

***Impact of Cultural Differences on Business Projects between Germans and Swiss  
Germans: Unravelling Sub-Proximity HR Challenges of Cross-Cultural Projects***

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Based on Hofstede's 5 cultural dimension we explored in a study of a business project among Germans and Swiss Germans that cross-cultural diversity and distance on a level of geographical proximity is more significant than literature has predicted. Its recognition, human resource management (HRM) and assignment level holds the promise to leverage benefits of bicultural teams.

This paper deals with the research question what are the cultural differences between Swiss Germans and Germans and to what extent do they have an effect within an international project. To verify the result, we conduct the business case on both, international and intracultural basis, which leads us to the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: Cultural differences exist between Germans and Swiss Germans, and are perceived by the stakeholders in cross-border, cross-cultural projects in this region.*

*Hypothesis 2: The cultural differences between Germans and Swiss Germans have a negative impact on a common cross-cultural project in businesses.*

*Hypothesis 3: There are cultural differences between Germans and Swiss Germans within the same cultural background (Alemannic culture)*

*Hypothesis 4: The cultural between Germans and Swiss Germans within the same cultural background have a negative impact on a common cross-cultural project*

In a first step the paper deals with the theoretical underlying of culture as well as background information on the two national cultures. Based on that, the case study was conducted. Finally, this leads to the result that there are cultural differences and that there is no significant distinction if Swiss German work with Germans from the Alemannic culture or not – the national border equals the border of culture.

## **Theoretical background**

### Definition of Culture

*"Culture... is ... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."*

UNESCO, World Conference on Cultural Policies,  
Mexico City, 06 August 1982

The UNESCO description is a useful starting point for a definition of culture because it outlines the basic elements of the complex topic. First the description is limited to a society or social group. Second it mentions and points out the aspect that a culture is embedded into an environment that either accepts or does not accept the cornerstones or layers of this culture.

### Layers of culture

Cultural differences exists on different levels which are visible (artefacts like language, food, clothes etc.), partially visible (norms and values like policies and regula-

tions etc.) or completely invisible (basic assumption like sense of humor, national feelings etc.).

Members of the culture interact within the level constantly but a foreigner of the culture mainly receives the visible part of artefacts. Hofstede defines four layers of cultures: symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Hofstede, 1991:7). A visual symbol for a national culture is its national flag. Heroes are person or characters the culture can identify with. For Germany this could be Hans-Dietrich Genscher (Secretary of State during Reunification) or for Switzerland Wilhelm Tell, a mythological figure for freedom fighting.

Rituals are collective activities with symbolic content which follow certain controlled steps until they reach the desired end. Within the culture, rituals are of social essence. Forecasting the weather is one ritual. People in Zurich celebrate “Sechseläuten” to predict the duration of the coming summer. A papier-mâché snowman filled with firecrackers is burned at the stake. The interval from sparking off the stake until the head of the Böögg burst will forecast the summer weather. Another example for Germany are the German Christmas markets.

Symbols, heroes and rituals are subsumed by Hofstede under the term practices. They are visible to foreigners but the meaning still remains within the members of the culture only.

The core of culture consists of its values which are attributes of individuals as well as of communities. Culture presupposes a collectivity. The individual combination is transferred by cultural patterns surrounding the receiver’s mind at the time when it is still relatively empty and programs can be most easily registered. Although the learning transferring collective mental programs goes on during our entire lives, the basic programming is entrenched within our cultural behavior and changes only slightly, although the content is non-rational.

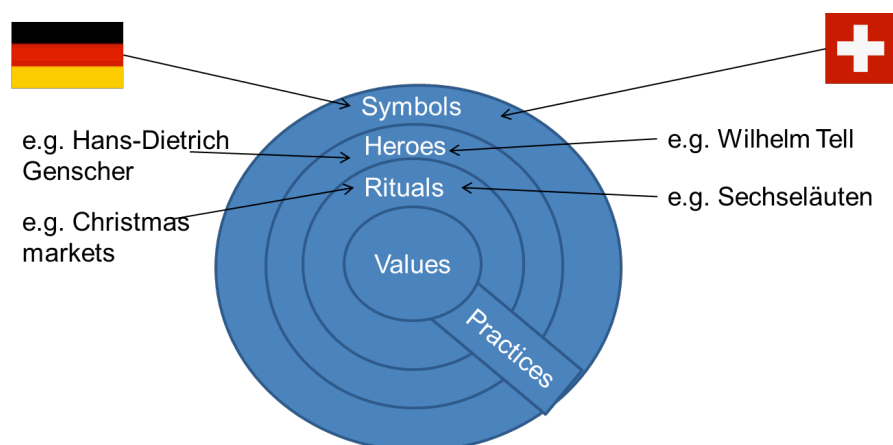


Figure: The onion diagram, Hofstede, 1991:9

**Figure 1: based on The Onion diagram (Hofstede, 1991:9)**

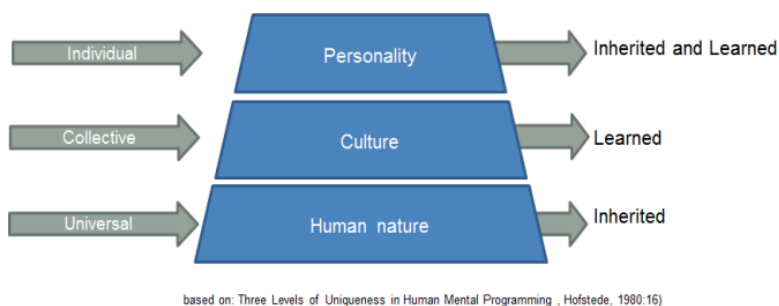
For the cross-cultural assessment between German and Swiss Germans not only the national level is of importance but also on linguistic affiliation level which contains linguistic determinant.

## Entities of Culture

Beside the layers of culture, entities of culture are another fundamental concept in cross-cultural research. Typical examples of cultural entities are individuals, organizational and societal levels.

This paper assumes that these three cultural entities exist and human interacting between all of them: The individual, collective and universal level. *“Metal programming can be inherited – transferred in our genes – or they can be learned after birth.”* (Hofstede, 1984:16). Hofstede noticed that it is difficult to draw lines between the single levels and therefore this is still discussed among anthropologists.

Culture includes: Different entities



**Figure 2: based on Three Levels of Uniqueness in Human Mental Programming (Hofstede, 1984:16)**

The universal and individual level are preprogrammed before birth while the content of the collective level is mainly learned *“which is shown by the fact that we share it with people who went through the same learning process but who do not have the same genes”* (Hofstede, 1984:16). This transfer is a social phenomenon. *“Societies, organizations, and groups have ways of conserving and passing on mental programs from generation to generation with an obstinacy which many people underestimate”* (Hofstede, 1984:16f.).

## Cultural Framework Theories

Scientists used different frameworks to find out the main cultural dimensions. Five cultural frameworks will be reviewed in chronological order, because each framework is based on former ones.

## Cultural Framework Theories

- Hall's framework (3 dimensions)
- Hofstede framework (5 dimensions)
- Trompenaars framework (7 dimensions)
- GLOBE framework (9 dimensions)
- Ralston framework (8 dimensions)
- Thomas's approach of cultural differences

**Figure 3: Most important cultural framework theories (by author)**

The framework of Ralston (1993) is of high relevance to this study, although it has been taken beyond the socio-cultural area which will be analyzed. Therefore the concept of Alexander Thomas (1992) about cultural standards and its interpretation of Frank Brück (2003) have been taken into concern. Brück analyzed the cultural standards of Austrians by comparing critical situations of Germans or Swiss Germans who have been confronted with in the working field of the Austrians.

Ralston and his team went stronger than Trompenaars into the interrelation between socio-cultural and business-ideological influenced values. Their research is based on the cultural dimensions of Hofstede and the GLOBE study. Ralston's framework is an important source for creating the cultural dimensions in data mining of socio-cultural and business ideological influenced values for this business case.

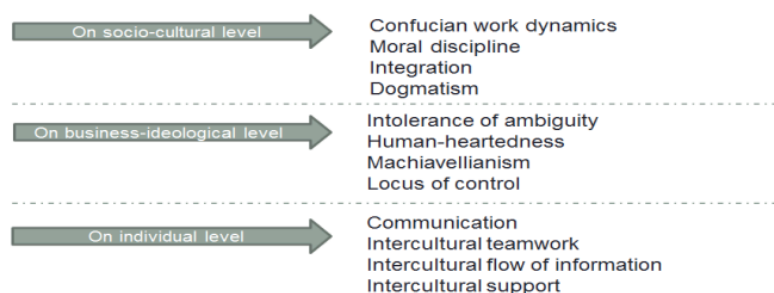
Based upon existing literature, they *“developed a values system that consists of eight specific values.”* On socio cultural level, *“theses value dimensions incorporate the importance of trust in relationships (Confucian work dynamics), the emphasis on one's self-interest versus the good of others (moral discipline), the managers' views and valuation of the superior subordinate relationship (integration) and his acceptance of new ideas and changes (dogmatism.”* (Ralston, et al., 2006:72).

On business ideological level, they defined the values of *“one's orientation towards wanting security and avoiding risks (intolerance of ambiguity), managers' orientation towards employee welfare versus task accomplishment (human-heartedness), managers' approach to influencing others at work (Machiavellianism), and managers' feelings of control over their work environment (locus of control)”* (Ralston, et al., 2006:72).

There are four more cultural dimensions on individual level added in this study, based on observations and interviews made in Germany and Switzerland: Communication, Intercultural teamwork, Intercultural flow of information and Intercultural support.

## Business Case Methodology

Ralston's framework and four further dimensions on the individual level used for this research study



**Figure 4: Framework for Business case (by author)**

### Critical approach

The cultural dimensions of Ralston are characterized by Western and Eastern culture which – in times of globalization- make the framework as one of worthwhile frameworks in intercultural research study. The participating researchers in this study come

from different cultural backgrounds of the Eastern and Western world. This boots the advantage that the cultural dimensions are taken from different cultural point of views. Unfortunately there are no data given for Germany and Switzerland. But with mainland China and Hong Kong, Ralston and his colleagues have at least similarity in relation to comparing country size, common language and close business relationship within the comparing countries.

## **Background information**

### Germany and Switzerland

Compared to Germany (357'000 km<sup>2</sup>; 80.5 billion inhabitants), Switzerland is very small in terms of both, surface area (41'000 km<sup>2</sup>) and population; of its 8.1 billion inhabitants, around 20 % of them are foreign citizens. In 2013 around 298'000 Germans lived within the borders of Switzerland (For Germany: 80'700 Swiss) (Sources: de.statista.com and bfs.admin.ch, requested 2014-05-21).

Switzerland shows an ethnic makeup of 65 % Swiss Germans, 18% French and 10% Italian (Szabo et al. 2002:55). With nearly 64% of the total population, German is the largest language area in Switzerland. Although High-German is an official language it is mainly a written language. According to the results of the census in 2000, 80.5% of the requested Swiss Germans replied to speak regional dialect (which belongs into the dialect family of Swiss German) while 90.8% of them replied to speak only regional dialect and no High-German (Lüdi, Werlen, 2005:36).

### Historical development

In the Middle Ages, main parts of Germany and Switzerland belonged to the Holy Roman Empire. The Habsburger, a Swiss dynasty, came into power in the 13th century. By that time, in 1291, the "Forest Cantons" united in a confederation against the Habsburg monarchy. The Federal Letter or League of the Three Forest Cantons was signed on 1st August, today's National Swiss Holiday.

At the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, Switzerland attained legal independency. It was lost within the time frame of French revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Switzerland became more and more dependent on France. At the Congress of Vienna (1815), the European powers restored Switzerland within its borders of 1789 but also obliged the confederation to be perpetually neutral. After 33 years of discord and civil war, Switzerland became a neutral nation encompassing 24 cantons with four language regions. Since 1979, 26 cantons exist within the border of Switzerland.

Germany, as we know it today, is a very young country of 24 years. After World War II, it was separated in Eastern and Western Germany. In 1955 Western Germany joined the NATO. Eastern Germany (GDR) was founded by the Soviets in May 1955 and became part of the Communist Economic System and the Warsaw Pact. People within Eastern Germany were not allowed to criticize the system nor to travel to Western Germany. Within the early nineties the economic system in UDSSR and its satellite states collapsed. The knock-on effect reached Eastern Germany and on 9th November 1989, the Berlin Wall came unexpectedly down. On 3rd October 1990 the reunification was made officially. Based on this event, the idea for a common currency within the European Union was born and fixed in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Switzerland never entered the EU but maintains bilateral treaties with members of EU

and operates as member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) since 1995. In 2002, after several referenda, the Swiss people decided to become member of UNO. In 2004, Switzerland ratified the Schengen-Dublin agreement, which grants the free movement of persons from EU to Switzerland and vice versa. It was supported by referendum on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2005 by the electorate and became operative in 2008 (europa.admin.ch; requested 14-05-21).

### Religion

Germany and Switzerland are strongly characterized by its Christian heritage. In 2013, around 31% of the German population has been Roman Catholics and around 30 % Protestants (Fowida, requested 14-05-21). In Switzerland, 38% of its populations are Roman Catholics and 28% Swiss Reformed (Der Bund kurz erklärt 2014:8). In both countries the numbers of members of churches decline steadily.

### Linguistic

Within the borders of the nations Switzerland and Germany are lots of heterogeneous cultures. There is neither typical German nor Swiss. In parts, the culture differs from village to village. A deep analysis of each culture would break the mold of this paper. Therefore the language areas in Germany and Switzerland are categorized into several clusters for this study.



**Figure 5: Cluster of language areas in Germany and Switzerland (by author)**

For the analysis of hypothesis 1 and 2 the cluster in dialect language area is not been taken in consideration. For hypothesis 3 and 4 the study is based on the same linguistic cultural area, the Alemannic language area. Historic-cultural, the Alemannic dialect was already mentioned in the Early Middle Age. This idiom is spoken in variation in six countries; in Germany (parts of Baden-Wurttemberg, Allgau), France (Alsace), Austria (Vorarlberg), Liechtenstein and well as in the German speaking parts of Switzerland and selectively in parts of Northern Italy.

### Daimler AG and Mercedes Benz Switzerland

Daimler AG, situated in Stuttgart, is one of the best known car manufacturers. Mercedes-Benz Schweiz AG is a subsidiary of Daimler AG. It is situated in the accommodation of Zurich and consists of two independent units.

From 2007, Daimler AG developed for its division Mercedes-Benz Car group a web based tool for its retailers to sell Mercedes-Benz and smart only by entering and using one single lead management system called MBC POS (Mercedes Benz Car group Point of Sales).

## **Business Case**

### Design and Selection

The Business case is based on the pilot rollout of MBC POS from Daimler AG to Switzerland from Sept. 2010 to June 2011. The rollout team of Daimler AG consists of twelve internal and several external employees. Furthermore, the executive managers from MBC POS, the CEO of Mercedes Benz Switzerland as well as executive managers from marketing & sales at Mercedes Benz Switzerland have been participated at the interviews.

I have chosen the single embedded case study because the German Daimler AG on the one side and its Swiss subsidiary provide the necessary conditions to assess culture, to test my hypotheses and access to the phenomena under investigation. This case study is viewed as critical and revelatory. Critical, because of the fact that the selected case – the MBC POS project – is present in two cultures where the phenomena under analysis can be observed and a sufficient sample size of respondents is given on both sides.

It is also revelatory, because such a phenomenon is not being previously investigated, from an insider's perspective, in a bilateral business project between a Swiss German and a German company. The phenomenon of culture in both companies is investigated at three different levels: socio-cultural, business-ideological and individual cultural level. The time frame for the investigation was kept as short as possible due to the ongoing project steps.

Another case study design alternative is the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches - a multi method design - which I selected for this thesis.

Thus, the employment of the qualitative methods (here observation and interview) has to be carefully weighted against the employment of the quantitative methods (here survey) because survey methods are more focused and efficient than observations or interviews.

The survey uses the 12 statements requested on cultural dimensions mentioned above. It is split in four sections. Section A samples personal data. Section B – D deal with statements of cultural dimensions on socio-cultural, business and individual level. The cultural dimensions in section B and C are in accordance to Ralston's Framework while those in section D come from conducted interviews and observations. Each section includes four statements which reflect each the perception of the current status (IS) and four statements which reflect each the desired status (SHOULD) in adaptation with the GLOBE study. Also the ordinal scale is adapted from the GLOBE scales but in reverse order. The order within the survey is depicted in the table below:

#### **Survey response scales**

- 1 I totally agree with this statement
- 2 I mostly agree with this statement
- 3 I somewhat agree with this statement
- 4 I neither agree nor disagree
- 5 I somewhat disagree with this statement
- 6 I mostly disagree with this statement
- 7 I totally disagree with this statement



In the first stage I've used observations and interviews to limit the determinants of cultural dimensions. In a second step, I analyzed and evaluated the results of the qualitative approach to build up a framework for my survey. In total, I weighted the results from qualitative methods against quantitative methods I used by 1:2.

Limitations of this study are not only related to language or dialect area but also to the methodology used, available resources and the influence of researcher's subjective point of view.

### Findings

I acquired the findings on the visible outer layer (artefacts and products) from casual and formal observations of participants and myself. The findings regarding to the middle layer (behavior and values) come from the conducted survey while those from the inner layer (assumptions) result from observations and interviews I conducted.

On sociocultural level I primarily noticed different narration between Swiss Germans and Germans. Independent of the canton they come from, the majority of Swiss are proud of being Swiss. Swiss claim to purchase at Swiss Supermarkets like MIGROS and Coop (although in cantons near the German border many Swiss purchase in Germany because goods are on lower price there). Many Swiss Germans are proud of speaking dialect.

One referendum, the Zurich electors have been faced in May 2011 was about if - instead of Higher German - dialect should be single language of education in public kindergarten. The initiative was accepted by 53.9% (<http://www.nzz.ch>, requested 11-07-01). Swiss are more involved into political decision findings than Germans (except fiscal policy). One of the Swiss principles is that each person is responsible for himself (individual initiative) and only in case he is not able to do so, the canton supports him. This fact and the myth of being one single nation of brothers, makes many Swiss Germans seen themselves as equal ranked with equal rights and equal duties. I made the experience that Swiss Germans frequently lay things on the line and – in general - adhere to it.

This directness may be strange to many Germans. Germans are familiar with social state although this concept is shifting towards self-reliance. Demonstrations like Stuttgart21 (against the low-level main station in Stuttgart) show that also Germans are willing to accept responsibility. Still, I noticed that Germans are more into hierarchical thinking than Swiss Germans which might be an historical remnant. Furthermore, I made the observation that fewer Germans that are proud of being German than Swiss of being Swiss. At the same time Swabians are proud of being Swabian. The slogan "Wir können alles ausser Hochdeutsch" launched by the federal state Baden-Württemberg in 1999 demonstrates this self-esteem.

I determined that Swiss Germans sometimes have a fairly gritty idea about their Northern neighbor: Germans push themselves to the fore, speak rapidly and do not care about consensus, which is highly valued by many Swiss.

I also noticed that Germans' main mean of transport are cars, while Swiss Germans' main means of transport is "Velo" (bike) or tram (in cities) and for medium distance railway. Both societies claim to be world champions in recycling. I also made the ex-

perience that both countries are very rule based, but in contrast to Germany, the fines in Switzerland are more expensive. In terms of gender equality, I made contrary observations for Switzerland. On the one side, the majority of Federal Council is female. On the other side female employee draw lower wage than male (in 2010:27%). In contrast to Germany, family policy is mainly not paid by social state but private for reasons mentioned above.

In interviews with Swiss Germans about their perception of Germany and Germans I got contrary impressions. On the one side many Swiss Germans term Germany a "Grosser Kanton im Norden" but on the other side there is a kind of xenophobia against Germans in Swiss politics and media noticeable.

In interviews with Germans about their perception of Switzerland and Swiss Germans I got the impression that it varies much from the facts. Some told me, Switzerland is seen as postcard idyll never the mind it is expensive others that Switzerland is an island for tax fraud. These are stereotypes which do not align with my observations.

The participation rate towards my survey was pleasantly high; for Switzerland 81% and for Germany 59% of the participants replied.

On the socio-cultural level I made the following findings for Germans and Swiss Germans:

Confucian work dynamics: The German respondent discern this value as partly given while the Swiss respondents distinguish it as mainly given. Both groups say that participants of the societies should mainly give attention on trust-based relationships given.

Moral discipline: The German and the Swiss German respondents perceive this value as partly not given. Both groups say that participants of the societies should mainly possess higher degree of moral courage.

Integration: While the German respondents do partly not agree that mistakes are tolerated by the society, the Swiss German respondents neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Both groups could neither agree nor disagree if their society should be more tolerant or not against mistakes made by a person living within the society.

Dogmatism: While the German respondents neither agree nor disagree that different opinions are usually accepted by the society, the Swiss German respondents partly agree with this statement. Both groups mainly agree that their own society should be more open for new ideas and changes.

On the business-ideological level I made the following findings for Germans and Swiss Germans:

Intolerance of ambiguity: The German respondent perceive this value as partly given while the Swiss respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Both groups mainly agree that employees should be more involved in the decision making procedure.

Human-heartedness: The German participants partly agree with the statement, while the Swiss German participants neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Both groups expect that conflicts should be mainly resolved by negotiation and finding a solution together with the employee.

Machiavellianism: While the German respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement that superiors and managers put self-interests beyond the interest of the work group, the Swiss German respondents partly disagree with this statement. The group of German respondents expects that Machiavellianism should mainly not be given in the company while the Swiss German group neither agrees nor disagrees with this statement.

Locus of control: While the German respondents mainly agree that superiors can rely on the participation of his team members, the Swiss German respondents partly agree with this statement. Both groups mainly agree that superiors should rely on the participation of their team members.

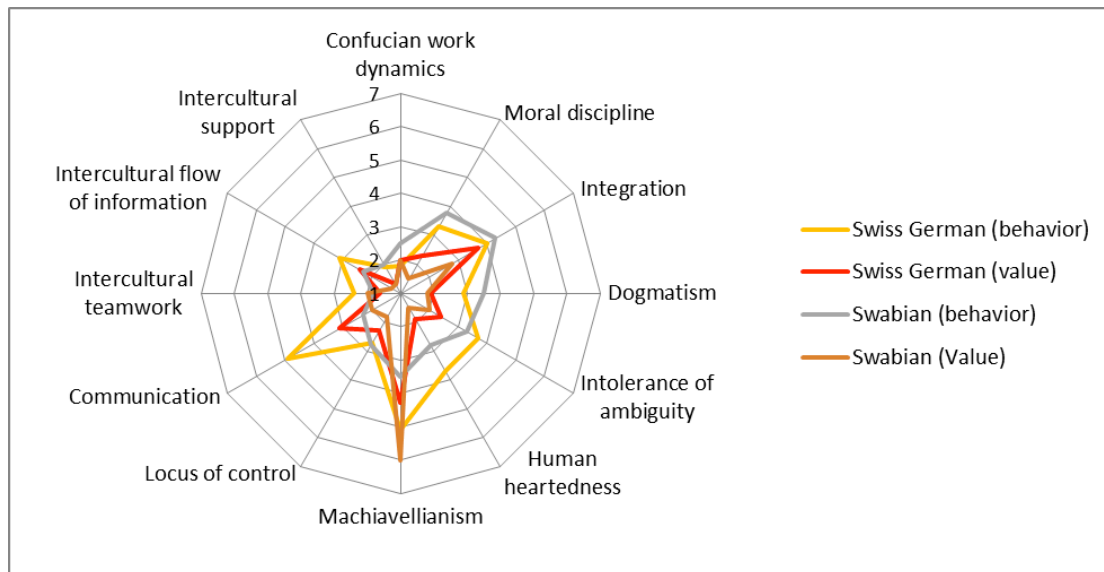
On the individual level I made the following findings for Germans and Swiss Germans:

Communication: The German respondents perceive this value as partly given while the Swiss respondents partly disagree with the statement. Both groups mainly expect that cultural differences due to communication should become smaller.

Intercultural teamwork: The German and Swiss German participants mainly agree that they feel very well integrated upon their own culture. Both groups expect that they mainly should be very well integrated with members of other cultures.

Intercultural flow of information: Both, German and Swiss German respondents partly agree that they got the same necessary information as their colleagues from other cultures. The group of German and the group of Swiss German respondents mainly expect that they should get the same necessary information as their colleagues from other cultures.

Intercultural support: Both groups mainly agree that they get the same support from each team member, regardless to cultural differences. While Germans mainly agree that they should get the same support from each team member, regardless to cultural differences, Swiss Germans totally agree with this statement.



**Figure 6: Cultural differences between Germans and Swiss Germans (by author)**

The 2nd part of the survey shows the findings I made within the Alemannic dialect area.

The sample size of Swabian is little with only 4 participants, while the sample size for Swiss Germany rests by 10 participants.

On the socio-cultural level I made the following findings for Swabians and Swiss Germans:

Confucian work dynamics: The Swabian respondent discern this value as partly given while the Swiss respondents distinguish it as mainly given. Both groups say that participants of the societies should mainly give attention on trust-based relationships.

Moral discipline: The Swabian respondents could neither agree nor disagree with the statement, that their society possesses a high degree of moral courage. The Swiss German respondents perceive that in their society partly possesses moral courage. Both groups say that participants of the societies should mainly possess higher degree of moral courage.

Integration: The Swabian as well as the Swiss German respondents neither agree nor disagree that mistakes are tolerated by their society. While the Swabian participants partly agree with the statement that their society should be more tolerant or not against mistakes made by a person living within the society, the Swiss German participants could neither agree nor disagree if.

Dogmatism: While the Swabian respondents neither agree nor disagree that different opinions are usually accepted by the society, the Swiss German respondents partly agree with this statement. Both groups mainly agree that their own society should be more open to new ideas and changes.

On the business-ideological level I made the following findings for Swabians and Swiss Germans:

Intolerance of ambiguity: The Swabian respondent perceive this value as partly given while the Swiss respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Both groups mainly agree that employees should be more involved into decision making procedure. The Swabian participants partly agree with the statement, while the Swiss German participants neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Both groups expect that conflicts should be mainly resolved by negotiating and finding a solution together with the employee.

Machiavellianism: While the Swabian respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement that superiors and managers put self-interests beyond the interest of the work group, the Swiss German respondents partly disagree with this statement. The group of Swabian respondents expects that Machiavellianism should mainly not be given in the company while the Swiss German group neither agrees nor disagrees with this statement.

Locus of control: Both, the Swabian and the Swiss German respondents partly agree that superiors can rely on the participation of their team members. Both groups mainly agree that superiors should rely on the participation of their team.

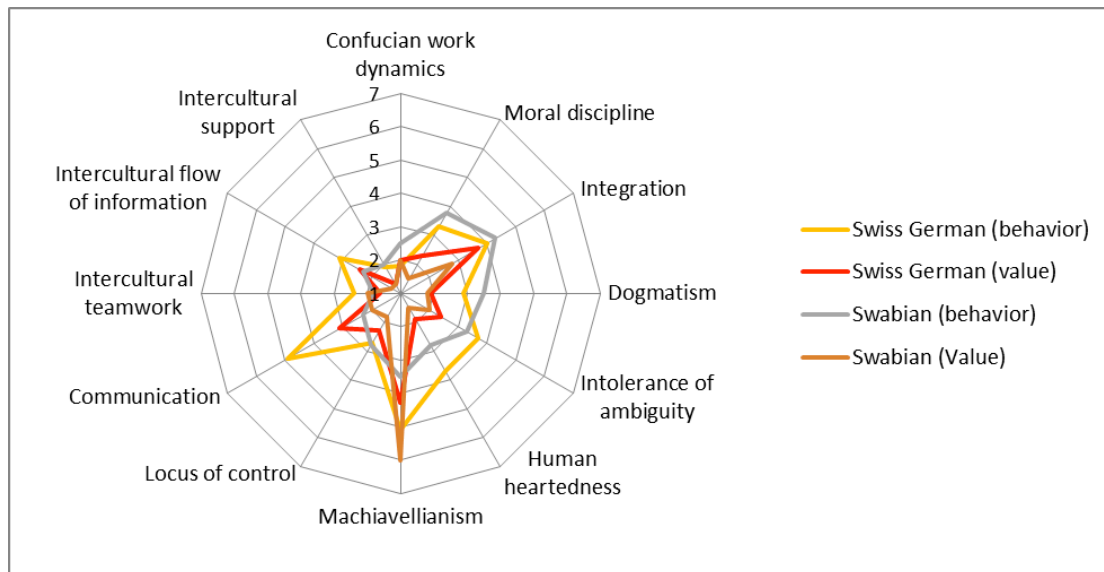
On the individual level I made the following findings for Swabians and Swiss Germans:

Communication: The Swabian respondents perceive this value as mainly given while the Swiss respondents partly disagree with the statement. While the Swabian participants mainly expect that the cultural differences due to communication should become smaller, the Swiss German participants only partly expect it.

Intercultural teamwork: The Swabians and Swiss German participants mainly agree that they feel very well integrated beyond their own culture. Both groups expect that they mainly should be very well integrated with members of other cultures.

Intercultural flow of information: While the Swabian participants mainly agree to the statement that they got the same necessary information as their colleagues from other cultures, Swiss German respondents only partly agree with it. The group of Swabians totally agrees with the expectation that they should get the same necessary information as their colleagues from other cultures. The group of Swiss German respondents mainly expects it.

Intercultural support: Both groups mainly agree that they get the same support from each team member, regardless of cultural differences. At the same time, both groups totally agree that they should get the same support from each team member, regardless of cultural differences.



**Figure 7: Cultural differences within the Alemannic dialect area (by author)**

## Conclusion

The empirical findings show that there are little differences between German and Swiss Germans based on selected cultural dimensions. This result supports the findings in literature of Hofstede, Trompenaars and the GLOBE study.

Finally the series of the survey exhibit significant cultural differences in only two cultural dimensions; in behavior for Machiavellianism and in value for intercultural support. Hypothesis 1 can be supported by the results.

Nevertheless, the findings in observation and the results of the survey show a different picture of the cultural understanding in behavior. In general, Germans see Switzerland as expensive tourist country with pretty countryside or as tax haven. I made the experience, that only few Germans which are involved in cross-cultural business with Swiss Germans really care about their cultural underlying. One main driver is the common written language why many Germans estimate are no cultural differences in business.

As we now know, this is a fatal error. My observation on socio-cultural level show that– others than the Germans – the Swiss Germans are frequently confronted with Germans mainly because Germans are the second largest group of foreigners working in Switzerland and they are mainly better educated than Swiss themselves. Thus, some Swiss Germans - especially voters of Schweizerische Volkspartei (conservative party in Switzerland) and popular Swiss media – show German phobic tendencies. I estimate fear and jealousy as main sources for this behavior because Germans are better educated and may destroy Swiss culture imposing their own culture.

Based on these results I come to the assumption that cultural differences between Germans and Swiss Germans tend to have a negative impact on a common cross-cultural project. The findings can be supported or rejected by comparison with Germans or Swiss Germans grown up in third cultures. This would lead to another hypothesis if grown-up outside Germany (for Germans) or Switzerland (for Swiss Germans) have influence on cultural perception towards the other culture. The analysis of

this would break the mold of this thesis. Therefore hypothesis 2 can be only partly supported mainly by observations.

Swiss Germans frequently call their Northern neighbors Swabians, even though it is geographically incorrect. Swabians are one regional group of Germans situated in the South-Western part of Germany and are socio-cultural closely related to Swiss Germans due to the historical heritage. Hypothesis 3 can be mainly supported. While there are no significant cultural differences in value system between Swabians and Swiss Germans, both show different behavior in the integration and obviously in Machiavellianism. The intercultural differences between Germans and Swiss Germans are more significant than the intracultural differences between Swabians and Swiss Germans. Based on these results I verify hypothesis 4. Due to the small sample size and the observations I collected no clear statement can be made. Thus, hypothesis 4 could neither be supported nor rejected.

In total, my findings give a glance that in or even inside related cultures, cultural differences play an important role in the outcome of a cross-cultural project. It shows that both cultures can learn how to deal with cultural differences of the related culture. Following this, Hofstede's comment that "cultures are more often a source of conflict than of synergy", can be rejected.

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