survey did not support the strong culture-politics link, but the answers of the respondents in the open questions showed that many young people feel that there is at least a link between politics and culture, but diverged on the strength of that link.

Conclusion

I started to think about the culture-politics link when I noticed that the Harvard concept did not fully match my experiences in youth politics. In the first chapter, I explained why negotiation literature has a difficult time acknowledging cultural differences. If it discusses cultural differences, it lacks sophisticated scientific methods.

Cross-cultural comparisons, described in chapter two, use these scientific methods, but their results are not feasible for somebody working in a cross-cultural negotiation setting or an intercultural political context.

From the study of the ASEM process, my own experiences in youth politics and from the survey, I could see that culture is a possible explanation of different behaviour, but I think it is important to be aware of the fallacies of that explanation.

To evaluate how much or how less culture influences negotiations and politics, the best method is to experience other cultures yourself. The most is to be gained by living in cultures which are very much different to one's own culture. As Trompenaars says, successful negotiators are those who "actively strive to embrace the behaviour and attitudes that feel uncomfortable to us"⁶¹

Political leaders, youth activists, negotiators and social scientists should aim at understanding their own culture perceived from a viewpoint far away from their own point of view. They should practise 'walking in the shoes' of other cultures, even if that process is uncomfortable at first, but there are great benefits from such an attempt.

Though sometimes 'walking in other shoes' is difficult, I hope that this essay made it possible for the reader to walk a small distance in the shoes of a young social scientist reflecting on culture, negotiation and politics.

⁶¹ Trompenaars and Haampden Turner in an interview with Kleiner (2001), pp 4-5

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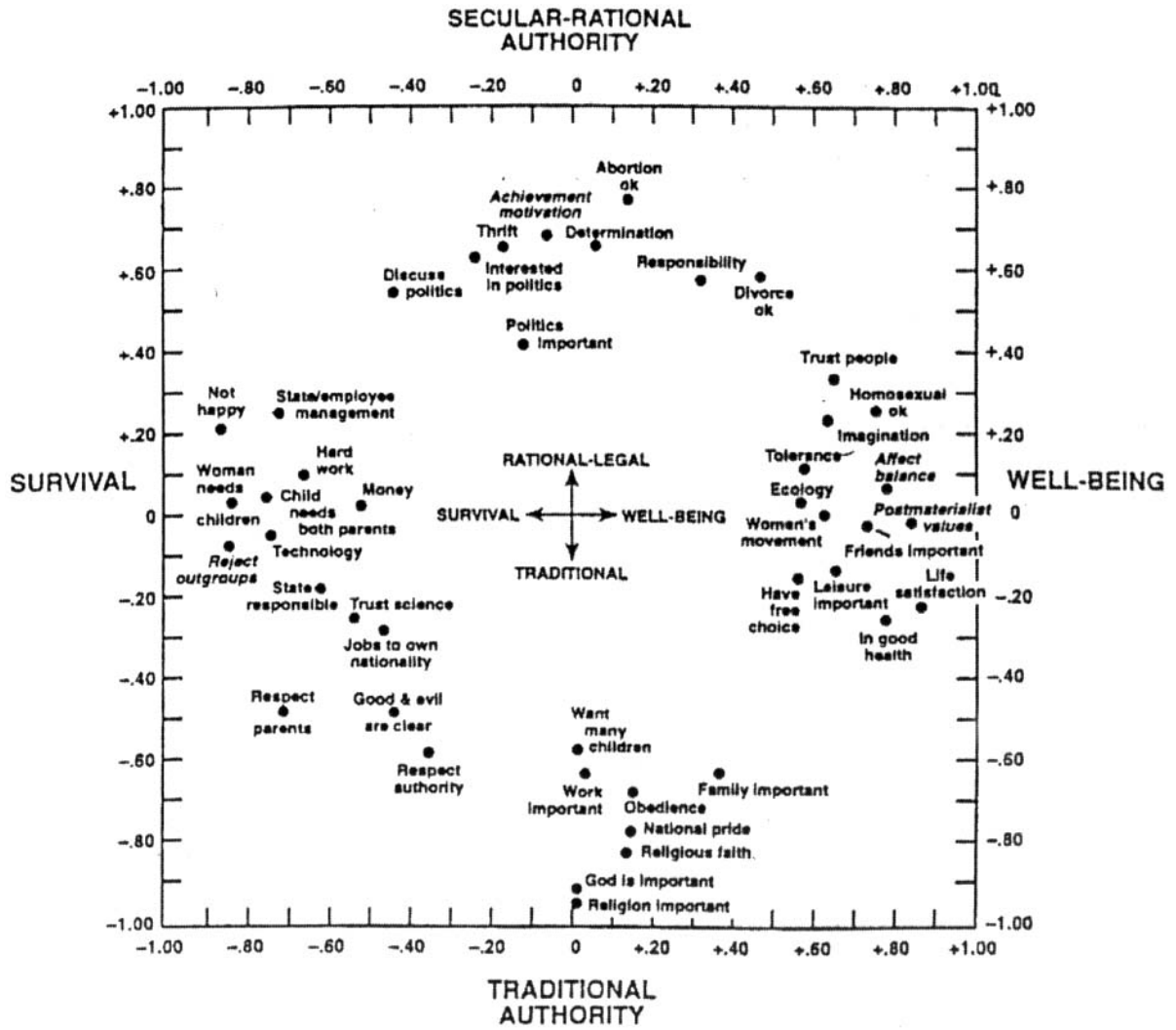
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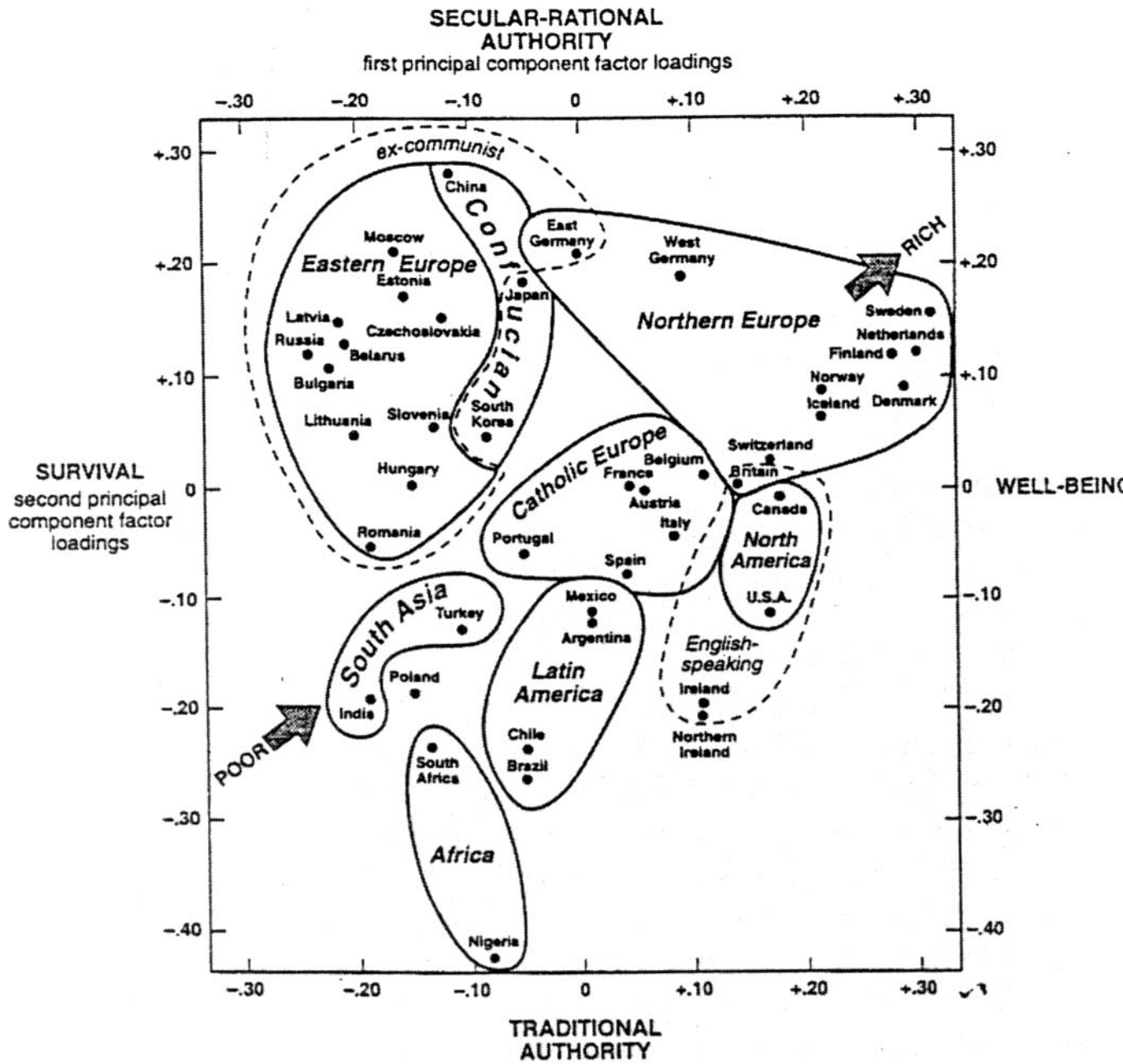
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Appendix

A - Diagrams



Lockhart et al. (2000), p. 330



Lockhart et al. (2000), p. 337

B - Questionnaire

Screenshots

TIG Survey - What expectations do young people have towards the procedure and the follow-up of international youth conferences?

The following questions are aimed at exploring what expectations you have AFTER a conference. Please indicate if you feel the following aspects are important.
The conference produced concrete results such as a political statements or follow-up plans, which are useful to the participants after the conference.

After the conference, the conference receives good media coverage.

Among the participants, a network for further cooperation is established.

What else do you find important during an international youth conference?

Open question: have you experienced differences in the approach to international youth conferences from participants from different countries?

TIG Survey - What expectations do young people have towards the procedure and the follow-up of international youth conferences?

As a young international activist, you probably have experienced international conferences or seminars of young people. If you were satisfied or disappointed is most likely related to your expectations towards the procedure and the follow-up of the conference. The following survey aims at exploring the expectations that you have when going to an international youth conference.

The survey is very short, but please take your time to answer the questions. All data will be dealt with confidentially and no personal data other than age, gender and nationality will be used in the survey evaluation.

Thanks a lot for your help!

Name OR TIG Username

Email

Sex Male Female

Country

Age under 10 26-30
 10-15 31-35
 16-20 36-40
 21-25 41 or older

Note: Information collected will be used for statistical analysis, and may be used to facilitate updating of member records.

You have 2 sections to go!

TIG Survey - What expectations do young people have towards the procedure and the follow-up of international youth conferences?

The following questions are aimed at exploring what expectations you have DURING a conference. Please indicate if you feel the following aspects are important.

During the conferences, the participants can join and observe all discussion processes.

There is a general feeling of cooperation and constructive work at the conference.

The participants are involved in the decision-making at the conference, especially concerning agenda setting and formulation of public statements.

There is enough time provided for social and cultural exchange among the participants.

What else do you find important during an international youth conference?

You have 1 section to go!

Questions

Age	Eight options: under 10, 10-15,16-20,21-25,26-30,31-35,36-40,41 or older
Country	Drop-down list of countries
Sex ^{xxiii}	Two options: male, female

The following questions are aimed at exploring what expectations you have DURING a conference. Please indicate if you feel the following aspects are important.

1. During the conferences, the participants can join and observe all discussion processes.	Four options with drop-down list: ^{xxiv} 4=Very important 3=Modestly important 2=Barely important 1=Not important at all 0=Don't know
2. There is a general feeling of cooperation and constructive work at the conference.	
3. The participants are involved in the decision-making at the conference, especially concerning agenda setting and formulation of public statements.	
4. There is enough time provided for social and cultural exchange among the participants.	
5. What else do you find important during an international youth conference?	Open question, maximum 500 characters

The following questions are aimed at exploring what expectations you have AFTER a conference. Please indicate if you feel the following aspects are important.

6. The conference produced concrete results such as a political statements or follow-up plans, which are useful to the participants after the conference.	Four options with drop-down list: 4=Very important 3=Modestly important 2=Barely important 1=Not important at all 0=Don't know
7. After the conference, the conference receives good media coverage.	
8. Among the participants, a network for further cooperation is established.	
9. What else do you find important during an international youth conference? ^{xxv}	
10. Have you experienced differences in the approach to international youth conferences from participants from different countries?	Open question, maximum 500 characters

C - Data from the Survey

Country	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q6	Q7	Q8
Australia	4,000	4,000	3,167	3,500	3,333	2,500	4,000
Belgium	4,000	3,800	3,000	3,200	3,200	2,600	3,200
Benin	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	3,333	4,000
Brazil	3,500	4,000	3,667	3,667	4,000	2,000	3,000
Canada	3,833	4,000	3,333	3,833	3,500	3,333	4,000
Denmark	3,333	4,000	4,000	3,333	4,000	2,667	2,667
Egypt	3,143	3,571	3,286	3,286	3,429	2,857	3,143
Estonia	3,375	3,500	2,875	3,750	3,375	3,125	3,500
Ethiopia	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Finland	3,375	3,875	3,375	3,625	3,375	2,375	3,750
France	3,750	4,000	3,750	3,750	3,500	3,250	3,750
Germany	3,275	3,700	3,225	3,300	3,553	2,703	3,316
Greece	3,333	3,667	3,000	4,000	2,000	4,000	4,000
India	3,833	3,500	3,667	3,333	3,667	3,333	4,000
Italy	3,750	4,000	3,500	4,000	3,667	3,333	4,000
Kenya	4,000	4,000	3,667	3,833	3,667	3,667	3,833
Macedonia	3,800	3,400	3,200	3,800	3,600	3,500	4,000
Nepal	4,000	4,000	3,250	4,000	3,500	2,750	4,000
Netherlands	3,600	3,933	3,333	3,533	3,429	2,571	3,000
Nigeria	3,625	3,625	3,625	3,375	3,750	3,375	3,625
Peru	3,667	4,000	4,000	3,667	3,333	3,000	3,667
Philippines	3,750	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	3,333	4,000
Poland	3,500	3,778	3,222	3,556	3,625	3,000	3,750
Romania	4,000	3,889	3,778	4,000	4,000	3,375	3,750
Russia	3,250	4,000	3,500	3,000	3,250	3,250	3,500
Serbia & Montenegro	3,750	4,000	3,250	3,667	3,333	4,000	4,000
Spain	4,000	4,000	4,000	3,667	4,000	3,333	4,000
Switzerland	3,000	4,000	3,667	3,000	3,500	1,500	2,500
Turkey	3,692	3,692	3,545	3,417	3,700	3,200	3,333
United Kingdom	3,800	3,900	3,500	3,700	3,500	2,600	3,300
United States	3,545	3,909	3,545	3,909	3,200	2,300	3,900

Averaged Answers by countries with at least three respondents.

		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q6	Q7	Q8
Q1	Pearson Correlation	1	.241	.223	.534(**)	.331	.417(*)	.610(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.191	.228	.002	.069	.019	.000
Q2	Pearson Correlation	.241	1	.491(**)	.197	.235	-.158	.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.191		.005	.287	.204	.397	.989
Q3	Pearson Correlation	.223	.491(**)	1	.150	.650(**)	.073	.004
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.228	.005		.422	.000	.696	.981
Q4	Pearson Correlation	.534(**)	.197	.150	1	.064	.453(*)	.668(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.287	.422		.731	.011	.000
Q6	Pearson Correlation	.331	.235	.650(**)	.064	1	-.053	-.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.069	.204	.000	.731		.776	.681
Q7	Pearson Correlation	.417(*)	-.158	.073	.453(*)	-.053	1	.669(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	.397	.696	.011	.776		.000
Q8	Pearson Correlation	.610(**)	.002	.004	.668(**)	-.077	.669(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.989	.981	.000	.681	.000	

Correlation Matrix of Closed Questions

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

	16-20	21-25	26-30	Male	Female
Q1	3,600	3,536	3,587	3,654	3,537
Q2	3,680	3,843	3,745	3,915	3,706
Q3	3,208	3,386	3,565	3,423	3,422
Q4	3,375	3,556	3,596	3,619	3,509
Q6	3,391	3,590	3,489	3,536	3,553
Q7	2,870	2,957	2,733	2,779	3,068
Q8	3,522	3,517	3,578	3,639	3,471

Averaged Answers by age and gender with countries of at least three respondents.

D - Definitions of youth

The following table was created for a seminar on “Globalisation” by Dr. Borchers at University of Bayreuth. It shows the age intervals for ‘youth’, the voting-, drinking, driving- marriage-age for 46 countries as well as 4 international organisations.

Symbols: ? = no decision taken, X = activity is not possible, f = female, m = male, -18 = below 18, 20+=above 20. Red figures are upper and lower range in the sample

The data was gathered through the Email-network of the International Youth Parliament from the representatives of each country.

Country	Youth	Voting	Drinking	Driving	Marriage
Australia	15-25	18	18	16.5	
Bangladesh	15-30	18	X	18	
Brunei	15-25				
China	14-28				
Costa Rica	15-35	18	18	18	
Domenica	15-30				
Egypt	15-35	18	X	18	
France	18-30				
Germany	12-27	18	16	18	16
India	13-35				
Italy	15-20	18	16	18	
Jamaica	15-24				
Japan	20+	20	20	18	f. 16, m. 18
Jordan	15-24				
Malaysia	15-40				
Maldives	16-35				
Mexico	15-29	18	18	18	f. 14, m. 16
Micronesia	6-35				
New Zealand	15-24				
Pakistan	15-29				
Papua-New Guinea	12-35				
Philippines	15-24	18	18	15	
Poland	?	18	18	17	
Qatar	-18	X	X	18	
Republic of Korea	9-24				
Samoa	15-35				
Senegal	18-30				
Singapore	15-29				
Sri Lanka	15-29				
St. Kitts	12-35				
Thailand	15-24				
Tonga	12-25				
United States of America	-18	18	21	16	
Vanuatu	15-24				
Vietnam	15-35				

Organisations	Youth
United Nations	15-24
Food&Agricultural Organisation(UN)	10-25
European Union	15-27
European Youth Forum	12-27

Endnotes

ⁱ TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international organization - led by youth and enabled by technology. TIG connects youth to find inspiration, access information, get involved, and take action to improve their local and global communities.

Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, with a growing worldwide presence, the organization's flagship program is TakingITGlobal.org, an online community for young people interested in connecting across cultures and making a difference

TIG works with global partners – from UN agencies, to major companies, and especially youth organizations – in order to build the capacity of youth for development, support youth artistic and media expression, make education more engaging, and involve young people in global decision-making. (Source: www.takingitglobal.org)

ⁱⁱ These organisations were ACC (Association for Community Colleges), AEGEE (Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe), ASEF (Asian-European Foundation), European Youth Press, GYAN (Global Youth Action Network) International Youth Parliament, OBESSU (Organisation Bureau of European School Student Unions), YOIS (Youth for Intergenerational Justice and Sustainability).

ⁱⁱⁱ I do not want to imply that traditions lack any reasons, but I want to contrast the decision theoretic approach with the anthropological approach. It is possible to discuss traditions and customs using a game-theoretical approach, but I believe that in most cases, traditions were developed in an evolutionary and unplanned way.

^{iv} My suggestion to classify the term 'culture' is not very detailed because I lack the tools to a decent phenomenological analysis; therefore I restrict myself to a few categories and some examples without discussing them in length. Yet, I am grateful for being introduced to the wonderland of phenomenology at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium.

^v I invented this term because it reflects the ambiguity of the method: the method relies on living in a country (= 'to dwell somewhere') and to contemplate these experiences (= 'to dwell on something')

^{vi} I will try to use this method in the chapter "5. The culture-politics link in Youth politics".

^{vii} The procedure sounds simple, but is of course difficult to carry out. I explain some problems in the chapter on possible criticism to my survey ('Youth Survey - Design and Procedure').

^{viii} In Western Europe nodding means approval, shaking the head means disapproval. In some cultures, it is the other way around. I was very surprised when my friend Boris from Bulgaria repeatedly shook his head to whatever I said, but it was just his way of saying "I have understood you!"

^{ix} In some cultures like the Maori in New Zealand, screaming is used to greet a stranger, but it is no sign of hostility. And some cultures would not exist without whiskey. Obviously, the bottles of whiskey should be savoured, not thrown. A hug is sometimes even better than whiskey to soothe a conflict. I am indebted to my friend George from Liverpool, who is a professional trainer in conflict solving methods. He taught me that a good hug before engaging in a debate can be the best way to avoid slithering into negotiation stalemates.

^x ASEM (the Asia-Europe Meeting) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation initiated in 1996. Until 2004, it has brought together the fifteen EU Member States and the European Commission, with ten Asian countries (Brunei, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam). As a result of the enlargement of the EU in May 2004, the ASEM Summit held in Hanoi on 8-9 October 2004 enlarged to the ten new EU Member States as well as three new ASEAN countries (Cambodia, Laos and Burma/Myanmar) that were not yet part of the process.

The ASEM dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues, with the objective of strengthening the relationship between our two regions, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership. The first ASEM Summit was held in Bangkok in March 1996, giving rise to an ongoing process including Summit-level meetings every second year, Ministerial-level meetings

in the intervening years (although now normally once a year) plus a range of meetings and activities at the working level. Source: European Union (2005)

^{xi} Although the term is somewhat vague, I use it to differentiate between politics in the youth sector and all other policy areas.

^{xii} Explicit rules are for instance how officers are elected, laid down in the statutes of an organisation. Implicit rules are how people dress, e.g. in 'adult' politics tie and jacket are informally required for men, while in 'alternative' youth organisations colourful clothing, dreadlocks or long hair might be informally asked for.

^{xiii} In a political party it might not be accepted to deviate too much from the position that the party in general holds, even though in general freedom of opinion is endorsed. In a youth organisation it is sometimes required to act according to the general principles of the organisation, consider for instance the principle of scout members to help other people who are in need. This principle is confirmed by scout members also outside of the organisation's activities.

^{xiv} Take Rwanda as example. The fact that more than half of the population is under the age of 18, made it necessary to elect two children's representatives into the parliament. These are young people under 18 which are chosen through a system of elections in towns, regions and districts, but they are chosen by all residents under 18.

^{xv} Youth politics is not funded well, mostly because the youth NGO-members themselves have very limited funding. NGOs receive funding if they can make it clear to governments that their vote counts. In Germany, the federal parents' council receives about twenty times of what the federal school student union receives.

Although the European Union and other supranational institutions have started extensive youth programmes in the last two decades, handing out millions of Euros to youth-NGOs, the situation for youth organisations has only slightly improved. In the EU, a market for youth programmes was created, with NGOs being founded by quick thinking adults drafting applications fitting exactly the requirements needed to obtain the funding. However, youth NGOs run only by young people (and not by professional adults running them on behalf of young people) have a difficult stand.

^{xvi} After 9/11, many of us felt that we should say something about the debate on terrorism. We wanted to express our views on the security policy of the United States, claiming that it was a topic heavily discussed among school students.

^{xvii} I think that the political differences were related to the fact, that some Länder were internally good organised and were very effective in expressing their interests on the federal level. Therefore they were also in favour of a strong federal level. Some other Länder had doubts that their interest would be represented on the Federal level and therefore opposed a strong federal level.

^{xviii} One remark concerning the word umbrella organisation: Umbrella organisation as a synonym for an organisation of organisations conveys the image of a thin shield for protection, but only in English language. In German the translation for umbrella organisation is 'Dachorganisation', which means 'Roof organisation'. In French, the same organisation is called 'imbrication de societies', which means 'Entanglement of associations'. Maybe the word reflects very well English, German and French culture and the respective understanding of 'organisation'.

^{xix} After all, the whole drafting process needed more than a year and involved four sessions, held in Spain, Italy, Germany and Brussels, endless email-conversations and redrafting.

^{xx} A couple of countries were not active in OBESSU, such as France, UK, Greece, Portugal and Poland.

^{xxi} The Italian school student organisation UDS (Unione degli Studenti) has many members, partially because they have always openly criticised the Italian government on all kinds of political issues. I experienced how UDS mobilised young people to participate in the demonstrations against the G7-Meeting in Genova.

^{xxii} Our pragmatic approach was to go with whoever seemed more reasonable, but this always yielded mild amusement or polite accusations of opportunism by our friends in the North, South and East.

^{xxiii} In social science usually the term 'gender' is used. It is widely accepted in social science that a bipolar world of femininity and masculinity does not exist because there are more than two genders. But In this case, the TakingItGlobal-Survey modules only allowed the two options "Male" and "Female".

^{xxiv} It was not necessary to differentiate four degrees of importance. Dr. Cappai gave me the hint to reduce the options to "Important" and "Not important", but at that time I had already put the survey online.

^{xxv} The repetition of this question is a mistake of mine. Originally this question should have been "What else do you find important *after* an international youth conference?" Interestingly, the respondents did answer to both questions, sometimes even with different answers.