



Diversity as an advantage

Is diversity more of an advantage, or rather a barrier?

We use various strategies to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity: we bind clients to long-term contracts, we hire those whom we already know from previous jobs, we create rules to be able to predict behaviour. However, with increasing uncertainty, these strategies become less and less reliable. It is obvious that with increasing uncertainty, it is worth it to leave our need of control behind and start adapting to the external environment. Organizations are able to adapt, provided their inner heterogeneity corresponds with the heterogeneity of the environment in which they operate.

Cultural diversity is a renewable resource which supports the organization's ability to react to changes. Therefore, cultural diversity is beneficial. On the other hand, compared to homogeneity, it is difficult to manage. The challenge therefore is, how we can increase and/or utilise diversity without chaos.

The following steps can help:



Mapping

Mapping of the current situation depends on the phase in which the team currently is in its 'lifecycle'. What needs to be mapped?

- > Primarily, authentic misunderstandings and conflicts, unwritten rules and the consequences of their violation. The objective is to open the critical situations and recognize the connected emotions and their consequences. Negative emotions or evaluation should transform into curiosity and interest in cultural differences.
- > Cultural differences which are significant for most situations which the team deals with.

Exploration

The next step enables a detailed exploration of the mapped areas and a comparison of one's own perspective with the others' perspective, in the light of common interaction and common goals. The understanding of the others' perspective and the development of flexible thinking should become the foundation for the development of a new 'third' culture, which results from combining various attitudes and finding common traits.

Attachment: Using sociograms in exploring mutual relationships

Integration

Integration includes the development of skills and abilities which will help maintain the culture which handles diversity efficiently. The team members learn e.g. how to facilitate so they can create space for the team's various perspectives, solve problems creatively or lead 'sensitive' dialogues.