



Cultural Chameleons and Teamwork
Terminators – Promoting Intercultural
Management in the Baltic Sea Region PIM 2009
as Intercultural Teamwork



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**Cultural Chameleons and Teamwork Terminators –
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Region PIM 2009 as Intercultural Teamwork**

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This bachelor's thesis discusses intercultural teamwork in the intensive programme Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region (PIM) 2009. The aim is to answer the research problem "How did cultural differences appear and affect teamwork in PIM 2009". The need for this research and discussion of this topic can be found in the growing importance of both interculturalism and teamwork in working life.

The research was implemented as a qualitative research using the observation method, and to be more specific, both participant and structured observations were applied. Assessed teams were formed from students participating in the programme. The organizing team of PIM 2009 was also observed, in which the observer herself took part. Results are presented through abductive reasoning, that is, researcher's own interpretations about the observation situations: another person's opinions could differ significantly. Additionally, the samples, that is, the amount of participants, from each culture are rather small and therefore the obtained results are valid only for PIM 2009 and may not apply to any other occasion.

Theoretical and empirical parts are merged together in order to discuss results immediately after theory, which reduces repetition and helps readers to compare PIM 2009 to the theory. To answer the research problem, theories about the participating working cultures and intercultural teamwork are discussed, as well as the results of PIM 2009 in practice.

The cultures participating in PIM 2009 supported the gathered theory well, considering how small a sample represented each working culture. Basic cultural characteristics derived from R. R. Gesteland's and other writers' observations were to be found in the behaviour of the students and organizers participating in PIM 2009. As presumed, it was also noticeable that these cultural characteristics were present in teamwork and had both positive and negative impacts. Results showed that cultural differences had an impact on PIM 2009 teamwork and to confirm these observations, some examples of how the participants managed these differences are introduced.

Keywords: Baltic Sea, cultural difference, intercultural, observation, teamwork, working culture

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Kulttuurikameleontteja ja tiimityöterminaattoreita – Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region PIM 2009 kulttuurienvälisenä tiimityöskentelynä

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Tämä opinnäytetyö esittelee kulttuurien välistä tiimityötä Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region (PIM) 2009 -intensiivikurssilla. Tavoitteena on vastata tutkimusongelmaan ”Kuinka kulttuurierot ilmenivät ja vaikuttivat tiimityöskentelyyn PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssilla”. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus selittyy kulttuurienvälisen osaamisen ja tiimityön tuntemuksen merkityksestä työelämässä.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tutkimuksena käyttäen havainnointimenetelmää, tarkemmin sanoen sekä osallistuvaa että systemaattista havainnointia. Tarkkailtavat tiimit muodostuivat intensiivikurssille osallistuvista opiskelijoista sekä projektin järjestävästä tiimistä, johon myös tutkija itse kuului. Tulokset johdetaan abduktiivisesta päättelystä, jolla tarkoitetaan tutkijan omia tulkintoja havainnointitilanteista: toisen tutkijan mielipiteet saattaisivat poiketa näistä huomattavasti. Lisäksi otos, eli osallistujien määrä joka kulttuurista, oli melko pieni, jolloin saadut tulokset pätevät vain PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssilla eikä niitä voida soveltaa muihin tilanteisiin.

Teoria ja empiria on sulautettu yhteen jotta tulokset voitaisiin tuoda esiin välittömästi kyseisen teorian jälkeen. Tämä vähentää toistoa ja auttaa lukijoita vertaamaan PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssia koottuun teoriaan. Vastatakseen asetettuun tutkimusongelmaan, tämä opinnäytetyö esittelee teoriaa osallistuvien maiden työkalttuureista ja kulttuurienvälisestä tiimityöskentelystä sekä lisäksi PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssista saatuja tuloksia.

Intensiivikurssille osallistuvat kulttuurit tukivat hyvin koottua teoriaa, ottaen huomioon kuinka pieni otos kutakin työkalttuuria edusti. R. R. Gestelandin ja muista lähteistä löydettyt kulttuuripiirteet näkyivät selvästi PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssille osallistuvissa opiskelijoissa ja järjestäjissä. Kuten oli oletettu jo ennen tutkimusta, nämä kulttuuripiirteet olivat merkittävästi läsnä myös tiimityöskentelyssä vaikuttaen siihen sekä positiivisesti että negatiivisesti. Tulokset osoittivat, että kulttuurierot vaikuttivat tiimityöskentelyyn PIM 2009 -intensiivikurssilla, ja tämän tueksi esiin tuodaan esimerkkejä ja tilanteita erojen ja yhtäläisyyksien ilmenemisestä.

Asiasanat: havainnointi, Itämeri, kulttuurienvälisyys, kulttuuriero, tiimityö, työkalttuuri

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1 Introduction

Teamwork is a frequently used and highly appreciated method in working life because of the positive outcomes it has been said to provide (Levi 2007, 3). Teamwork is also one part of the intensive programme Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region (PIM) both for staff and students participating in it (Henriksson 2008).

PIM is an intensive study programme organized by Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Partner universities from around the Baltic Sea participate in this programme enabling intercultural work and a study environment for approximately 40 students. Since all work in PIM 2009 is handled as intercultural teamwork, it became topical to consider the effects different cultures have on teamwork in PIM. In addition, a research on different cultures and how they work together supports my own professional development in the tourism field and my interest and studies concerning the Baltic Sea countries.

This thesis is written for students who will participate in PIM in the future or who need to consider cultural differences and teamwork in the Baltic Sea region during other projects or tasks. The goal is not to write guidelines or strict generalizations on how the representatives of these cultures work in teams, rather it is to reflect how the participants of PIM 2009 acted and reacted together and how all this may have affected their teamwork. All of the conclusions will be made according to this year's PIM and therefore may not be accurate in other teams or other PIM programmes in the future. Regarding cultures, this thesis focuses on working cultures of the countries in question, which in this case includes also the study environment.

The research problem is as follows: "How did cultural differences appear and affect teamwork in PIM 2009". Therefore, the basic presumption made prior to the formulation of this thesis is that there will be some cultural differences to be seen and that they do affect teamwork, either in a positive or negative way. By asking "Did the differences have any impact" the answer would be only "yes" or "no", but with the chosen problem more information is required to answer the question thoroughly. Conclusions about cultures, differences and teamwork result from participant and structured observation which are all documented in a project diary before and after the actual intensive part of PIM in Lithuania.

In PIM 2009 there are two to nine people representing each country. In this case generalizations about the whole nation according to this small sample are not valid. This thesis concentrates only on PIM 2009 and the observer is participating in the teamwork, both of which affect the final results. The chosen method to reason these results is abductive reasoning, when

the researcher uses a theory or a guiding principle of some kind through which he or she observes the empiric world and analyzes the obtained results. The observed features can appear to be seemingly unrelated and therefore results are relevant to only this one certain situation or occasion. (Grönfors 1982, 33–34.)

The results will be presented using the so called zipper technique, as Lantto (2006, 23, [www-document](#)) suggests. When using this technique, theory and practice are brought together like two sides of a zipper, when the connection to practice is considered right after theory without any interruptions. This means that examples and insights of PIM 2009 are presented in between theory to compare practice to theory, to bind the whole work together and to avoid unnecessary repetition.

The first thing to present in this thesis is the background, that is, explaining what PIM is, why cultural differences are important to take into consideration as well as some reasoning for writing this thesis. Thereafter every participating working culture is presented, mostly through the theories of R. R. Gesteland (2002), along with examples from PIM 2009. In addition, some of the most visible differences and similarities between these working cultures are discussed.

After introducing the participating cultures, teamwork theory is discussed. Some crucial terms are first defined as well as reasons for using teams in working life. It is important to explain the features by which teams in PIM are going to be observed. During all these topics the observations in PIM 2009 are presented in between theory. After this the research is evaluated through some challenges and improvement suggestions as well as my own self-evaluation. The thesis is drawn together at the end under the headline Conclusions.

2 Background for the research

Firstly some background information is required before introducing the actual theory and results in PIM 2009. In this chapter PIM itself is presented to give an insight about the history and background of the programme. After this it is important to give some basic information about why cultural differences in working life appear and why they are important to be included in this thesis. In addition, important information and justifications about implementing this thesis are provided.

2.1 Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region

Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region (PIM) is one part of the Baltic Sea Network (BSN). The main goal of this network is to develop the Baltic Sea area in accordance with European Union policy. It consists of higher education institutions, regional development organisations and other organisations around the Baltic Sea. Shared development is achieved by exchanging knowledge and experiences. Students' participation is an important matter for BSN, and PIM fulfils this need perfectly. (Baltic Sea Network 2006, [www-document.](#))

PIM is a two-week intensive programme partly funded by the European Union and Lifelong Learning Programme. It has been organized once a year since 2006, and so far it has taken place in Estonia, Germany and Latvia. PIM was created when the organizing partners recognized the need to promote cultural awareness and equality in the Baltic Sea Region and to improve students' competence in working in multicultural Europe. (Henriksson 2008.)

The main goal for PIM organizers is to get students from different countries together, to help them learn how to act in an intercultural setting and to develop cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. PIM offers students an intensive study environment focusing on intercultural management which is planned to suit students of all fields. Topics such as interpersonal skills, cultural theories, teamwork, conflict resolution, and European multicultural identities will be considered through both theory and practice. This intensive programme will prepare students for changing needs of interculturalism in European working life. (Henriksson 2008.)

Laurea University of Applied Sciences has been in charge of planning and organizing the PIM intensive programme. Together with Kiel University of Applied Sciences it has formed a partner network consisting of universities around the Baltic Sea. Approximately 40 students and 10 teachers from 7 Universities of Applied Sciences have participated in the programme every year. (Henriksson 2008.)

2.2 Cultural differences in working life

Like every vast and complicated term, there are several ways to define the word “culture”. Fred E. Jandt (2007, 25) says it means every element that makes a group of people unique by sharing similar experiences and attitudes. Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 15) say that everyone learns how to behave and act from the society and culture they are born into.

According to Geert Hofstede (2001, 2-3) culture teaches us norms and values and also more superficial things such as symbols and rituals. He has defined the term mental programming of an individual as three levels of a pyramid, illustrating how every person's mind is partly unique and partly shared with others (see Figure 1). The bottom level is shared with all humankind and includes for instance laughing and aggressive behaviour. The next, collective level means the behaviour we learn in a certain group which is not shared with all people. This is the level of human culture, including our language, the physical distance we maintain to other people as well as different ceremonies and customs. The top level is the one which makes people unique. This individual level means one's personality which sometimes does not quite fit the collective culture, that is, the culture of a group.

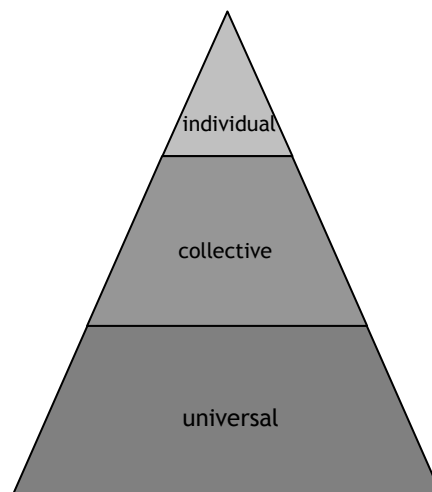


Figure 1. Hofstede's Three Levels of Mental Programming (Hofstede 2001, 3).

According to Hofstede, the differences between cultures, which are discussed in this thesis, belong mostly to the middle level of the pyramid. Cultural differences derive from the collective level when a group of individuals is used to doing things differently from another group. (Hofstede 2001, 2-3.) One could think that in working life the behaviour of people would be somewhat similar, the individual level affecting more because of a joint goal: to do successful business. But because the collective behaviour is so deep in every one of us, as Hofstede

(2001, 2) points out, sometimes people do not even realise how differently things can be done and understood.

Richard R. Gesteland (2002, 9–10) emphasizes the importance of intercultural competence in working life. He says that even if facing new cultures might sometimes seem unpredictable and confusing, interculturalism should be reached for in order to gain success in business. People need to acknowledge differences between ways to act in working life and know how to deal with foreign cultures in everyday life. There may be problems when people from different backgrounds interpret things in their own way and have different expectations about how business should be done, but this diversity should be converted into success and possibilities such as new ideas and creativity. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 72–73; Samovar & Porter 2001, 198–199.)

This thesis concentrates on the working cultures of the countries not considering every feature of a culture. Working culture in this case will also include studying culture, while the students in PIM are studying and working together in teams. As R. R. Gesteland (personal communication 12.5.2009) says, working culture reflects the whole culture of a nation, but is slightly more specific. He continues to write that it is crucial to be aware of these differences to establish patterns that indicate how best to act in a foreign culture and to do successful business across cultures.

2.3 Reasoning for the research

Cultural characteristics are deeply held in every individual and may have an enormous effect on how people work together (Hofstede 2001, 2–3). There are several different cultures participating in the intensive programme PIM every year which is why it is topical and a challenging mission to consider how students in PIM cooperate as a team and how the cultural differences are visible in their work. For me this topic was interesting since cultures and cultural differences are a crucial part of understanding the tourism field. In addition, the topic met my learning objectives as I have concentrated my studies on the region around the Baltic Sea, where all of the cultures represented in PIM are from.

The research problem is: “How did cultural differences appear and affect teamwork in PIM 2009”. Therefore the presumption is that there will be some cultural differences to be spotted in the cooperation and communication of an intercultural team and that these differences supposedly affect teamwork. There are not that many representatives of every country in PIM 2009, which means that some personal characteristics may be more visible than national stereotypes. This is taken into consideration already pre-observation, and the presumption is that some actions and reactions can be explained through personal, and some through cul-

tural differences, as also Hofstede (2001, 2–3) mentions. But when talking about cultures in this thesis, the term refers to the working cultures around the Baltic Sea. In addition, the Baltic Sea countries Sweden and Latvia are not discussed in this thesis, since these cultures are not represented in PIM 2009.

The research method chosen for this thesis is observation. It is one of the qualitative methods, which describes what actually happens in real life and in genuine situations. In qualitative research results are usually multiple and changing, by dint of fitting perfectly to culture and cultural differences, which also vary from country to country and from individual to individual. This is also how the effect of personal characteristics can be observed. Additionally, the sample in qualitative research is usually smaller than in quantitative ones, which justifies the small amount of people representing each culture in PIM 2009. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2008, 157, 160.)

With observation it is possible to gather information on what really happens in a particular situation, whereas questionnaires and interviews explain what the interviewees think, feel and believe. In this thesis it is more important to see how a team works together and how examinees act and react and not what they think about their own cultural characteristics. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 157, 207–208.) Also Pennington (2002, 28–31) says that observation is the best way to get evidence of how teams are working together, since this gives an insight on how people act with each other, what is said and how they say it.

In observing the teams I employ the method of direct observation, when the examinees know they are being observed (Brown 2009, www-document). With the organizing team PIM team, I apply the so-called participant observation, when I am one member of the team in question. In this case I consider also my own cultural behaviour in our teamwork and how it may have affected PIM team. Participant observation does not have to be strictly organized, it can be fulfilled quite freely and in a natural way. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 209; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, 222.) Considering the teamwork of PIM team I apply my own experience from the approximately eight months the team was working together before the actual intensive part of the programme as well as during the two-week intensive part in Lithuania. I studied cultural behaviour amongst the members of the PIM team and wrote a project diary about my observations. Chosen parts from this diary will be used to consider our cultural features and intercultural teamwork.

When it comes to teamwork among participating students I was a structured observer, an outsider watching the examinees systematically and in a well-organized way (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 210). For this I prepared certain forms to make the observation easier to be documented (Appendix 1). This form includes basic characters of cultures which may affect team-

work and teaming, based on the theories of R. R. Gesteland (2002). This procedure is due to Pennington's (2002, 31) proposal that every observed feature should be defined clearly in advance, in order to have reliable outcomes. I observed students during the two-week intensive part of PIM 2009 in Lithuania without participating in their teamwork in any way.

The goal was to observe the big student team as well as the smaller ones and write notes about their cultural behaviour and consider how this behaviour fits into the stereotypes presented in this thesis. In addition, during the final presentations of the small student teams I filled in two forms of each team, considering every member's national characteristics as well as how the team works together (Appendices 2-3). These notions and possible national stereotypes of the students are gathered in my project diary and chosen elements are discussed in this thesis.

Pennington (2002, 28-31) reminds his readers about the different ways to interpret things, how one observer may see things differently than others. This is why the chosen logic for this thesis is abductive reasoning. The theory I have employed is not the absolute truth about cultures and the representatives, rather they are just observations of individuals. In addition, it is not possible to create absolute facts from observations in PIM 2009, since results are just one person's interpretations and the sample of each culture is rather small. Abductive thinking avoids both of these logical problems concentrating on the fact that observations are always valid, even if being paradoxal. They are opinions and interpretations of the researcher who has one guiding principle which can be just a hunch from one source or for instance from any theory, literature or intuition. Results are based on this particular guiding principle and since results are always valid, only the way the researcher presents the results and uses them, can be challenged. (Grönfors 1982, 33-34, 36-37.)

3 Working cultures in PIM 2009

Cultural differences in general and especially in working life may cause problems between individuals, usually because the foreign culture is unfamiliar and it may be difficult to adapt one's own cultural behaviour to match others'. As Gesteland (personal communication 12.5.2009) presents it, working culture is "*a set of implicit expectations and assumptions about how people should communicate, negotiate and manage*". That is, people expect others to do business in a similar way they do it, but differences between working cultures may be enormous and cause misunderstandings, problems or even conflicts.

To be familiar with foreign cultures is therefore extremely vital. But to talk about working cultures of various countries is stereotyping to a certain extent, when some characteristics may be over generalized or exaggerated in a positive or negative way. People form stereotypes subconsciously, which is just a way of simplifying things. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 38; Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 87.) As Hofstede (2001, 424) states, stereotypes are unavoidable and should not be ignored, since they may help to get communication started between two or more individuals. Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 40) agree and say that stereotypes are a person's first best guess about a foreign culture, which means that everyone should be ready to modify these images when meeting other cultures. It is a good thing to know how to act with different cultures, even if this begins through stereotypes. As Frisk and Tulkki (2005, 87) write, some parts of the known stereotypes of the whole nation are true to some extent but it should be kept in mind that stereotypes do not relate to every individual. In any situation, though, having some patterns of how a certain culture usually behaves is a safe way to enter this particular country and avoid crucial mistakes in doing business (R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009).

In PIM 2009 the participating countries are from the Baltic Sea region, that is, countries which have coastline with the Baltic Sea. In the year 2009 seven of these countries will participate in PIM: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. (Baltic Sea Network 2006, www-document; Henriksson 2008.) Working cultures of these countries are discussed in this chapter.

The main goal for this chapter is to present the common characteristics of each working culture which were notable in several different sources used. The main emphasis will be on R. R. Gesteland's experiences during his long career among people from various cultural backgrounds. Gesteland's theories and findings can be applied well for PIM 2009 since he concentrates especially on cultures in working life, which is exactly the emphasis of this thesis, too.

In addition to presenting each culture, some of the most visible differences and similarities between these working cultures will be presented as a closure for this chapter.

3.1 Gesteland's patterns of cross-cultural business behaviour

Richard R. Gesteland (2002) has defined his patterns of cross-cultural business behaviour according to his experiences in meeting and working with a notable amount of cultures over the years. The four patterns are called deal-focused versus relationship-focused, informal versus formal cultures, rigid-time versus fluid-time cultures, and emotionally expressive versus emotionally reserved cultures.

The pattern of deal-focused versus relationship-focused cultures refers to the difference between the importance of completing tasks and getting to know one's working partners. Although relationships are important in doing business no matter where you are, for the deal-focused people it is more appreciated to finish the tasks first and not to get to know each other before business is done. They get to know each other while signing agreements and not much small-talk is required. On the other hand, the relationship-focused need to develop a strong relationship before making any agreements. (Gesteland 2002, 16, 21.)

As the name already infers, in informal cultures formality and hierarchy are not an important part of working life. Small differences in status and power as well as seldom used titles are normal and may sometimes offend people who come from a more formal culture. The latter mentioned group is more used to strict hierarchy and showing noticeable respect to persons of higher status. (Gesteland 2002, 16, 45, 47.)

The difference between rigid-time and fluid-time cultures may cause serious misunderstandings. People from rigid-time cultures work according to the clock and usually expect others to be on time and respect other people's schedules. The members of a fluid-time culture are more interested in the people than punctuality which makes them more relaxed when it comes to schedules and being on time for meetings. Gesteland uses the term monochronic while referring to the people coming from rigid-time culture and polychronic for the opposite side. (Gesteland 2002, 17, 57.)

The fourth and the last pattern is about communication, called emotionally expressive versus emotionally reserved cultures. In the latter one people are more reserved and do not express their thoughts and feelings as much as in expressive cultures. This may cause major problems in communication between cultures when both verbal and nonverbal features are misinterpreted and considered as rude at both sides. (Gesteland 2002, 17, 67.)

Gesteland (2002) has divided cultures under a certain combination of patterns introduced above. All of the cultures participating PIM 2009 are now presented according to Gesteland's findings as well as some main characteristics found in other sources.

3.2 Denmark

Gesteland has categorised Denmark, as all other Scandinavian countries, under the group "Deal-Focused - Moderately Formal - Monochronic - Reserved". According to the first mentioned pattern Danes get to know each other whilst doing business but compared to other Northern Europeans they appreciate small-talk more. There should be some discussion before the meeting starts and not many silent moments. Being moderately formal the Danish have some rituals in business behaviour, such as firm hand-shakes, own personal space and considering it rude to interrupt a person talking, but they actually dress quite informally and use titles very seldom in working life. In addition, hierarchy is not appreciated or visible. On the opposite side, monochronic characteristics indicate that for the Danish schedules and deadlines are important and meetings are rarely interrupted. Although the Danes are said to be laid-back, they are still northern Europeans, who tend to be more reserved than others. This also means that in Denmark people are modest and tend to underestimate their own achievements. (Gesteland 2002, 289–291.)

Both Andersen (2008, www-document) and Bosrock (2006, 131, 140–141) agree with Gesteland about the laid-back attitude of the Danish in business. Their working life habits are very Scandinavian, but Danes are said to be the most relaxed nation in northern Europe- they are open and appreciate friendliness, internationalism, tolerance, and equality. People are usually addressed by their first names, men and women are considered to be equal and time span is not as strict as it usually is in Scandinavia. A chat before a meeting is a way to get to know each other and although hard business tactics are usually disliked, facts and figures play an important role in business.

In PIM 2009 there were four students from Denmark. All of them were talkative, relaxed and polite, just as Gesteland (2002, 290–291) indicated. One visible feature was that they really disliked any hierarchy between professors and students. The real surprise was that at first they were not entirely tolerant towards other cultures. As Bosrock (2006, 131) and Gesteland (2002, 291) specify, Danes appreciate equality and modesty, but there were some totally opposite features to be observed during PIM 2009. Our Danes were very confident and self-conscious, they knew what they wanted and also expected to get it. They were very outspoken and honest. In addition some were very critical about the language skills of other students as well as different teaching methods of the intercultural teaching team. Lithuanians and Lithuanian food seemed to be one of the biggest problems for our Danes, which refers to

the fact that they were not quite prepared for meeting foreign cultures. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

The reasons for the Danes in question to be less tolerant than the average Dane are quite difficult to ascertain. One reason may be that they arrived a little later than others and felt that they were outsiders in the big student team. They also had difficulty adapting to the teaching styles and lectures we had in PIM 2009 which differed from the ones that they were used to. Their opinions were quite surprising, since Danes are usually considered to be outgoing and accepting, feeling comfortable with foreign cultures. Actually, in opposition to the Danish criticism towards teaching methods in PIM 2009, one Lithuanian said she has never seen such openness in teaching before, when professors treated students almost as friends. In my opinion the most important reason for problems with tolerance and adaptation of the Danish is the fact that all four of them had been studying no more than two months in their university before arriving in Lithuania. Over all, they all were friendly and did not cause conflicts with other students. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

3.3 Estonia

Gesteland does not present the Baltic states separately, instead together as a whole. He defines all of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to be a “Moderately Deal-Focused - Formal - Variably Monochronic - Reserved” cultures. There are some differences to be found, though. In fact, Gesteland designates the three Baltic states as Europe on a smaller scale. This means that the Estonians in the north behave in the same way as the Scandinavians whereas in the south the Lithuanians behave more like the southern Europeans. This leads to the fact that the Estonians are relatively individualistic, reserved and deal-focused in working life. Formality is stricter than in Scandinavia, though, for example first names should not be used before the Estonian counterpart does it first. Estonians dress and behave formally and use controlled body gestures and facial expressions. In addition, silence is appreciated in certain situations, as are firm handshakes and eye-contact at all times. As Gesteland says, the Baltic states are variably monochronic, Estonia being the most punctual and rigid-time culture of the three. (Gesteland 2002, 271–275.)

Although Estonians are said to be like the northern Europeans, being more individualistic, deal-focused and reserved than other people from the Baltic states, there are still differences between Estonian and Scandinavian habits in doing business. The heritage of Soviet Union times is still somewhat visible in working life even though Estonia has been eager to cooperate with other European countries, improving its political and economic relations with the west. (Regional Language Network East Midlands 2005a, PDF-document.)

As Gesteland (2002, 271) says, Estonians appreciate politeness and take pride in traditions and in business formality and titles are a part of everyday life. In addition to Gesteland's findings, Estonians are considered to be very entrepreneurial and hard-working and one should never underestimate an Estonian colleague. Punctuality equals reliability, written contracts and discussing or even arguing are appreciated. It should be noticed, that an estimated one quarter of the population in Estonia is Russian-speaking, which is a consequence of the long Soviet period. Russian and Estonian cultures in Estonia differ significantly, which can still be seen also in working life. (Bosrock 2006, 143, 145–146, 149, 151; Finnish Institute for International Trade 2000, 175, 177–179; Regional Language Network East Midlands 2005a, PDF-document.)

According to my observations during PIM 2009 the Estonians were very entrepreneurial, hard-working and appreciated traditions. This was to be seen during the fair the students organized in their national teams: Estonians had brought lots of material and wore Estonian national costumes. Also what Gesteland (2002, 272) says about Estonians being quite similar to the Scandinavians could be seen in PIM 2009, too. They were quite quiet and considered carefully what they said out loud but, on the other hand, they were among the most talkative people in PIM 2009 and always very lively. None of our Estonians represented any Soviet time heritage, which may be due to the fact that Estonia has been the most eager Baltic state to fight their way to the western way of life after the 1990s. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

There were only three Estonian students participating in PIM 2009, which may be a bit too small a sample to make any generalizations about the whole culture, but since I am using abductive reasoning for this thesis, three representatives are as good an example as for instance eight Germans. All of our Estonians match the profile of a regular Estonian quite well and there were not that many differences between theory and practice in PIM 2009. In fact, they were the other one of the two cultures which almost perfectly matched the theories found, Germans being the other. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

3.4 Finland

“Deal-Focused - Moderately Formal - Monochronic - Reserved” are the words to describe Finnish working life according to Gesteland (2002, 308–310). These are the same patterns which he uses to introduce the Danish working culture. But even though these two cultures have the characteristics of the northern way of doing business, the differences in working life are truly visible. Probably the biggest differences can be found in formality and time concept: punctuality is valued in Finland and meetings are rarely interrupted, first names are used in working life but some hierarchy can still be seen. Gesteland says the Finns avoid showing emotions in public and after a firm handshake no further physical contact is appreciated. Being deal-

focused, the Finns appreciate well-organized meetings and presentations and there may not be any small-talk when starting a meeting. All this may sound very harsh to a person who comes from a totally different culture but once you get to know a Finn, his or her behaviour will change quite quickly to become closer and friendlier. (Gesteland 2002, 308–310.)

Almost as the opposite to Gesteland's points of views, in other sources Finnish working culture is said to be very open, liberal and democratic and the manager is not the only one who is allowed to make decisions. Even with these kinds of opinions it is usually added that Finns are actually more closed than other cultures, respecting silence and avoiding unnecessary small talk, just as Gesteland suggests, too. This can be rudely interpreted since some gestures are very important and as Bosrock (2006, 156) as an American says, despite the reserved body language Finns are very friendly and polite. (Alho 2002, www-document; Bosrock 2006, 153–154; Finnish Institute for International Trade 2000, 18–19; Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 92; Gesteland 2002, 308–309.)

Finns are always said to be silent and a little distant before they get to know people and this was true in PIM 2009, too. The Finnish students spent a lot of time together before getting to know the other cultures better, which was actually quite common for all cultures at the beginning of the programme. The Finns were open and talkative in their national team but quiet during teamwork. When they said something in their team, it was obvious that they had considered it for a while and usually others listened carefully what the Finns had to say. There were some characteristics which are quite the contrary to the theory, too. Some of the Finns definitely were not afraid of showing emotions in public, which was probably due to the fact that they had already spent time together before arriving in Lithuania. In addition quite often it was the Finns who arrived late to the lessons, punctuality was not important to our Finnish students. There is one important factor which may have affected them and should not be forgotten: In the Finnish team in PIM 2009 there was one participant originally from Spain, who was studying in Finland for one year. Even though she had possibly adapted some Finnish working habits, she was probably the one who introduced some non-Finnish characteristics into this team and the whole PIM family. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

I was the only Finnish person in this year's PIM team and even though one representative from a culture may sound minimal, there were definitely some Finnish characteristics to be seen in my work. First of all, compared to the Russians and the Lithuanian, I as a Finn was the most distant in the beginning and possibly the most silent too. This was partly due to the fact that I was the only person from a different university unit than the others. In time, however as stated by the theory, when I got to know the others better, communication started to flow smoothly. Something that did not fit into the national pattern, though, was the slipping from some deadlines, which the Finns usually never do. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

3.5 Germany

In Germany there are major differences between north and south as well as east and west due to the Second World War and the importance of the Federal States. Although there is a notable diversity of local cultures, there are some main characteristics to be found which combine the whole nation together. (Aittoniemi, Salminen & Yliniemi 2000, 237–238; Gesteland 2002, 312.) When possible, this thesis emphasises the Northern parts of Germany.

According to Gesteland, Germany is the third country in PIM 2009 belonging to the “Deal-Focused - Moderately Formal - Monochronic - Reserved” pattern along with Denmark and Finland. All of these cultures have the main characteristics of the northern way of doing business, along with some national adaptations. For Germany this means that formality and punctuality are appreciated more than anything. Being deal-focused means that it is not crucial to build up a relationship before signing a contract and although Germany belongs to the group defined as moderately formal, formality plays a significantly more important role than in other countries belonging to this group. Using titles and showing respect is vital and sometimes overwhelming compliments coming from a foreigner can be confusing to Germans. They are reserved and punctual when it comes to working life, where schedules, meeting agendas and facts are appreciated. Smiling and showing emotions are not necessary, business is considered to be a serious matter. Although Germans may be reserved, they might use very blunt language, but this is not meant to offend anyone rather than being a part of doing business. (Gesteland 2002, 312–315.)

Also other sources agree with the German working culture being quite formal and hierarchical, where titles are common as well as politeness and good manners. The Germans may seem to be blunt and direct but at the same time also appreciating other people's opinions as well as honesty and being direct. Punctuality and preparation are important as well as personal space. The common stereotype of a German having schedules and working hard and strict is therefore not far from the truth. (Aittoniemi et al. 2000, 237–238; Bosrock 2006, 179, 181–183, 190–191.)

It is difficult to comment on the differences between different parts of Germany according to PIM 2009, since all our Germans now lived in northern Germany. Some of them were originally from other parts of the country but after studying in the same place they were all quite similar to each other. The most common perception and stereotype about Germans being strict, scheduled and formal turned out to be quite true, at least regarding our eight participating Germans. Most of them were always on time, they were polite and did not initially show emotions in public. Some needed schedules even for leisure time. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Like the Finns, Germans spent a lot of time in their national team before they got to know others better. One crucial characteristic to be observed about the Germans was the appreciation of hierarchy and titles. As in Germany in general, professors were referred by their last names and there is a certain power-distance present at all times. Respect of hierarchy and printed facts were noticeable: if after complaints it was shown to Germans that information was to be found in a written form in advance, they accepted it immediately whereas others may have kept on complaining. Another characteristic which suited the theory above is that sometimes the Germans were considered to be slightly blunt in what they had to say, it was not uncommon to hear a straight "No!" from a German team member. This was not meant to be rude, though, rather it was just a way of letting others know their opinions. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Germans were the most similar to their stereotype compared with the other nationalities in PIM 2009. It can easily be said that all of them were punctual, polite and well-organized (Appendix 4). Some were not able to complete tasks without clearly defined and carefully written instructions. When, for instance, the big student team was discussing a task in the classroom, it was the Germans who said that the discussion was going off track and what was being discussed was not what they were supposed to talk about. The reasons for these features and the fact that they were using titles a lot can be connected to the long history of formality in Germany. One thing which proves that the Germans in PIM 2009 represented the images most people have about that nation quite well is the fact that it was basically the only stereotype all students noticed and agreed on. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

3.6 Lithuania

Gesteland considers the Baltic countries' working cultures to be so similar that he mentions them in the same chapter in his book, belonging to the "Moderately Deal-Focused - Formal - Variably Monochronic - Reserved" pattern. Lithuanians represent the southern part of the Baltic states, which means that they are the furthest away from the other northern European cultures. The Catholic Lithuanians are more group-oriented and relationship-focused and this can be seen also in working life: introductions and contacts make it easier to do business in Lithuania. Formality is clearly visible, people dress in a conservative way and first names are avoided, but, on the other hand, physical contact is more likely than in Scandinavia. Lithuanians respect time and schedules, meetings usually proceeding point by point. In Lithuania people are said to be expressive and outgoing but like in Estonia, some traces of Soviet Union times may still be seen in working life. (Gesteland 2002, 271.)

Bosrock (2006) agrees with Gesteland expressing that Lithuanian working-life etiquette is quite similar to other Baltic states, although Lithuanians are said to be more open, outgoing,

tolerant, talkative and energetic. Even still hierarchy, authority and protocol are important and traditions are highly appreciated. Men are chivalrous and women still underrepresented in working life. (Bosrock 2006, 266, 269, 272, 274–275.)

Contrary to the theory above, our Lithuanian students did not actually have any obvious characteristics of southern European cultures. The formality in business is quite true, though, a person has to be overly respectful towards others and hierarchy is sometimes overemphasized. Some students were shy to start speaking English and as Gesteland (2002, 272) outlines in his book, there are still not that many English speaking people in Lithuania compared to other Baltic states. Lithuania is said to be a very homogenous country and compared, for instance to Estonia, the Russian population is very small. This may explain why Lithuanians did not seem to be very open to foreigners in the small town in which PIM 2009 was organized. (Bosrock 2006, 266; Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

When considering Lithuanians in PIM 2009, in the student team there were two different Lithuanian patterns to be seen: one was a quiet, shy and closed and the other was open, active and lively. Some had had their exchange semester abroad already and these people were more open and talkative than the others, who seemed to be somewhat closed, silent and had difficulties in adapting to the big student team. Also personal characteristics affected our Lithuanians a lot, but even still all nine of them were a bit cautious and usually in the background. On the other hand the Lithuanian PIM team member was more open and outgoing and not afraid of contacting other people. He was energetic and talkative, exactly what the theory predicts, but which somehow was not seen in the student participants in PIM 2009. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

There are two facts explaining the challenges some of our Lithuanians had: many of them were locals and were going home to sleep every evening, therefore not spending nights in the big student team. Another reason is that since we were in their home country, PIM possibly was not as exciting for them as it was for the others. Additionally, there were some situations when the Lithuanians had to explain some flaws the others had spotted in Lithuania or the people, which definitely made them somewhat defensive and closed. One difference compared to theory which is left without any explanation is the lack of southern features in our Lithuanians: excluding the Lithuanian PIM team member, they all had more characteristics of northern Europeans and Russians than of southern Europe. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

3.7 Poland

Poland belongs to the “Relationship-Focused - Formal - Polychronic - Variably Expressive” pattern of Gesteland’s, along with Russia. Unlike Russia, though, the Polish have characteristics from both deal-focused and relationship-focused patterns: it is important to build up relationships but the Polish are verbally direct, sometimes at the cost of not being polite. Formality can be seen in rituals, in the way people dress conservatively and how first names are used only among family and close friends. Interpersonal space is not too rigid but touching is rare. Like Germans, the Polish are serious in business, too, and therefore it is important for foreigners to be serious and use hard facts in business. The importance of schedules is also recognised but sometimes meetings start late and they last longer than expected. (Gesteland 2002, 233–236.)

Hierarchy in Poland can be seen clearly and small talk is usually handled after the meeting. For some it may seem that businessmen behave quite aggressively but building up as many contacts as possible will make it easier to do business with the Poles. Thorough preparation, punctuality, traditions, loyalty and one’s own opinions are highly valued. (Bosrock 2006, 332, 334–335; Finnish Institute for International Trade 2000, 95; Regional Language Network East Midlands 2005b, PDF-document.)

Chrulska (2000) has studied Polish culture in her master thesis and also concentrates on Polish business culture. Firstly she introduces the most important characteristics of Poles, which are that they are: religious, patriotic, resourceful, friendly, educated, cultural and honest. This reflects the actual working culture well, even though Chrulska says that there is not a clear pattern for a Polish businessman yet. During the Communist regime it was illegal to make profit and after this period the habits in working life are changing rather slowly. The exceptions to this are the managers who have experience in working with the west and the young students in new business schools. One interesting thing Chrulska brings up in her thesis is that the majority of Poles think that business has to be immoral in order to gain success. (Chrulska 2000, 58, 61–63.)

Although Poland belongs to the group by Gesteland (2002, 233), in which relationships should be quite important, this feature did not stand out in PIM 2009. The Polish students relied on others as much as other nationalities did and there was no obvious difference to be seen. Also all of them were polite, not blunt, and there was only a bit of formality between the Poles. These differences can be due to the fact what also Chrulska (2000, 62) states: times have changed a lot after the Communist regime collapsed and the younger business students have already adapted western ways of doing business. The things that do match with the theory are for instance politeness, importance of traditions, small amount of small talk, as well as

respect to schedules. There was, however, quite a contrast between the Polish students: some of them were loud, talkative and already had lots of intercultural experience whereas others appeared to be more careful, quiet, and considerate to other people. All in all the Polish in average represented the theory well, but in a milder way, so to speak. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

3.8 Russia

According to Gesteland, Russia belongs to the same group as Poland, that is, the “Moderately Deal-Focused - Formal - Variably Monochronic - Reserved” pattern. But comparing these two cultures it turns out that Russia is much more relationship-focused, since connections and keeping in touch are really important in order to get things done. Even though being relationship-focused, in Russian working life verbal communication is very direct and blunt, which is not usually characteristic for relationship-focused cultures. In Russia meetings and discussions get interrupted frequently and guests need to have a lot of patience. Also signed contracts tend to be renegotiated more than once and compromises are not something to be sought. Being serious in working life is crucial, formal dress code and rituals in meetings are also important. The Russians are initially emotionally reserved but after some time expressive communication, first names and touching among friends are common. Russians are emotional people, which means that confrontations, temper tantrums and emotional outbursts even in working life are not rare. In addition Russian interpersonal space is smaller than other parts of Europe. (Gesteland 2002, 227–231.)

It is interesting how Gesteland (2002, 227) emphasizes the different history Russia has had compared to all other countries in Europe. During czarism and collectivism it went through kind of an isolation: Gesteland says that Russia never went through Reformation, Renaissance nor Enlightenment, which have been the basis of other European cultural development. In addition after Soviet Union collapsed, Russia has not been as eager to change the patterns of behaviour as the smaller post-communist countries. This is definitely one reason for some of the basic differences in working culture between Russia and other parts of Europe. (Gesteland 2002, 227; Jandt 2007, 350–351.)

The large number of different cultures and the vast area have also had the effect that differences between different parts of Russia are significant and so it is difficult to specify a coherent Russian mentality. On average the Russians tend to have a formal start in working life but they prefer cooperating with friends. Good personal relationships and patience are crucial when dealing with Russians as well as flexibility and friendliness. Although the older generation may still show some characteristics derived from the Soviet Union era, such as sticking to rules, needing authorization and not being eager to take responsibility, doing business in Rus-

sia is changing all the time and it is becoming more European. (Jandt 2007, 350–351; Regional Language Network East Midlands 2005c, PDF-document.)

From Russia we had only two representatives and they were both part of the PIM team. Both had been living, studying and working in Finland for quite a long time already, one for 11 years and the other for five. Even though neither of them had actually worked in Russia and so only had real experience in Finnish business culture, in my opinion there were some obvious Russian features to be seen. They took working and studying seriously and actually were stricter about schedules and not interrupting others when compared to theory. Russians are said to be emotional people, and this was shown during PIM 2009, too. Our Russians were initially a bit reserved, which also Gesteland (2002, 230) has noticed during his long career, but after some time they became closer and more emotional. Friendliness was important to them, bluntness was never to be seen, and when a conflict occurred it was solved quickly, but with a lot of emotion. There were differences between these two persons, of course, which may have been a result of personal characteristics, differences in the time spent in Finland or the heritage of totally different parts of Russia. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

The reason for the Russian cultural features can be found from theory about cultural development; children learn to identify themselves as a part of a certain group, which usually is the national culture of the parents. The first 15 to 20 years have a huge impact on formation of a person's identity. But since children are not able to recognise cultural issues, it is only during teenage and adulthood when people actually "choose" which culture to adjust to. (Lustig & Koester 1999, 137, 140.) As a proof for this theory some Finnish working life characteristics were obvious in both of our Russians, such as reduced formality and giving a bit less importance on relationships in business. Mixing cultures and living in between two different ones can be quite confusing and complicated. Gore (2007, 42) quotes a Russian student living in Finland: She is not a typical Russian but not a typical Finn, while she is living in Finland she feels more like a Russian and while in Russia, it is vice versa.

3.9 Differences and similarities

There are some basic similarities to be seen in the ways the Baltic Sea countries do business, as well as differences, too. Europe, and especially European Union, is sometimes seen as a whole, single region with common interests; but when it comes to different cultures and ways of thinking there are some clearly visible differences which should be considered while dealing across cultures. Northern European countries, as all the Baltic Sea region countries are, do not differ from each other as much as, for instance, when comparing them to some of the southern European countries. In the north people are said to be more quiet, unassuming and

formal and some may think that people from northern Europe appear to be difficult to contact. (Finnish Institute for International Trade 2000, 8–11; NIFIN Pohjoismaiden Suomen instituutti 2005, 9–10.)

One very interesting factor in PIM 2009 was that we had one participating student who was originally from Spain but had been studying in Finland for one year before PIM 2009. By participating she actually showed everyone how similar people in the northern Europe really are. Compared to Spanish culture, the nations around the Baltic Sea share a lot of similar characteristics, mostly punctuality, formality and less importance towards relationships in business. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009.)

According to R. R. Gesteland (personal communication 12.5.2009), all the participating countries in PIM 2009 can be considered to be quite similar due to the close proximity and joint history. He fits all of these cultures into three of his eight different categories of cultural groups. The few differences are mostly defined through geographic distances: the further you go the bigger the differences are. For instance the Baltic states are considered to be quite similar to each other and also to Poland and Russia. Finland, Denmark and Germany form the other group, even though they are not geographically that close to each other. As said, history and influence from the west have had an enormous effect on cultures in northern Europe. As Toivanen (2004) brings up in his article, the European Union has affected the countries with more western characteristics, meaning Finland, Denmark and Germany, and will have more impact on the ones that joined in the year 2004, that is, Estonia, Poland and Lithuania.

Gesteland (personal communication 12.5.2009) defines the differences through his deal-focused versus relationship-focused pattern as well as through formality. Differences tend to grow bigger the further away the countries are from each other. The Finns, Danes and Germans are more deal-focused than people in the Baltic states, Russia and Poland, mostly because of the joint history of the latter countries. Poland and Russia are considered to be the most different to every other country around the Baltic Sea: in these two countries business is less western when comparing to the others, which means more emphasis on the relationships, more formality and in a way more uncertainty when already signed contracts can be renegotiated. (Gesteland 2002, 227–236; R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009.)

The second division is about formality. In Russia, for example, hierarchy is very important to take into consideration while doing business. This may be difficult for people coming from more informal countries, such as Denmark and Finland. On the other hand, Gesteland states that in his opinion the Finns are the most reserved culture in all of Europe, which also may cause misunderstandings when others interpret this as being rude. All in all, he says that dif-

ferences in the Baltic Sea region can be seen when moving from west to east and also from north to south. (R. R. Gesteland, personal communication 12.5.2009.)

Some traces of Soviet era characteristics can still be found not only in Russia but also in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. Communistic governance affected how people had to behave both in public and professional life, and these countries have had a great challenge to bring their economies level demanded by the European Union. The western European habits have been adapted quite quickly. Russia is the only Baltic Sea country which is not a member of the European Union and there traditional values, personal relations and emotions may still be more important in decision making than in the more western societies. (Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 93; Regional Language Network East Midlands 2005c, PDF-document; Toivanen 2004, 7-12.)

In the Baltic states there are still problems between native inhabitants and Russian-speaking minorities, deriving from the Soviet era. Ever since Estonia and Lithuania regained their independence, there have been some restrictions for Russian-speaking people, for instance to get the citizenship. (Jandt 2007, 321.) Because of this fact, in PIM 2009 it should have been presumed that people in Lithuania would not be eager to speak Russian but as it turned out, several people were delighted to hear that they can do business with us in Russian. Russian language skills bring Russia, Estonia and Lithuania closer together. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008-2009.)

If the earlier mentioned eastern countries around the Baltic Sea region have quite a lot of in common, the same thing can be seen between the western ones too, including Denmark, Germany and Finland. Also Gesteland (2002, 6) confirms this by placing these three into the same category according to his four patterns. All these working cultures are somewhat formal, Germany being at the most strict end and Denmark at the more relaxed end of the scale. In Finland and Denmark titles are used seldomly and in general the atmosphere is more relaxed and open. Germans, Finns and Danes in PIM 2009 shared some common characteristics, for instance being polite and calm but even still there were differences for example in their ways of expressing opinions and communicating with others: Germans and Finns were somewhat quiet and Danes more straightforward with what they had to say. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Finland and Denmark are bonded also with language. Scandinavian language is understood in both countries, Swedish being the second official language in Finland. In spite of this, though, it usually takes a lot of effort for a Finn to understand the spoken Danish. (NIFIN Pohjoismaiden Suomen instituutti 2005, 6, 9.) Finland and Estonia share a certain kind of a brotherhood, too, connected by the similar Finno-Ugrian language, close proximity, history and the same Lutheran religion. After the collapse of the Soviet Union business between Finland and

Estonia has been increasing all the time, but still the working life behaviour differs quite a lot. (Finnish Institute for International Trade 2000, 175–176.) In PIM 2009 the Estonians were fluent in Finnish and Russian, some of the Polish knew good German and Lithuanians Russian but for example the Finns did not communicate with the Danes in Scandinavian (Project diary Lithuania 2009).

Language was both separating and combining people in PIM 2009. Some Estonians knew the Finnish language, Poles knew German and some Finnish, Polish, Estonians and Lithuanians knew the Russian language. Unfortunately Scandinavian was not heard that much which actually can be considered to be a good thing: the language of PIM is English and even though people were building up connections with others by also using those other languages, it also excluded other people from the discussion. This naturally happened also when people were using their own language in their national teams during leisure time. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

One feature bringing people together in PIM 2009 was definitely the same generation everyone belonged to, all students and PIM team members were between 20 and 29 years old. Young people in Europe do not differ from each other that much and are considered to be more tolerant in general than the previous generations because of the lack of personal experiences about the problems in the recent history. The youth in Europe have adopted same kinds of habits through globalization and shared music, clothes, brands, and values make it more similar than ever before. The eastern parts of Europe have adopted the western way quite quickly, too, and also business is changing fast. People of young age do not remember how the working life used to be before the 1990s. Globalization has brought cultures closer together which little by little makes cultures become more alike and merge together. (Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 10, 104; Gore 2007, 104; Project diary Lithuania 2009; Stone & McCall 2004, 78.)

When considering the similarities inside the PIM team, there were more joint characteristics than differences to be found. All of our cultures are said to be reserved at first and only in time get to know people better. After getting to know each other, relationships are built to be strong and this makes working together easier. In my opinion all of us represented the more open side of our cultures and all of us were talkative and open. All in all, we were all quite similar, small cultural differences and similarity in personal characteristics made it easy for us to become friends. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.) Smoothly running teamwork can be explained through small cultural differences, experience in Finnish working and studying culture and personal characteristics which fit well together. In addition we had all been studying and working in a foreign culture, and the more a person is in contact with other cultures, the less she or he reminds one's own culture. (Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 10, 104; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

There are most definitely differences to be found in working cultures around the Baltic Sea, but the bottom line is that every country in this area is more or less a western society and therefore share some kind of similar way of thinking. Individualism, punctuality and schedules are shared features and usually emotions are kept away from working life. (Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 8; Lahti 2008, 136–137.) Presumptions about cultural differences and similarities represented earlier were relevant and the differences did cause some challenges in the teams of PIM 2009. Actually the way how so few representatives from one culture can reflect the theory so accurately was surprising. I had thought that there would be somewhat half of the features present but for example for Estonians, Germans and Finns theories of Gesteland and others were very true in PIM 2009. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

4 Intercultural teamwork in PIM 2009

Interculturalism in teams and especially in PIM 2009 is the main interest in this thesis. The aim to answer the research problem “How did cultural differences appear and affect teamwork in PIM 2009”. The three main definitions required for this topic follow here, that is, interculturalism, teams and communication between cultures. All of these are connected to PIM 2009 with examples right after definitions. The main reasons to use intercultural teams are discussed, too, as well as the features chosen for assessing teamwork in PIM 2009.

4.1 Crucial terms

Before discussing characteristics of intercultural teamwork and how it was in PIM 2009, it is necessary to define three basic terms. Since they are the basis for understanding this thesis, these terms are all introduced separately and after each definition there will be a small explanation about how it is connected to PIM 2009.

4.1.1 Interculturalism

The terms intercultural and cross-cultural are often used interchangeably, but both Fries (2002, 2, PDF-document) and Jandt (2007, 36) want to emphasize the difference between these two terms. According to Fries “intercultural” includes interaction between cultures whereas “cross-cultural” does not. Jandt adds that cross-cultural refers to comparing a phenomenon across cultures and “intercultural” when the cultures actually meet each other. Fries also introduces the term “multicultural”, which in a society means that there are several different cultures in one area but these cultures do not necessarily interact with each other. (Fries 2002, 6, PDF-document; Jandt 2007, 36.)

PIM 2009 definitely employs interculturalism in its programme since the cultures are mixed together and they have to interact in order to work together. The term intercultural is already included in the name of PIM (Promoting Intercultural Management in the Baltic Sea Region), which means that this is the term used in this thesis. Even though one of the most important theories in this thesis, *Cross-cultural Business Behaviour* by Gesteland (2002), uses another term, “intercultural” is chosen here when talking about cultural differences, since PIM requires interaction.

4.1.2 Teams

A team is a group of people who have come together for some special reason or purpose, which can be, for instance, a project with a goal and a schedule. One common thing for every team is that the members recognize that they are a part of the team and that they feel a connection between each other. (Levi 2007, 4-5.)

According to Levi (2007, 3-5), the difference between a team and a group is that a group of people do not necessarily have a common purpose or a goal. They may work in the same group without being responsible for other people's work or lacking cohesion and direct communication. A team, however, develops joint understanding, thus having the feeling of solidarity and possibly a separation from people outside this team. Sometimes the terms group and team are used interchangeably, although there is a slight difference to be found between them, as Levi (2007, 5-6) states. On the other hand, Pennington (2002, 3-4) does not even mention "teams", but uses only the term "group".

Even though also DeMarco and Lister (1999, 123) say that the word "team" is used quite loosely in working life, in this thesis the word team is preferred over group. Every group of people in PIM 2009 is called a team, which improves the cooperation and team spirit, as well as mutual understanding. Team is more coherent than a group: it binds the members closer together and creates the best opportunities for success. Teamwork and how it is composed is a crucial part of PIM.

In PIM 2009 there are three different kinds of teams to be found. The one in which the observer is participating in is PIM team, the organizing team of PIM 2009. PIM team is taking care of all the needed arrangements with the project manager and it consists of three students of the organizing institution Laurea University of Applied Sciences and one student of the host institution Alytus College in Lithuania. Two members in the team are Russians living in Finland for several years already, one member is Finnish and the fourth one a Lithuanian who spent his exchange semester in Finland. (Project diary PIM team 2008-2009.)

There were 38 students participating in PIM 2009 and they come from six different countries. These students are chosen by their home universities and they spend two weeks together in Lithuania during the intensive part of PIM. This big student team can be observed during the lectures and leisure time to see how they act together in this kind of a major team. (Project diary PIM team 2008-2009.)

During the intensive period the students study and work together in different kinds of assignments as smaller teams. They are divided into eight teams, each of which has either four or

five members. This amount is ideal, since as Pennington (2002, 78) states, when the team size increases, the average individual effort usually decreases. In the teams of this size there are also at least four different nationalities from PIM 2009, which allows the students to get introduced to several different working cultures. Students have to be able to cooperate and manage any possible cultural differences in these smaller student teams. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

4.1.3 Communication between cultures

Communication is the basis of all human contact and therefore there are uncountable ways to define it. Samovar and Porter (2001, 22–30) list some characteristics of communication, for instance that it is symbolic, situational, interactive, and complex. All communication is influenced by our social, physical, and cultural settings and this is why communication between cultures may sometimes be complicated (Samovar & Porter 2001, 22). Jandt (2007, 27) defines communication through culture, since he considers them to be inseparable and they should be studied together - there is no cultural study without communication and communication can be understood only through culture.

Intercultural communication occurs every time a person sends a message to another person from a different culture. Since culture and communication are strongly connected, these two persons most likely have a different perception on symbols, behaviour and communication styles, which will alter both the message and the way to receive it, that is, the whole communication situation. When communicating between cultures people should be aware of possible problems and also willing to avoid them. But even then misunderstandings and conflicts are not rare since the collective level of every human mind affects the values and behaviour of an individual. (Hofstede 2001, 2; Jandt 2007, 47–48; Samovar & Porter 2001, 46, 196.)

In an intercultural team people usually have to use one common language which is not the native language of all participants. English is often used as this kind of *Lingua franca*, a language used by two or more non-native speakers to reach mutual understanding. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 59.) As Gesteland (2002, 10) mentions, bilingual or multilingual ability is a crucial character in intercultural communication, and therefore important for PIM 2009, too. Good knowledge of the English language is required from every participant since communication in PIM 2009 is handled in English. English was chosen because it is known and taught in all the participating countries, but there would be other language possibilities in PIM, too, for instance Scandinavian, German or Russian. These languages are spoken in more than just one of the participating countries but not in the same vast way as English is. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.) As Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 59) say it, English has become the language of intercultural communication.

4.2 Reasons to use intercultural teams

There are usually positive outcomes from intercultural teamwork, which are achieved by firstly overcoming some possible obstacles in the way. Despite the potential challenges intercultural teamwork may have, it is thought to improve the effectiveness of the organisation and keep it competitive. The cooperation of a team depends greatly on the personalities of team members and their capability to work as a team as well as their ability to manage the possible cultural differences. (Levi 2007, 220, 224, 274.)

Teams are sometimes used in situations where it is not the best way to get things done. Although Levi (2007, 276–277) states that “*Teams are a fad*” and sometimes the values of teamwork are overemphasized, for PIM teamwork is the best option both for PIM team and the students. The main idea is that in a team students will learn different ways of working, as well as communicating and cooperating with foreign cultures. A team is a good choice for this kind of learning, when students have to find solutions to the possible problems and have an actual outcome, that is, the final presentations, as a result of their teamwork. (Henriksson 2008.) In PIM team it would not have been possible to organize the project in another way than in a team and in addition it is important to use the team as a source of innovativeness.

The next chapters discuss the general starting points for working in intercultural teams. That is, comparing monocultural and intercultural teamwork and introducing the most crucial challenges and opportunities for working with different cultures, all of which affect the teamwork in PIM 2009.

4.2.1 Working in monocultural and intercultural teams

As the name already refers to, in a monocultural team members from one culture are working together. In these kinds of teams people have a joint language and usually somewhat similar values, beliefs and working habits. When a team is homogenous in such a way, members are more likely to understand each other and build a connection quite quickly. As the opposite, in an intercultural team several cultures cooperate and different kinds of backgrounds make it more difficult to find a common way to work together. (Gore 2007, 103–104.) Cultural differences in a team are noticeable through psychological diversity and mostly differences between values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations (Levi 2007, 220).

Gore (2007, 106–108) compares monocultural and intercultural teams through three stages for teamwork: entry, work and action phases (see Figures 2–3). Entry means the formation of a team and building up a connection, work equals creating ideas, and action states for the

agreeing and implementation of a task. In a monocultural team the first stage entry and the last one action are easy to execute but work in between is more difficult. This is because people from the same culture reach an agreement and build up relationships easier but tend not to have as many new ideas and fresh insights. In an intercultural team, however, people usually see things in multiple ways and therefore sharing opinions, ideas and different experiences is more rewarding. Backgrounds may vary quite a lot, which brings out more perspectives, interpretations and alternatives. On the other hand, in an intercultural team the first and the last stages tend to be more difficult since role division and agreement may be problematic to reach due to differences in opinions and attitudes.

ENTRY	WORK	ACTION
easier	more difficult	easier

Figure 2. Different phases of teamwork in monocultural teams (Gore 2007, 106).

ENTRY	WORK	ACTION
more difficult	easier	more difficult

Figure 3. Different phases of teamwork in intercultural teams (Gore 2007, 108).

In PIM 2009 new ideas and especially sharing and creating information is the most important thing to make the students and also the staff to learn and develop their skills. Every team considered in this thesis is intercultural. In PIM team there are three cultures represented, in the big 38-person student team altogether six cultures and in the smaller teams four to five different cultures in each team. The next chapters present the potential challenges and benefits of intercultural teamwork.

4.2.2 Possible challenges

Hofstede (2001, 424) says that intercultural contact does not necessarily mean instant mutual understanding. This is why people should be aware of the cultural differences and also be ready to work on the problems which may occur. False stereotypes, prejudice and misunderstandings are some of the most frequent problems in intercultural teams and may weaken the team spirit more than in monocultural teams. Also stress level is usually higher in intercultural teams, due to the mentioned problems. (Gore 2007, 104; Levi 2007, 219.) In PIM 2009 students' own opinion was that already during the first week it was impossible to tell the cultural backgrounds apart. But even though people would become friends, they have to recognize the possible effects of cultural differences. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Stereotypes and prejudice towards foreign cultures make it more difficult to build up team spirit. As Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 39) write, it is natural that people usually think of positive stereotypes when it comes to their home culture and negative ones while talking about others. Prejudices are usually connected with a group of people, for instance one nation, and are based on false and inflexible stereotypes. In most cases prejudices do not derive from personal experience but even still cause biased perceptions and negative behaviour. (Lustig & Koester 1999, 153.) Prejudice was not expected to occur in PIM 2009, since everyone who applies to participate knows about the interculturalism of PIM. On the other hand, stereotypes are inevitable and a starting point for getting to know a certain culture (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 38; Hofstede 2001, 2).

It was assumed that students have stereotypes in their minds when they arrive in Lithuania but that they are able to get rid of them after getting to know other students. This is precisely what happened in PIM 2009, the students let go of the stereotypes they had had before or which they had formed during the two-week programme. For instance, all the Lithuanians had thought that Estonians are slow but the Finns considered them to be quite the opposite. Forming both positive and negative stereotypes is natural, though, and also necessary as Hofstede (2001, 2) states, too. The one stereotype, which was not changed, though, was the one about German punctuality and strictness, which was obvious in the big student team (Appendix 3). (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

A team may also fail because of the lack of team members' skills. Each member should have knowledge, skills and abilities which are required to complete their task and also ability to work in a team. Members have to be able to use their skills as needed and to combine and share their knowledge with each other. Interculturalism will add some extra challenge to this. (Levi 2007, 23–24.) The tasks in PIM 2009 are designed for students of this level of studies and the main rule is that students are at least second year students. Therefore they are able to complete tasks and to get the most benefit from the programme. Some students had been studying already for 3 years in a university, when some had started their studies only 2 months before PIM 2009. This was a challenge for teamwork and there were definitely differences between the way these students worked together and also individually. One basic idea in PIM is, though, that the differences between cultures and individual students bring some challenges to the whole learning process and will get the students to learn more. (Henriksson 2008; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

The main problem of intercultural teams is misunderstandings in communication. Usually language problems are quite common, as Gore (2007, 104) says and adds that when there is a person in a team who is not using his or her native language, it may lead to misunderstandings

and poor communication. In PIM 2009 this means that tasks require more time to be completed when the language in use is English. Using English as a working language was not a problem at any level for PIM team. All of us had become used to speaking and writing English in their everyday life, so working in a foreign language in PIM 2009 was not a shock for any of us. The only effect from using English in all conversation, documents and contacts was indeed that working pace became somewhat slower. If we had some slight problems with English, there was always some other team member to help that person to be understood. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

In all student teams communication in general seemed to vary quite a lot between teams. For some there seemed to be problems with communicating in English when explaining and writing down tasks required a lot of time. Problems with language frustrated some students but also made them cautious: instructions and feedback were not as straightforward and clear as they should have been but in my opinion this also prevented conflicts in teams. Another thing with good and bad outcome was the amount of other languages used: they could have made the explaining easier and improve mutual understanding but, on the other hand, the members in team who did not know that language would have felt like an outsider and interpret the discussed topic differently. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Other languages created some potential problems in PIM team, though. Russian and Finnish were sometimes used inside the team, in which not everyone was able to understand these languages. Especially in Lithuania it was difficult for me to do business without knowing any Lithuanian or Russian, which was frustrating and put more workload on the other members in the team. Also Finnish was used quite often especially in Lithuania when there were again some people who did not understand everything what was said. Conflicts with language issues were avoided, though, since things got always done even in spite of some problems. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Communication flow may be disturbed also due to possible distance since people are used to working face-to-face in a team. This kind of a virtual team is a physically separated team, which keeps in contact through virtual technology. A virtual team may have problems in contacting all members when needed. (Levi 2007, 257–258.) PIM team had to work as a virtual team for several months, meaning that one member was separated from the others and it was possible to contact him only through discussion forums, virtual working space, phone calls and e-mails. Distance was a bit of a challenge for PIM team because of the lack of weekly meetings, where everyone could have participated and interact face-to-face. Usually contacts were made individually, when one of the members in Finland contacted Lithuania. For instance, the members in Finland were not sure all the time who had been talking to Lithuania and if the things needed were done or not. In addition, the Lithuanian member did not always

have a good perception of how the whole project was proceeding because not everything was written on the virtual working platform of PIM. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.) Student teams on the other hand did not work from a distance during the two weeks they were spending together in Lithuania (Project diary Lithuania 2009).

Differences may also occur in the way people give feedback within a team. Some may value direct communication with cold facts when feedback is also direct. In other cultures people try to preserve harmony in the team and avoid conflicts with indirect implications. (Levi 2007, 252–253.) There may also be different opinions between cultures when making compromises: some may be eager to reach a compromise whereas others consider it rude that they are expected to slip from their principles. In a national group, when conflicts occur, people are used to making compromises in a same kind of manner. (Lewis 2000, 128–129.) In PIM 2009 all the cultures were somewhat similar in the ways of communicating so that big conflicts were avoided. When dealing with northern cultures it seems that less feedback is more common than too much of it and compromises are desired. In PIM 2009 it is crucial to be able to compromise with other cultures in the way that no one bears a grudge against the others later on. In a team with only four or five members everyone has to participate in teamwork and there is no place for gathering negative feelings. Two weeks is too short of a period to spend time for arguments. For PIM team it was the same although the time span was longer: things for the project had to get done and progress to be seen so some compromises had to be done. Therefore in PIM team feedback was given quite eagerly, which was good for the whole team. The Finnish member had a lot to learn from the Russians in the fine art of feedback exchanging, which usually prevented minor problems to become serious conflicts. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

People working together for a longer time may also cause some problems. In a team people tend to give shorter instructions for their fellow members than other people because they count too much on the connection within a team. People may also think they know their team members' opinions even without asking which disturbs decision making. (Levi 2007, 81–82, 94.) Even though in an intercultural team it may take longer to create a common way of working, usually in time the members get to know each other so well that they start having their own patterns for completing tasks. These patterns make working faster but they may be quite difficult to change. (Levi 2007, 82, 252–253.) The student teams did not cooperate together for a long time, but still they spent the whole two weeks together, living in intercultural pairs in one dormitory. This intensiveness of PIM may have caused that these teams could be considered to be more coherent than other teams after only two weeks. For PIM team, however, long-term cooperation was reality and some of the factors mentioned above could be seen in their teamwork. For instance, it took some time to build up the relationship between team members but fortunately the ways to work were quite similar and everyone

found their role in the team quite quickly. Dividing tasks may have caused the problem that there was only one person responsible for certain things and this may have affected innovativeness in the team. All in all the tasks got done, though, and sometimes there was no time for every PIM team member to engage in every task. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

4.2.3 Potential benefits

Despite the possible problems caused by cultural diversity, the starting point and assumption in forming an intercultural team is that diversity will offer the project benefits, such as better production and creativity in problem solving as well as other tasks (Levi 2007, 219). Learning in an intercultural team in PIM is essential since the students have to figure out a way to cooperate with foreign cultures, through which they gain the best possible development for their own social and professional competence (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009).

Working in a team increases flexibility and enables the members to respond better to changes related to the project or task. Also efficiency tend to increase because teamwork usually gives more autonomy to the team which has a direct positive effect on workers' commitment and job satisfaction. One of the reasons why teams are used so frequently nowadays is the possibility for a two-way benefit: the organization will get the work done efficiently and the employees develop their professional and personal skills. (Levi 2007, 9, 274–275.) For PIM this means that through interculturalism the staff provides students with the best possible environment to learn. Therefore the actual learning process depends a lot upon the students themselves, when they are adjusting themselves to work together with different nationalities. They have to be able to respond to the differences which occur on the way and use it for their benefit in teamwork. (Henriksson 2008; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Cooperation also tends to improve communication which leads to a better exchange of knowledge. Team members teach one another and when individuals learn more, they perform better both as individuals and in a team. The longer the team has been cooperating, the better the communication. (Levi 2007, 80–81.) In PIM exchanging opinions and experiences is important and that is one of the main reasons why the small student teams are divided in the way, that there are as many different nationalities in one team as possible. This is how the students have the best opportunities to get to know different cultures and their habits, that is, gain as much knowledge as possible and together create new information. About the length of the teamwork, student teams were working together only for two weeks, but since they spend almost 24 hours a day together, they can be considered as a more coherent than other two-week teams. The PIM team worked together for more than eight months, which definitely taught the entire team a lot through knowledge exchange, cultural differences,

close teamwork and friendship. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

In about half of the teams, the communication developed well and in these teams members built a strong friendship between each other (Appendix 5). It was obvious that for these teams teamwork was more fun and they succeeded better in their assignments. In addition, a couple of students said that PIM 2009 was only the beginning for their learning process and that they will realise all the benefits only later on in their working life. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Even though the English language may be a problem in intercultural teamwork, in PIM 2009 there is one benefit from the fact that no one speaks English as their mother tongue. As Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 60–61) mention, usually for non-native speakers of English it is easier to communicate with another non-native speaker than a native one. In PIM 2009 every participant was a non-native speaker of English, which made it easier to start speaking with others and therefore learn more and in a faster pace.

4.3 Assessing observations on intercultural teams in PIM 2009

In order to measure teamwork in PIM 2009, there has to be some pre-defined characteristics for a valid assessment, as Pennington (2002, 31) states. They make the observation and assessment organized and more reliable (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 210). Below presented will be short definitions of the most important features in teamwork: Teaming; Cohesion and role division; Attitudes, motivation and adaptation; Competition, conflicts and maintaining social relations; as well as Knowledge creation and personal benefits. These features have been gathered together from several different sources (Gesteland 2002; Gore 2007; Levi 2007) and in every chapter some examples about the intercultural work in PIM 2009 are discussed.

4.3.1 Teaming

In order to become a team and cooperate successfully, there are some phases the members have to go through after they have been selected to that team. Stages for teaming are sometimes gone through consciously but most of the times it happens naturally, without planning or any extra effort. In any case it has to be born in mind that when these stages are gone through well and thoroughly, teamwork tends to be more productive and successful. (Helker 2008; Pennington 2002, 70.)

Teaming is required to make the team to reach the set goal. When a new team is formed all the members have a challenge to figure out team structure, common ways of working, as well

as certain rules and norms within the team. (Helker 2008; Pennington 2002, 70.) During PIM 2009 the students have only two weeks to work in their team without even meeting each other before this cooperation. They will get to know their team members on the first day in Lithuania and start working together immediately.

As Gore (2007, 106) says, the work of teams can be divided into three stages: entry, work and action (see Figures 2–3). To consider the stages a bit more in detail, there are altogether five different stages covering the whole life span of a team. The first stage is called forming, when members act formally and start to get to know each other. In an intercultural team this is done through evaluating known stereotypes. The second stage storming is when the team usually has conflicts through frustration about task division, competing, confusion, and communication problems. These conflicts are overcome in the third stage called norming. This is when the teamwork finds its paths, trust is built and members start to appreciate others' differences. While the ways of working become clearer, the whole team starts building harmony and trust. Performing is the fourth stage and by now the team is working well together, members are connected to one another and the team has its own social identity. Members are happy and focused on the results until the fifth and the last stage comes along. It is called adjourning and means the phase when the work has been done and it is time to be separated and move on to other tasks. The team has strong positive feelings about the project and feels sad about parting from each other but at the same time are looking forward to future tasks, too. (Helker 2008.)

In PIM 2009 students have to go through these stages in a very fast pace, since they are a team for only two weeks and have to work and study intensively. Especially forming has to be done fast, which is usually difficult in intercultural teams: people tend to trust less in others if they come from a different culture because they cannot be sure how they may act and react (Gore 2007, 104). In PIM 2009 students seemed to be eager to get to know each other but for the first few days almost everyone preferred to spend most of their time in the national teams, for example while eating and during leisure time. This was probably due to the fact that students did not know others from the same country that well either and it was easier to start with them. To make the forming phase easier, during the first days all students found their roles in their team through exercises at the lectures. They divided tasks according to the results and tried to adapt as soon as possible in order to get things done. Also conflicts in the storming phase were present in PIM 2009, mostly due to cultural differences, stress and language barrier. The most obvious conflicts were between cultures which are not considered similar, such as German and Estonian, German and Lithuanian as well as Danish and Lithuanian cultures. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

However the teams got to the next stage quite fast and norming was gone through without any problems. When it comes to the performing stage, there were some differences between student teams in PIM 2009. In my opinion as an observer some teams achieved harmony and really felt they succeeded in tasks as a team, but not all (Appendix 5). Some teams did not quite achieve this performing stage as well as they could have, most probably because of the final task and the stress it caused them. There was some dissatisfaction to be seen during the last days and not that many people bonded with each other in teams. They somehow stopped their team development after storming and completed tasks but not developed a strong bond. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Even still, on the last day in Lithuania sadness and tears were definitely a part of PIM 2009, but it did not apply only for the small student teams and in fact it was more about the whole 38-student team splitting up. In my opinion, students were already glad to be able to go home, just as Helker (2008) mentions that people are thinking about next challenges in the adjourning stage, but at the same time would not have wanted to leave their friends behind. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

For the teaming of the PIM team everything went according to the theory above. The forming took some time when members were getting to know each other. Some of us already knew some of us but not everyone, and it could be seen in the first stage of teaming. Everyone was observing the way others were working and searching for their own place in the team. This phase lasted quite a long time since the team met so few times a week and all members had their other studies and jobs to handle at the same time. After a couple of months of teaming phase the PIM team moved on and actually went through the conflict and norming phase around the same time. Everyone found their own place in the team and disagreements which occurred were solved quite quickly due to the openness and good relations in the team. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

When we got to the performing stage, everyone was already friends with each other and worked well together. Friendship could have caused problems, too, if members felt too comfortable working with each other and therefore did not make their best for the project or task. In PIM team friendship was actually a good thing and made members work harder, since we did not want to disappoint the others or the project manager. The adjourning phase for PIM team's work was handled with a closure meeting but some of the administrative tasks will be finished only when the final report is handed to the European Union. In addition, the members still continue working on PIM, for instance in the form of thesis writing. For all PIM team members it felt like the project is not over yet, though, we felt sad because PIM 2009 was ending but we knew that we will stay in touch also after the project. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

4.3.2 Cohesion and role division

Team cohesion means the glue which holds the team together and appears as a form of loyalty in that team. It is crucial that all members feel they actually are a team and share a certain connection, which also reduces stress and gets them to be more supportive to each other. A strong connection between members is especially important in small teams, such as the student teams and PIM team in PIM 2009. (Gore 2007, 101; Levi 62, 298.)

In PIM team the connection between members was really strong, cohesion bonded everyone together and created a strong friendship between everyone. In small student teams cohesion varied quite a lot, it was obvious that some teams were tighter than others. In the beginning it was actually a challenge for some teams to spend time together outside teamwork, for instance to have dinner with their fellow members from the small student team. On the other hand, cohesion in the big 38-student team was obvious, the spirit of PIM glued all students together so quickly that it actually surprised the PIM team. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Cohesion can be fostered by cohesion-building activities which tend to improve team spirit, create trust and strengthen cooperation between members. One way of cohesion-building activity is an outdoor experience which is something different and refreshing compared to the everyday working environment. (Levi 2007, 298.) Also Gore (2007, 116–117) suggests that the best way to build up a connection and improve team spirit is playing together. This requires a certain kind of attitude and is a way of informal learning, a good contrast to the learning environment in a class room. In addition, playing in an intercultural team creates new insights to foreign cultures, since while playing people learn something they may not find in books. (Gore 2007, 116–117; Levi 2007, 298.)

Learning through playing is exactly what the PIM team planned for the students on the first day of PIM 2009 in Lithuania. The teaming was made faster with team building exercises which we had outdoors on the day of arrival. Already from the beginning, the students had to get close and innovative with their team members, which helped them to get to know each other through something fun and playful. They improved their team communication without even noticing it and created the feeling of belongingness already from the day one. Playful exercises brought out the innovativeness in student teams: every team had collected pictures from previous games and at the end of the day had to come up with a play using these pictures. This not only brought together every small student team but also the whole 38-student team as well as professors and PIM team members. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

In order to build up cohesion between members, a team has to be able to divide roles and tasks successfully. Roles describe what people are supposed to do in a team and how all the roles suit together. Roles make teamwork clearer and more efficient, and they can be created and divided deliberately. (Levi 2007, 64.) In PIM 2009 they usually derive from people's own personalities. During lessons the small student teams went through tests to define which kind of members there are in each team. This makes the role division faster, since in PIM there is not that much time before the team has to start working together intensively. In PIM team we did not have any tests to define our team characteristics because we had more time to build up the connection. Our roles were formed slower and we had time to observe the ways others were working and therefore adapt our own behaviour for the benefit of the team. (Project diary Lithuania 2009; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

According to Levi (2007, 50) the teams that have been working together earlier or work together often are more likely to be more productive than other teams. This is due to team's developed internal social processes and role division and applies perfectly to the PIM team, where the team worked closely together for more than eight months and on a regular basis. We were spending so much time together and working on the same project that we got used to understanding what the other one was saying already in the middle of a sentence. This made working much easier when the members knew each other well and also their ways of working. Comparing to the student teams, PIM team was working together for a longer time, which definitely made our team cohesion better. We became a real team which was bonded through the project as well as in private life, too. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.) As Levi (2007, 24) puts it: "*Good teams have good team members*".

Intercultural teams are appreciated due to globalization but there may be some problems in cohesion in these kinds of teams. It is more challenging to trust people with different backgrounds, but once cohesion is achieved, it makes the decision making easier and helps creativity. (Gore 2007, 104; Levi 2007, 147, 205.) In PIM 2009 it may have been a challenge for team cohesion that all teams were formed by people from outside the team and they themselves had no influence on the team division, but this is how it is in working life, too (Helker 2008; Project diary PIM team 2008–2009).

4.3.3 Attitudes, motivation and adaptation

In general confronting foreign cultures make people feel uneasy and insecure because anything new is usually experienced as distant and different (Gore 2007, 149). Changes and challenges usually cause negative stereotypes which may have a serious effect on intercultural teamwork and attitudes before the members get to know each other better. On the other hand, stereotypes can also be positive and help the team to get to know each other faster.

This is all about team members' attitudes towards teamwork itself and the foreign cultures they are assigned to work with. (Levi 2007, 20, 220, 224.) As Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 135) put it, intercultural learning is a question of attitude. While working with different cultures, adapting does not mean accepting all the habits the foreign culture has, rather than understanding these differences and perhaps coming to the half way with one's own attitudes (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 137).

Students thought about stereotypes more in the big student team than in smaller ones. In the big team there were more students representing one country and some stereotypes present which mostly just made people smile. That means that the few stereotypes students found were mostly considered to be positive, for instance some stereotypes about the Spanish only according to one representative. We had only one Spanish girl participating in PIM 2009 and after she had been late just once, all other students thought that the stereotype of the Spanish always being late is true. This proves how easy it is to create a stereotype. Another example of this is how a German and a Dane made conclusions about Lithuanians too fast: The town in which PIM 2009 was organized was quite small and people were not used to foreigners. This is why some of the students build negative stereotypes about Lithuania and the people. After a visit in the capital city Vilnius they realised how hasty they had been in judging the locals and how they got trapped in their own prejudices already after one week in a foreign country. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

After saying that, it has to be mentioned, that there was more intolerance in PIM 2009 than I had expected. There were small things which the students themselves probably did not even recognize as intolerance, such as bad attitude towards food and locals. These problems became fewer when time went by and in the end of the two-week period all students had changed. Some students who first appeared to be tolerant in the class but were not in reality, learned to realise the connection between the lessons and their own behaviour during the two weeks and actually gained the most from PIM 2009. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Motivation, and especially the lack of it, is also something which affects teamwork. Team spirit and the feeling of belongingness may motivate people to work harder for the rest of the team. Social relations in the team have to be satisfying, otherwise members will not feel comfortable and thus have no motivation to cooperate. (Levi 2007, 21, 58–59.) Especially in teams consisting of different cultural backgrounds it is necessary that people are motivated and open for foreign cultures to be able to work together (Levi 2007, 19, 24). In the big 38-student team the same age brought people together and one example on the good attitude are the joint slogans and sayings the students had. For instance, they all shared a strong and joint PIM spirit and really took the PIM 2009 mascot whale as their own. Students taught phrases in their own languages to each other and some even learned to say "I love the PIM

whale” in Finnish. This PIM spirit was exactly what the organizers had had in mind, we called ourselves a PIM family already from the start to motivate everyone to work and the students adopted this term really fast. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Also the task has to be interesting, involving and challenging. (Levi 2007, 21, 58–59.) For instance PIM team was aware of the common goals and everyone wanted to do their best for the project. Since we all are approximately the same age and were at the same level of studies, it did not take long to start working as a coherent team. Having many regular meetings and spending a lot of time in the project brought the team closer together and friendship motivated us to work harder on the project. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Getting to know a culture's behaviour, values and habits is a way of adapting to a foreign culture, which is crucial in intercultural teamwork. Cultural adaptation requires changing one's ways of thinking to make it possible to deal with foreign cultures. This happens gradually while the person still maintains the characters of his or her own culture. Cultural adaptation can also be called intercultural sensitivity, which represents the degree of sensitivity people have towards host cultures. (Gore 2007, 150.) Sensitivity is a good term to describe the delicacy people should use when dealing with foreign cultures.

In PIM 2009 students were expected to learn how to adapt their own cultural characteristics to fit other cultures in order to be able to work efficiently in an intercultural team. On average our students seemed to be tolerant and willing to get to know others, after all, they had applied to participate in PIM. The openness and tolerance was obvious during the lessons when cultural differences were discussed about and the whole big student team agreed on how stereotypes usually are not accurate and should not form any bad attitudes. In practice, the behaviour of some of the students was quite the opposite, though. It took some time to understand that the living standards and food in a small town in Lithuania cannot be the same as what they have at home. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

After some time these people started to see cultural differences in a new light, probably just because they had spent time with other students or they just needed time to adjust. The most crucial fact is that after all they started to adapt, changed their attitudes and got motivated to learn more. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.) There were not that many persons in PIM team and therefore we did not have any negative attitude against each other when we started the project. We knew we have to be able to work together and adapt to each others' ways of working. All of us were motivated to work for PIM 2009, which also brought us together and improved teamwork. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

4.3.4 Competition, conflicts and maintaining social relations

In an intercultural team the risk for competition and conflicts may be more significant than in monocultural teams. This is usually due to false attitudes and possibly trying to achieve power and status in the team. It is also possible that members misperceive a cooperative situation and turn it into a competitive one, which may develop into a serious conflict. (Levi 2007, 75, 234–235.)

If there are several members from an individualistic culture in a team, it is probable that competition occurs. Individualists tend to be more competitive and in their culture winners are highly appreciated. One important cause to prevent competition is to choose equal members to the team, so that they will be on the same level of ability when they start working together. In addition, all of them should participate equally to the tasks, everyone should be heard and tasks should not be divided according to nationalities. (Gore 2007, 109; Levi 2007, 75.)

Competition in PIM 2009 could have appeared inside the team or between separate teams. In reality there was not actual competition to be seen between small student teams, to an outsider it seemed like the teams were competing just among the team, here meaning that they were cooperating just for their team's success, not for winning the others. Inside the teams there were a couple of strong-minded persons, who were eager to get their opinions out but this seemed to be more about personal differences than nationalities. Student teams were so mixed that competition between cultures was not present since personalities were more notable. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.) In PIM team all members competed against themselves, that is, not with each other. There were situations when it seemed like the whole team had to prove others, for instance interest groups, that they were capable of managing everything. This made the PIM team to overcome themselves and show that they are a good and a professional team. (Project diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Levi (2007, 111) as well as Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 137) agree that in a team in general and especially during the learning process conflicts cannot be avoided. They may destroy team cohesion and social relations as well as weaken communication, and therefore draw attention from tasks and goals. There are also benefits to conflicts, though, and depending on how big of an importance the members give to maintaining social relations in the team, they choose how to handle the possible conflicts. When a team survives a conflict, relations usually become tighter, more open, and therefore the team is prepared for the possible later conflicts. Problems and conflicts are often a good test for the cohesion of the team and solving the problem together makes the team learn even more than when experiencing only harmony. The main purpose is that a conflict has to be meaningful, not pointless and important

thing to notice is that especially in an intercultural team diversity problems rarely disappear by themselves. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 137; Levi 2007, 11, 114–115, 298.)

Also in PIM 2009 conflicts were unavoidable but all students had good social skills and some experience in working in teams and they were able to solve the occurring problems. Conflicts in the big student team were not significant in PIM 2009, since the ones arguing could have just walked away and take some distance to the difficult situation. In the smaller teams, however, this was not possible because they did not have much time for completing tasks. Stress, deadlines and especially the final assignment seemed to cause some conflicts, which had to be solved right away to be able to continue proper team work. Also friendships and the awareness of the future separation of the whole student team prevented major conflicts. All in all the teams seemed to manage their conflicts quite well and come out from them as winners, and therefore it is actually a good thing that these problems occurred. It is a way for the students to learn more about working in intercultural teams. (Project Diary Lithuania 2009.)

In PIM team conflicts never got too big since arguments were usually solved almost immediately when they occurred. This had an enormous effect on team spirit and we managed to maintain social relations better than well. Conflicts occurred mainly because of stress level and the devotion all of us had for PIM 2009 and at times discussions got noisy and negative but they brought the team even closer together. Through conflicts we learned new things about ourselves, our fellow team members and teamwork in general, for instance how to manage one's own temper, how other members act in a conflict situation and how a team can develop after a conflict. (Project Diary PIM team 2008–2009.)

Maintaining social relations is an important feature for evaluating a team, since after a successful task the team may continue cooperation which is not possible without a good relationship. This is important also for the motivation of the members and therefore teamwork should encourage all of them to want to work in that team in the future, too. Even if conflicts occur, an emotionally related and interactive team is able to solve problems and learn from them. In a team everyone should be reaching for a win-win-situation and success in this depends only on how much members give importance to the cooperation and maintaining social relations. (Bartlett & Davidsson 2003, 137; Levi 2007, 21.)

Many students found their closest friends in PIM 2009 outside of their own teams. This was probably because of some problems in teams and the fact that they had to spend a lot of time in those smaller teams. After working intensively they needed some time off from their team members. In addition, the strong influence of personal characteristics had an impact on the

cross-team friendships and also the fact that students were sharing a room with a person who in most cases was not in the same team. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

4.3.5 Knowledge creation and personal benefits

Knowledge creation is the main reason for intercultural team work, also in PIM 2009. New information is created when tacit knowledge is transferred into explicit knowledge and also the other way around. This is particularly useful in intercultural teams, since people need to hear the explicit information about their own culture: person's own tacit knowledge is not enough for creating a real perception about his or her own nationality and intercultural competence. More importantly, a team of different backgrounds offer far more potential for new knowledge than monocultural one, simply because there is more varied tacit knowledge to be shared, which is then transferred into explicit information to the fellow members. This knowledge is adapted and developed in the team and can then be used in many ways individually as well as in the team. (Gore 2007, 142–143.)

Knowledge creation is crucial in PIM 2009 and especially the personal benefit the staff and students gain during the project. As Levi (2007, 22) puts it, teamwork should help an individual's social skills, and in PIM also intercultural competence. This applies for the personal as well as professional growth, and the level of learning and devotion depends only on the individual himself (Levi 2007, 22).

The personal development of the students is the main reason to organize PIM. Students create new knowledge themselves by spending time together, learning not only at the lessons but also during leisure time. In PIM 2009 many of them said they had to let go of the stereotypes they had had and that they learned how to act with different cultures - learned by doing and experiencing by themselves. Lecturers gave some insights about cultural differences but in order to really learn what was discussed about the students had to see it in the real life. (Henriksson 2008; Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

After the intensive two weeks in Lithuania several students said they could see an enormous change in the way they think of other cultures and that they have definitely changed their attitudes about intercultural teamwork. Students attended PIM 2009 to get to learn about interculturalism and tolerance, many had never studied these topics before. Most of them said they feel like their learning process had started in PIM and that they are eager and motivated to learn even more. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.) This is exactly what Bartlett and Davidsson (2003, 133) say, too: intercultural learning is about helping people to understand dimensions of culture and to make it a continuous learning process.

For PIM team's learning process PIM 2009 was a challenge and an experience. All of us learned significantly in the personal and especially professional level and actually had fun while doing it. Even with some minor problems every PIM team member enjoyed being a part of the team and gained much more than they had expected. We learned from the teamwork of PIM team but also from the participating students. The whole PIM team got to work with every culture that participated in PIM 2009 and had a good opportunity to observe how students acted together. Even though our main goal was to get the project organized successfully, we definitely learned about our own native cultures as well as all the others in PIM 2009. (Project diary PIM team 2008-2009.)

5 Evaluating the research

Concerning the observation and using abductive reasoning for this thesis it can be said that the research was successful. It was implemented as planned and answered to the research problem. For the closure before conclusions it is important to discuss some challenges and improvements which came up during and after the research. One of these is the influence of personal characteristics, with is presented separately. In the end I present my self-evaluation and professional learning process.

5.1 Challenges and improvements

Even though the programme would be considered successful, there is always something that can be improved. This applies both to PIM and my thesis writing. Now discussed will be some challenges I paid attention to, as well as the points which could have been handled differently in PIM 2009 and in my thesis.

To start with PIM team, it could have been useful to have virtual meetings while the team was physically separated into two countries. This would have kept information flowing, improved innovativeness and probably maintained the feeling of belongingness for the Lithuanian member. What I learned in PIM 2009 is that good information flow in a team is crucial for a project's success. In addition, we used to divide tasks in PIM team after every meeting, which made the work faster and clearer. This led to the fact that sometimes the others did not know what was happening with one certain task and in an urgent situation would not have been able to handle things without the one person in charge. On the one hand, it was good that members were dependent on each other to maintain the importance of the team but, on the other, it may have caused problems, too. PIM team members could have had meetings also in the end of the day to check what had been done and how, so that everyone would have been on the same line the next day. Since PIM team did not always have enough time for their tasks, after all the clear task division was the best option for us and in the end worked fine for PIM 2009.

Even though this thesis is not a guideline for other PIM programmes, there were some notions which could perhaps be taken into consideration next year. Firstly, as mentioned before there were some students for whom it was a challenge to get used to a different environment and foreign cultures. In my opinion, the student selection slightly distorted the evaluation of cultures in PIM 2009, bringing forward the differences between theory and for instance Danish and Lithuanian participants. The participating students have to be motivated to work in

teams and especially with foreign cultures. They should be open-minded, since a two-week period is not that long a time to totally change a person's attitudes. This year some of the students had not quite prepared themselves to study in a foreign country with just a few participants from their home culture and the level of the final reports and presentations was not as high as expected. Comparing to the previous years, in PIM 2009 there were a lot of troubles in adapting to foreign cultures. There would have been a lot to improve in attitudes towards foreign nationalities and different language skills. As one of the PIM team members put it: "*When a team from Finland organizes a project in Lithuania, the teaching methods cannot be only Danish*". (K. Henriksson, personal communication 26.5.2009; V. Rombonen, personal communication 26.5.2009.)

As quite the opposite some of the students were too experienced in dealing with foreign cultures. They had already had their exchange year and their expectations about the pace of studying were not correct, which is why there was some lack of motivation to be seen. For those who had not have the opportunity to go for an exchange, PIM 2009 was a perfect way to interact with foreign cultures and study abroad, which had the nice result that these people were excited about and open to the programme.

The whole organizing team noticed that it may be better to organize PIM somewhere on the "no-man's land" where all the students are foreigners. Some reasons for this are that then no one could go home in between the programme and the place would be new and equally exciting for everyone. This year there were three countries from the shores of the Baltic Sea which we did not have any partner universities from. In my personal opinion it would be a good idea to have this kind of a "foreign" culture in order to try how it would work out when all the students would spend time together without disturbance and that they would all start from the same line. In this case a problem could appear with language and communicating with this culture, when PIM would not have any native participants, but this could be avoided with proper planning and PIM team members who are able to communicate with that language.

When it comes to my thesis writing, I would have needed more time to observe the ways the teams were working in Lithuania. The whole PIM team was so busy with organizing the whole project that observing the small teams while they were working together was not possible as frequently as I would have wanted to. On the other hand I got to observe the big student team and PIM team more, how they were communicating and coping with all the participating cultures.

The two challenges I had with my thesis - if there are enough representatives from every culture and if personalities affect more than cultural features - were solved by using abductive reasoning, which suited well for this thesis work. This reasoning method was chosen because

most probably from two to nine students would not be enough to represent the whole nation. National characteristics were consciously searched for, though, and many of the cultural theories seemed to be true also in PIM 2009.

Some problems may have occurred if the examinees had reacted to the presence of the observer. This challenge can usually be overcome with long-term observation when the examinees get used to the situation but since PIM 2009 intensive programme lasts only for two weeks, long-term observation was not possible to reach for. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 209.) Fortunately teams did not seem to react to my presence in any way, probably because they were too busy with their assignments and there was always some staff around when students were working. Unfortunately most of the time I was absent from the work situations of the smaller student teams because of the lack of time during the intensive two weeks, which may have affected results.

One crucial thing I had not taken into consideration in advance was that some students were bi-cultural, that is, born in one culture and then brought up in another or having parents from two different cultures. The two Russians in PIM team living in Finland already for a long time I had decided to consider as Russians with a slight Finnish touch. For the students, being for instance Russian-Lithuanian, Finnish-French and Finnish-Estonian-Russian, I decided to consider them to be from the culture they were participating in PIM 2009 from. This was clearer for the thesis and the culture of their present home country was strong enough in their behaviour.

5.2 Influence of personal characteristics

Personalities naturally had an impact on how people acted and reacted in PIM 2009, just as Hofstede (2001, 2–3) states in his theory of mental programming. According to most students' opinions, personality was more visible than the cultural stereotypes in the whole student team in PIM 2009. They actually did not believe at all in stereotypes at the end of the intensive part of the programme, which basically proved them to have learned something about interaction between cultures. Even in spite of this as an observer I spotted cultural stereotypes from the behaviour of the students.

To question the validity of this research, I have to wonder if I saw these characteristics only because I knew about them already in advance. On the other hand, this does not affect the validity of results because of the chosen abductive reasoning, when the insights and opinions of the observer affect results. Naturally students' opinions are also just their personal observations which changed quite a lot during the programme. This actually shows that during PIM

2009 they had met foreign cultures, cooperated with them and then adapted their own behaviour to match with others’.

Actually all deviation from the cultural stereotypes in PIM 2009 can be explained through personal characteristics. Complaining about cultural features was definitely partly caused by personal differences rather than cultural characteristics. In addition, not being punctual or formal can be interpreted as a feature of youth, which usually defeats the cultural characteristics (Frisk & Tulkki 2005, 104; Gore 2007, 104). Even though it was said in the theory that Finns are first reserved, I expected them to be more open, not to use much Finnish and to understand the interculturalism of PIM because their home university is the organizing partner of the programme (Project diary Lithuania 2009).

Also the fact that students made friends quite quickly had the influence that some personal characteristics may have affected more than the cultural ones. Friends were usually chosen outside the small student teams and across cultures which refers to the fact that personal features got people together. Still it could be seen that in this kind of a short time it was difficult to get to know people by using English and sometimes it was easier to get familiar a person from one’s own culture, with similar values and beliefs. (Project diary Lithuania 2009.)

Even though the individual level in the pyramid of mental programming is the top one of the three, the collective level represents a wider area of the human mind (see Figure 1). It is also placed in the middle of the pyramid - on the bottom there are the basic human characteristics such as basic emotional behaviour - which means that it is more vast and deeper in an individual than personal characteristics. (Hofstede 2001, 2-3.) This was already a presumption when starting this thesis which turned out to be true also in PIM 2009 (Project diary Lithuania 2009).

5.3 Self evaluation

As in PIM 2009 the main point is to get students learn as much as possible, also while writing my thesis I have to be able to show what I have learned. Additionally, the ways I have been working for this thesis will be evaluated in this chapter.

It is difficult to talk about cultures, since it is a vast and a changing topic. Culture always requires a certain kind of outline which turned out to be a challenging task for me. I chose to talk about cultural features only in working life, but naturally it is not possible to truly separate one part of a whole culture. Culture in working life reflects strongly the common behaviour of a nationality and unfortunately has just few common features across cultures. Similar

habits would make business easier and reduce problems since it would be easier to predict other people's behaviour. (Gesteland 2002, 9.)

One thing I learned from writing this thesis, is how fine and delicate cultural features and differences are. It is possible to define some stereotypes and main characteristics of different cultures but this is always done by individuals and through their own opinions. In addition these kinds of definitions are always done by comparing cultures. This shows that every culture is just "a little more or less" like some other culture and makes it difficult to actually define how a culture is. Definitions are usually formed through stereotypes, which themselves have one basic problem and Gesteland (personal communication 12.5.2009) also agrees: there are no two similar persons in any culture. This means that personal characteristics and tendencies play an important role in getting to know a culture and individuals belonging to that culture.

Personal characteristics always have an impact on how people behave, after all it is the top level of the human mind (see Figure 1). But culture is the basis of all human behaviour, the impact of the group in which a child grows up leads the ways of thinking. (Hofstede 2002, 2-3.) By choosing theories of Gesteland (2002), I also chose the basic assumption that personal characteristics are important but that cultures have to be introduced through stereotypes. Gesteland's theories meet the needs in this thesis, since they concentrate on working life cultures. In addition, he was a guest lecturer in PIM 2009, which gave me an opportunity not only to listen to his more specific presentation about communication between cultures but also to ask him in person to explain or clarify issues when needed. His theories were easy to compare to the cultures we had in PIM 2009 and there was also place for the personal characteristics. It was rewarding to hear him confirming the fact that cultures around the Baltic Sea are quite similar in working life but that some interesting differences are to be found, too.

In spite of the strong influence of personal characteristics in PIM 2009, cultural differences certainly affected teamwork in PIM 2009 and should never be ignored. Some of the students were kind of blinded with friendships and they denied the existence of cultural features in PIM 2009, but as an outsider observing teams and individuals I found that some cultural aspects discussed in this thesis were obvious in most of the representatives.

After pointing out the friendships the students built, it is time to discuss the friendship between PIM team. Since I was a part of the PIM team there is a possibility that friendship blinded me, too, when discussing cultures and teamwork in PIM team. I was conscious about this possible problem at all times and tried to stay neutral and observe PIM team the same way as I did the student teams.

When it comes to teamwork, I realised that working in a team is not easy for everyone and even in working life it matters with whom people are working. Differences in personalities, especially in an intercultural team, may cause problems which are sometimes difficult to overcome. In time the PIM team formed a close unity and were working successfully together. In fact I was surprised about how well we could cooperate and manage all kinds of situations and it made me believe in productive teamwork. On the other hand, I realised that teamwork indeed depends crucially on the social skills of individuals. In some of the student teams there were problems in adjusting to other people's working habits and finding team cohesion. In my opinion this was partly due to communication problems derived from cultural differences and the English language and partly due to personal characteristics when some members acted too strongly and not tolerant enough.

All in all PIM 2009 made me believe that teamwork can as its best be very effective and bring benefits to both the organization and individuals. In PIM team and most of the student teams this came true, when friendships were created and new aspects about intercultural work for future professional life were achieved. All these were personal benefits but at the same time benefits for organization, too: PIM is implemented to teach students, improve their personal and professional competences and to improve collaboration around the Baltic Sea (Henriksson 2008).

There are several cultures around the Baltic Sea and even though not all of them participated in PIM 2009, many different cultures were brought together in Lithuania. I learned that even though there are differences between these cultures, the sea itself is not the only thing binding them together. They are all more or less northern European cultures, which have the same kind of calm, polite and somewhat reserved basic behaviour. Especially compared to more southern cultures in Europe, such as Spain from where we had one participant in PIM 2009, these people from these seven countries around the Baltic Sea definitely belong close together.

It is obvious that I had presumptions and previous experiences about some of these cultures already before PIM 2009. To be able to concentrate only on participants of PIM 2009 I had to forget everything I had seen earlier and have a clear start. Naturally I had the theory I had gathered from several sources to which I compared the behaviour of the participants but I was not supposed to think about my previous encounters with these nationalities. I feel that I succeeded in this quite well, but there were some things I had falsely and subconsciously assumed to be a natural part of people my age.

This kind of a surprise for me personally was the level of intolerance in the big student team. Naturally for PIM in general it is good that the students learn as much as possible and perhaps even make a change from a prejudiced person into a tolerant one, but I falsely had the presumption that all young people nowadays are eager to get introduced to foreign cultures: for some in PIM 2009 it was seemingly difficult. Also the amount of native languages used during the first few days was surprising to me and it seemed like students were too lazy or not eager enough to speak English and get to know other than their fellow natives. This was of course also because they were in a new environment with totally new people and I think that it was just a way for them to settle down in Lithuania and get used to the new settings.

The surprises I encountered were a needed wake-up call and proved me that while working on a research, a person has to firstly give up all the personal opinions to be able to learn more. They got me down from the clouds and showed me how to stay as neutral as possible while observing the teams. After the research I believe I did this successfully.

The observation process in general was a good experience for me. It is not as easy as it may seem like in theory and it requires a lot of time and effort. I was disappointed in the amount of time I spent observing the smaller student teams, since in Lithuania PIM team had a big work load, and it was not possible for me to attend that many lessons. On the other hand I got to see how PIM team was working together under pressure and in unexpected situations. The big 38-student team was well observed, too. It turned out to be a crucial thing to have the observations forms (Appendices 1–3) and features for teams' success defined already in advance. This made the observation of both the smaller teams and the big team more professional and reliable when behaviour and cultural characteristics were documented properly.

Since this thesis employs abductive reasoning, which means that the results are just one person's opinions and conclusions, some other person might have interpreted the situations in a different way. While also the theory is chosen to fit into PIM 2009, this thesis is specifically designed and carried out for the intensive programme itself. Of course some characteristics can be used also in other situations but may not be valid even in other PIM programmes. Reflecting to this starting point this thesis discusses well the different working cultures around the Baltic Sea and their teamwork in PIM 2009.

As a tourism student I have to be familiar with cultural differences and to be able to act and work with people from foreign countries in order to be a professional in my field. Participating in PIM 2009 and observing cultural differences have therefore a very positive impact on my professional competence and the development of my personal and social skills as well. Since I already had concentrated my studies on the Baltic Sea region, I had some experience about these countries and their cultures. All in all, the topic of this bachelor's thesis suits

perfectly my personal study programme and I was very much interested in it, which made me learn more than I had expected and left me wanting to cooperate with the Baltic Sea countries again in the future.

6 Conclusions

This thesis answers the research question “How did cultural differences appear and affect teamwork in PIM 2009” rather well, presenting both cultural differences and intercultural teamwork in PIM 2009. Observation was implemented with success, and even if culture is a difficult feature to discuss about and prove because of many possible interpretations, all in all the intercultural features in PIM 2009 were clear.

The limitation to consider only working cultures in this thesis turned out to be a success. Choosing Gesteland’s theories completed with some others made it simple to compare students in PIM 2009 to the cultural features. Teamwork theory was not based on this kind of a leading source or book, rather it was combined from many different theories. This turned out to be a good choice, which adapted this thesis to suit better for PIM 2009.

The time spent for observing the small student teams could have been longer to make the results even more reliable. The obtained results were enough for assessing these teams, too, but the amount of observation I myself had in mind before the actual situation differed quite a lot from the reality. It was obvious that for structured observation planning and preparation are crucial to start well in advance. This simplified the actual observation situation as well as ensured concrete and clear results for the research, even if time was limited.

As the outcome of this thesis can be considered the notion that cultural differences are present even with countries with close proximity and that these features bring challenges to working in teams. Even if the results are valid only for PIM 2009, they can be used for introducing the importance of interculturalism for instance to later PIM teams and students. The results in other projects would differ from these ones but even still this thesis can make the readers realize how important it is to recognize cultural differences.

For both my professional and personal skills PIM 2009 and this research was an irreplaceable experience. Even if I recognized cultural differences already before the research, it proved me that even in small teams cultural differences are noticeable and should not be ignored. I learned more about teamwork especially through combining several different theories, which connected to interculturalism will be beneficial for me and my future career.

Since PIM 2009 was lacking participants from two Baltic Sea countries, that is, from Sweden and Latvia, it would be interesting to study cultural characteristics in these countries, too. Even if the presumption would be that they do not differ much from all the other Baltic Sea countries, they were not a part of this thesis. In addition, through PIM 2009 I became more

interested in all the countries around the Baltic Sea and would like to continue working with these cultures.

When considering the intercultural teamwork in PIM 2009, this thesis completed its aims and purposes well. Even in spite of a small sample of all cultures and the effect of personal characteristics, it was obvious that cultural differences affected PIM 2009 teamwork. The basic idea in cooperating interculturally is to get to know foreign cultures and Gesteland (2002, 16) says it well in the first pages of his book. He compares two old proverbs: "*When in Rome, do as the Romans do*" and a Chinese one "*Enter village, follow customs*". The first one means basically just mimicking and copying the local behaviour but the second one is the one which should be used when meeting other cultures: be yourself but honour local customs and traditions, being aware of local sensitivities.

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Appendix 1. Observation form for structured observation (based on Gesteland 2002).

Gesteland form students									
	DF	RF	formal	informal	monochronic	polychronic	expressive	reserved	TEAM WORK
TEAM 1									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
TEAM 2									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
TEAM 3									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
(nationality)									
	DF	RF	formal	informal	monochronic	polychronic	expressive	reserved	TEAM WORK

Appendix 2. Observation forms for teamwork during presentations 1.

	TEAM 1	TEAM 2	TEAM 3	TEAM 4	TEAM 5	TEAM 6	TEAM 7	TEAM 8
CONTENT								
company,								
intercultural								
communication,								
depth of ana- lysis								
VISUALIZATION								
powerpoint,								
team cohesion								
APPEARANCE								
contact with the								
audience,								
participation,								
functionality								
LANGUAGE								
how clear,								
understandable,								
communicative								
TEAM SPIRIT								
cooperation,								
enthusiasm,								
task and role division								
FINAL GRADE								

(5 = Excellent 4 = Very good 3 = Good 2 = Moderate 1 = Satisfactory)

Appendix 3. Observation form for teamwork during presentations 2.

TEAM NUMBER X

time of presentation: xx.xx

Notes about teamwork

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Notes about team members

Name, nationality

.....

.....

Name, nationality

.....

.....

Name, nationality

.....

.....

Name, nationality

.....

.....

Appendix 4. Photography: German organizing skills.



Appendix 5. Photography: Successful intercultural teamwork.

