



secrets of  
working across  
five continents

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# **Secrets of Working Across Five Continents: Thriving Through the Power of Cultural Diversity**

BY

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WITH

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# Why this Book Matters

There are (at least) three reasons for writing this book:

- In today’s world, more and more people travel, work and live in countries other than their own.
- In today’s world, collaboration is ever more important as no one individual, organisation, nation alone can find solutions to the challenges (and opportunities) facing humanity.
- In today’s world, innovation is more important than ever before. Diversity is a key driver of innovation yet at the same time often a challenge.

Cultural insights and awareness are key to all the above, and the foundation for enjoyable and successful working in cultures other than our own.

## ‘Our Vision of Cultural Diversity’

- Cultural Diversity is about meeting, dialoguing and sharing with people, being curious, and to go beyond to create something better and sustainable for all
- Cultural Diversity thrives under inspired, authentic and visionary leadership that empowers all
- Cultural Diversity is personal liberty that enriches one’s life and facilitates personal growth
- Cultural Diversity is the foundation for innovation, where creative tension leads to the creation of something meaningful and novel
- Cultural Diversity creates unusual relationships built on mutual trust and appreciation of that which is different
- Cultural Diversity is within ourselves as long as we are sincere, authentic, free from judgement and need for approval
- Cultural Diversity intertwines with time, both ending and never ending, timeless and precious, enchanting, requiring care and wisdom

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## Preface

*Wolfgang G. Sonnenburg*



When I was asked by Chris Igwe, author of one of the chapters of this book, if I would be willing to write the Foreword for this project, I was immediately ready to give my support. But then I hesitated. A 'secret'? What does this mean? Do we not wish for an open society? A secret is something you normally keep to yourself and are not allowed to share. It could even be associated with conspiracy.

With this thought in my mind I talked with Meltem Etcheberry, the initiator of this book, who explained how the authors found the way to creating successful trusting relationships while working across five continents and wanted to share these experiences, from their hearts. Meltem answered my question with this answer: 'Peace'.

This brought back memories of my own experiences with different cultures and war and peace. I grew up in the 1950s during the Cold War, a young boy in Berlin when the Wall was built. The very night before the wall was built I was staying with my grandparents and was due to spend the weekend with my aunt in the eastern part of Berlin. However, my granddad didn't allow his daughter to take me with her. At the time, we didn't understand why, but the next day, when we heard the news that the wall had been built, we realised he had foreseen that this would happen. That day in Berlin, American and Russian tanks were facing each

other at Checkpoint Charlie, and from then on, the Russians were considered to be the enemy. As I was a young boy, I simply accepted that.

Years later, in the 1980s, I travelled to Miami – my first time in the United States. To me it was the land of the ‘good guys’ and freedom. Sitting in a restaurant, I overheard someone behind me speaking in Russian. I was totally shocked, and my first thought was: ‘Oh no, the enemies are here now!’ Of course, this was just an initial reaction, but I realised that I had been programmed to think that Russia was the enemy.

Times are changing. Since then I have travelled to Russia and other eastern countries, have met a lot of wonderful people there, and count Russians among my friends.

For a more recent experience, the tables were turned. A while ago, I held a workshop for an international company in Paris when a 70-year-old lady came to me and said: ‘I want to apologise’. I was astonished and had no clue what she was talking about. She explained, ‘You were here two years ago, and I hated you’. I was shocked and asked her why she felt that way. She said, ‘It was just because you are German, and I put you in the enemy box’. I was grateful then that my work across borders had changed my views and also those of other people.

If we haven’t travelled or have met people from other cultures, we may not be open to seeing people for who they truly are. Instead, we rely on old paradigms and wrong beliefs, which are often encouraged and reenforced by the news, which are no longer interested in bringing us facts so we can form our own views. They often present a very biased ‘truth’, one that is not helping with reconciliation and bringing peace.

A while ago I was in Jerusalem and had contact with different interfaith organisations; one simply brings together people of different faith: Jews, Muslim, Christians, and Druze. Beautiful things are happening there. Where once the fasting periods for the different religions ended at various times, things have changed. At Ramadan, the Muslims said: ‘Friends, let us wait one more hour and break the fast together with our Jewish friends’. When I heard this, I had tears in my eyes. Experiencing something like this may not make global news but it can help to return faith in humanity. One can only experience things like this through travel, being present on such occasions. While modern technologies certainly also helps us to connect with people from other countries and cultures, being in the same space enables a much deeper experience.

Most of us grew up with the idea that we are separate from others. And we are educated to think that if one wins the other has to lose. We experience racism, judgement, competition, and a society with millions of misinformed and ignorant people as a result. Some of us may have heard of [Marshall B. Rosenberg \(2003\)](#) who created the concept of *Nonviolent Communication* in the early 1960s. This is a process for supporting partnership and resolving conflict within people, in relationships, and in society. It is amazing what is possible if we are truly interested in understanding, not judging, and are not driven simply by our inherited paradigms and fearful emotions.

By studying Professor Don Edward Beck's 'Spiral Dynamics' theory – an evolutionary human development model (Beck & Cowan, 2005), and Kenneth Wilber's (2000) *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*, we find a pathway to more integral work across the continents. The world will be a better place if more and more people reach the integral level of consciousness, a view where we consider our internal and external world, where we consider ourselves as individuals and the systems of which we are part. We no longer see ourselves as being separate and hence show greater consideration for the implications of our own actions on others.

Once we raise our consciousness, we will be able to create a different dialogue for business leaders. History shows that as business structures started to grow into large organisations, the only people experienced enough to run such large entities were military personnel. Much of business language borrows from the military: we have chief officers fighting for market shares and talk about a war for talent. It is about winning and profit, not about protecting or nurturing people. In this world, there are indeed winners and losers. To change that we have to change how we create our wealth and how we nurture and educate our people, we have to change the language we use. We need to focus on health and peace and make that our first priority.

I had the privilege to interview Professor Muhammad Yunus, who influenced my view of the world immensely. He is often seen as the father of microcredit. But his real success is based on the intention to give people back their dignity. He realised that a loan given to one person does work well, but when that loan is given to a group which then is responsible for each single loan, it starts to work. The result of this realisation, and auctioning it: more than seven million women who formerly suffered because of poverty are now the owners of the Grameen Bank.

Where are we now?

While we still have distribution problems, in principle, and for the first time in history, we have enough food to feed everybody, all 10 billion. Artificial Intelligence is gradually taking over all the work we humans don't really want to do. Shouldn't we be excited about the future? In his book, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, Professor Yuval Noah Harari (2017) explains that for the first time in the history of mankind, we are able to approach near mastery of our environment. Yet perhaps exactly that is the problem, we should not seek mastery but a way to understand our role in the systems we are part of; nurture these systems instead of 'mastering' and destroying them. What do we need to create an extraordinarily good future for all of humanity, and the planet? We have never been there so it feels like a mystery. It truly is new territory.

If we understand that we are not separate and that we are all as one, responsible for one another and for our world, then we can create a beautiful way of living on this planet. One that we cannot even imagine yet.

*Secrets of Working Across Five Continents* is not just a new book. It is a project. It is not just written by six authors. It has become possible through the generosity

and openness of 145 people. It is a project which illustrates the beauty and enormous benefits of a world that values the 'We' over the 'Me'.

Four areas are important and covered in this book. First, we need a vision which inspires people and wise trustworthy leaders. Second, we should nurture the people, create trust, and respect their cultures. Third, it is about innovation and a new way of living together, in a 'We' world. Fourth and finally, it is about creating relationships and inspiring communication between all the humans. We do not want competition; creation is key. Innovation needs to be positively disruptive that benefits all, otherwise it is not really innovation and doesn't bring us a new quality of life.

I found the vision for this in this book.

The lead authors Meltem Etcheberry and Bettina von Stamm have this vision. And the four chapter authors cover the four important areas: Chris Igwe – Visionary and Authentic Leadership; Hande Karabatak Binns – Nurturing People and Culture; Triana Navarro de Chollet – Innovative Design and Creation; and Maria Goulina Rabany – Inspiring Communication and Relationship.

One hundred and forty-five people across the globe opened their hearts and shared their ideas, their experiences, and their world views. They have helped us to realise that which Meltem Etcheberry wants to achieve for us all: Peace and collaboration are possible.

Thanks to all these pioneers who worked together for global understanding and who worked together so that thousands or even millions of people can follow their example and benefit. This work, this project, is an inspiration to us all and helps us to believe that an extraordinary good future for all of us IS possible and that it IS on its way.

I would like to leave you with one final thought: what if we had one day a year where we celebrated such vision? Celebrated the potential of humanity and proclaimed our desire to preserve the beautiful planet we live on?

As actions speak louder than words, a start has already been made: Winspiration Day. Celebrated every year on the 7th May, it is meant as a transformation companion that supports people and organisations in shaking off their dependencies on well-established beliefs and patterns. The goal is to encourage everybody to dare to be seen, to believe in the power of working together, to share their gifts and talents, so that, together, we can create powerful change. Winspiration Day is an umbrella that invites all movements that work for a better, more sustainable world to come together, and to support all those who do not yet see the beauty, power, and potential that lies in collaboration and diversity.

If we all, nourished by the insights and the wisdom of this book, believe that 'The Best is Yet to Come', together we can make it happen.

Be inspired and pay it forward.

Wolfgang G. Sonnenburg



Luzern, Switzerland, 20 January 2020.

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# Acknowledgements

*Not all of us can do great things.  
But we can do small things with great love  
Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

During her Nobel Peace Prize speech in 1979, Mother Teresa of Calcutta explained her story as a ‘Daughter of Charity of Calcutta’: One spring evening, she saw a very weak old man on a path in a street in Calcutta, unable to do anything against the rats eating his ear. At once, she thought that every man should die with dignity ... whatever his life, whether rich or poor. And she created her first clinic for these people. Very quickly, these dispensaries multiplied, and her charity became well known throughout the world. She said that the night she met this old man and decided to open her first dispensary, if someone had told her how important her work would become (700 missions in more than 130 countries), how many people would get involved (4,500 daughters) and that thousands would benefit from it, she would have been afraid to start and not have had the courage to take the first step.

Of course, we can’t compare her experience with mine, but I often think of this extraordinary story. After more than a year with more than a hundred people who were kind enough to participate in our book, I humbly had the same feeling: when I had the idea for this book, I wouldn’t have dared to start it if I had realised where it would take me. I admit that they all gave me courage, desire, and passion! I would like to thank all contributors and friends for sharing their secrets from working and living across five continents.

*Gathering is a beginning,  
being together is progress,  
working together is success.  
Henry Ford*

Maria, Hande, Chris, Bettina, Triana: Special thanks to a special team ... for your trust, dedication, patience, and generosity.



Thank you for the lovely thoughts of my sister Özlem Lausser, for valuable insights of Saime and Eda Yapanar, as well as for unfailing support of Bikem İbrahimoğlu de Montebello, Deniz Taner Gökçe, İnci Somuncu Botsalı, and Sezim Sezer Darnault.

*If you want to build a ship,  
don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work.  
But rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

And a deep thought to my father in law, Jean-Pierre, who passed away before being able to contribute to this book. Basque and globe trotter in the soul, he transmitted us his incredibly rich experience in terms of cultural diversity, all his stories in the merchant navy (Far East, Middle East, Latin America) and when he was a shepherd in Wyoming, Colorado, and California – United States, in the 1950s. Today, the experience of this legendary family figure is rooted in our hearts.





From bottom of my heart, a great thanks to my husband, Norbert, for his benevolence and to my son, Jean-Emre, for his curiosity.



I would like to dedicate my part in the memory of my father, DüNDAR, for his wisdom, in the memory of my mother, Sema, for her elegance.



*We all participate in creation.  
We all are kings, poets, musicians ...  
It is only to open up like a Lotus to discover what is in us.  
Henry Miller*

Thank you to Wolfgang G. Sonnenburg, for his winspiring sharing and enrichment for our Preface!

Indeed, heartfelt thanks to our art contributors, Wendy Barrat, for her extraordinary journey of our logo design, and also Aristide Nejean, Jean-Emre Etcheberry, Slobodan Dan Paich, Zhulen Erdinch Yashar, for their exceptional sculpture, paintings, and photo.

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Last but not least, thank you to Emerald Publishing for their kind collaboration, understanding, and warmly follow-ups.

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# Setting the Scene

*Meltem Etcheberry and Bettina von Stamm*

## The Passion that Drove this Book – Meltem

*To touch the head,  
one must first speak to the heart.*

Blaise Pascal

Our world seems to become increasingly connected, getting closer, getting smaller thanks to the new, ever changing technologies and network developments. But really ... are we truly connected? Truly closer? Is the world truly smaller?

Quite some time ago, during a discussion if our world becomes smaller or not, one of my good friends told me that *the world is small for those who have an open heart* ... this touched me very deeply!

Indeed, the world is smaller for those who are ready to open their eyes, their hearts, and their minds; for those who have empathy, benevolence, time for others; for those who do business by respecting other cultures, their art of living and working; most importantly, for those who are passionate about living, learning, and innovating with those others in order to share, and create a better and sustainable future!

Today, communication between different countries becomes more and more frequent. And increasingly people choose to study or work overseas to experience culture diversity with the goal is to broaden their horizons and develop themselves by being overseas.

Living and working in a foreign country and feeling good – as happy as at home – is a true-life experience and personal luxury. Our aim with this book is to capture and share international work experiences and insights of those professionals who work across cultures in the hope that we may open more eyes, hearts, and minds towards the beauty that lies in diversity, and the immeasurable benefit it can create for business, society, and our planet.

So, let's be open-minded and open-hearted! Open our hearts and make our world pleasant to live and share ... take advantage of our diversities to go further together ...

**That is the Secret of Working Across Five Continents:  
Knowing how to leverage cultural diversity to innovate!**

From a very young age, games shape our way of learning and being together. As a child my son, Jean-Emre was fond of the 'spot-the-7-differences' game. At the beginning, the pictures look the same but the more you explore the pictures, the more the seven differences appear. This game requires attention, concentration, and is exciting.

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In fact, ‘spot-the-7-differences’ game gives a glimpse of real life. At first glance, everything seems the same. Afterwards, when we look into details, we can perceive things differently. In everyday life, when we change our way of living and our point of view, we notice what is different in others more or less easily. To discover this diversity is also exciting.

Like in the game, we understand that differences actually tie things together. As a matter of fact, these two pictures become complementary and create a synergy. But to understand this, we need to go deep and take the necessary time – time is precious and we need to give it generously if we are to truly meet and get to know one another.

Today, we need to learn again how to take our time, caught up in our daily occupations, as we are. If we are sensible and curious, we reach a capacity for listening, showing empathy and good manners, with a sense of welcoming, understanding, and a will to communicate. It is all about relationships ... true, visible, and sincerely loyal. All of this opens us to a new dimension of reality with its seven differences ... and more!

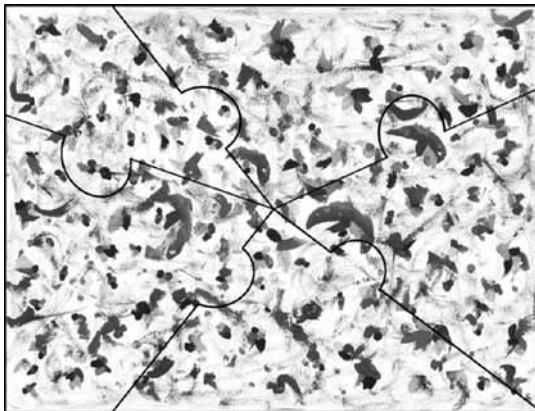
*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,  
but in having new eyes.*

Marcel Proust

For me, the wisdom of diversity is also about understanding history, on a global scale, be it from a collective or personal perspective. It is about preserving the positive part, and creating from it a positive vision, full of hope, and motivation, while leaving behind possible negative parts, those that keep people depressed, and undermine making peace in and around us. For such human and intelligent manner of acting, I am putting forward a new term: ‘CulturAll Intelligentsia’. CulturAll Intelligentsia<sup>©</sup> is about living and working together with respect and appreciation, drawing on the richness of the diversity in the world, thereby allowing us to create a sustainable, understandable, and peaceful future.

*Everything you can imagine is real.*

Picasso



‘CulturAll Intelligentsia’<sup>©</sup>

Puzzle Designed and Painted by Jean-Emre Etcheberry – 2011/2019.

*All the magnificent stories start in two ways:  
either a person goes on a journey,  
or a stranger comes to town.*

Tolstoi

Cultural diversity has existed since humanity emerged and moved into different parts of our beautiful planet, and history clearly shows its impact on progress and innovation. It's a moving and enjoyable journey, both looking backwards and towards the future. Dr Sezim Sezer Darnault, Art and Architectural Historian, United States, with whom I share so many friendly and intellectual thoughts since our childhood, has remarkably added her knowledge on this topic:

During the course of the history and since the oldest civilisations, people, goods, and ideas have travelled by crossing political, cultural, and geographical boundaries. Empires of the Ancient World expanded through east/west routes as well as north/south ones. Macedonian-born Alexander the Great's Empire stretched to the Himalayas. Central Rome unified a multicultural empire from Britannia to Syria. The Roman Empire built a complex network of roads that provided circulation among its diverse peoples and lands. The Mediterranean Sea, also called Mare Nostrum (Our Sea), was a connecting space through its several ports and cities.

In the Middle Ages, pilgrims, missionaries, crusaders, and traders travelled from Europe to the East, encountering diverse cultures. During that time, the Silk Road, that had linked Asia to Europe since the Antiquity, played a major role for cross-cultural encounters. Venetian traveller Marco Polo's narratives vividly presented the Silk Road and the East to a European audience. Besides the silk produced in China, spices, metalwork, and glass also travelled from the East to the West. Crusades and pilgrimages to the Holy Land(s) resulted in transfers and mutual emulation among different cultures. Wars and conquests brought back new ideas and left their influence on the lands they occupied, such as the Norman and Arab conquests of Italy and the Umayyad conquest of Hispania.

Constantinople, Venice, Florence, and Genoa controlled maritime trade and were major contact zones of diverse cultures in the Early Modern period. Buildings such as Fondaco dei Turchi and Fondaco dei Tedeschi served as headquarters for commercial activities and as living spaces of the merchants in multicultural Venice.

Textiles, fine carpets, rock crystals, book bindings and ceramics from the East, highly valued in Europe, were part of the artistic

exchange. Global interests, explorations, curiosity, and pleasures in the exotic led to further travels. Fifteenth century Europeans reached West Africa and America(s) where they came into contact with more cultures. Starting from the 17th century, the trade activities of Northern European countries, the establishment of the Dutch East India Company and British East India Company, and the exploration of the Oceania connected the world more than ever before.

In the 18th century, two great Empires, the Ottoman and the Russian were in need of modernisation and took Europe their model. 'Occidentalisation' then influenced many aspects of these societies. At the same time, the increasing Western interest in the Orient attracted a great number of traders, artists, and adventurers to the East. Representations of the Orient became popular in Europe in the 19th century, with painters and writers such as Eugène Delacroix, David Wilke, Lord Byron, Gustave Flaubert, and many others depicting the Orient in their works. Nineteenth century world's fairs, from Paris to Chicago, also served as environments of transnational encounter and exchange.

*By living, I learned to pass some bridges,  
to destroy some of them.*  
Paulo Coelho

Travellers' narratives and painters' visual presentations convey to us their experiences, and help us to better understand history and geographies. Cultural differences become the impulse for exchanges, and they boost local and global economies through the movement of goods, people, and ideas. In addition to their commercial, political, and religious interests, people had the desire to meet, communicate, and exchange with each other. My friend, Slobodan Dan Paich, Founder, Director and Principal Researcher of Artship Foundation in San Francisco, United States, and Visiting Professor at Anthropology-Cultural Studies Section, Victor Babeş University, Timisoara, Romania, has kindly shared with me two of his paintings about the subject ... His presentations address tangible and intangible heritage, comparative cultural studies, and the migration of techniques and ideas.



'Not Only the Silk ... It Is a Road'.



‘Outdoor Silk Road Taoist Rituals ... Even Venetians Can Understand’.

Indeed, for thousands of years, people travelled around the world to discover and explore new lands. It is remarkable how rich this world is! Its diversity, its natural and human richness make an extraordinary heritage. Human beings, having communicated, shared, and interacted with one another locally since the beginning of time, eventually took their cultural, social, culinary, and economic habits with them around the globe – and all this without aeroplanes, mobile phones, or the internet!

For me, diversity is a great wealth. Today, in our increasingly visual and ‘artificial’ world more so than ever before, the true value and meaning of life is our authentic human side, our interaction ... our inspirations, our creative senses. Everyone is unique and has a genuine history ... it is delightful to explore such diversity. Having spent my childhood in different countries, I have witnessed this wealth, learned from the different cultures I experienced, able to engage deeply with people from all over the world! My husband is French and Basque and my son heir to both our cultures: a navigator’s mind from the Basque Country, and a nomad’s heart from Central Asia ... It is an unimaginable human richness, a deep and mindful heritage.

I believe that the will to interact and learn about the other is almost innate in the human being. It all begins with understanding others, their capabilities, their ways of acting and working. Initially, we might imitate them, or they us; then her magic might happen, and together we go where neither of us could have gone alone. For that to happen takes time, time necessary to build a real friendship, a relationship, and a shared desire to build a durable and sincere world. According to Henri Lachmann, Industrialist, ‘One must not only accept differences but also love them’. The desire to discover new landscapes encourages us to go out of ourselves, to interweave, and to grow love between one another other, moving along together to witness new things, to explore new areas, and to find innovative horizons.

*The greatness of a trade is primarily to unite people.  
It is only a true luxury and it is that of human relations ...*

Antoine de Saint Exupéry – The Little Prince

Finally, I would like to say that I aimed to write about diversity since contributing an article – The Future of Innovation Is About Diversity – to *The Future of Innovation* (2009), a book in which my dearest friend Bettina and her friend and colleague Anna Trifilova. In August 2017, when I called Bettina to propose my idea about this new book, she immediately accepted to collaborate, and I was truly excited to start this new journey with her. In addition, for each part, I have invited four of my excellent friends and colleagues, Chris, Hande, Maria, and Triana, who

all have an amazing personal diversity in their life and an uncommon professional experience, and with whom I have shared extraordinary moments in my life. They brought both their great know-how and full of new complementary ideas ...

*There is no great genius without some touch of madness.*

Aristotle

This book is intended to share our knowledge, experiences, memories, and real stories about the diversity in professional settings and, to a certain extent, in our daily lives. By doing so, we aim to provide the reader with some understanding of the impact of cultural diversity and an awareness for some particularly successful business practices. While the stories told are by individuals, they often hold insights that are valid beyond their specific context. This how-to book draws on conversations with 145 contributors, with diverse ages and business activities, who lived and worked in more than 100 countries, on five continents.

The beauty of diversity is like the beauty of a rainbow: it is the multitude of colours and shades where not one is more important or more beautiful than the other. This means that our deep appreciation of diversity goes hand in hand with granting our contributors and authors the freedom to express themselves and share their experiences, ideas, advices, and photos as they chosen ... It is up to each and everyone of us to embrace such diversity by opening our hearts and minds and to enjoy diversity, complementarity, consistency, and the occasional contradiction in equal measures.

*A journey of a thousand leagues began with a step.*

Lao-Tseu

To work across five continents, taking cultural differences into consideration is vital for timeless innovation. It allows us to innovate with more authenticity, for human richness, relationships, creation, and communication. That is how the four chapter topics emerged, separate yet at the same time creating synergies, being complementary, creating a continuously circle and mutually reinforcing each other:

1. Visionary and Authentic Leadership :  
One can hardly be a leader without a sense of respect and love for the human being  
My keywords : wisdom and integrity
2. Nurturing People and Culture :  
One can hardly work in human richness without inspiring people  
My keywords : commitment and benevolence
3. Innovative Design and Creation  
One can hardly imagine creation without vision  
My keywords: preciousness and curiosity
4. Inspiring Communication and Relationships  
One can hardly communicate without bearing cultural diversity in mind  
My keywords: elegance and consistency



♪ *I have a dream.*  
ABBA

From the beginning, I call this project ‘a face-to-face book for leaving a trace’, especially for the future generation, to underline that we can only discover our uniqueness and our diversity by being closer to others, interested in them, in their culture, in their way of living, seeing, hearing, working ... as I always said to myself ‘you have to be ready to go to the unknown to discover the infinite ...’. In preparing this book, our goal was to bring together people we have known and have appreciated. We aimed to transmit their unique history by sharing our common human richness. It is because of this that when I composed my invitation list, I first focussed on the sense of value and friendship that connected me with all the people that I met throughout my professional and personal life.

*Choose a job you like  
and you won't have to work a single day of your life.*  
Confucius

To end, I would say that this is the single most unforgettable journey I've ever undertaken. With each of our contributors, I shared such incredible moments ... With some, I had not spoken for a long time, but I realised that time does not matter once you have built a real friendship ... For months, I have had amazing phone calls, exchanges on Skype, WhatsApp, Uber conference, Zoom, WeChat, from almost all over the world. While chatting about our book, I took time for a coffee or lunch with some ... and understood that doing interviews is a real job; that everything went well is thanks to the benevolence and availability of each of them ...

Receiving their responses to the questions we put to our contributors was absolutely an exciting moment! I read some with a smile, a curious surprise, and some with tears in my eyes. The transparency, the depth, the frankness, and the openness really touched me. During all these months of exchanges, I learned so many things, had plenty of souvenirs. That such tremendous treasures can only be released when adapting to the time and communication of each individual, remains the most challenging and human adventure for me. It proves to me once more that ‘the world is small for those who have an open heart’!

*Who dares to innovate,  
prove his courage.*  
Anselm Grün

I realised that diversity is being created from a desire, courage, urge, need for mobility. When we are in motion, we discover, we share, we transmit, we advance, and we create unbelievable new horizons! When working on this book, I deeply felt and understood one important thing: our book is not the end product, on the contrary, it is an extraordinary opening, a starting point, an amazing and never-ending story, sourced from Cultural Diversity ... towards ‘CulturAll Intelligentsia<sup>®</sup>’...

**It's a new era ahead of us ... !**

## **No Persuasion Needed – Bettina**

When Meltem asked me back in 2017 whether I might like to write a book with her, there was indeed no hesitation! This seems to be the way I make all important decisions: without hesitation, without weighing up the pros and cons. It sometimes feels as if the decision makes me, not the other way around – and I have come to realise that when a ‘decision makes me’, it is the right decision. Right in a sense that what I have agreed to do will be an important part of my journey.

Yet our connection goes back much further than 2017. It was 2008 when Meltem attended a workshop I ran while being Visiting Chair for Innovation and Design at ICN Business School, University of Nancy, France. My research was focussed on exploring the challenges and opportunities of what I call ‘collaboration across communities’, whereby I define ‘communities’ in this context as ‘groups of people with shared values and mindset’. The reason I was interested in this was that I had realised that innovation happens when you connect different bodies of knowledge, that is, bring people from different knowledge domains together. Yet at the same time I had observed over and over again that such collaborative relationships were often fraught with tension and misunderstandings that would frequently lead to suboptimal results. As part of my research, I had invited a group of architects, construction companies, and their clients – three communities with very different mindsets – to explore a tool I was developing to help address this challenge. Meltem was one of the participants of this workshop.

So a shared belief in diversity and a shared passion for unlocking the immense power and beauty that lies in bringing diverse people together lies right at the heart of our deep connection.

For me, the invitation to join Meltem on her quest could not have been more timely. Observing the confusion and anxiety, the conditions of the twenty-first century were causing so many people and organisations alike – aptly captured in the acronym VUCA which stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous

