



## Learning Journal and final Reflexion CAS International Leader and Entrepreneur

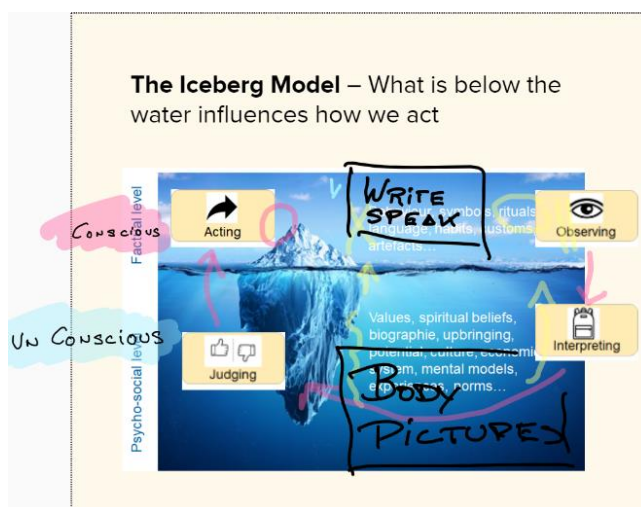
Learning Journal ...

## Course 1: Team Setup & Project Planning

What a start into the program! The first meeting in the morning of the first day was with the investor! We could meet with (...) of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA). ... listened carefully to what our challenge was in building a social enterprise to help farmers in Spean Tnaot to sell their pesticide free vegetables to the market or hotels and restaurants in Siem Reap. They asked a lot of interesting questions and this is when I realized that our two potential investors are real experts in their fields. We will have to show in hard facts how exactly we will be implementing our social enterprise. Peter also highlighted that it is very im-portant to do a thorough analysis of the market we are targeting. It is important that we do not implement something for which there is no market. This was a very clear and especially important statement.

Luckily, we have Coach X coaching us and always reminding us throughout the course that we are at the beginning of our journey. To the point of the market analysis Jorge made a true and good statement: "Start with the end in mind"

X also showed us the most important challenges when working in multicultural teams. What I liked best was the visualization of the iceberg. What we write and speak is visible above the water level. What is more important is what is hidden under the water, the unconscious part of us which relates to body, pictures and emotions. This picture illustrates it best:



Design Thinking:

We learned about the different steps of Design Thinking: Empathize – Define – Ideate – Prototype – Test

X stressed that in every project, it is important to **empathize** with what we are doing. We cannot be successful if we do not believe and especially if we do not get emotionally involved in what we do. One thing is to work with our brain and complete one task after the other but much more important is to put emotions and passion in what we do. Believe in what you do!

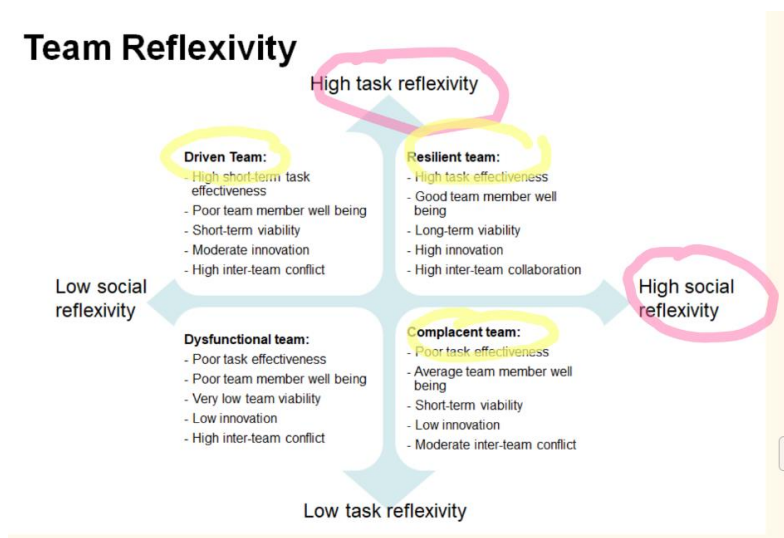
The **defining** phase is based on “try and error”. We first experiment and then we make the theory around it. Failing is key.

We only touched the method but I am sure we will learn more about it as we go forward.

Leadership:

Stefanie Neumann (“Steffi”, Coach at IAP Zurich) guided us through the different views in Team Reflexivity in the context of Leadership

## Team Reflexivity



With sadness I had to admit that during the extensive home office time due to Corona restrictions my team has moved from being a Resilient Team to a Driven Team. However, I will put it as my personal target to bring back my team to be resilient and motivated as before.



**Conclusion:**

The start into our programme has been intense with a lot of new views of intercultural challenges, social entrepreneurship and leadership.

I am looking forward to the next module and let's keep fingers crossed that we can go to Cambodia in the near future!

## Course 2: Intercultural Leadership Skills

This module took us on a trip into different cultures we live in. I learned from Coach Y that culture does not de-fine the country you are from or a religion you have. Culture has different dimensions:

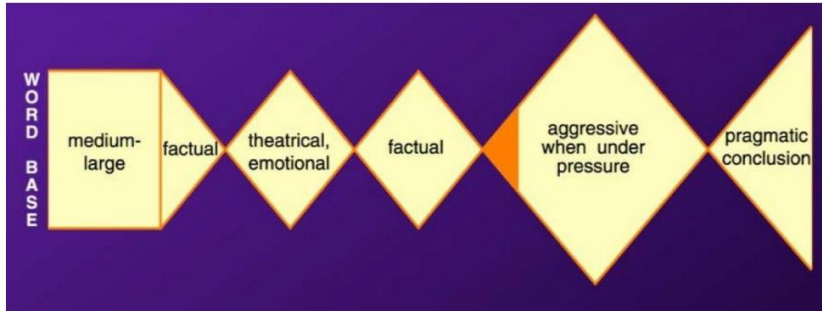
- Country
- Region
- Family
- Religion
- Job
- Generation
- Education
- Leisure
- Language

All these dimensions define you as a person and what your “culture” is. This also defines on how you interact with people you consider being from other “cultures”. Culture is actually not a clearly defined status. Culture is the human-made part of the environment and can be split into material culture (dress, food, houses, highways etc) and subjective culture (society’s characteristic way of perceiving its social environment). I find this a very interesting definition as it shows how difficult it is to really define what culture means.

With Steffi we analysed the differences of communication patterns in different countries which also partly define culture.

I am picking an example which was totally new to me:

## Poland



Poles often have a communication style that is "enigmatic, ranging from a matter-of-fact pragmatic style to a wordy, sentimental, romantic approach to any given subject."

I was really impressed by seeing that there is so much of up and downs in a Polish discussion but at the end the result is still pragmatic. In my view I picture that if the discussion is harsh and very emotional then the result can be jeopardized. However, it seems that in Poland it is the opposite.

Another example:

## Switzerland



The Swiss tend to be straightforward, nonaggressive negotiators. They obtain concessions by expressing confidence in the quality and value of their goods and services.

Being born as an Italian but lived all my life in Switzerland I really do recognize my style of communication in this overview. I like the consensus driven approach in Switzerland which leads much more to better results than in a "quick and dirty" setting.

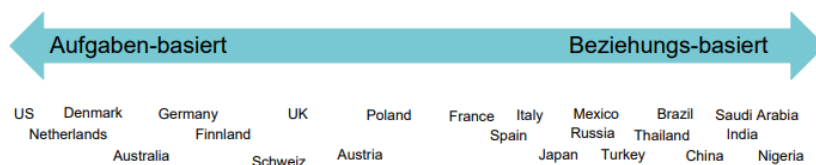
These two examples show that you need to be aware of these communications styles when interacting with people of these countries. Especially never work on the assumption that my own communication style is understood by others the same way.

My biggest take away of this course is certainly the visualization of the Cultural Dimensions.

Kommunizieren (Communicating)	Entscheiden (Deciding)
High context vs. low context	Konsens vs. Top-down
Bewerten (Evaluating)	Vertrauen schaffen (Trusting)
Direktes negatives FB vs. Indirektes negatives FB	Aufgaben-basiert vs. Beziehungs-basiert
Überzeugen (Persuading)	Anderer Meinung sein (Disagreeing)
Prinzipien zuerst vs. Anwendung zuerst	Konfrontativ vs. Harmonisch
Führen (Leading)	Zeitwahrnehmung (Scheduling)
Egalitär vs. Hierarchisch	Lineare Zeit vs. Flexible Zeit

In multicultural teams it is important that you always recognize where you stand in comparison with your counterparts. Your nationality or the place you grew up does not necessarily define your behaviour. If I pick out the example of Trusting. Even though I grew up in Switzerland I can see that I am definitely much more relationship driven than task driven when interacting with others which is more of an Italian quality. This clearly shows my Italian attitude being much stronger in this context than the Swiss attitude:

### Kulturdimension: Vertrauen schaffen



I have learned a lot in this module and I will for sure apply most of it in my day-to-day life.

## Course 3: Needs Analysis & Business Modelling with the Partner community

HEALTHY FARMING

HAPPY PEOPLE

STRONG COMMUNITY

Our vision of C Farm stands! What an intensive week we had!

We had two very important tasks to complete and this made us all kind of nervous. We had to interview key stakeholders and hold the Community Meeting.

### Interviews

We held interviews with key stakeholders such as farmers, community representatives, shop owners and an NGO. We had drafted some questions but we did not know how we would proceed. I volunteered for the interviews with the community representatives and the NGO. I was a little bit nervous but I knew that I would make it. From both interviews we got a lot of information for our project.

Community representatives:

The community representatives are fully committed to support Saren and his vision of Phum Farm. They clearly said that they would do everything necessary to make it happen. This gave us confidence that we were on the right track with our ideas. We learned a lot about the challenges the families are facing now. What touched me most was the fact that children don't go to school because they are looked after by their grandparents and they are too old to take them to school. This touched me a lot. If children do not get a proper education, how can they get out of poverty? I knew this project is too important not to make it happen.

NGO Temple Garden Foundation (TGF)

In the interview with Mr. S of TGF we learned a lot about what we have to address in our project. We need a trustful "collector" or "middle man" who pays fair prices to the farmers. He is the one who collects the vegetables from the farmers and brings them to the Phum Farm for further distribution. Lack of water during dry season is another big challenge which needs to be addressed. However, I think that through Phy's know



how as an agronomist we might find a good solution through wells or ponds. Another important point mentioned by Mr. S is the Calendar Planning. In order for Phum Farm to be successful, the provision of vegetables throughout the year is important. For example, the calendar defines which family will grow which vegetable in which month so that we have a steady production. This avoids surplus production and underproduction of specific vegetables. A steady production also ensures steady prices which are more favourable to steady income for the farmers. Commitment of the farmers to join C Farm is another important point which needs to be ensured by a contract.

All in all, we got a lot of important information which helped us in the further planning.

### **Community Meeting**

The preparation for the Community Meeting was a very big challenge as we did not know how to tackle it. We gave Saren advices, especially, we suggested to have a story telling or a role play. The Swiss team was of the clear opinion that Saren was not convinced of the role play..... We all ended the Tuesday with a strange feeling that the Community

Meeting of Wednesday morning was not well prepared. BUT! On Wednesday morning S told us that he had a dream and suddenly everything fell into place! S had organized several farmers and community representatives to join the presentation of his vision. All women! Women have an important role in the society as they typically control the money flow. We were watching him via the Zoom how passionately he was explaining this vision. P presented ways and gave advices on how to better grow vegetables and how the Calendar Planning works. The community representatives even distributed pa-per symbolizing contracts to be signed to join Phum Farm!



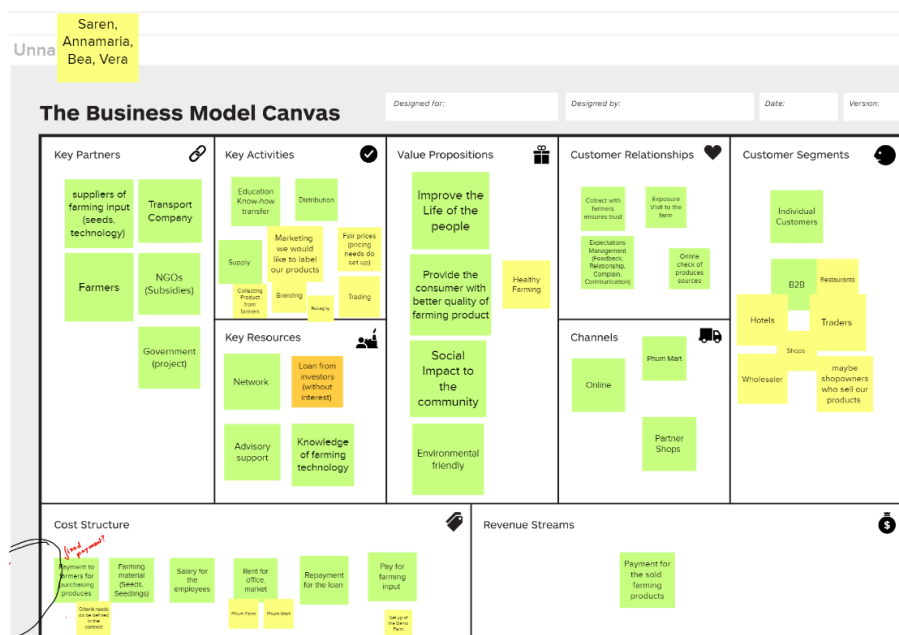
Then it was time for the Swiss team to play their roles of Customers. The vibe was incredible!

Despite the chaotic and uncertain preparation, it was a full success! My learning of this: When you are forced to perform, you find the energy and the strength to do the right thing! We all got out of our comfort zones and succeeded.

Most of us were now wondering how all this information we got, feelings and this strong experience of the Community Meeting would convert into a real plan. This is when Jorge introduced us to the Business Model Canvas

### Business Model Canvas

We got time to learn and practice the Business Model Canvas and how to use it as base to develop the Business Plan to be presented at our Investor Pitch. We practiced the Business Model Canvas with Nespresso and Facebook models before we prepared the Business Model Canvas of C Farm:



In the following few weeks, we will need to prepare the Business Plan and the Investor Pitch which will take place on ...



To complete the Cambodian experience S took us on virtual tours to the village and of course to the Angkor Wat. Even though we were not physically in Cambodia we got a very strong feeling of how it could have been. Jorge keeps on promising that we will be travelling to Cambodia as part of Module 6 so let's hope we can do it after these crazy Pandemic times!

## Reflection Own Development Process

### 1. Introduction

When I signed up for the CAS ILE2, I did not actually know what I was getting myself into. The description of the programme was intriguing. Not being confronted with a structured timetable with books, teachers, exams etc made the modules interesting but I also realized that I could not really imagine what it was all about. The learning experience, however, has been immense. I recommend this course to Leaders who want to develop the competences of entrepreneurship with themselves and their teams.

### 2. Description of the learning journey

When S our Community Hero explained his vision during the introduction module, I was actually quite disappointed of our task of the set-up of a social enterprise. I imagined that we would only organize a transport facility such as a tuk tuk or a van to bring the vegetables to Siem Reap and the subject would be closed. I asked myself if this was the right thing I had signed up for. Only during the first module when we met the investors in person and I understood how knowledgeable they were, I realized that this was not only about organizing a tuk tuk. I really got thrown into cold water as I had never been involved in setting up a social enterprise with the additional challenge of doing it in an emerging country such as Cambodia!

When we prepared for the community meeting, I really started getting involved emotionally. My level of insecurity and the feeling of being thrown out of my comfort zone overwhelmed me. I started involving my family, friends and working colleagues in my emotions as I had this strong urge to communicate my unease. Only later I realized that this was the main purpose of this project.

After the community meeting, I realized that by no way we could fail in our project. To see the farmer women listening to Saren and Phy made me understand that they depended on us. During my closing speech when I mentioned that Phum Farm had caused me sleepless nights, this was not invented but the bare reality. I started to involve my environment such as friends, family and working colleagues even more in my excitement and also my concerns about this project. I could feel that my colleagues in the course



were going through the same situation as me. The commitment to the project was at 100% for each of us. In my opinion this was also the reason why we won the Investor Pitch. Commitment of a High Performing Team.

### 3. Insights for own development

What did I personally learn from this course for my own development? I would like to reflect it based on three different dimensions: Leadership Skills, Entrepreneur Behaviour and Cultural Thinking

#### **Impact on Leadership Skills**

Being a Leader is very different from being a Manager. A Manager “just” executes orders and has much less of own initiative. If I want to put it in an extreme way: Managers are excellent order takers but they do not inspire their employees. Leaders are inspirational and make other people do the right thing in the right moment and take initiative. Hence, being a true Leader is much more difficult than being a Manager. Now the question is: Is a person gifted to be a true Leader or do you become a Leader? Maybe to a certain extent you have to be gifted by your personality but I am also convinced that if you face the right situation, you can also become a very good Leader. Unfortunately, in many big organizations people are not given the opportunities and the situations to unleash their capabilities to become good Leaders. And as a matter of fact, in my opinion this is also the reason why in big firms you typically have Managers and not Leaders.

#### **Impact on Entrepreneurial Behaviour**

For me a pre-condition to become an Entrepreneur is Leadership. This course has clearly shown it to me. When you start thinking of your own Enterprise, you develop Leadership Skills. You become passionate about what you do and especially you want to convince and inspire others to follow you and your ideas. An Entrepreneur believes in his project and lives it at his full. Again, big organizations do not give much ground to develop entrepreneurial thinking and acting. In banks for example you are bound to lots of regulations and policies which limit your freedom in acting as an Entrepreneur.

### **Impact on Cultural Thinking**

Having members in the team from Switzerland and Cambodia clearly contributed to the success of our project but also brought challenges to it. Having different cultures in a team brings diversity to the thinking. However, when different cultures work at the same project, one needs to be careful in understanding hidden messages. For example, the Cambodian team is not used to answer to questions with a clear “Yes” or “No”. So, it became important to me to give an interpretation of their statements to see whether this was a “Yes” or a “No”. During the build-up of the project, I made it a bit my personal task to be the link between the Swiss and the Cambodian team. In my professional but also private life I had to often work with teams in Asia and I think that I developed a good understanding of how to deal with Asians. Of course, also in Asia we have different cultures but I found a lot of similarities in the behaviour of our Cambodian team with the behaviour in the Indian and Sri Lankan culture to which I am exposed quite a lot in my private life.

An additional challenge was also the cultural diversity within the Swiss team. Even though we are all based in Switzerland, many of us have different roots. We had Iranians, Croatians, Italians, Austrians etc. As we learned in course 2, you carry the “culture” in you even if you live in a different country.

Conclusion for my personal development: I have definitely grown within these three dimensions mentioned above. I feel much more resilient in my Leadership skills. I think more like an Entrepreneur and I have sharpened my understanding for cultural diversity.

#### **4. Learning for professional role and transfer into business context**

I would like to transfer my learnings from this experience for my professional role describing two dimensions in short:

- My personal development
- Development of my team

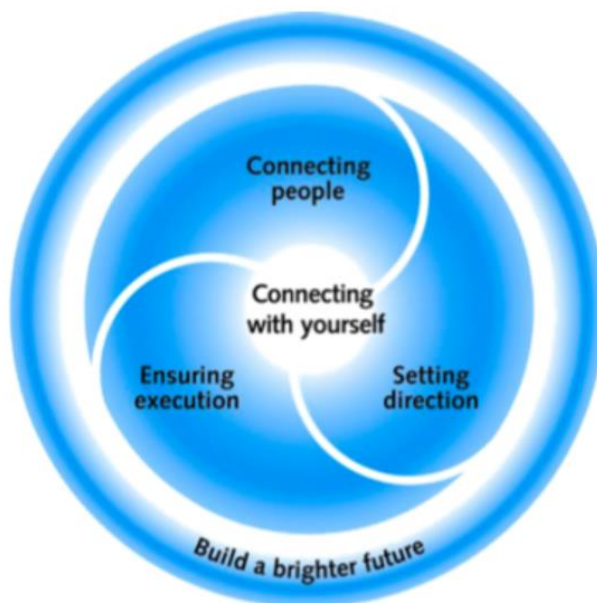
##### **My personal development**

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Leadership and Entrepreneurship are linked to each other. My plan for the future is:

When confronted with a new project or initiative in my professional life, I want to fully understand what the initiative is about, ask detailed questions and especially explore what my contribution is and what the benefit to be achieved is. To understand the goal is very important. I want to develop the initiative in question as being my personal initiative so that I can develop the necessary enthusiasm to give my contribution to the initiative. This is when the Entrepreneurship in yourselves is developed. Through Entrepreneurship you naturally start behaving like a Leader and make things happen easier. I know that it is not always easy especially when working in a banking environment but I will make it my new way of looking at things. Jorge would call this "Connecting to yourself" (see illustration further down).

### **Development of my team**

To describe how my learnings will be transferred to my team, I would like to refer to the following illustration:



Leaders who excel  
in all of these five  
elements are our  
most successful  
(future) leaders.

In order to best lead my team, I first need to connect with myself as described above and really believe in what we do. I need to be authentic. Only then I can be a true Leader.



Through my authenticity I will connect to the Team and transfer my enthusiasm to them. In this delicate phase which will set the ground for the success, it is important to talk openly of what the initiative or the project is and put them on fire. This is the phase which certainly takes more time and energy to onboard them to the enthusiasm. In my opinion once this part is completed then the setting of the direction will be more natural as through the understanding of the initiative, they will know what needs to be done and take the driver seat for their tasks. For sure my task will remain to ensure the direction is always the right one and especially I need to ensure the execution. In this process, I will have to accept that things will not always be done the way I would have done it. But this actually remains irrelevant as far as the goal is clear and remains in focus. Like this I will empower my team members to perform at their best. My role will be the one to coach them in the journey. In fact, Jorge repeatedly reminded us that actually Leadership is Coaching. My team will be a High Performing Team!

## 5. Learning for private role and resulting actions

The learnings for my private life are very similar to the once for my professional life in terms of Leader- and Entrepreneurship. I need to believe in what I do in order to make it happen. And especially to always do things with enthusiasm. Looking back to my life, I would say that I have often been doing that. I have grown- up children and as a parent you need to have Leadership skills to navigate your children through their educational and later also in their professional lives. Even though my children are not living with me anymore, they often come to me for advices. I often take a Coaching role in these situations and they seem to appreciate it. My goal will be to continue with this role and to further improve my Coaching skills with them.

## 6. Closing

I would have never thought this course would change me so much. I do not want to start a marketing campaign around this course, but I think that going through the experience of setting up a real enterprise like Phum Farm in our case, cannot be compared to any other theoretical schooling. Experiencing something cannot by any means be compared to learning something. What one needs to be aware of when joining an experience like this is that you really get thrown out of your comfort zone. When joining a “normal course” with teachers, lessons and books, you are in competition with yourself. You write a good





exam; you get a good mark and at the end you get your diploma or certificate. In the case of setting up a social enterprise, you have to perform with team members you do not know and there is no exam at the end but the lives of real people you want to change and improve. My next trip to Asia will for sure include a visit to Siem Reap and C Farm!

What an incredible experience I had!



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