Reflection Intercultural Design DZB150   23-1-2017

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Past

Before I knew some of the theory, I had to write the 'Who am I' story. I found that difficult, but also very interesting. Difficult because I never had to write something like this about myself before. But also very interesting, because writing this down, I already learned a lot about myself. I learned how important my parents are for me, I learned so many things from them. The way they made me grow up, how they taught me manners and learned me what was wright and wrong. But also a lot of very special experiences which they gave me, made me the person I am now. Experiences when travelling in Europe and Asia with them or with friends. But also more general experiences, as listening to jazz music and playing in a hockey team. I realized that I am changing, and that my relationship with them is changing. I am expressing more my own opinion, I live on myself now and I make my own choices. I do not see them that often anymore, but they are still very important to me.

Team

For this course we were divided in teams. In my team I only knew Mignon before the course. In the team we had to discuss the 'Who am I' stories. I really liked to do this. We listened to each other's background, asked questions about it and compared the way we were grown up. This was a very nice method to get to know each other on an easy way. Very soon I learned a lot about my teammates, I told them things which I did not told to friends who I thought to know better. This first talk with the team really braked the ice, I regularly found it difficult to express my own opinion in a big group, but because of discussing the stories I felt very comfortable in this team. I dared to give my own opinion and it was quite easy to have nice conversations.

Before the beginning of the course, I already thought that the students raised in other countries would have grown up quite differently. But I did not expect that I would have big differences with my teammates who were raised in the Netherlands. They had other relations and habits with their family, different ways to celebrate Holidays, other interactions with their parents and so on.

Because we all grew up very differently, we were able to have nice discussion when talking about the theory of the book. We had different opinions about it and we could relate it to our own experiences. I had not thought before that I was able to give a lot of nice examples myself, because I did not realize that I had such interesting experiences. Actually I could relate the theory very well to my own experiences. Experiences gained when travelling in Asia and Europe, but also experiences of my own habits and out of my family. It was very nice to look back at these experiences and to share it with my teammates.

The work division in the team was reasonably equal. We all read the book, discussed topics we found interesting, topics we did not understand or topics that we oppose. For the team presentation, we brainstormed together and we decided how we wanted to do the presentation. After that, we divided the topics and we all searched for the most important information in a topic, we discussed it again and completed the presentation. For me this was a good way of preparing the presentation.

For the video, Noëlle, Igor and Joline went to Rotterdam to do the interview. After that the other team members watched the interview. I and Rueben analyzed the video, we wrote down what happened at what time. Then we divided different topics, chose which timeframes we wanted to

show in the topics and drew conclusions related to the theory. For the editing, I cut the video in the parts we wanted to use, Joline made the illustrations and Mignon edited it as a complete video.

I my opinion we had a good team division, we discussed together, but we also divided some work, which was really efficient. I never edited a video before, I watched some instructions on the internet and after a while I succeeded working with the video editing program. I am really satisfied that I did this during the course, I will really use this skill for other courses!

Project

When doing the trio project, we redesigned my first bachelor project, CycleCircuit. I finally saw that I absolutely did not encounter cultural differences in this project. CycleCircuit was really designed for Dutch children, children who had to be motivated to play more outside, so we chose to motivate them to let them cycle more in their neighborhood. Cycling is something really Dutch, when we tried to redesigned the project for children in Indonesia, we came to a totally different product.

When making this redesign, I was really surprised that I did not take other cultures into account when designing CycleCircuit. When designing CycleCircuit with my project group, we did not even said that it was designed especially for Dutch children. From this course I learned to encounter the cultural differences when designing, because of this course it is normal for me now to think about it and in the future I will really take this knowledge into account.

Present

Without this course I would not have realized the culture in which I grew up, I would not have encountered different cultures in designing, I would not have thought about the special experiences I have had and much more. When talking about the word 'culture', I thought about countries far away. I realize now that culture is more close to me and that I grew up in my own culture as well. Right now I am more often thinking about the past, about the interactions with my parents and about my travelling. I try to relate the theory to the way I grew up, for example I discovered that I grew up in a very feminine family, as I described during our team presentation about the theory. That is very normal to me, but my teammates reacted on my story as if it was very special. Furthermore I am thinking back on my holidays more often and I try to analyze why people did act on a certain way, and how it was different in contrary with the way I am used to. When connecting this to the theory I understand these people easier, and in one way I have more respect for them. For example, I found it very funny in Indonesia when people put sticky rice on my forehead. It was strange to me. Now I researched this on the internet and I discovered that the rice remind them of the Gods and that it gives protection to you. So the intention of the Indonesian people when they put this sticky rice on my forehead was actually very lovely! Now it is a beautiful cultural ritual for me.

Theory

Hofstede believes in his book that the national culture in a country is the culture of an individual in that country. He believes that every country has just one culture, whereas I think that there are a lot of different cultures in one country. For the PDI he talks about the geographic latitude of a country, but if he had divide the big countries in smaller parts when looking at the geographic latitude, he could have been more specific. Hofstede's statements are very black-and-white, for example for the IVR index, he says that indulgent is happy and constraint is unhappy. We also talked about this during class. Sometimes he contradicts himself within his theory, for example with the MAS dimension, he says that the dimension is politically incorrect mainly in masculine cultures such as the United States and the UK, whereas he takes the US and the UK into account when drawing his conclusions.

Despites this comment on his theory, I found the theory very useful. Sometimes the theory was not clear to me directly, then it became clear after the team presentation about the specific dimension. I really liked this way of presenting the theory in class, every team put a lot of effort in the presentation and the most of them made the presentations interactive. I did not always liked to read the theory, but I liked to listen to the presentations about it.

I think that the best way to connect the theory in your daily life is when you experience something with a culture which is different to yours. Then you can look into the theory, the theory is useful to better understand why something could be different. This way it is easier to accept this difference and to interact in certain situations. Furthermore the theory is useful when analysing your own culture, or a culture of someone else. I learned a lot about my culture, because when reading, I could look for myself how high I scored on the dimensions. This was not always the same as the score of the Netherlands.

Future

On the moment I am thinking that I want to do something with Food-Design in the future. I have always been interested in food, I really love cooking, reading about food, trying new things and the combination of food and design. I like to see new ways of producing food and against wasting food. After this course I realize that in this subject there are a lot of things which you have to take into account if you want to make something useful for different cultures. Not only because in another culture people eat different food for which they need different ways to prepare, but also because different cultures are having dinner on a different way, with whole families or just alone, and having different table manners. Emptying your plate or not. Or for example, only eating halal meat, or eating no meat at all. I discovered that colors and web-design for food is also very important, for the example exercise, I have an example of McDonald's, that also makes use of this.

Furthermore I have always said that I want to live in a country with a warmer climate. I am aware right now, that living in another country could be more complicated than I thought before. It is not only about understanding the language.

This course has influences my view on cultural differences, in a positive way. The knowledge I gained during the course helps me to understand different cultures, but also to understand just different habits and norms on a better way. I will take this knowledge into account when I meet new people and when designing new products, because I would like to try to make designs which are useful for other cultures as well. Despite that, I learned so many about myself, I think that this course was really good for me. I learned more about the way I grew up, about how I became the person I am now. So I am really grateful for having this course and I would advise everyone to take this elective!

 'All people are the same, it's only the habits that are so different.'