

# Communicate effectively between cultures

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Delphine Ménard



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**Culture is  
everywhere**



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**National, regional,  
organizational,  
generational, social,  
educational,  
departmental.. wiki-al**

# Let's see what your take is:

Sofia works far away from home. Her commute is ...

Claire does not see her grand children often, they live....

Hector speaks many languages, he speaks....

It was so cold this morning, it was....

Asha has many kids....

Finn is really tall he's....

Wolfgang arrived late for the meeting this morning ....

Answer those questions with the "amounts" that make sense to you.  
Eg. 2 km, or 20 minutes...



**Everything we do, is "cultured".  
But of course you knew this.**

**This said, which of the other  
participants answers surprised  
you? Why?**



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# **This one you'll actually recognize:**

**Let's meet at 1 pm on 2/10!**

**Let's meet at 13.00 on 10/2!**

**Let's meet at 12.00 UTC on 2 Feb then :P**

Different  
norms for  
dates can  
lead to  
confusion!

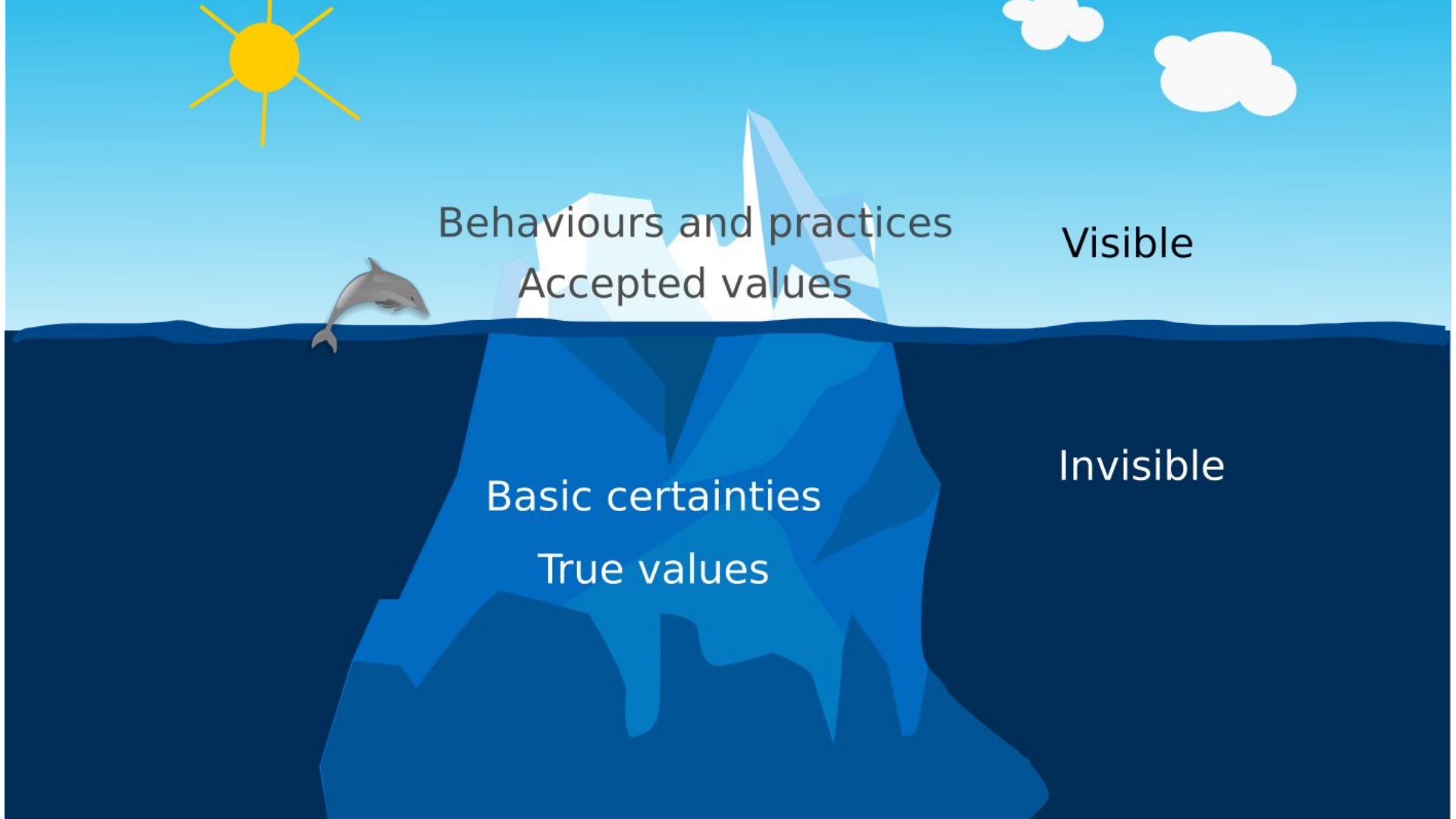


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**Culture is an iceberg,  
and we mostly work  
with the tip**



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Behaviours and practices  
Accepted values

Visible

Basic certainties  
True values

Invisible



# Low context and high context communication & culture

(Edward T. Hall - Beyond culture - 1976)



One of many intercultural communication theories.

# Imagine...

- A corner office in a tall glass building. A woman is standing near what appears to be her desk. She is middle-aged, dressed in business clothes, looks busy. She owns the place. A young man dressed in casual clothes comes in, with a hat on his head.
- The woman looks at him and says: "nice hat"

Asking participants what they hear when they hear "nice hat", you get very different answers.



# The guy with the hat



# Low context

Typically, Germanic or Scandinavian cultures are more low context, men are usually more low context...

- Explicit information
- Direct communication
- All of the necessary information is integrated in the exchange
- Exchanges are more direct
- Easy to enter



# High context

Typically, latin or Asian cultures are more high context, women are usually more high context

- Implicit information
- Importance of rank, status, hierarchy
- Common history and background
- Nuanced communication
- Emotions are being transmitted
- Difficult to enter



# What is affected?

- One to one interactions
- Group communication
- Written communication
- Circulation of information (formal, informal)
- Learning styles
- Relationships
- (and grant requests)



# Are you from a low context or high context culture?

- Exchange in groups
  - Get into groups of 3-4 people and exchange about whether you are from a low context or a high context culture/background and how this affects your interactions with others
- Share with the larger group

# Have you observed here in South Africa...

- Behaviours that show what kind of culture this is?
- Reactions from yourself that tell you what kind of culture you come from?





# Context is key, even in simple interactions

- Understanding where the other comes from is important
- Context (or lack thereof) can make interactions become extremely violent
- We can't always give context, but we can try.



# Let's try and observe



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Asking the audience to say what this means to them. Depending on the age, people will have very different answers.





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# Basic tools to establish context

These are general communication tools, but they help to establish context.

- Reformulation
- I statement
- Observation
- Before you assume anything, try and get clarification
- Try and understand the underlying culture
- Adapt your pedagogy, discourse, communication style





MERCI:)



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# Sources & reading material

- Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture, 1976
- Explorations culturelles: <https://edwardsapirmsh.wordpress.com/2015/06/09/106/>
- Culture at work: <http://www.culture-at-work.com/highlow.html>

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