

## Constructive Intercultural Management

The thematization of problems is omnipresent. Therefore, in this knowledge bite, we suggest taking Constructive Intercultural Management into account, which focuses on the potentials that exist by synergistically combining cultural differences in organizations. We plead for a shift from a problem-oriented view to a constructive view on Intercultural Management.

**Problem-oriented approaches in Intercultural Management Research.** In Intercultural Management Research, there is a strong orientation towards problem-oriented approaches. Cultural differences are often addressed only one-sidedly. Little attention is paid to the constructive approach of considering interculturality as a resource and creating added value from cultural differences. This added value arises through negotiation processes in dynamic intercultural encounters, allowing something new to be “constructed”. In research this is often called “negotiated culture” or “third culture” (Barmeyer & Davoine 2019). The problem-oriented approach ignores these positive effects of interactions of different cultures. From the Positive Organizational Scholarship perspective, this phenomenon is caused by the strong impressions negative experiences leave behind which mask the positive ones:

“Paradoxically, both tendencies—toward the positive and in response to the negative—are important enablers of positive change, but because the negative usually dominates, positive factors have to be given extra emphasis for positive change to occur.” (Cameron 2008, 7).

Thus, there is an emerging **need for new “impulses”** and orientations that allow different insights and more constructive contributions in Intercultural Management Research. By adopting such a constructive attitude, tolerance towards otherness, freedom of action and new research opportunities could be discovered, the quality of decision-making improved and creativity enhanced (Stahl et al. 2017).

Organizations should foster this constructive attitude to exploit the enriching nature of interculturality. By combining different cultural characteristics complementary actions arise. Moreover, combining different cultural characteristics can even lead to far more enriching outputs than a simple combination of the strengths of both sides. These creative and innovative outputs are known as intercultural synergy (Adler 1980).

Prof. Dr. Christoph Barmeyer

Chair of Intercultural Communication  
University of Passau, Germany



**The highspeed train company Alleeo - an example.** A suitable example of a synergetic cross-border cooperation is Alleeo. This joint venture of German Deutsche Bahn and French SNCF shows synergetic border cooperation by constructively negotiating cultural differences to go beyond simple compromises. It develops innovative solutions and thus provides train travelers with new types of services, e.g. French and German train assistants who work in bi-cultural tandems. As a result, power relations are more balanced and mutual intercultural learning processes, such as language learning, trust and knowledge transfer, are facilitated (Barmeyer & Davoine 2019). The importance of Constructive Intercultural Management becomes evident; the advantages that arise from such a synergistic collaboration extend beyond the original framework and reach a new dimension that benefits organizations as well as all actors involved. The results are mostly new, efficient forms of organizational and management practices

In sum, **Constructive Intercultural Management** is about accepting and appreciating the peculiarities of other cultures. It promises to see diversity as a resource and an opportunity for organizations to combine fundamentally different value orientations and social practices. This approach compensates deficits and fosters new complementary actions. It is a rethinking and especially a further development of existing approaches, which must be accompanied by a liberation of dominant research assumptions to adopt different perspectives and develop innovative research results.

### Literature

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Sina Grosskopf, Research Assistant

Chair of Intercultural Communication  
University of Passau, Germany



sina.grosskopf@uni-passau.de