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MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Germans in the Cameroons“: A Training Requirement
Assessment for German expats in development
organisations in Cameroon

An intercultural perspective

verfasst von / submitted by

Annika Doreen Maurer

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master (MA)

Wien, September 2022 / Vienna September 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / UA 067 805
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt / Individuelles Masterstudium Globalgeschichte
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Betreut von / Supervisor:

ao.Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. phil. Hermann Mückler

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Abstract

German-Cameroonian shared history started with colonialism over a hundred years ago and currently mostly unfolds itself in development cooperation as Germany is Cameroon's biggest bilateral funding partner. The work takes place in multicultural teams where German expats work with local staff. The field of intercultural communication describes this complexity: Seeing culture permeating every aspect of life, different cultural backgrounds play a role in interactions. When preparing for assignments abroad, limited information about Cameroon is available for Germans. Intercultural training is a tool to prepare future expats for effective and appropriate behaviour in intercultural encounters. This is especially relevant in the field of international development where the context will be very different from the home country, and also permeated by different power dynamics, but intercultural competence does matter a lot for the successful implementation of the project.

This study analyses the viewpoint of Cameroonian colleagues on German expats in Cameroon through interviews and adds informal field research to illustrate the findings. Germans and German culture enjoy a positive image in Cameroon, including a majorly positive connotation of the German colonial past, for its rigorousness and hard work. Other characteristics of a German work style are goal-oriented processes and flat hierarchies. German and Cameroonian differences in the perception of reality can lead to friction regarding time, communication, understanding of hierarchy and financial distributions. These might be explained by underlying value differences of an individualistic compared to a collectivistic worldview, and following this, a particularistic or universal application of norms. A German mechanism of returning to the known rules and structures is sometimes in conflict with the flexibility necessary for the Cameroonian context. From the Cameroonian perspective, the Germans show a good adaptation to the Cameroonian context by displaying interest in the Cameroonian cultural heritage and a willingness to learn.

Following this assessment, this paper proposes training content including theoretical knowledge about Cameroonian history as well as the importance of Cameroonian culture and collectives. In addition to the country-specific information, training should include the outside view on German culture and awareness of German cultural values, enabling perspective-taking and understanding of misunderstandings. This culture-specific training is projected alongside a general intercultural competence training, that should focus on German particularities based on the discovered gaps and cultural communication frictions such as high-context communication and dealing with uncertainty. Another important aspect of training is the awareness of power dynamics, especially the positive image of the German colonial legacy in Cameroon which requires a sensitive approach from the Germans. The last part of the training shall be practical advice for mitigating culture shock, which also includes expectation management regarding the new situation as an expat in Cameroon.

Abstrakt

Die gemeinsame deutsch-kamerunische Geschichte begann mit dem Kolonialismus vor über hundert Jahren und entfaltet sich heute vor allem in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, denn Deutschland ist der größte bilaterale Finanzierungspartner Kameruns. Die Arbeit findet in multikulturellen Teams statt, in denen deutsche Expats mit lokalen Mitarbeitern zusammenarbeiten. Das Feld der interkulturellen Kommunikation behandelt diese Komplexität: Weil Kultur alle Lebensbereiche betrifft, wirken unterschiedliche kulturelle Hintergründe auf Begegnungen. Bei der Vorbereitung auf Auslandseinsätze stehen für Deutsche nur wenige Informationen über Kamerun zur Verfügung. Interkulturelles Training ist ein Instrument, um zukünftige Expats auf ein effektives und angemessenes Verhalten in interkulturellen Begegnungen vorzubereiten. Dies ist besonders relevant, weil in der internationalen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit sich der Kontext stark vom Heimatland unterscheidet und mitunter von anderen Machtdynamiken charakterisiert ist. Interkulturelle Kompetenz spielt dort besonders eine Rolle für die erfolgreiche Umsetzung der Projekte.

Die Sichtweise der Kameruner Kolleginnen und Kollegen auf deutsche Expats in Kamerun wird anhand von Interviews analysiert und durch informelle Feldforschung abgerundet. Deutsche und die deutsche Kultur genießen in Kamerun ein positives Image, und die deutsche koloniale Vergangenheit wird überwiegend positiv beschrieben: Für die deutsche Struktur und harte Arbeit. Weitere Merkmale eines deutschen Arbeitsstils sind zielorientierte Prozesse und flache Hierarchien. Deutsche und kamerunische verschiedene Wahrnehmungen können zu Konflikten in Bezug auf Zeit, Kommunikation, Verständnis von Hierarchien und finanziellen Zahlungen führen. Diese lassen sich durch zugrundeliegende Wertedifferenzen in der Weltsicht, von einer individualistischen im Vergleich zu einer kollektivistischen, und daraus folgend einer partikularistischen oder universellen Anwendung von Normen erklären. Der deutsche Mechanismus der Rückkehr zu den bekannten Regeln und Strukturen steht manchmal im Widerspruch zu der für den kamerunischen Kontext notwendigen Flexibilität. Aus kamerunischer Sicht zeigen die Deutschen eine gute Anpassung an den kamerunischen Kontext, indem sie Interesse am kamerunischen Kulturerbe und Lernbereitschaft zeigen.

Nach der Beschreibung der Fremdwahrnehmung der deutschen Kultur werden in dieser Arbeit Schulungsinhalte vorgeschlagen, welche theoretisches Wissen über die kamerunische Geschichte sowie die Bedeutung der kamerunischen Kultur und Kollektive umfassen. Zusätzlich zu den länderspezifischen Informationen sollte das Training eine externe Perspektive auf die deutsche Kultur und das Bewusstmachen der deutschen kulturellen Werte umfassen, um einen Perspektivenwechsel und ein Verständnis für Missverständnisse zu schaffen. Dieses kulturspezifische Training ist neben einem allgemeinen interkulturellen Kompetenztraining vorgesehen, das sich auf die deutschen Besonderheiten konzentriert, was basierend auf den entdeckten Lücken und kulturellen Kommunikationsproblemen, wie z. B. kontextbezogene Kommunikation und Umgang mit Unsicherheit, konzipiert wird. Ein weiterer wichtiger Aspekt des Trainings ist die Sensibilisierung für Machtdynamiken, insbesondere für das positive Bild des deutschen kolonialen Erbes in Kamerun, das einen sensiblen Umgang von Seiten der Deutschen erfordert. Der letzte Teil des Trainings soll praktische Ratschläge zur Milderung des Kulturschocks geben, was auch das Erwartungsmanagement in Bezug auf die neue Situation als Expat in Kamerun einschließt.

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Table of Abbreviations

AFD.....	Agence Française pour le Développement
BfdW.....	Brot für die Welt
FES.....	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
GIZ.....	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank all interviewees who participated in this research with the idea to provide more insight into German-Cameroonian intercultural relations that can help the preparation of their future colleagues. I am particularly grateful for your collective wisdom because I was able to learn more about myself and German culture by illuminating the issue from your viewpoint and understand things, I would not have been able to put into words without your words. Thank you for making this research possible.

I would also like to thank every single Cameroonian I engaged with during my semester at the University of Yaoundé 1 who was so kind to share with me part of their culture and viewpoints and allowed me to amplify my perspective. I am grateful to have had a glimpse at the Cameroonian diversity through the window that was offered to me. I would like to thank my Cameroonian friends that assisted me during my daily struggles in Yaoundé and accompany me on this journey. All experiences I made influenced the analysis of this study.

I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Mag. Dr. phil. Hermann Mückler for supporting this research project enthusiastically and allowing me the freedom to pursue my fields of interest in this research while providing very helpful advice for scientific practices in fieldwork.

A great amount of gratitude has to be attributed to my friend and mentor Valerie M. Viban, Policy Advisor for the dealing with German colonial legacy at *Justicia et Pax*, without whom this research and my study stay in Cameroon would have been severely limited. He served as my cultural advisor during my acculturation phase in Cameroon and provided valuable feedback for reflection during the writing phase of this project. The starting points for my involvement with local organisations in Cameroon and this research relied heavily on his networks. Thanks to the motivational and logistic support of him and his friends I was able to safely explore different aspects of Cameroonian culture and travel to Buea and Douala to conduct interviews and experience different facets of Cameroon.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the University of Vienna for valuing this research project with a short-term grant abroad that supported my field research in Cameroon financially.

Preface

This master thesis project grew out of the desire to mix the topic of intercultural communication with anthropological field research in Cameroon. As much has been said already about the intercultural experience of expats, my approach was to capture the intercultural relations between Germans and Cameroonians from a Cameroonian viewpoint. The research design was aimed to give voice to the experience of the local staff when working in a German-led environment in Cameroon and to add a culturally different perspective to interculturality. Fully aware of my positionality as a German, this master thesis aims at trying to open a German reading of Cameroonian viewpoints of German culture and gets thus stuck in an interesting meta-level of culture – a double intercultural study.

The title of the research is inspired by my German colonial history class at the University of Yaoundé 1 “Germans in the Cameroons”. I like the use of Cameroon in the plural: Back then, it described the multiple lands combined into one territory, later the territory that under the League of Nations mandate was divided into multiple administrative entities, but today I would like to use the term in the plural to reflect the cultural diversity of Cameroon, where it is hard to speak of one unified national identity (apart from football). I also like to use the title of my colonial history class to allude to the continuity of German presence in Cameroon from a post-colonial perspective: German work on Cameroonian territory today is shaped by the legacy of Germans in the Cameroons in the past.

The final goal of this study is to explore the intercultural training needs of German (management) personnel working in Cameroon related to cooperation for development. The focus is especially on describing German culture from an external standpoint, understandable both for Germans and Cameroonians, as well as analysing points of friction in Cameroonian-German relationships to improve the German awareness of culture, and identifying possible fields for training to then propose a framework to better prepare Germans for work in Cameroon. The practical results of this study are hopefully an added value to designing management and intercultural training for Germans working abroad.

On the way to responding to the research question, I embarked on an interesting journey with myself and the relationship to my own national heritage. Many of the findings were not so surprising, as they were aligned with common stereotypes or anecdotes I’ve heard from international friends in other instances. Some anecdotes were similar to experiences I made myself when working in German settings, and some of the findings were offering me very interesting explanations of cultural manifestations I was not yet aware of or for which I simply lacked the right definitions. Many things came up that made me smile because I could relate and felt so emblematic for German intercultural situations. I summed them up here so that others can also be fascinated by the generalisability of some experiences we believe to be personal. Others might not be able to agree with certain described features and are invited to engage in a constructive debate with me.

As much as I followed proven scientific methods objectively while analysing these cultural phenomena, I cannot claim that this scientific analysis is objective. In the end, it is very much embedded in culture and my personal perspective on the environment that surrounds me and my academic positionality, influenced by my extensive literature review and fellow scholars on the field, and the subjective interpretation of the data gathered in

my interviews based on my understanding of Cameroon during my six months in the country. Nonetheless, I hope that this paper offers a new perspective and maybe new vocabulary for any reader and a foundation to assess cultural interaction from a different point of view.

With this project, I wish to add my grain of salt to the conversation on intercultural dynamics and I hope that my findings on German culture and German-Cameroonian intercultural dynamics will invite others to engage with this topic and with the German-Cameroonian space.

*The essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is not to answer
our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that
others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to
include them in the consultable record of what man has said.*

Clifford Geertz (1973)

1. Introduction

Expats, international employees sent by their national employer to a different country, are often described as having trouble understanding the perspectives of the local workforce (see (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 415)). This is an issue in global companies, but even more pressing in the context of international development cooperation where advisors from the Global North join forces with local experts from the Global South to jointly execute programs. These are usually financed by the donor country which creates power dynamics. The experienced cultural differences might be perceived as superior to an expat assignment in a multinational company in the Global North. The diversity of teams creates huge potential for change implementation through the multitude of professional opinions, but the intercultural nature of the teams can also create friction and a space that has to be adapted to.

Intercultural trainings can improve the ability to handle the hybrid cultural context, but while being taught to integrate into the host culture, expats still have to fulfil the requirement of the mother company that sent them (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 416). The balancing act between working the way one is socialised in and the way the context requires is part of international development work. In German development work today, projects get designed and implemented by multinational teams with a great share of local Cameroonian staff that will bring a multitude of professional and cultural perspectives to the execution of an idea.

The German presence in Cameroon is looking back at a history of more than 100 years, starting with colonial conquest. Today, Germany is very involved in development programs in Cameroon as its biggest bilateral funding partner. In German-led development organisations, Cameroonians work mostly in Cameroonian teams with a German supervisor, and potentially one other European colleague. In the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung* (FES) power is concentrated in the hands of the Germans with approximately 10% of German employees to 90% of other nationals and local staff. *Brot für die Welt* (BfdW) constitutes a case apart as in their structure, they partner with a Cameroonian Christian organisation which they support financially, the leaders on the ground, however, are Cameroonians who are in close contact with the office in Berlin, but without German supervision. BdfW also sends German development workers to different partner institutions in Cameroon, who are then working under the supervision of that partner. This cross-cultural collaboration is the heart of development cooperation. The level of intercultural competence of the individual as well as the organisational space given to intercultural cooperation are variables that influence the success of the development projects (Armbruster, 2014).

The potential of diverse teams is known and outstanding, however, German expats in Cameroon face a process of adaptation to the context, and the projects by the German development organisations sometimes collide with customs on the ground. The disentangling of these conflicts is interesting to observe. Therefore, this master thesis research uses the testimony of 14 interviewees to construct categories of frictions that can be used as examples for future intercultural issues.

The guiding question of this research is a practical one:

How could the current intercultural relations between Germans and Cameroonians working in development organisations in Cameroon be improved through intercultural training?

To answer this question, we first explore what German culture is according to the Cameroonian colleagues. While doing so, we have to examine how the German colonial legacy influences the perception of Germans in Cameroon to give a differentiated answer. Following this outside view, we explore the experience of German intercultural competence and explore cultural friction between Germans and Cameroonians.

Assessing intercultural competence often happens by questionnaires or tests for the personnel that is to be recruited (Paige et al., 2003) or based on reported problems of the expats (Bolten, 2010). However, this approach focuses on evaluating the mindset, knowledge, and experienced behaviour of the expat. A different method, assessing the cultural competence by informants, is rarely done. Nonetheless, the evaluation from the standpoint of the Other can give us valuable insights into how intercultural competence and behaviour are ultimately perceived by those who are engaging with them. Intercultural competence is usually described as the ability to successfully act in intercultural situations but evaluating it along the lines of successes experienced by one side does not take into account the experience of the other, which often does not figure in research. Therefore, informant-based assessment can close the gap between the perception of the self and the other and can direct us to adequate fields of training. Engaging in research about the Cameroonian perspective of the interculturality of German-Cameroonian relations is thus an added insight on how to improve the intercultural competence of the German workforce.

One tool for enhanced cooperation is capacity building to reinforce strengths and work on weaknesses. The findings of this anthropological fieldwork will then be to propose content relevant for an intercultural training similar to those done for international management but tailored for German expats in development organisations in Cameroon. The description of German culture and the cultural differences will aid with the formulation of the knowledge-based part of future training, because a verbalisation of these aspects can help mitigate their impact, train and prepare, and in combination with soft skill development led to greater intercultural competence through awareness.

2. Context of the Germans in Cameroon

2.1. German Colonial History in Cameroon

To analyse German-Cameroonian relations today, we have to situate them in the historical context. “Cameroon” was created through German colonialism. Its name is derived from Rio dos Camarões, the Portuguese naming of the river Wouri. The Germans called their protectorate *Kamerun* and the starting point of the colonial expansion *Kamerun-Stadt* which later became Douala, named after her people. The expansion of the “protectorate” from Douala to the interior, after the agreement with Britain and France about its delineations, marked the creation of “Cameroonian” territory and the birth of a territorial entity. *Kamerun*’s borders changed twice since then – with the treaty of Versailles giving trusteeship to the British and French in separate entities, and with independence marked by a referendum leading to the annexation of the North of the British Cameroons to Nigeria and the annexation of the British Southern Cameroons to the newly independent former-French Cameroon. The existence of a unified Cameroonian nation-state today is due to German colonial intervention. (Ngho, 1979, p. 98)

Germany’s colonial rule began officially in 1884 with the Berlin Conference that divided African territories among the European powers during the ‘scramble for Africa’, without any African representative present (Conrad, 2011b, p. 36). Before, German and other European traders had been engaged in commercial activity on the territory for a long while, working together with the Duala people as intermediaries in their trade. To secure their economic position in particular in face of British imperialism, the German traders pushed the German government to make the territory a formal protectorate. Cameroon became a German colony in July 1884 by a treaty signed by Gustav Nachtigal and the chiefs of Duala, which was the starting point of the expansion of German rule in Cameroon (Conrad, 2011b, p. 42).

The colonial project was pushed from the German side for three reasons: the opening up of new territories for the German overpopulation, the expansion of the market for German products and more independence from the global market and the idea that colonies will consolidate the position of the German empire as a world power (Fuhrmann, 2015, p. 3). German colonialism was driven by the idea of finding settler colonies for German overpopulation, as an economic project but also by the idea of ‘civilisation’ of the colonized people (Conrad, 2011c, p. 29). Colonial power was based on a hierarchy between settlers and the native population, justified by racist beliefs, that legitimized the treatment of the natives disregarding human rights (Conrad, 2011a, p. 105). It also went along with the already ongoing missionary project that vindicated its intervention on the territory with the idea of bringing superior civilization. “Colonialism was considered a Kulturmission (cultural mission) in which the ‘superior’ race educated and civilized the ‘inferior’ Other, who was still steps behind on the evolutionary ladder” (Fuhrmann, 2015, p. 3). After the period of Enlightenment, together with the spread of the Lutheran Reformation from Germany to Europe and the world, German ideology in the 18th century focused on the holism of the community and strong individualism (Dumont, 1994).

During Germany’s rule in Cameroon, the local population and land were economically exploited, often in connection with violence and abuse of power (Conrad, 2011b, p. 45). The colonial expansion started through treaties with local authorities but turned into a military venture submitting the uncooperative indigenous people to forced labour (Mveng, 1963, 325f). The German economic project needed labour for its plantations and thus

stroke deals with local authorities who might have used inhumane methods to send their people to work (see Müllendorff, 1902, p. 74). Additionally, the levitation of a tax created a need for money in the local population and thus pushed them into wage labour (DeLorme et al., 1988, p. 156).

Apart from suffering from physical violence, the greatest negative consequence of German colonialism was disrupting the subsistence economy of the region and pushing many natives into poverty by misappropriating the land that they needed for food autonomy (DeLorme et al., 1988, p. 152). The Europeans needed land for their plantations and the construction of missionary institutions like schools. Later on, a resettlement plan was established to keep the native population at a 1km distance from the settlers as they were believed to bring malaria and other illnesses to the White population (DeLorme et al., 1988, p. 149).

The resettlement program that forced the native population to choose a new plot of land among options given by the colonizer started in 1912, while it faced strong opposition from the Africans. The spokesperson of the group was Duala Manga Bell. He was killed for treason when he spoke out about this violence and breach of the contract of 1884 which promised that no land from Africans was going to be expropriated (DeLorme et al., 1988, p. 155).

The justification of the colonial venture came with racialized discourse about the inferiority of the Black¹ subject (for example, see Müllendorff, 1902). Dippold (1973) points out that German colonial literature describes Africa and Cameroon in racist terms: Africans are seen as superior in strength but with no competition to Europeans. In the analysis of German colonial cinematography, we learn about the multifaced message the images were transporting: those of the exotism and beautiful scenery of the colonies, mixed with “colonial rule, conquest, racism and salvage ethnography” (Fuhrmann, 2015, p. 2) working in creating political support for the colonies but also uplifting the Germans in their White Supremacy². This portrayal of Africa submersed into German culture, perdured the colonial period and does have its remnants in popular culture today.

The literature describing the colonial crimes of Germany and relating the history is limited. As a useful source however I would like to cite Mveng's *Histoire du Cameroun* (1963) which includes an extensive description of the German military expeditions to gain control over and define the territory of *Kamerun* and the violence and conditions of work on the plantations. Other important writings on the German colonial history in Cameroon can be found by Victor Ngoh. There are more scholars like Philippe-Blaise Essomba and others whose works unfortunately are not yet digitally available to German audiences. German scholars who wrote about German colonial history in the 70s have created extensive works, yet based on German archives and without consulting Cameroonian experts (Osteraas, 1974).

Even though the German past in Cameroon ended with the First World War and the transfer of the mandate of the territory to the imperial powers the United Kingdom and France, German traders continued their influence in the British Cameroons through their plantations until the Second World War (Authaler, 2018). In this era, they were not

¹ Black and White with a capital letter is used here refer to the identity of a people created by racialized discourse and not to the colour or biological features.

² White Supremacy is the racist ideology that places the White race above all other races to justify (White) privileges and the inhumane treatment of other races.

allowed to use forced labour anymore but grew their influence by creating incentives for the locals to work for them and Africanised the production (Authaler, 2018, p. 124).

2.2. Post-colonial legacy

The German colonial post in Cameroon, and the ongoing dynamics between the Global North and Global South as remnants of colonialism, have to be taken into account for the following analysis of the German-Cameroonian relationships. Even though the period of formal colonization ended with the independence of the Cameroons, in 1960 and 1961 respectively, the power imbalance of the colonial era still manifests itself in the dominance of the Global North, especially France and Britain, in business, education, culture, politics and policies in Cameroon. Hall (2017) describes the postcolonial as

“an era when everything still takes place in the slipstream of colonialism and hence bears the inscription of the disturbances that colonization set in motion. The term indicates a moment when everything in the conversation makes reference to the colonizing dominant, to the West, which may be resisted, but whose presence as an active force, as an interlocutor, cannot be denied, since the configurations that characterized the earlier epoch remain visible and operative, having real effects.” (Hall, 2017, p. 101)

One example of the shared history of German colonial heritage and present Cameroon is the various cultural goods that were taken from the territory of Kamerun during the German colonial times for which claims of restitution were made (Splettstößer, 2019). The political fight for the returns is an example of ongoing colonial power relations. The return of the objects that came into German possession as “war booty” could be a first step into reparation, reconciliation and dealing with the colonial legacy yet the process has been obstructed by German institutions (Splettstößer, 2019, p. 354). Recently, the negotiations for the return of one artefact in the Humboldt Forum have started and reminded us of the contemporariness of colonial interwovenness.

The German colonial heritage is visible in still existing infrastructure in Cameroon and the presence of many German development organisations on the territory. Christianity was introduced as a means of “civilisation of the Africans” and to promote a German work ethic and is still an important factor of everyday life in Cameroon. The legacy of the German missions can be seen in the many church-led schools. German infrastructure is used still today to shape the narrative of the shared history which can be found in the bridge across the Sanaga which was transformed into a cultural space on its centenary to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the *Goethe-Institut* and symbolise a bridge between the cultures (Gouaffo & Tsogang Fossi, 2018). According to Gouaffo and Tsogang Fossi (2018), the remembrance of fallen Germans took place but the German institutions have given little remembrance to the victims on the Cameroonian side; the critical reflection on the German colonial expansion does happen, though, in Cameroonian literature and art. The narrative about the intertwined history of Cameroon and Germany is still ambivalent, as parts of history are celebrated as a shared culture but there is no direct focus on the Cameroonian loss.

Germany today is an important partner in development cooperation with Cameroon, being the country providing the biggest bilateral governmental development cooperation funding with over 100 million in the period of 2017-2019 alone and German is the second most learned foreign language by students in the country (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020).

3. Intercultural Competence and Training

3.1. The concept of Culture

An anthropological definition of Culture

Culture as a term is very hard to grasp as there are manifold ways of defining it. In common sense, it can refer to arts and other artefacts of civilisation, or it refers to sophisticated forms of entertainment or customs and traditions. The different disciplines have created their respective definitions. Studies of culture as taught in Germany usually focus on culture as standardisations of symbols for a collective (see Hansen, 2011). The concept of culture is diverse and inconclusive and to be able to work with the term culture, a scholar must choose its definition. However, this does not mean that other viewpoints, scholars or disciplines are wrong, they are just shedding a different light on the issue. Geertz (1973) offers the definition of culture as a “thick description”. In his theory, culture is what helps us explain and, moreover, understand behaviour in its context. His main argument is that observable behaviour only achieves its meaning as a symbol by the underlying cultural knowledge. The emphasis is on the fact that anthropological interpretation itself lies within the meaning given to it by culture. There is no such thing as subjective or objective culture as “culture is public because meaning is” (Geertz, 1973, p. 12). Culture gets understood by its symbols. Communication is embedded in culture, and all acts of communication are embedded in the context and readable through the knowledge of the *signifié*³ behind each *signifiant* in a particular context. You cannot do acts of communication without knowing what the meaning of this communication is, you can observe and learn behaviour but this is not something to be analysed with rational methods (see Geertz, 1973, p. 12). You need background information to be able to make sense of a particular event, custom, or idea, so “ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript [made of] transient examples of shaped behaviour” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Ethnography is thus trying to make sense of the unknown and “understanding people’s cultures exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity” (Geertz, 1973, p. 14). It is the idea of seeing culture as a code which allows to decipher the meaning of symbolic action.

According to his thick description of culture, “culture consists of socially established structures of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p. 12) and ethnography tries to describe these structures and meanings to read and understand behaviour. Anthropology in this sense is actor-oriented. The term “anthropological interpretations” in this sense shows the role of the researcher, highlighting that they are interpretations made by anthropologists. They are second- and third-order interpretations because “only a native makes first-order interpretations [as] it’s [their] culture” (Geertz, 1973, p. 15). A native, however, might lack the awareness of their own culture because, as we have just seen, it is the context that gives meaning, but this context might be “normality” and thus invisible to the native. In my case as a German, I can give a first-order description of German culture while also

³ *Signifié* (Signified) and *Signifiant* (Signifier) is a semiotic theory introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure. It comes from the field of linguistics and describes the interdependent relationship of a term and its connected image. We could define communication beyond linguistics and see every act as a symbol that transmits a message and thus arrive at semiotics where we analyse every symbol for its purpose within communication. Hansen (2011) provides a good overview to symbols in communication in regards to culture.

giving a second-order description of Cameroonian culture. While my description of German culture will be clouded by underlying assumptions of what is obvious to a European audience, the contrast with Cameroonian culture and the second-order description of German culture by Cameroonians will offer an additional layer of abstraction and complete this anthropological description as it allows us to leave the sphere of mere description but arrive at an anthropological interpretation: a “part of a developing system of scientific analysis” (Geertz, 1973, p. 15). The use of the gerund alludes to the fact that interpretative anthropology is a process that will never arrive at perfect conclusions but rather seeks to improve the debate and gets deeper with every new analysis (Geertz, 1973, p. 29)

To look at the symbolic dimensions of social action – art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense – is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them. The essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said. (Geertz, 1973, p. 30)

For Geertz, culture is seen as giving meaning to actions and deciphering communication which anthropology tries to scientifically examine. In other definitions, culture is emphasized as a system of orientation that provides behavioural orientation in terms of morals and standards to its members and helps explain reality. Stuart Hall describes the beginning of the discipline of cultural studies. Culture permeates “all social practices, and is the sum of their interrelationship” (Hall, 2021, p. 523). I understand culture as socialisation as part of a certain cultural group that helps us make sense of the world, understand each other and the meaning of each of our actions, is the basis of communication but also provides us guidance in what to strive for and what is the right way to do. It comes with a certain worldview that is based on the collective memory of the cultural group. This is an anthropological understanding of culture, where culture is encompassing all forms of human interaction.

In different contexts, culture can be seen as an umbrella term for traditions, rituals and a traditional lifestyle. For instance, Parekh (1997, p. 187) discusses choosing between the modern way of life and traditional culture. Cultural ways of life thus stand in contrast to modernity. This view neglects that modernity has its own cultural code, as well as customs and symbols. Anthropologists would disagree that the Western style of living is without culture, but it has to be taken into account that this vision of culture still exists, especially because in Cameroon there is a common understanding of the dichotomy between culture as traditions and the modern way of life in the cities as non-cultural.

According to Moosmüller (2007, 38f), cultural differences are the central element in both the fields of intercultural communication and ethnology: However, while ethnologists try to describe and explain the difference and accept subjectivity, the interculturalist tries to move toward ethnorelativism and overcome differences. He criticises that interculturalists see themselves as defenders of diversity but work for the reduction of differences within the global business sphere (Moosmüller, 2007, p. 39). Intercultural Communication and Ethnology examine a similar topic, yet the priority is different in their two fields of activity: ethnology focuses on understanding while intercultural communication focuses on instrumentalising scientific research for practical use (Moosmüller, 2007, 40f). This study aims at explaining behaviour in a cultural context to then instrumentalise the findings for intercultural training, focusing crossover approaches to the two disciplines.

An intersectional view on Culture

Culture is often discussed in the context of national culture of the modern nation-state, or at least ascribed to ethnic groups, and especially the field of intercultural management offers us a great variety of literature contrasting national cultures. Nonetheless, in the current debate about culture and cultural identities⁴, we can speak about intersectionality as people do belong to multiple collectives that all provide their own code and customs to their members by socialisation. Former intercultural studies, especially in the business context, have been criticised in that they focus on a certain prototype of an international manager with a similar business sector, age, gender and socioeconomic background (see Schmitz, 2015 for further discussion).

It can be debated whether national culture is a predominant factor even in intersectional cultural settings and overshadows other levels of culture and whether organisations create a culture or constitute a culture (Nguyen, 2016, 55f). Still, cultural theorists agree that organisations include a culture on their own. When entering a new organisation, employees learn formally during an onboarding process and/or informally through observing and imitating the new values and processes within the organisation (see Troxler & Ternès, 2017, p. 8) which can be seen as a form of acculturation. The beforementioned definition of culture as a whole way of life for a cultural group does not only refer to national groups but could also be applied to all sorts of social groups that provide some form of socialisation to its members, such as a family or a football club. For this, we must not forget that some cultural manifestations do not have to be a factor of national culture but could be explained by organisational culture. Hofstede (2002, p. 393) argues that the culture of a nation and an organisation cannot be described in the same way as they have different levels of depth, where he sees the national culture as majorly relevant for behaviour. Nonetheless, if we understand people as belonging to multiple collectives and with a focus on intersectionality, organisational culture and ethnic or social groups within national clusters have to be taken into account. On the last note, interculturalists run the risk to overattribute phenomena to cultural factors, while we still have to keep in mind that an individual's behaviour can also be explained by the circumstances, the power dynamics in place, the personal background and personality of the person in question, and other identities' codes that are not the expected national culture. For example, supranational collectives of religious or political communities might influence individual's behaviour, as well as experiences of members of marginalised communities because of race, class or sexual identity might have incorporated different codes of behaviour than a national average that has been identified through studies with business employees.

Difference is what marks an identity. The relationship analysed within the scope of this study might have been described as a Central African-Central European divide or a Black-White juxtaposition, yet these generalizations dilute the smallest commonality to constitute homogeneity of the group. Despite the heterogeneity within the group, what they have in common is carrying a German / Cameroonian cultural legacy which is why

⁴ Identity here is not understood as a personal but as social identity (see A. Thomas (2022, 109ff.)). In White Western contexts, self-reliance, autonomy and individualism are very pronounced, and self-actualisation and development of an own identity are major goals. Identities are also understood as to be created by self-identification. There scholars might differentiate between an I-identity, the identity of an individual, and a social identity, that is an identity which cannot easily be chosen (see A. Thomas (2022, 116f)).

using the national categories here is a deliberate choice. I do not have enough data to transfer the found conclusions to a broader scale like the African-European dichotomy or on a smaller scale distinguishing between ethnic groups within Germany and Cameroon, but this might be interesting for future research.

Culture as a system of orientation: Cultural Standards

From the German field of intercultural psychology, Cultural Standards are hypothetical constructs that work as a mean value or a reference frame for culturally appropriate behaviour (see A. Thomas, 2020). Cultural Standards are visible during so-called *critical incidents*, where a conflict arises when two parties assess a situation according to what it would mean within their country: the standards from which deviating behaviour gets judged (see Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 31). They can give us a first insight about what the norms of a collective are, but do not represent the complexity of different cultural manifestations. The advantages of these generalisations are a reality-based structure, easy understanding, clarity and memorability, and can help reflection in the intercultural learning process (Kammhuber & Schroll-Machl, 2009, p. 22). They can be described as improved stereotypes, that are very simplified but offer general orientation about the “normal” of a culture (Witzenleiter & Luppold, 2020). Despite offering generalisations, they might be useful in intercultural training as they offer a first idea of a nation’s culture and a hypothesis that can be tested against real-life experiences in the new host country. Yet, they bear the risk of oversimplification, creating a risk of bias and engrained cultural ideas that will be hard to break later. An extensive assessment of the Cultural Standards methods can be found by Kammhuber and Schroll-Machl (2009). This analysis of culture by intercultural psychology focuses on the definition of culture as a system of guiding principles for all interaction and constituting the worldview that is taken for granted (A. Thomas, 2022).

An introduction to German cultural standards is offered by Witzenleiter and Luppold (2020): Main characteristics are:

1. The factual orientation (compared to a more people-oriented approach)
2. Appreciation of structure and rules
3. Time management
4. Internalised rule control
5. Distinction between the professional and private sphere
6. Direct communication and low context
7. Individualism

(Witzenleiter & Luppold, 2020, 84-87)

These cultural standards are criticisable, yet they will be connected to the findings of the field research in the search for an anthropological explanation of behavioural patterns.

Culture as mental programming: Cultural Dimensions

Edward T. Hall started the definition of cultural dimensions. He defines culture as code for communication (Hüsken, 2015, 66ff) and focused on other dimensions of culture: Cultures with high vs. low context in communication, which described how much of the transmitted message gets verbalised and how much (cultural) context knowledge is necessary to decipher the message (Hofstede, 2002, p. 30). Another aspect is the relationship to time, whether people experience it as linear or parallel, thus being monochronic or polychronic cultures. Spatiality in the literal and figurative sense is

another dimension: how does the private and professional sphere get divided, but also how to understand general questions of proximity and distance (Hüsken, 2015).

In the field of intercultural management, the most known study was done in the 80s by Geert Hofstede. He classified culture(s) along certain cultural dimensions that respond to questions every society has to deal with but deals with differently. It works well in the Western business context as it explains how different values and approaches exist to conflict management. According to the understanding of culture by Geert Hofstede, culture is the mental programming of the individual by socialisation (Hofstede, 1997, p. 3)

The dimensions designed by Hofstede (2002) are:

- 1. **Power distance**, which is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality*
- 2. **Uncertainty avoidance**, which is related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future*
- 3. **Individualism versus collectivism**, which is related to the integration of individuals into primary groups*
- 4. **Masculinity versus femininity**, which is related to the division of emotional roles between men and women*
- 5. **Long-term versus short-term orientation**, which is related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present*
(Hofstede, 2002, p. 29)

In 2011, another dimension **Indulgence vs Restraint** has been added, which is related to the satisfaction or control of human needs (Lang & Baldauf, 2016, p. 51)

While the Cultural Standards approach focuses on a descriptive analysis of concrete behaviour that is the standard in a cultural group, the Cultural dimensions focus on underlying priorities regarding organising society. Both aspects are interesting to illuminate behaviours and understand their meanings in a more profound sense.

Nonetheless, cultural dimensions constitute an approach to quantifying cultural aspects and ordering them on pre-defined scales that assume universal value. While it gives us an overview of how much one characteristic is present in one culture compared to another, it offers very little anthropological interpretation of its origins or culture-specific context or particular manifestation in the space, as the combination of various dimensions and non-quantifiable factors constitute the culture we can observe in a moment. Another criticism is the focus on national cultures offering no intersectional data on intranational cultural variables such as age and gender. The data creates thus prototypical images of a whole national culture without showing intracultural variety. Another criticism is the ethnocentrism of the study as the questionnaire focuses on aspects considered relevant by the European researchers and sees the national culture as the most important unit of collectives which might not apply in all contexts (Lang & Baldauf, 2016, p. 56). Despite its limitations, cultural dimensions are widely spread within the field of intercultural management as they show the dichotomies of contrasting values without elevating one end of the spectrum. These dimensions might show national averages and stereotypes, but the described dichotomies might also be relevant for qualitative statements as they offer vocabulary to classify phenomena.

Germany is classified by Hofstede's study with a moderate-low power distance (35 on a scale between 11 and 112), moderate uncertainty avoidance (65 on a scale between 8 and 112), high individualism (67 on a scale between 8 and 91), moderate masculinity (66 on a scale between 5 and 110), strong long-term orientation (83 on a scale between 0 and 110)

and moderate-low indulgence (40 on a scale between 0 and 100) (Lang & Baldauf, 2016, p. 50).

These dimensions have provided great insight into the field by offering vocabulary to describe and classify cultures. However, they have been criticised as being Eurocentric as they are influenced by their academic traditions. A Global South Approach to creating dichotomies of cultural values might look different.

Intercultural Communication as an academic field

Intercultural⁵ Communication in a simplified sense refers to the interaction of individuals from different cultural groups. The field of intercultural communication is highly multidisciplinary, being addressed by psychology, sociology, anthropology, business studies, cultural studies and more, yet the approaches are not necessarily complementary in their definition of culture (Piller, 2011, p. 15). While interpretative anthropology aligned with Geertz follows a semantic approach, explaining symbols by their meaning, the approach taken with Cultural Standards and Cultural Dimensions sees culture as the system that drives people to certain behaviour. While these two approaches are not necessarily reconcilable, they provide both useful insights. In the frame of the study, the anthropological ground for research follows Geertz's thick definition of culture analysing actions within their context to grasp the meaning. To describe findings in a more practical, understandable framework and discover possible reasons for the observed behaviour, connections to the theories of cultural dimensions and cultural standards will be made. This study tries to merge an anthropological viewpoint with intercultural management.

3.2. Introduction to Cameroonian culture for Germans

Compared to the literature offered for frequent business partners of Germany like the US, China or France, non-colonial cultural information available about Cameroon is limited. Even for the region of East Africa, a more detailed cultural standard report can be found (Boness & Mayer, 2009). For West Africa, detailed information about Nigeria can be found, yet given the different colonial experiences and ethnic belongings between the neighbouring countries Nigeria and Cameroon, generalisation is only possible to an extent.

If a German seeks to learn about Cameroonian culture from a book, the following sources would be available:

Peppler (2017) gives a country portrait and a cultural description of Cameroon. Even though there is no official data on Cameroon in the framework of the Hofstede study, a portrait of Cameroon through the lens of cultural dimensions is reconstructed using data from neighbouring countries and the narration of two young German volunteers. Generalised statements about Cameroon are served with the same mention of intranational diversity - that you will find in the scope of this study - which cautions the reader to think of a universal Cameroonian culture. Nonetheless, the tone introducing

⁵ Within the same field of research, we might find the terms *cross-cultural*, *transcultural* and *intercultural* communication used interchangeably or with nuances to its meaning. Without wanting to add to this debate, the term "intercultural" is chosen for the scope of this study as it is focusing on the interplay of German and Cameroonian culture, but cross-cultural and transcultural are acknowledged as synonyms and are used if referring to a theory whose author distinguishes between the terms.

Cameroonian culture focuses on negative aspects as it starts highlighting a failing police system and self-justice.

To situate Cameroon on the scale of Hofstede's dimensions very generalised assessments based on external observations were made. Cameroon is described as a country with high power distance in all spheres of society, high collectivism, and moderate masculinity - as masculine characteristics such as dominance are important for the business context whereas feminine attributes such as caregiving and solidarity play a role in the private sphere –, and mean risk avoidance and a low long-term orientation. The illustration for the categorization however seems to be written from an external, negative perspective and will not be repeated in the scope of its study, as I do not want to externally ascribe cultural features or political views to the Cameroonian population.

However, to illustrate the cultural differences, Peppler chooses a case study of two young unskilled German volunteers in Cameroon that is embedded in the complexity of post-colonial dynamics and expectations in the frame of development cooperation when a discussion of power asymmetries and the effectiveness of foreign intervention might have provided more useful insight to the case than an assessment from a cultural perspective.

From a critical point of view, the chapter is reproducing colonial stereotypes as it focuses on using negative examples to exemplify a culture without regarding the positive outcomes of certain cultural behaviour. It is thus written with a very Eurocentric lens contrasting Cameroonian behaviour with a German ideal. Based on my personal experience in Cameroon and my conversations with Cameroonian academics, this information cannot be corroborated or only displays a small fraction of how Cameroonian culture can be displayed.

Another hint to understanding Cameroonian culture can be found in a publication prepared by a German Chamber of Commerce that gives a quick overview of Cameroonian culture (Hackenbroch, 2015). The chapter about Cameroon is co-edited by Cameroonian Veye Tatah, yet the information available is very simplified and adapted for a business context and does not provide profound cultural understanding beyond superficial observations. The description uses linguistic patterns that include negative connotations and speak from a German point of view. While the general descriptions do not fit the academic criteria to be reproduced in this study, the focus on cultural dimensions is of interest which stems from the more extensive overview in the *Blog of Subsahara Afrika IHK* by Tatah (2014) who presented Cameroonian cultural dimensions in prose in contrast to German culture for the Chamber of Commerce. There is no academic source given to where the data for the categorization stems from. As the classification does not happen on a quantitative basis but a qualitative description, one can assume that it is based on the experience of the author who is a member of the Cameroonian diaspora in Germany.

Dimension	Germany	Cameroon
Time (in allusion to Edward T. Hall)	Time is an economic factor. "Time is Money." Punctuality is important. Tasks are done in sequential order.	Time is a broad cord; it is an immaterial good. Coming late is usual. Cameroonians master multi-tasking.
Context (in allusion to Edward T. Hall)	Low Context: Germans are direct and say, what they mean (they get to the	High context: You beat around the bush. In conflicts, everyone tries to

	point). The danger is vexing someone [“jemanden vor den Kopf zu stoßen”]. A message is sent and understood independent of its context.	act face-saving. A message can only be deciphered within its context.
Space (in allusion to Edward T. Hall)	Little private information gets disclosed at work. While conversing, distance is kept from colleagues.	No distinction between the professional and private spheres. Touch and closeness are normal.
Individualism/Collectivism (in allusion to Geert Hofstede)	Individualism: Every person is responsible for their actions. Employment and promotions are based on personal talents and rules. The task has priority over personal relationships.	Collectivism: You take your place within the group and submit to it. The membership of a group decides about promotion and employment. Relationships have priority over a task.
Power Distance (in allusion to Geert Hofstede)	Low: Inequality between people should be as low as possible. Employees get involved in decisions.	High: Inequality between people is expected and wanted. Employees receive orders. Dignitaries often display their power publicly.
Masculinity/Femininity (in allusion to Geert Hofstede)	Femininity: Overlapping gender roles. Supervisors trust in their intuition and aim at a consensus.	Masculinity: Clear-cut traditional gender roles. But also female supervisors are expected to act assertive and decisive.
Risk Avoidance (in allusion to Geert Hofstede)	High: “What is different, is dangerous.” Uncertainty gets perceived as a permanent risk that has to be combatted.	Low: “What is different, is strange”. Uncertainty is normal in life and is accepted the way it is (subjective feeling of well-being).
Universalism/Particularism (in allusion to Fons Trompenaars)	Universalism: Rules and standards apply to everyone, independent of status and relationship.	Particularism: One does feel obliged, to protect friends and family, independent of the law.
Long-term orientation (in allusion to Geert Hofstede)	High: Tenacity during the slow achievement of results. High rate of saving, resources for investment are available. Adaptation of traditions to modern circumstances.	Low: Expectations of quick results. Low rate of saving, low funds for investment. Respect for transmitted traditions.

Table 1: A presentation of Cultural Dimensions of Germany and Cameroon. [Source: Tatah (2014), translation by author]

These cultural dimensions might provide a first overview of Cameroonian culture for outgoing Germans, focusing on the differences and conflict points that may arise, yet they do not offer an ethnorelative explanation of the underlying values of Cameroonian culture.

From this literature review, it can be inferred that Germans seeking cultural information about Cameroon will not find adequate sources to prepare themselves for the cultural immersion in Cameroon. In the scope of this study, a full description of Cameroonian culture will not be given, as the focus is on German culture and its underlying principles, yet the underlying value conflicts and dynamics of Cameroonian and German intercultural encounters in the work context will be further elaborated.

3.3. The concept of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural Competence is often described as the ability to thrive in an intercultural sphere. Leung et al. (2014) give a good introduction to the different definitions of this concept. They describe that the different available studies and theories frame intercultural competence as intercultural traits, attitudes and worldviews, and capabilities. Intercultural traits describe personal characteristics that shape behaviour in intercultural spaces, like “open-mindedness, dissimilarity openness, tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive complexity, flexibility, inquisitiveness, the quest for adventure, patience and emotional resilience (Leung et al., 2014, 490f)”. In the category of intercultural attitudes and worldviews, the same authors refer to a positive attitude towards intercultural contact and “have sophisticated, rather than ethnocentric or simplistic, construals of cultural differences and similarities” (Leung et al., 2014, p. 491). Intercultural capabilities are then cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioural skills related to intercultural encounters as well as “social flexibility, adaptability to communication and cultural tuning in terms of holistic concern, collaboration, and learning” (Leung et al., 2014, p. 491).

Given the variety of literature on the subject, many aspects fall into the broad definition of intercultural competence. In the following, a brief overview of relevant theories in the Anglophone and Germanophone scientific community is given.

Intercultural Sensitivity

To describe the learning process of achieving intercultural sensitivity, Bennett (1986) developed a scale with the different attitudes from denial of an intercultural world to the integration of cultural differences in normality. The first three stages are under a worldview of ethnocentrism: denial, defence and minimization of differences; the following three stages are characterized by an ethnorelative approach: acceptance, adaptation and integration of difference (Bennett, 1986). Depending on which stage the individual finds themselves at, different training methods are proposed. Paige et al. (2003) use this scale to perform a quantitative study of intercultural competence among students of foreign languages based on self-assessment questionnaires to develop a measurement scale of intercultural competence. These stages provide a valuable theory of intercultural sensitivity learning as a linear process as it describes the broadening of the worldview towards ethnorelativity. However, this focus on intercultural competence as a general attitude does not take setbacks in the cultural learning processes, or a separate cultural learning curve into account which occurs when individuals enter a completely new sphere and have to adapt to new norms and differences.

Intercultural Management

The field of intercultural competence assessment receives a lot of attention from the management perspective, as it is seen as a tool to screen for suitable candidates for global

workplaces. Studies show that the degree of intercultural competence of a team leader strongly influences the performance of the team (Gasteiger et al., 2016; Leung et al., 2014; Moodian, 2008). Fischer (2008) introduces different theories to assess global leadership, or intercultural competence of leaders, which refer to different leadership styles or cultural profiles. He points to the potential of using leadership competence assessment in the employment process but also mentions that most tests do not assess intercultural competence per se. Critics point out that models of Intercultural Competence that are similar to the US-American model of leadership have to be assessed for their own cultural bias. While great work on interculturality has been done in US universities, the models of intercultural competence might not be transferrable into contexts where leadership looks different. Good African Leadership includes the concept of communalism and the understanding of an individual as part of a collective, where, while striving for personal fulfilment, the relation to the collective has to be taken into account (Metz, 2018, p. 45). Metz (2018) contrasts “An African Theory of Good Leadership” with the common US-American model of leadership, and focuses on the moral concept of *ubuntu*, which is based on the understanding of personhood through others “I am because we are” and “a person is a person through other persons”. This differs from the Western and especially US-American ideal of individualism and might explain some of the collectivistic aspects we will see when trying to situate a Cameroonian understanding of work compared to the German one.

In his recommendations for the HR selection process, Stuarts (2008) describes global intercultural competence as follows: “Knowledge of one’s own and other pertinent cultures, Recognition of specific differences between cultures, Understanding of how culture influences behaviour in the workplace, Ability to adapt to and/or manage differences, as expressed in business structures, systems, and priorities, within multicultural work environments” (Stuarts, 2008, p. 177) He further classifies these under the terms of **attitude** – interest and openness to difference, similar to the concept of ethnorelativism by Bennett; knowledge – the **consciousness** about cultural differences; and **skill** – the ability to implement the knowledge in crisis (Stuarts, 2008, p. 177). This idea is similar to the three dimensions of Intercultural Competence by Gertsen (1990): affective, cognitive, communicative, and behavioural) which have been redefined and adapted to different studies by scholars (Bolten, 2010, p. 63; Gasteiger et al., 2016, p. 29).

To this, Bolten (2007, p. 86) adds the different levels of intercultural management competence: professional, strategic, social and individual. Gasteiger et al. (2016, p. 86) define Intercultural Agility on the cognitive, emotional and behavioural level but only apply it to the leadership of oneself, of others and of organisations and change. Here we can see that most models apply to the business - especially the leadership - context and not to employees. Different dimensions of intercultural competence are illustrated in the following matrix:

Dimension	Affective	Cognitive	Behavioural
Professional	Awareness and understanding of diverse emotional states (Gasteiger et al., 2016)	Ability to understand different manifestations of professional skills (Bolten, 2006)	Being able to take decisions under uncertainty (Gasteiger et al., 2016) Being able to transmit knowledge while respecting different (educational) socialisation (Bolten, 2006)
Strategic		Understanding processes of change (Gasteiger et al., 2016)	Finding synergies in differences and exploiting those for mutual benefit (Bolten, 2006)
Social	Being able to recognize the feelings of others and interact with them (Gasteiger et al., 2016)	Consciousness of others' cultural ties (Gasteiger et al., 2016) Being able to reflect Being able to think in different frameworks	Conflict management in diverse cultural settings, where conflicts face different management strategies (Bolten, 2006)
Individual	Motivation Control over one's emotions, emotional stability (Gasteiger et al., 2016)	Conscience of one's own cultural background (Gasteiger et al., 2016)	Asking for Feedback to reflect own actions

Table 2: Matrix of Intercultural Competence Dimensions, own classification after Bolten (2006), Gasteiger et al. (2016)

As we can see, there are many aspects to intercultural competence, and manifestations of it can be seen in very different ways. To find a general definition, Deardorff (2006) conducted a Delphi study with leading researchers and practitioners in the field. The definition of intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” was most-widely accepted (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Whereas intercultural competence as a business and leadership skill rather focuses on the ability to effectively and efficiently transmit communication and achieve the best possible outcome as a team through intercultural sensitive action, this definition includes the appropriateness as the factor of respect for the other. These two directions of intercultural competence, for the self as a tool of more effectively achieving one’s goals and for the other as a tool to respect the other’s culture and make them feel good during the interaction, are part of most definitions (Arasaratnam-Smith & Deardorff, 2017, p. 9).

For the following analysis in the scope of this master thesis study, this definition will be used. It offers an openness for informant-based assessment of intercultural competence as it includes the aspect of appropriateness for the other.

Assessment

The measurement of Intercultural Competence can happen by self-assessment questionnaires, informants or performance-based tests. Most of the current methods are quantitative studies based on scales and the aforementioned different criteria and mostly through questionnaires filled in by the subjects. A great overview of different assessment tests for students is given in Arasaratnam-Smith and Deardorff (2017). The assessment by observers has been included by Ang and van Dyne (2008) who suggested an external assessment of CQ (cultural intelligence quotient) in addition to the CQ self-report. Before starting to assess, some factors to be taken into account are the purpose of assessment has to be defined, and tailored to the target audience, along with the clarity about successful outcomes and the scope, efficiency, and length as well as the validity and reliability of the testing method (Fantini, 2009, p. 461).

The method of informant-based assessment is not very common (Leung et al., 2014). One reason could be that an additional bias from the point of the informer as well as the researcher can distort the findings. Another reason is that most assessments are done with standardized tests to ensure comparability, validity and reliability. Yet, intercultural competence is shown in interaction with the other, thus especially the experienced reality of the informant should be a good indicator of how much the individual is able to translate their intercultural knowledge and attitude into real behaviour that is visible to the other. Even though the view of the informant might be clouded by their own culture and positionality, this perspective is essential to understanding cross-cultural relations. A subject might score well on an intercultural worldview and knowledge in a questionnaire, as well as exhibit behaviour that is labelled interculturally competent by an Anglo-Saxon or German cultural competence researcher, while this behaviour is not well received by the other cultures they are engaging with. Including informant-based assessment in the evaluation of intercultural competence reduces the gap between the self and foreign perception of the subject.

The scholarship of an African viewpoint on Intercultural Competence is less popular and limited literature is available. Nwosu (2009) gives a first overview of the commonalities and values of African cultures. He illustrated that “[j]udgments about culturally competent behaviours are shaped by loyalty to this core value [of showing respect and obedience to hierarchy]” (Nwosu, 2009, p. 164). For outsiders, reference to these culturally accepted standards is seen as positive, and thus cultural competence is how much you respect the given cultural values in an African environment. Even though it is hard to speak of one African culture, there are some similarities between the cultures of Africa, and while the manifestations of cultural characteristics are different between the plentiful ethnic groups and regions within Africa, one common trait is that society is organised very communally where individuals are existing as part of a group that is organised by important norms for interaction. Loyalty within the group is of high value. Thus, the respect of the norms or at least referring to them is part of intercultural competence.

3.4. Intercultural Training

Cultural trainings started after the Second World War in the USA when personnel sent into the world had to be prepared for new contexts (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 408). Some trainings are supposed to prepare expats to integrate into the culture of the destination. According to Moosmüller, this goal is unlikely attained as expats do not live immersed in

the host country but in a bubble of internationals and a hybrid work culture of their local branch of the international organisation (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 412).

Nowadays, intercultural trainings are not only done for people going abroad. The need for additional skills for diverse and multicultural settings exists also within countries. Hermeking (2019) talks about the intercultural struggles of Germans working with refugees where an intercultural training for the teachers of German as a Foreign Language can help them with understanding the intercultural differences.

Intercultural training becomes more and more popular. Studies about their implementation and effectiveness have been conducted by Kumbruck and Derboven (2009) and Landis and Bhawuk (2020). However, intercultural trainings have been criticised for not preparing for the reality of the expats in the host country but for an idealised version of the culture of the nation (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 417). Trainers usually have great expertise in leadership development, human resource management and didactics, yet might focus on transmitting intercultural theories for the management context and do not transmit concrete, practical information about the situation in the new country (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 407). Intercultural trainings, in order to be most effective, have to be based on ethnological research and incorporate ethnological methods so that they reflect the reality of the destination community (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 419). Expats live in a different reality than non-privileged migrants as they do not face existential fears such as financial struggles and migration-regulating policies and are usually welcomed in the new country (Moosmüller, 2019, p. 411). This can be connected with the previously mentioned divide in cultural definitions between the field of intercultural management and anthropology, whereas a fusion of those concepts might provide the most helpful cultural training.

Challenges of Interculturality in the Development Context

Intercultural Trainings are popular among expats being sent to another similar country in the frame of North-North cooperation. Within the context of development cooperation, German expats are sent to the Global South, experiencing not only a different cultural environment but also a workplace that is framed within different power dynamics. The different framing of expats versus un-privileged migrants, and in the development context, a local population that is excluded from the global mobility system of the elites, has to be taken into account in the training (see Moosmüller, 2019, p. 412). Thus, these deployments require a more extensive preparation. Intercultural situations are often linked to questions of power, and power asymmetries can lead to the dominance of one party in the interaction (Nguyen, 2016, p. 39). It has to be mentioned that especially international development is enclosed within a power discourse. The recipients of foreign intervention in the frame of development cooperation are economically in a less powerful position, and even though current development work aspires to cooperation at eye level, it is not yet so. The definition of development goals is also often culturally influenced, and even the participatory approach, including the grass-roots in the process, is a Western-influenced concept, as it surpasses existing hierarchies and questions the social order from the outside (Nguyen, 2016, 83f). A different justification for intercultural competence is on the moral level: Whereas intercultural communication in the context of multinational corporations is seen as a tool for greater efficiency, it could be seen as essential for international development cooperation because its goal is to improve the standard of living

while respecting the local heritage (Loch & Seidel, 2009, p. 309).⁶ Another difficulty of cultural integration into the new environment is the conflict between adapting to local characteristics and still responding to headquarters back home, which brings them into a space of structural contradictions that cannot be explained by cultural differences alone (see Moosmüller, 2019, p. 417).

Intercultural Training for Development Cooperation

Intercultural Coaching can help understand and respond to differences (Steixner, 2007). In her study, Steixner (2007) analyses differences in experiencing reality and management with a focus on individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Linschinger (2009) critically analyses intercultural trainings preparing future expats for development work. One point of criticism is that these trainings often work with dichotomies to explain culture which can be connected with the Eurocentric idea of seeing the own culture as exemplary and in contrast to the other that can reproduce colonial patterns of thinking (Linschinger, 2009, p. 98). It has been analysed that trainings create a space for reflection on experiences abroad and about the own culture but could be improved by further intercultural coaching (Leib, 2010). Similar studies have examined dealing with the intercultural in the international development sector (Koch, 2012). For example, Nguyen (2016) assessed the importance of the concept of Intercultural Competence in German organisations in Bolivia and Peru by interviewing expat and local employees of the GIZ. A classification of different types of intercultural behaviour when dealing with the Other and coping strategies of German expats, mainly in Kenya and South Africa has been done by Schondelmayer (2010).

Intercultural trainings can be country-specific, tailored to a certain cultural environment, or country-general, enhancing awareness of cultural dynamics and fostering sensitivity to cultural issues. Both trainings have their advantages and disadvantages, and a combination of both would be most useful. The discussion can be read in Gertsen (1990) and Bolten (2010). Training should be holistic. Both general intercultural competence, like the ability to think from an ethnorelative perspective, and local knowledge are necessary. These knowledge sets are interdependent and complementary. Araiza (2012) focuses in her training recommendations on methods that encourage perspective change. Her exercise starts with an ethnocentric evaluation of a situation, which then, with additional knowledge of the context and different priorities of the cultural other, can move towards an ethnorelative evaluation, taking multiple perspectives into account. Araiza's main focus lies within the transmission of different value systems and the reflection of the culturally own. Loch and Seidel (2009) emphasize the awareness of the cultural condition of our orientation and value systems to understand the other. During their training methods, they focus on understanding structures by reducing the complexity of the issues, yet not entering the sphere of mere stereotyping or giving do's and don'ts in the new country. They emphasize that the role of the development consultant is an important aspect of training as it might not be understood in the same way by both parties, and an

⁶ Interculturality in the process of deciding for development alternatives would be an interesting further discussion that Speiser (2012) refers to. The topic of development is entangled within multiple systems of power dynamics beyond the cultural and global discourse which has been discussed very detailed elsewhere (see Escobar (2011); Hüsken (2015); Sachs (2010)). This study focuses on the interaction of German development workers on the ground and their relationships with their colleagues, no assessment will be made about the effectiveness of their work or relationship to the local population.

adaptation to the cultural context should be encouraged. The training should lay the foundation for a mental framework within the social structures of the host country (Loch & Seidel, 2009, p. 315).

Concluding from previous studies, intercultural trainings are recommendable and helpful if they include an anthropological-informed basis and focus on not transmitting stereotypes but also on making participants aware of their own positionality. Teaching cultural standards for Cameroon might be a difficult endeavour because the country is diverse in itself and the literature is limited about such. However, testimonies from Cameroonian diaspora in Germany and German expats in Cameroon as well as useful generalisations based on underlying dynamics might provide useful first insight during the trainings. The training then should offer reflection and action orientation but not reproduce stereotypes or give a blueprint for behaviour.

4. Introduction to the Field Research

4.1. Methodology

4.1.1. Data collection: Guided interviews and participatory observation

The research aims to explore the work relationship between Germans and Cameroonians and its Cameroonian assessment. The interplay of German and Cameroonian culture as well as the subjective perceptions of German culture by Cameroonians should be the centre of the field research, so only a qualitative study was judged adequate to capture this complexity. Qualitative methods aim at understanding in depth the subjective perceptions, opinions and construction of realities of the interviewees (Misoch, 2019, p. 25). As the topic of culture is a highly sensitive topic based on the construction of reality and the interaction with the Other, guided interviews seemed the best method to capture this multifaceted experience.

The sampling methods were interviews, participatory observation and informal conversations. The interviews were semi-structured with a previously written guide on questions and topics to be discussed. Even though the topics were presented through the interview, the guide left room for exploration of phenomena that were outside the expected range and shall be included in the analysis. Talking about intercultural experiences required room for the participants to evoke what felt most important to them and it gave us the possibility to ask for clarity during the interviews. The guided interview was thus the best option where openness for new ideas and exploration was offered but comparability was given (Misoch, 2019, p. 67).

In addition to the valuable insight from the interviews, the field research included informal conversations as well as participatory observation by the researcher. I studied in Yaoundé in the previous months to the interview phase. I experienced a culture shock which shows parallels to the experiences that German expats are expecting when arriving in Cameroon. This enabled me to place the answers of the interviewees into context and to add additional insight to the missing German perspective of my studies. My field and study notes have provided supplementary context to the qualitative data from the interviews. The study focuses on intercultural competence but is an act of intercultural communication in itself: The answers of the Cameroonians include terms that only with the collective knowledge in Cameroon can be deciphered (see Kruse, 2009) and hence the participatory observation during my study semester at the University of Yaoundé 1, including courses about the colonial history of Cameroon improved my understanding of the implicit interpretative system underlying the answers of my Cameroonian interviewees. The study thus includes first and third-order interpretations of German culture and second-order interpretations of Cameroonian culture.

The given information needs to be analysed in the cultural context it is embedded to grasp its full meaning (see Geertz, 1973). The interviewees gave me some context because I am a German interviewer, however, as many interviewees knew about my previous long stay in Cameroon and my attitude was adapted to the Cameroonian way, interviewees might have not elaborated on things, that seemed banal and are thus missing from the transcripts.

4.1.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

For the scientific use of the material, qualitative content analysis was performed based on Mayring (2016). The material was structured by a category system and then analysed by its contribution to the research question and analysed from an ethnological perspective (S. Thomas, 2019). The goal was to display the range of perceptions of German culture which was only possible through this qualitative analysis.

The interviews, conducted in French and English⁷, were transcribed in a literal way without annotations of tempo, intonation or hesitating, as the focus laid on the content and not the linguistics. The interviews usually took approximately 45 min; 15 min was the shortest and 1:30h was the longest interview. A local professional transcription service was hired for the transcription which had the advantage of reducing the workload of the master thesis and having a correct transcript of French and English including local idioms as I am neither a native speaker of French nor English. The disadvantages were different styles of transcribing by two transcribers and intensive contact of the researcher with the material through transcription. This disadvantage got reduced as I checked and corrected the transcriptions and worked through them with the audios afterwards.

For the coding of the material, the software MAXQDA was used. Categories were created inductively. At the beginning of the coding, a few categories were created according to the topics of the interview guide and the first interviews were coded, the used codes were organised and broadened according to the inductive coding process described by (Mayring, 2016, p. 116). These categories were used for the coding of the remaining interviews. After coding all material, I realised that intracoder reliability was not given as I put different foci in my coding according to my environment. The initial coding started while some interviews were still conducted, and the completion of the coding stretched out over a long time span, while I was travelling back from Cameroon to Europe and my viewpoint shifted. Thus, I revised all codes and merged or grouped codes with few occurrences into broader topics. Codes were now clearly distinguishable. In the last revision, I re-coded the complete material within a week to ensure I used the same rules on all interview transcripts.

Then, I used the category system to give quantitative answers to categories most used to describe German culture and requirements for Germans coming to Cameroon and interpreted the content per category regarding my research question (see Mayring, 2016, p. 117).

⁷ I've asked the interviewees for their preferred language for the interview and conducted two interviews in English even though the person primarily identified with a Francophone background. My interviews conducted in English contain terms and phrases in French (and even German) which I tried to preserve in the quotes. It might give the reader a feeling of terms that are better described in French/German and I hesitated to find an appropriate term in English that does not diminish a connotation or the implied meaning.

4.1.3. Criteria for interview partners

As the study focuses on the intercultural relation of Cameroonian employees in German⁸ development bodies, the participants should be of Cameroonian origin⁹. The participants were selected from middle- and top-level management in these German organisations to reduce the power imbalance bias against their German counterparts in the workplace as much as possible.

The topic posed a hindrance for one potential interviewee. One person had to reject participation because she was bound by her work contract to not speak about her co-workers. On my interviewee search, I spoke to interested people in German-funded organisations who did not experience Germans in person but had to deal with German bureaucracy. I did not interview them, but our informal conversations influenced the frame of the study.

4.1.4. Ethical concerns

To assess whether a study respects ethical codes, potential harm to the people involved had to be evaluated. Negative consequences might arise for employees criticising their employer. This danger was reduced by anonymizing all data obtained in the interviews so that given answers cannot be traced back to an individual. Given the small number of interviewees and staff in international organisations, I cannot reveal the age or gender of the interviewee in this study to ensure anonymity. The study was conducted after obtaining the informed consent of the participants who were aware of the study they were providing information for (see Misoch, 2019, 15ff).

4.1.5. Subjectivity of reality and Interviewer bias

Answers in interviews are often influenced by the person of the interviewer (Misoch, 2019, p. 217). There is always a tendency that interviewees try to give socially acceptable answers and the race, class, position and gender of the interviewer might influence the statements of the interviewees as in every other social interaction. I interviewed Cameroonian professionals as a White German female master's student, which created various dynamics in social interaction. It is hard to quantify which factors dominated. Women usually get higher response rates for interviews (Misoch, 2019, p. 218). But also seniority and professional experience lead to higher success rates (Misoch, 2019, p. 218) which I could not provide. When an interviewer is regarded as of high status, interviewees tend to not contradict norms (Misoch, 2019, p. 221). I experienced an amplified amount of White Privilege compared to living in Europe. My positionality as a White German made my interviewees mostly very welcoming and appreciative of my study and its idea to improve the preparation for German expats. The general sympathy towards Germans and my role as a German probably played a role in the majorly positive feedback I received. Given the fact that the interviewees were working for a German organisation and talking to a German interviewer, the answers were expected to be less critical. However, ensuring

⁸ The study contrasts the cultural identities of Germans and Cameroonians. National identities are very complex. Even though I use the terms German and Cameroonian in this contrast as homogeneous terms, it must not be forgotten that Germans working abroad are already subjected to cultural adaptation in various degrees and might come with previous knowledge of culture.

⁹ By Cameroonian origin I refer to the cultural identity of the interviewees. I ascribed this to people who have received primary socialisation in Cameroon and have their home in the country. This definition does not include bureaucratic ascription of identity such as nationality.

the anonymity of the interview, I was able to gather some more profound answers, that were usually delivered with individualisation of the negative behaviour. The researcher should constantly reflect upon their bias (Misoch, 2019, p. 259). Due to my own experiences working in Germany and assisting in Cameroonian organisations, I was primed to information that confirmed my personal experience or data that confirms my theoretical understanding of Cameroonian and German culture. However, while analysing the transcribed interviews I was able to extract more information that might have slipped my awareness during the interviews and adjusted my understanding of the matter.

The place of interview influences the answers as different settings trigger different identities: whereas one might act more upon their professional side in the workplace, at home the domestic identity prevails (Misoch, 2019, p. 222). Unfortunately, I visited all my interviewees at their workplaces, so the interview setting was rather formalised. This was planned out of practicality, as it was an open space, and I was able to speak to their colleagues as well. Security was another factor, as visiting strangers at their homes is not common and could have posed a security risk.

This study falls within the field of ethnography which observes the Other and tries to put the observed into a description that is always clouded by the cultural view of the ethnographer. In this case, I tried to repeat my interviewees' testimonies in the most accurate way possible, but also put their statements into a context for better understanding. However, the foreign described is always based on the perspective of the self, and always ethnocentric to a degree (see Gottowik, 1997, 138f). The role of the ethnographer today is not to just describe what they experience as foreign, but to reflect the experience of the foreign in their relationship to other factors, such as historical events and socio-economic distortions to explain the conditions and create transparency about the experience of the other (Gottowik, 1997, p. 139). While I try to stay as objective as possible, writing only what I assume most Cameroonians will corroborate, I cannot stop to perceive reality from my native cultural background. Within the frame of this study, this ethnocentric lens is embraced as this is Cameroonian-inspired writing about German culture, from a German perspective. This exploration of German-Cameroonian relationships is a double intercultural perspective as it offers us information about both – and more interestingly, their interplay. I analyse the data within my Western framework of culture and categorize it according to the academic traditions I immersed in during my studies in Europe and Argentina, but in the end, I write for Germans. It's to be written so that Germans recognize behaviour and put it into context, are aware of patterns and have a better understanding of the intercultural dynamics.

4.1.6. Sample size and selection bias

The size of a sample in qualitative studies depends on the information power of the obtained data per subject: In broader research questions, a greater amount is needed than in studies with a narrowed scope (Malterud et al., 2016). More important than just size is the variation of the cases and the quality of the obtained data (Malterud et al., 2016).

The research started by reaching out to contacts that work with German development organisations. The sample thus followed the snowball principle to reach most of its interviewees which helped find appropriate interviewees, however, they were often linked to the network of the initial gatekeeper (see (Dobeneck & Zinn-Thomas, 2014, p. 90). I am well aware of this selective bias. This method was chosen as it facilitated access to the field and improved the willingness to participate from the side of the interviewees. Given the broad network of contact people who could refer to employees of German institutions,

there has been diversification. I had four entry point contacts, one at GIZ, one at FES, and two at *Brot für die Welt*, who then continued referring me to colleagues on their floor, their team or passers-by in the hallway so that most interviewees are somehow connected but the sampling had a random factor as it depended on who was present and available. Participation in the study was voluntary and non-remunerated, thus the people likely to accept the request were positively interested in the research project. After conducting 14 interviews, I noted in my field notes that the information had been saturated and additional interviews added little to the general findings but offered different anecdotes and confirmed my findings.

4.2. Sample

A total of 17 interviews was conducted. However, three were excluded from the final analysis as the respective interviewee was not Cameroonian, working in management or not in a team with German co-workers.

The analysed 14 interviews include 6 women and 8 men, with an average age of 39 years. I include graphics with the distribution among the age group, origin and connection to Germany in the following. For the sake of anonymity of my study participants, I cannot connect the different variables which would make them identifiable as most of them had very unique biographies.

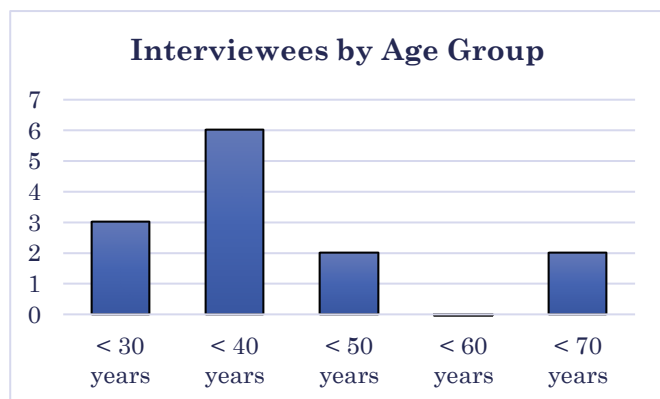


Figure 1: Interviewees by Age Group

I tried to have interviewees from the different regions of Cameroon to reflect the diversity of culture within the country and have a broad representation of Cameroonian viewpoints. Out of the 14 interviewees, four identified themselves as anglophone. It has also to be mentioned that the region most represented was the West. While I do not possess sufficient cultural sensitivity to comment on the differences between the regions and what impact the different origins have on their answers in my interviews, I found it important to mention their background here: for any Cameroonian

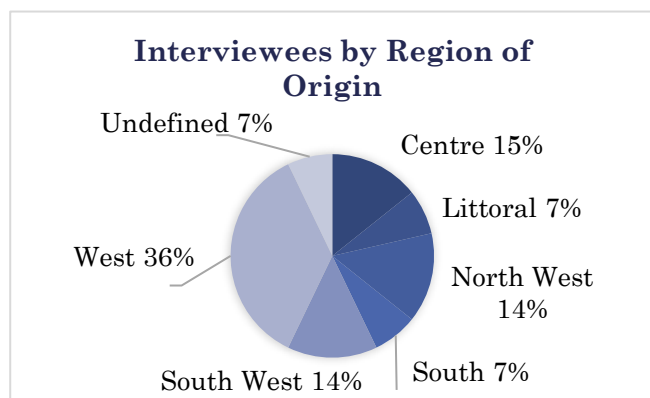


Figure 2: Interviewees by Region of Origin within Cameroon

reader who can put this data into context and to illustrate that not all ten regions (and more specifically all cultural groups) of Cameroon have been included in this study, because of feasibility restrictions in the frame of a master thesis. This small sample represents the employees at the three organisations that were available for an interview and additional research would be necessary to determine if this group represents the regional, gender and age distribution within the organisations.

Cameroon is a very diverse country with on the one hand, two major groups by linguistic (and colonial heritage) divide between French and English, but also over 250 different ethnic groups and around 200 local languages. There are similarities and differences in culture and are marked by different climate, economic activity, and political issues. Thus, it is hard to speak of a Cameroonian identity. In the scope of the study, I interviewed people from different ethnic groups, so that the joint characteristic of this group is them being Cameroonian. This heterogeneity yet has to be in the back of the head while speaking about the Cameroonian way. However, the diversity of Cameroon is not the research focus of this study and for simplification, I grouped the Cameroonians as they face a similar position vis-à-vis the German expats.

What I found interesting in my following analysis of German-Cameroonian dynamics is the German language fluency of five out of 14 interviewees, three of whom have undertaken tertiary education in Germany. Including those who studied in Germany, seven interviewees have done parts of their academic training abroad.

The average duration of working with a German development cooperation organisation was 4 years with a range from 7 months to 13 years of service for a German organisation.



Figure 4: Interviewees by German Language Abilities and Studies in Germany

Figure 3: Interviewees by Years of Service for a German organisation

The interviewees were working for three different German organisations in the field of development: Nine interviewees are staff of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*, three interviewees are employed with the *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, two are working for *Brot für die Welt*. The tasks and relationships with the German co-workers were characterised by the structure of the organisation and its work culture. This is a factor that should not be ignored in the following analysis. While national culture does play a role, organisational culture is also relevant to explaining behaviours and patterns. Current cultural studies highlight the complexity of cultural encounters and describe humans as part of multiple collectives, speaking of intersectionality. This has to be taken into account while reading the findings of the following studies as I have limited data on the background of my interviewees to make a judgment about different identities at play in their answers.

4.3. German Development Work in Cameroon

This chapter focuses on the presence of German development organisations on the ground. My interviewees were working in the three biggest institutions¹⁰.

The **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit** (GIZ) is a German development corporation that is mainly funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and other commissioners including international organisations, the private sector and other governments (GIZ Corporate Communications, 2021). The GIZ has several offices in Cameroon that focus on different areas of development including a regional office for the coordination of the activities in neighbouring countries. The workforce is mostly Cameroonian, with 395 national employees is 87% of the staff local, and adds only 45 international employees and 15 development workers (see GIZ, 2021). The international staff is not only composed of Germans but for example also French, Belgian, Irish, or Finnish nationals according to the statements of my interviewees. Most teams have a German supervisor - one interviewee's team was led by a Belgian, another one was led by a Burkinabe – while the vast majority of the staff is Cameroonian. The GIZ corporate culture tries to aspire to a horizontal management style and opens the dialogue for all employees to contribute¹¹. Projects can be varied, they often comprise consulting with ministries and Cameroonian entities, but some projects also require work on the ground with the communities.

The **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung** (FES) is a German political foundation that is promoting social justice, democracy, and peace and security worldwide (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.n.b). Their work in Cameroon consists mainly of collaborating with local partners, fostering dialogue in meetings, workshops and conferences, promoting research, and empowering actors of change in the region (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.n.a, n.n.c). The Office in Yaoundé is led by a German Resident Representative. Another German colleague on the team is in charge of the finances, which makes a bit more than 10% of the staff German. The FES Yaoundé Team is comparatively small to the GIZ Cameroon, as the foundation only has about 15 employees according to its interviewees.

Brot für die Welt (BfdW) is a development and relief agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany working on various development topics in the Global South (Brot für die Welt, n.n.). For its work, it usually collaborates with local partners, often church-related, and sends consultants and volunteers upon request of the partner organisations (Brot für die Welt, n.n.). *Brot für die Welt* as an agency does not have a German-led office in Cameroon but works with Cameroonian stakeholders who directly communicate with the office in Berlin, and at the same time coordinate the German expat consultants and volunteers send to projects of partner organisations. Local Cameroonian organisations, related to a Protestant Church, often hosted young German volunteers in the framework of the *Weltwärts* program¹². In other contexts, German specialists requested were then working with a contract made in Germany but under the supervision of the respective Cameroonian

¹⁰ Other actors in Cameroon are the *Goethe-Institut* which is working on the level of German culture and cultural heritage, and the KfW which I did not get any reference points for interviews and the KAS, who recently closed their office in Cameroon according to my interviewees.

¹¹ This is based on findings of my interviews. GIZ leadership was not interviewed regarding their vision.

¹² The *Weltwärts* program in Cameroon is paused at the time of writing in 2022.

organisation. Another factor was the Covid19-pandemic which made German expats return to Germany and stopped new secondments. The interviewees from *Brot für die Welt* did thus not work under the direct supervision of a German expat but were rather collaborating on an equal level with Germans, coordinating their placement or supervising them. The Cameroonian interviewees acted more as middlemen between the *Brot für die Welt* Berlin office, the local Cameroonian organisations and their German consultants or volunteers. The dynamics and experience are henceforth very different from the more usual office structure which is to be found in the GIZ or FES.

Another characteristic of German management in Cameroon is the high fluctuation of expat personnel. Three interviewees mentioned the short period in one position of the Germans: One challenge for the team on the ground is to adapt to a different leadership style and way of working with every new manager. Cameroonians remarked that every German has a different management style, which is why they struggled to point me to one particular style. Some features were generalisable which are described on the following pages. Maybe it can be said that this fluctuation and constant adaptation is a part of the Cameroonian team culture in German organisations as they learned to live with these regular changes:

It's an organisation where the resident representative changes every three years or so, one has to ask the question, what is the role of that person? Because it's hard to imagine that this culture was developed in two years since our resident representative was here [...] So, I think it is a mix of her, her influence but also the resilience of the colleagues because I also know from histories and stories that some of the resident representatives were, well how to say, not the same, right? So, I think that [the colleagues are] very resilient and they really believe in the social work we are doing and so, they work together and evaluate these kinds of leaks. (Interviewee L, pos. 9)

The Germans also come with an expat contract, that allows them a higher salary and more benefits than the local employees. Extra holidays or better health care were mentioned along with the higher salary. The contractual difference did not alone consist in the monetary benefits but also the fact that they were short-term secondments and can always return to their home country whenever they like. This privilege does certainly influence the relationships between Cameroonians and Germans as one interviewee pointed out.

Most Germans come with an expatriate contract to Cameroon, which means that they are here with their suitcase, and they never really identified with Cameroon, they are auf Tour [on tour], they are passing through, so the mindset is different. A Cameroonian who works for GIZ in his country, he does not have the same vision as a German for GIZ in his country and the German always has this retreat, he always says to himself that I am not at home here and tomorrow I can leave. (Interviewee I, pos. 35)

Five interviewees spoke out negatively about the differences in salary, as the expats get paid a competitive salary for the European context plus top-ups for the circumstances abroad, whereas the local contract offers a salary adjusted to the local context. One more experienced interviewee, who had worked with financial services and understood the salary distinction, tried to explain to her colleagues that it is justified because the expats gain a prime for being separated from their country and have different costs to bear.

Discursion: Hybrid Culture

This master thesis focuses on the dichotomy of German and Cameroonian culture, but it has to be mentioned that cultures do not exist in a vacuum and that contact between cultures leads, depending on their power relations and level of interaction, to a new hybrid culture.

Three of the interviewees did their studies in Germany and spoke of an internalised shared culture that helped them work in the environment. Another interviewee experienced a sort of hybrid culture because he did anglophone education that prepared him a bit for the rigorous work ethic. On the other side, some integration into the German system happens according to an interviewee that said “[they] end up getting moulded into the German system”. Several interviewees spoke about the learning curve and getting adapted to the German style of working.

One interviewee spoke about the German way but also the points in which the Cameroonians have to work in their Cameroonian way as their work is to benefit the Cameroonian people.

With this in mind, work culture in the FES and GIZ can be characterized by a German culture of leadership, but also the organisational culture transmitted by the headquarters and the team culture including the local staff as these generally stay longer than the rotating expat supervisors. The work culture in partner organisations of BfdW cannot be described in the same way, because Germans work in Cameroonian-led organisations with an organisational culture based in Cameroon where they bring their German influences being subordinate employees. As there were currently no development workers with the interviewees due to the Covid19-pandemic and the Anglophone Crisis, I have limited data about their integration.

These findings have to be taken into account when analysing the findings as it is hard to differentiate between the national, organisational or *Germanroonian*¹³ culture. Multiple interviewees spoke of a mutual adaptation process.

That's it, so that the German and Cameroonian culture passes quite easily, there's not a... there's not a side that tries to dominate the other, according to what I observed. Of course, other colleagues have tried this, but they quickly realised that it doesn't work, that it's not possible to dominate, no, this is not possible, but rather to try to adapt to the Cameroonian culture for the Germans and to the German culture for the Cameroonians. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 59)

While describing the work culture of the teams, it is more appropriate to speak thus of a hybrid, multidimensional work culture.

This chapter served to summarize the context of German development work in Cameroon and hopefully enables the reader a more differentiated picture between the organisational culture to be found in the workplace and German culture. We saw that the organisational and work structure of the three organisations is different which might have an impact on experiences of German culture.

¹³ Germanroonian is a colloquial word for a self-ascribed identity of Cameroonians living in Germany or Germans having lived in Cameroon which tries to capture this interwovenness of identity. I think it is also fitting in this description of hybrid culture created by Germans and Cameroonians working together in teams in Cameroon.

5. Analysis of findings

5.1. Cameroonian perception of Germans

In this chapter, emphasis shall be laid on giving an appraisal of the Cameroonian perception of Germany and German culture. Germany is a well-known country in Cameroon, as the Second German Reich was the first imperial power that colonized the territory. Despite the cruelty and violence German colonialism rendered on several ethnic groups of Cameroon, the country of Germany happens to still enjoy a positively painted image. One could almost say that the colonial atrocities play an almost non-significant role in Cameroonians' perception of Germany.

During our conversations, interviewees highlighted a good working relationship with Germans. Among my interviewees were two who studied German Studies at the university, out of curiosity and appreciation for the culture. The German zeal for work was especially valued. Six interviewees explicitly appreciated German culture for their good quality.

They left, we have to admit, some things, quite solid infrastructures, well, they left because history wanted it that way, maybe if they had stayed we would have had another way of doing things, maybe we would have copied the rigour, the ardour in the work of the Germans because they are very hard-working, we have to admit that and I add as proof (when I watch a football match, I don't know if you like football, where a German team plays against another team, they play to the end. So even if you beat them at the beginning, they will end up beating the opposing team because they don't give up because they are so "hardworking" as they say and their products are solid: Look at the German vehicles, they are solid, they are really very, very good quality. (Interviewee D; pos. 90)

The knowledge produced in Germany has a lot of weight in Cameroon. One interviewee said that “somebody who is a technician and has better knowledge on that aspect, he is been under looked and preference is given to maybe development workers or German expats. Because it is believed that considering the fact that he is German, it means he has better mastery, and a better knowledge, which is not the case” (Interviewee H).

Generally, most Cameroonians believe in the superiority of Western education¹⁴:

“In terms of education, in terms of know-how, we are looking at the Cameroonian versus the German. Yes, we always believe that out there, the knowledge is more than here. That is what they believe in. That is why we have more people wanting to go study out there and to come back here.” (Interviewee F, pos. 54)

While I cannot compare the quality of the education systems, I would like to compare these thoughts to the colonial discourse of setting the West as the standard to achieve and aspire to and the reality that Cameroonians who have studied in France, Europe or the USA get treated with higher respect upon their return to Cameroon¹⁵. The framing of the

¹⁴ Even as a German master student in Cameroon, in my role as a fellow in a Cameroonian NGO I was told that what I do is probably right, as White people generally have a great knowledge.

¹⁵ I followed the course „Décolonisation de l’Afrique au Nord et au Sud de la Sahara“ in the University of Yaoundé 1. The introduction lecture focused on the fact that the Cameroonian

superiority of education could be seen as part of the general discourse of Western superiority and is important to consider when analysing power relations. While this is an appropriate generalisation for common public discourse, it has to be pointed out that individuals and academics like my Decolonisation history teacher, especially those with closer contact with Europeans, do assess Western knowledge critically and would emphasize how important local knowledge is.

5.1.1. German Colonial Legacy in Cameroon

The German colonial legacy is not a key topic of German-Cameroonian development cooperation. Critical reflections about the colonial past are an upcoming topic within Germany, whereas my Cameroonian interviewees see it with a neutral or positive note. Of the 14 interviewees, 11 said that the topic of German colonialism had no impact and no importance to their work, and it was not addressed at their workplace or reflected upon. There is an upcoming discussion in Cameroon about the German colonial past, but it is not very popular nor considered a pressing issue in politics, by state officials or within German-led development cooperation. On the one hand, in my personal experience as a student in Cameroon, I was confronted with a rather positive view of the colonial past and remarks that Germany would have been a better colonial master than France¹⁶. On the other hand, Cameroonians who have lived abroad engaged in a much more critical discussion about the colonial past with me. German colonialism is not so much of a topic within Yaoundé, which even has a statue of Karl/Charles Atangana, an ally of the German imperium and following French colonialism. To find the violent impact of German colonialism, one has to speak to indigenous people in non-urban spaces and ethnic group leaders.

One interviewee sums it up like this:

People look at it from different angles. We have one of our partners in Douala, that is focused on how this, looking at how was it, the German time... the Cameroonians in times of the Germans. And some would tell you, Cameroon in the time of the Germans was good. Some will tell you it was terrible because of the harsh treatment, the punishment, the Kaiser and this, this, the German treatment by German Governors. And so, it is addressed differently. And I cannot tell you. People have different views about it, some feel like it was not good, some feel like we should go back the times of the Germans, some feel like we should never go back to the times of the Germans. So, some feel like, the Germans contributed lots in building the Cameroon that we find ourselves. Even in Buea, Buea was the first capital of

students look up to France and similar countries and that decolonisation starts by the African who emancipates themselves from aspiring the West and appreciating his own culture. The lecturer asked how many of the present students plan to study in Europe and a great majority raised their hands. She followed with a vehement remark against this ideal and the idea of blindly appraising everyone who has studied in Europe, as this is common in Cameroon. When I spoke to her at the end of the lesson to introduce myself as a foreign student, she apologized for her violent words explaining that these were needed for the Cameroonian students to wake them up. Concluding, Cameroonian academics are aware and critical of the idealisation of Western culture, yet the young students still think in these (neo)-imperial patterns.

¹⁶ As an exchange student in Yaoundé, I said I was German, I received a lot of positive comments about my country, and more often than not, one of the first small talk remarks was the outstanding colonial legacy in infrastructure that still exists today. Often it came along a remark that German should have continued being the colonial master, so that Cameroon now would be a well-developed country or at least would not have the political issues it does have now.

German Cameroon. Yeah, so they have different ways of looking at it. (Interviewee F, pos. 88 – 91)

When asked about the legacy of the colonial past, three interviewees mentioned the visible legacy of the German colonial times, which are buildings and infrastructure that still exists today. Two interviewees mentioned that one reason why Germans feel comfortable in Cameroon might be the common history that the countries share. Surprisingly, criticism of the German colonial period was little. One interviewee suggested to instrumentalise this good image for constructive work:

[...]. So, the point I'm making is that Germany does not have a kind of negative connotation or history or something and so they should embrace it, people hate France, you know, for good or ill, people hate America, you know, whatever, policeman of the ... nobody likes China; Chinese invasion, whatever and so forth. Germany is innocent, really and they should work on that, they should take advantage of that, they are much more popular than they know. (Interviewee L, pos. 75)

If an interviewee had an opinion of German colonialism, it was predominantly positive: Eight interviewees mentioned positive aspects of German colonialism like the German ideal of hard work and the infrastructure they left behind. Within this framing of German colonial heritage as its efficiency culture, one interviewee saw a legacy because the work culture in their current organisation is still efficiency-based.

But perhaps in the way... since we work with the Germans, the way of governing is German, so it's result-oriented. So I can say that's it, we benefit from that by working here. (Interviewee L, pos. 54-55)

Since most current issues are framed as problems that developed during and because of British and French colonial rule, German colonialism often gets idealized. One interviewee spoke long about how German colonialism was not really exploitative colonialism, but rather an economic investment and thus good for the country¹⁷. Another interviewee was grateful for the schools the Germans build in Cameroon. During German colonial times, over a hundred schools were run by German missions which amounted to an estimated 95% of all schools at that time.¹⁸ Massive schooling was thus a legacy of the German missions within Cameroon and does not necessarily get associated with the exploitative behaviour on the plantations and the military expansions.

On this note, it has to be repeated that the German colonial rule did include a breach of the initial contract with the Douala people and resulted in land-grabbing, which made self-subsistence farming in large parts impossible. They led a military expansion against all people that refused to sign peaceful contracts with the Germans and employed forced labour on their plantations and for public works in very bad health conditions. Nonetheless, the focus on the teaching of and public discourse about German colonialism

¹⁷ In my field notes, I noted down my discomfort on being lectured about the greatness of the German colonial times. I felt like wanting to end the interview when he gave me a long monologue about German colonial history. He also said German colonialism was not real colonialism but rather like an investment. The Germans created infrastructure, plantations for the territory and did not plan to simply exploit. I did not want to rectify him about forced labour and land grabbing at the moment, as my role as interviewer was to collect information, but the conversation was uncomfortable for me. He drifted away from the topic many times. He also understood the questions in ways that put the Germans as ideal in the centre and how Cameroonians should adapt. (Field Work Diary, pos. 59)

¹⁸ Script of History Lesson, Yaoundé 1

is on the economic development of the area and the infrastructure that was created. Teachings in the university include Cameroonian resistance and the military expansion on a side note. However, the German colonial expansion in Cameroon is displayed as principally an economic project and thus portrayed in a much more positive light than the subsequent time under the mandate of the French and the British respectively.¹⁹

Discursion: The perception of Germany through the consequences of French and British rule

[Is the topic of German colonial history addressed here?] Not explicitly, not in an explicit way, but in an implicit way in most of the ..., I don't know, since we are currently working on the Anglophone crisis. You can say: implicitly it comes out, because we study for example the origins of the conflicts in Cameroon, but otherwise it's not really a focus from what I know. [translation by author] (Interviewee M, pos. 82 - 91)

Cameroon was divided in the aftermath of the First World War and the territory was separated and put under mandate of the United Kingdom and France. This divided history, together with the conditions of unification of the two Cameroons, ruled under different systems for 38 years, created the tensions that led to the current political crisis in the anglophone regions, also called the “Anglophone Crisis” that is characterised by guerrilla warfare in the fight for a more autonomous federal state. This conflict, based on cultural, identity, economic and political reasons, is very complex and not to be analysed in the frame of this master thesis. Its existence nonetheless helps explain why the German cultural heritage is seen as less severe than the British and French rule. When talking about problems within the contemporary Cameroonian nation, the boundaries and time of the German *Kamerun* get displayed as ideal.

People like Germans, you know, and then what is even very interesting, in this whole context of Anglophone, Francophone, you know, and Cameroon: is it ‘double o?’ is it ‘ou?’ and all of that stuff, do you know what some people do? They write Cameroon the German way, with ‘k’ and the ‘u’ and they do it, it’s a sort of, how can I explain Annika, you might not really be aware but there are ... there’s a, not a class, but a certain kind of African that’s very ... they’re usually young, upcoming and then they’re just wanting to reconnect with their African roots. (Interviewee 3; pos. 73)

This excerpt might also show that the influence of the later colonial period of France and Britain gets connected to modernity and today’s reality, whereas German occupation of

¹⁹ One of the test exam questions for the Course “Germans in the Cameroons” was “Which was the main purpose of the Germans in Cameroon?” With economic as its right answer and philanthropic as a wrong answer. An excerpt from the script for the class by Dr. Kum reads as follows: “The prime objective of the German colonial government was to facilitate economic development to the benefit of its country. Germany's aim in colonizing Cameroon was above all, economic. Unlike her successors, Britain and France, who were at least nominally subject to conditions stipulated by the League of Nations, Germany had no philanthropic motives whatsoever in the colonizing enterprise, nor did she so much as attempt to disguise her economic interests in terms of a ‘civilizing mission’. This purely economic aim inevitably had repercussions on the form of government and the relationship with indigenes. Economic exploitation (Trade and Agriculture) and the resulting need for labour, were some of the most characteristic features of Germans’ economic policy.”

the territory ended over 100 ago and gets remembered as the distant past before the West expanded its influence also through culture and soft power in the world.

Interviewees saw very little legacy of German colonial heritage in their work in Yaoundé, while a few mentioned visible French colonial heritage, with travel agencies as an example. One reason for that is that British and French colonial heritage was more recent and came with its new and different atrocities and problems overshadowing the importance of German colonial history. Especially in the region under French mandate, policies attempted to eradicate all German influences. In the Anglophone areas, German plantation owners and missions were expelled after the First World War but were able to come back some years later and continued to have a lasting economic and religious impact until their expulsion at the time of the Second World War. A Cameroonian born in a francophone region described his perception of the German colonial legacy as follows:

No, we just say, 'Le Cameroun était une petite colonie allemande' [Cameroon was a little German colony] but we don't really pay attention to that, you see, we don't pay attention to that, we... I think it's more of French heritage that people talk about at workplaces or across the road, it's more of French heritage that people talk about. But now is, when for example, there is an issue and then people want to go deep, very deep, it's at the root of the Cameroon that they will say Portuguese and then German with the too late counsel and then stuff like that and then French took over, the World War I, World War II and so on and so forth, so. (Interviewee C, pos. 164-165)

Differences in teaching German-Cameroonian history in Germany and Cameroon

Generally, Cameroonians know more about German colonialism in Cameroon than Germans, which one speaker pointed out:

And I was surprised it [the German colonial past in Cameroon] wasn't addressed while I was in Germany as well, that was one of my biggest shocks I had in Germany and I said I was from Cameroon and Wo ist das denn? [Where is that?] and I said but Germany actually colonised Cameroon, how come no German knows about Cameroon but I know so much about German history? So, I think I had more of a culture shock when I went there because every time I said where I was from the reaction was, but where is that exactly? And I said I thought you should know where Cameroon is, you actually colonised ... we were one of your colonies, so, you should at least know something. (Interviewee J; pos. 117)

While Cameroonians study German history in secondary school and feel free to speak about it, the Germans in Cameroon rather feel uncomfortable when the topic gets addressed. Germans show reluctance to talk about its history:

She said "OK, we are in Cameroon, etc. There are new German people arriving, what can you tell us about Cameroon?" and each one said what he, let's say, what was the characteristic of Cameroon that he wanted to share with the Germans and then there were some who also told the story, briefly, of the presence of Germans in Cameroon. And I want to say that it's not so much the Germans who talk about it, but the Cameroonians because also, [...] I have noticed that sometimes the Germans are embarrassed when we talk about the presence of the Germans in Cameroon or in Africa in general, they had even said that it was not Cameroonian, it is not African, it is rather European, when we talk about Germany we think of Hitler, when we talk about Germany, we think of the World War and we know how it happened. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 113)

Students in Germany focus on studying the Second World War and the crimes against humanity committed during the Third Reich period, and as this interviewee pointed out, within the European context, Germany is known for this chapter of history. But Cameroonians rarely mention this and rather focus on the common history when thinking about Germany.

Another reason for the different education about German colonial history is the limited writings about the topic. There are few academic publications concerning the German colonial past in Cameroon with many of them being written by the colonizers themselves before 1915 and kept in archives. Some research has been done about the German colonial past between 1960 and 1970 which provides the most extensive chronologies so far. In Cameroon, however, access to the colonial archives is limited and the secondary literature is not widely distributed, so people rely on teachers and educators for their history education. Relating to the way German colonial history is taught in the University of Yaoundé 1, I assume that middle- and high-school education is also rather focused on the positive aspects of the German colonial period and its nation-building in Cameroon instead of critically reflecting on imperialism. Especially since the country follows the Anglo-Saxon and French tradition of education, and many schools are run by missions or are under the rule of a Cameroonian church. Most history is still transmitted by *tradition orale* which is passing on history through oral narration from one generation to the next.

I was not there when that colonial stuff happened or the colonial activity or the situations that happened so, I cannot say that I've been seeing it here, I cannot say to be honest because you know, to conclude on something like that you must have evidence or reports showing how Germans were treating Cameroonians at that moment, especially in companies but I've not come across any kind of report related to that so I cannot say that there's a kind of legacy. It was more of traditional talk or oral transmission, 'Les Allemands étaient comme ça, les Allemands ont fait comme ça' [the Germans were like this, the Germans did that this way] and there's one thing that maybe I can say related to that tradition, to that oral tradition, is that we have been told that Germans built things that are resistant, they built offices or let's say their infrastructure are very strong, this is what I know and this is the legacy that actually people have been talking about, 'Les Allemands non, quand c'est Allemand c'est sûr. Quand c'est Allemand, la qualité y est' [the Germans no, when it's German, it's certain. When it's German, quality is there] and then maybe this is what we are actually doing every day, to make sure that the support we bring to the government is a German quality... or is German Qualität like they say. So, yeah, that's the only thing I can say, that sense of let's say always do the best, provide people with the best quality or with the best product or the best service yeah, I think that's something we actually also contribute to put in place because if you look at those bridges for example, in Edéa and then in Douala, they are still there, they were built by Germans. (Interviewee C, pos. 167)

This excerpt shows the hesitance to judge the colonial past for lack of evidence. The speaker prefers to focus on the contemporaneity and issues he knows of rather than speculate about crimes of the past. The German times had been over three generations ago and thus been pushed back in importance by most recent events and reduced to less extensive reports. A possible explanation for this practical approach to dealing with history is the existence of more pressing current issues and social action on other fronts and the lack of resources to open a debate about the past.

To conclude this chapter, Cameroonian and German understanding of their shared history differs. While Germans learn little about German imperialism from high school and are

generally not proud of their past, Cameroonians do not criticise it so harshly and speak more positively about it. The current political climate and issues created during subsequent colonial administrations might also overshadow the impact of the German colonial heritage. This is a very interesting insight into the influence of the colonial heritage on the German perception: First, this could be a starting point for future discussion and research for both sides about dealing with the German colonial legacy in Cameroon. Second, this positive perception of German colonialism is relevant for the following analysis because it has a lasting impact in the present as it shapes an idea and stereotypes of Germany and influences how Germans are met in intercultural situations today.

5.1.2. German culture

You can see [the legacy of the colonial past] because the Germans' working methods haven't changed much, they haven't changed, they haven't changed much... because as I say, it's still the same rigour at work, the same work drive that exists and maybe... [...] Those who work here, yes, with the Germans. So they have a certain rigour, a certain, how shall I put it?... consistency in, not consistency, but they know a little bit about where they want to go because they have used a certain number of tools that the Germans have put in place and it is these tools that can allow them to arrive at conclusions. So it's the path, they know the path to take to reach a conclusion or to reach an objective compared to someone else who hasn't worked with the Germans and who would look everywhere for a path or several paths to reach the same result, so it would take a bit longer because the tools are not well developed. So I want to say that this... if we can consider that it's a colonial heritage, I don't know, maybe, but it's the method, the methods of the Germans which, when they are... shared and well adapted, adopted, they can give good results. [translation by author] (Interviewee 11, pos. 114-117)

Interviewees were asked to describe German management culture which was then coded according to recurrent topics. The category that was mentioned the most was rigorousness (66 mentions in 12 documents), flat hierarchies in the work environment (21 mentions in 13 documents), efficient and hard work (13 mentions in 6 documents), attention to detail (12 mentions in 4 documents), a distinction of the professional and private sphere (11 mentions in 8 documents), a certain level of mistrust (8 mentions in 6 documents), a high sense of accountability (6 mentions in 5 documents) as well as behaviour related to ethnocentrism.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Coded segments</i>	<i>Documents connected</i>
<i>Rigorousness</i>	66	12
<i>Germanocentrism</i>	32	10
<i>Equal treatment/flat hierarchy</i>	21	13
<i>Efficiency/Hard-Working</i>	13	6
<i>Attention to detail</i>	12	4
<i>Professional/private distinction</i>	11	8
<i>Mistrust</i>	8	6

<i>Goal orientation</i>	7	5
<i>Accountability</i>	6	5
<i>Relaxed work environment</i>	6	4
<i>Autonomy</i>	6	2
<i>Directness/Straightforwardness</i>	5	5
<i>Transparency</i>	4	4

Table 3: Codes associated with German culture by their occurrence

1. Rigorous

Germans are seen as very organized and rigid, but as people that get good work done. An example of the long-lasting and good quality of German work, bridges and buildings from the colonial era get cited by the general public and five interviewees. In my interviews, words like rigid, structured, and strict were used the most to describe German culture and were to be found in 12 of the 14 interviews. The work culture of rules and regulations for every little detail was a recurrent theme. Some interviewees mentioned attention to detail as part of German work culture. One interviewee described it as “factual” (Interviewee J, pos. 41), and another used the negatively connotated term “quite fuzzy [*assez tatillon*]”. (Interviewee B, pos. 40)

Vocabulary connected to the concept of rigorousness was found 115 times in total in a lexical analysis, three interviewees used related terms more than 20 times, while nine mentioned this word family between 2 and 10 times. This quantitative analysis however includes all mentions of rules and regulation not necessarily linked to the description of German culture. It is to illustrate that rigidity and rules do play a role when discussing German-Cameroonian relations.

“Appreciation for Rules, Regulations and Structures” (Schroll-Machl, 2013, 69f) is illustrating the same phenomena that can be observed in the interviews with Cameroonians. According to her, German life is especially strongly characterised by structures. Parts of social structures might be questioned by the current generation, but in general, a rule system gets appreciated when it is making a common goal more efficiently.

This rigidity is also seen as something positive by most interviewees. One person connects the strictness with efficiency and sustainability:

A [German management] style, what am I going to say? It's really rigour, because if I remember, for example, what guides us here is this rigour. Not that it's... not rigour in the sense that it's repression, but it's rigour in the sense that when we do something it has to be done so that it benefits not only those who are there, but also those who come; so durabilité [transl.: durability, sustainability, longevity]. That's what durabilité is all about. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 27)

German strictness is not experienced as limiting but rather as laying a foundation for good work. An interviewee contrasts the rigid German culture with the more fluid Cameroonian management culture in which “they take more of chances” and do not get as much work done. Another interviewee also welcomes the rules that give him a certain freedom of action, because he can be sure no contradictory assignments will come in spontaneously tomorrow:

I think that we have much more opportunity to flourish here, we do what we think is right, we have great freedom of action. When everything is clear, we have a clear plan of action for everyone, less arbitrariness, much more planning, The work is organised and you're not told tomorrow morning "go to such and such a place" without being previously notified, you're not prevented from going home at the end of the work day, these are typical things here. The working hours are organised, the missions are planned, the outings, everything is better structured in terms of objectivity. [translation by author] (Interviewee I, pos. 25)

Nonetheless, as we will see in chapter 7, the interviewees also advocated for flexibility as a core competence for the Cameroonian context.

But one thing which is common with ... is that everything should be straight to the point with enough facts to back up any decision, yes, and to stick ... because in the GIZ too, I think GIZ has its own culture as well, everything is written down we have processes and rules which are written and defined by the headquarters and there's nobody really inventing the wheel because everything is said and if you can manage to take decisions based on those processes and rules then you are good to go. (Interviewee J, pos. 41)

This rules-bound culture does not get simply attributed to the people but also the institution or organisation. Often the rules are given by the headquarters in Germany or are in place independent of the current manager. Another contact working with German institutions as a donor, who did not participate in the study as an interviewee, complained about the rigidity of the forms that are often not adequate for the Cameroonian context. One example is that the German Government funding under usual circumstances cannot be used for taxi receipts, yet in Cameroon, the public transport system is based on collective taxis. Safe and orderly transport is done with normal taxis, and in rush hours motorbikes are the fastest and most convenient option, but this is not acceptable to traditional German accounting rules. These small differences create additional bureaucratic work for the organisations when dealing with German donors because accountability is key for them.

2. Accountability

The project benefits from German taxpayers' money, we know that. But now when we carry out activities we always say, yes, we have to think that these are... these are German taxpayers' money, yes, we know that, otherwise we wouldn't be here, but at the same time we don't... it shouldn't always be as if we were only involved in waste, we don't waste, if we're here, it's because we have an objective to achieve and we know full well that these are funds for which we have to give an account. Moreover, we report everything we do, but it's still a bit embarrassing, a bit frustrating that every time you go to do an activity, we start to suspect you a bit; there you go! what is he going to do? He mustn't forget that the funds come from the taxpayer. We pay taxes too, it's true that it's the taxpayer's taxes, but if the action we carry out wasn't justifiable and justified, we wouldn't be here. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 23)

The accountability for money spent is an important topic in German organisations. Two interviewees were surprising me with the expression of "German taxpayer's money", *das Geld des deutschen Steuerzahlers*, which is a recurrent term in Germany to refer to

government investments when describing inefficiently used funds and the lost value of a project at the expense of the German taxpayer. Germans do pay a lot of taxes, and generally like to point out when their contribution was not handled with care by the government. It was interesting to see that this concept was transmitted to Cameroonian GIZ employees who are in effect mainly working with German government funding. This was felt by a driver of the GIZ who criticized being constantly reminded that the tools he is using are funded by German government money as if he does not know how to deal with entrusted capital well. In my informal conversations with Cameroonians that work with German donors, the exorbitant importance of accountability was an important topic in the work relationship. An interviewee who worked with funding in previous NGO involvement related the exceptionalism of German accounting and spoke out about the extreme level of reporting German donors are requesting:

we had everybody you can imagine, a galaxy, four million dollars a year from 20 different sources, right, so all kinds of... Americans and what, and then you have the EU, so we know that they are a different animal and then you have the Germans. Everybody else is the same and then but you have the EU because they are big, what, they're complicated, and then you have the Germans, the Germans want every detail. I first heard about participants' list from the Germans, you must sign participants' list, you have to be there, you know; otherwise we are not accepting your report. They are very pedantic and very exigent, demanding, about records and things.

Nonetheless, the two interviewees who were speaking about the taxpayer's money as a part of German management culture still do see the German rigorousness in accounting as a good thing because it is linked to responsibility.

The difference in bookkeeping is not only noted as a German-Cameroonian distinction but also in comparison to other Europeans. The Germans tend to be more rigorous in accounting and regulations. This is one example of inter-European cultural variety and the highlighting of characteristics that are particular in German culture.

3. Goal-oriented

Another factor of the efficiency-based German work ethic is the focus on goals and delivering good work, before the focus on people. A couple of interviewees manifest that the non-work-related conversations at the office are rather brief with their German colleagues, while the Cameroonians like to engage in a longer greeting. In Cameroonian contexts, employees do have more personal conversations during work time which is missing in the German GIZ environment:

I don't know if Cameroonians gossip a lot, yeah, I think here is mostly focus on your work, do your job, do your task, deliver and then this is what... it is really different but for Cameroonians you will see, if it's a 100% Cameroonian environment, somebody will just stand at your door and speak for like 30 minutes in the morning, the person does not care if you have work or not. (Interviewee C, pos. 51)

This is reflected in the statement of another interviewee who also experienced the Germans being less approachable for long greetings while she would have more extensive conversations with her Cameroonian colleagues. We can find this characteristic also described by Schroll-Machl (2013) as objectivity: Germans focus on the task at hand and professional execution of the task will be the beginning of a good relationship, whereas friendly engagement will be seen as a distraction first instead of an interest in a good work relationship. An explanation for this behaviour lies on the one hand in the importance of Protestantism in German culture, as the religious reformation eliminated emotional

elements from worship and moved it towards a more intellectual and rational form which affected all spheres of life (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 65). Other factors like the absolutism of small states and the therefore connected impersonal bureaucracy will also have influenced the ideal of objectivity (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 66). In the Southern half of Cameroon, especially the environments I was in, Christianity is widely practised, yet this aspect of protestant factual work ethics seems not so pronounced. This could be explained by a different understanding of spirituality in general, and Christianity in particular, based on the Cameroonian – or more general African context – where local traditions, customs and culture merged with the Western gospel.

Another explanation provided by Schroll-Machl for this German goal-centred working method is the historically needed suppression of emotions. The period after the zero moment of 1945 has been important for German identification. National identity is not so much constructed by pride in one's country or emotional attachment to the state but through the appreciation of its economic success. Through hard work, Germany achieved its economic miracle which gave the country a new way of identification on an objective level: "Life became centred on functionality and the predominant emotions of isolation and powerlessness could be banished into the background" (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 67). Trying to focus on facts and portraying their behaviour as objective might be a counterforce to ideologically influenced emotional behaviour, but also a justification for their work outside of the sphere of the historic guilt.

Words used by my interviewees to describe this objectivity were for example "result-focussed culture [*culture du resultat*]" (Interviewee B, pos. 36). One interviewee says that Germans like "good work" that is "factual":

work that is done thoroughly with the details and facts, yeah, it's more factual. So, I noticed that Germans don't like a lot of storytelling, it's straight to the point, yes, there's not much beating around the bush, when they want information, they want it to be straight to the point and if you can capture that then it is good. (Interviewee J, pos. 41)

This appreciation of good work could also be connected with the earlier described focus on objectivity. Germans appreciate colleagues who take work as serious as them.

Another interviewee illustrates this difference as fact-oriented versus aesthetic-oriented. The achievement is more important than the relationship:

in Cameroon, we have a culture that is often very form-oriented and less content-oriented [culture très orientée souvent sur la forme et moins sur le fond], and when you work with a German who appreciates that the goal is achieved you just have to sit down, he will do it. But a Cameroonian he has to sit right there, he will do it, but a Cameroonian will first put on his suit, he has to sit in a certain way and when we have a meeting it has to be... and this often leads to differences in perception, which means that the form sometimes takes up more space for Cameroonians than for Germans and it's... I often observe this, and I laugh in the back because if we want to do something together, the method is different. The Cameroonians have a very French, very Francophone method of putting the form first, of seeing first where we are going to do this, of seeing who will be there, before seeing the content, what will be the result? What are we going to talk about? And that often makes a difference in perception which can cause shocks [translated by author] (Interviewee I, pos. 29).

This is also set in context as a French and francophone tradition, to focus on the form instead of the content. This difference might be already visible between students of the

Anglo-Saxon and the French education system within Cameroon.²⁰ The presentation of the results matters at least as much as the results.

German culture is experienced as straightforward and result-oriented, and Germans are known for being direct in communication (see Schroll-Machl, 2013, 53f). Another remark was focused on the direct line of approval of projects by the local GIZ office. An interviewee contrasted it with the work of the World Bank or the *Agence Française du Développement* (AFD), a French Development Organisation, where new projects have to get approval from the headquarters which requires a lot of additional time. Another interviewee seconded this and described the process in the GIZ as flexible because decisions can be influenced. It could be said that the German structure approach allows little flexibility on the level of changing existing processes but allows for independence within the structures.

One interviewee states that the Germans are perceived as more flexible compared to other partners despite being known for their structuredness:

In the end, the partner finds us more flexible than all the PTFs, i.e. all the development partners, who work with the ministry. For example, this mission [...] was not initially a mission that we had to carry out, but because the partner is more at ease with us, he comes to us to say I have such and such a difficulty, we always manage to find a way of doing things. [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 24)

An interviewee contrasts the methods of the GIZ with its French equivalent, the AFD. While the GIZ in Cameroon has more local authority to decide on projects, projects of the AFD have to be sent to their headquarters for approval.

Furthermore, with the AFD, with the World Bank, you do everything, you put together your file, your project, and then it goes to France to the headquarters and then they examine it and then they give a non-objection if there is a non-objection or they give... they say that no, it's not possible and then it has to come back and then... so it takes a long time. So, a project that has to be carried out perhaps in the following month, it may be carried out, if there is a non-objection, it may be carried out 4 or 5 months later, whereas with Germany it's already very fast, it's very flexible, it's very... it's more efficient in any case. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 111)

The German focus on delivering is contrasted with the Cameroonian context and appreciated by most interviewees. Not having to focus on protocol and form allows the employees to focus on the goal and work more efficiently:

It's less unnecessary pressure, everything that we... we really turn to useful stuff, we are more work and that's the difference. [translation by author] (Interviewee K, pos. 21)

One interviewee at GIZ mentioned pressure due to the focus on the task, but that his colleague manages to find time to joke even though being very rigorous in his work. Some interviewees felt that work was given too much importance and within the drive for results, Germans should not forget the pleasurable things of life:

²⁰ I can only substantiate this claim with anecdotal evidence: While studying at the public, officially bilingual University de Yaoundé 1, that follows the francophone education tradition, I've spoken with students of anglophone high schools who experienced a difference in how to present papers and exposés in this new system: the form is much more important in the francophone system.

They are objective in terms of attaining goals. Which is a good thing. But life... In work organizations, there should be a balance more like, there should be a balance in terms of work-life balance, so much so that it keeps you healthy and also keeps your mental health intact but ... with the German system is more like: work should count more and any other thing besides work is actually not paid much attention to. (Interviewee H, pos. 4)

This excerpt stems from an interviewee who does not relate much with Germans outside of work and finds them very hard to approach socially. His experience with the Germans could illustrate the distinction between the private and professional sphere of the Germans, while he only sees their behaviour in the workspace. Other foreigners have observed a similar experience as described by the study of Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 141) Germans tend to have different manifestations of behaviour in the respective space while the focus on delivering work is the main goal within the work sphere and derivations from the work by friendly conversations could be seen as unprofessional.

So, the work of the Germans I think is something that we should copy, the ardour at work, the self-sacrifice at work because they put their heart into it and they want to obtain the result. Now, what they have to learn is that even if they are very good at work, they have in front of them people who maybe also have another perception of work, maybe of life. Being hard-working doesn't mean that you have to give up the other pleasures in life, if I can put it that way, otherwise you become... you fall into a crisis, into madness, you often see people who, let's say, go crazy and then do anything. [translation by author] (Interviewee 11, pos. 91)

As Germans grew up following the ideal of hard work and are committed to their goals, they expect the other to respect the work at the same level because it means that you care about the other and the relationship explains Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 56). The rule-oriented thinking of Germans can lead to moral superiority and harsh judgments of transgressions of norms on the side of the Germans (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 107), which is why little deviation from its system is tolerated so as to keep its justification in place.

I think it's a constructive culture, that is to say, that when we adopt it, we put pressure on ourselves to get the results, we put pressure on ourselves and that's a bit what one feels every time, there's always pressure, you go to a colleague, he's under pressure. Everyone is a bit concerned about whether they are going to achieve the result and everything, but I think that in the end, when you get into that, you feel at ease, so you don't have any problems. [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 24)

The focus on work of the Germans is seen as a good thing, yet little open for enjoyment or other perceptions of work. It is assumed that Germans do experience their work as rewarding and, as we saw, focus on objectivity and efficiency in pursuing goals. There could be a profound difference in understanding of the purpose of an enterprise between the Cameroonians and Germans insofar as the Cameroonians understand the purpose of their job in creating a valuable community whereas a Western view might portray work as the pursuit of an end or the means to satisfy a desire (Metz, 2018, p. 51).

4. Relaxed

This affinity for structure and meticulousness comes with an experience of a relaxed work environment. Despite the strictness and regulation of German work culture, some interviewees called it a “relaxed” work environment. One part is that working hours are respected. Employees arrive according to the schedule, but also leave at the scheduled

hour. This is not always the case in Cameroonian work environments where overtime is expected and not recompensed, according to the statements of two interviewees. Germans are also rigorous in their free days, meaning that after working on weekends they will take a different day off. With *Brot für die Welt*, German contracts have a higher number of holidays than Cameroonian contracts, because they are made in Germany. The Cameroonian employers respect these differences, but in the Cameroonian work context and work contracts for Cameroonians not so much free time is given. This aspect of respecting work time and resting time one interviewee calls “humanity” as one part of the work culture by BfdW.

Other interviewees perceive the management as relaxed, due to the focus on goals. Employees are given the liberty to accommodate their tasks according to their own schedule, as long as the results are delivered. This is to be contrasted with a Cameroonian work context where supervision and hierarchy are more pronounced. Young female employees at the beginning of their careers particularly appreciate the flat hierarchies and *laissez-faire* management. These findings might result from the fact that the Cameroonian culture is in general very hierarchical and gives little voice to young people and women. Given the external circumstances, the German work environment might seem like a very relaxed and prosperous place for young female Cameroonians.

5. Flat hierarchies

Two GIZ interviewees made a point about the autonomous work culture, the management style of giving the employees the freedom to structure their work themselves.

13 of the 14 interviewees mention the hierarchy in their German organisation as rather flat with equal treatment and participation of all employees. However, one of these interviewees spoke about the vertical leadership of his team that is running against the usual flat hierarchies of the GIZ. In other cases, the relationship with their superior is friendly and the supervisors are approachable and available to answer questions. The team can call their supervisor by the first name, which is not usual in Cameroonian contexts.

Cameroonians are not used to flat hierarchies. One interviewee tells the anecdote of a director forcing the local staff to break the hierarchised sitting order by sitting on the outside of the table as Cameroonians were uncomfortable sitting at the table:

I'd say we normally have team meetings here, we used to have, before Corona we used to have them in our big conference room down and it was just, I think the colleagues just assumed that everyone who ... because we had a big round table and we had chairs round because not everyone could fit on the table and even those who come early usually just fit themselves behind on the chairs. No one wants to sit on the table. And the country director at that time always asked me but [...] 'Why does everyone not want to sit on the table, is not reserved for everyone?' So, one of the Fridays we had the meeting, she came in very early and sat right behind and so, everyone was used to her sitting on the table and when she sat there everyone came and [] nobody expected her to be there, but they had nowhere to run to so, they had to sit with her in the middle and it was really interesting. [...] Few people [started sitting at the table in the following meetings] but not everyone was still comfortable sitting on the table. (Interviewee J, pos. 31)

Even though the participation of all employees is welcomed, and colleagues feel equally appreciated, one interviewee spoke out about the official participatory approach that seems to include everyone, while decisions are taken on higher levels and are effectively

not influenceable. There are culturally different understandings of participation which could range from being able to criticize openly and being asked to offer your opinion directly to superiors to a consent-based approach where all individuals influence the decision. While constructive feedback is expected and allowed, it serves as an orientation for the supervisor and does not necessarily mean that the decision will be taken by the team. The latter might be the case for the participation in this interviewees team:

I think you're always led to believe that you have the possibility to say what you think, but sometimes it's also... it's just for the appearance, yes. I have the impression that a lot of things are already cooked very often and you are led to believe that you have the right to change certain things, although you don't have much leeway [marge de manœuvre], but still, you are given the opportunity to express yourself and say what you want, but very often the decision is already made [les pommes sont cuites, les carottes sont cuites] and it's difficult to change what already exists, what is planned. There is not much space for change [marge de manœuvre]. [translation by author] (Interviewee I, pos. 23)

Another interviewee made the experience that not only in the community with Germans, but also in a group of Europeans, the Europeans tend to make decisions among themselves before including the Cameroonian staff in their decisions.

In general, not only the Germans, but when the Europeans get together they make a separate case, yes. So, whether you are German, English, Italian, French, etc., they first make their little business separately, they discuss separately, even if we are in a large group, we can say that we are, for example, in a workshop or in a meeting with all the other partners, the TFPs, who are French for the most part, who are German, who are European in general. So we can meet in a room to work because we are working and then first they will sit down with each other and then they will murmur to each other and so on. So, sometimes, I don't really like this kind of attitude because I think that we always have the impression that, well, there are things we have to hide from us Cameroonians and that's a bit... it's quite painful. So if you want to talk to each other, find another space to talk to each other, don't wait until we're in a general meeting to make little camps over there and whisper or say I don't know what because it makes people uncomfortable. Moreover, as I was saying, it's quite normal that you speak your own language when you get together, but here it's, he speaks German, he speaks German. I don't blame them, but sometimes when you meet someone who is not German and you want to talk, try to apologise and then speak German as soon as... to speak German after apologising. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 55)

The flat hierarchies do not only exist in comparison to Cameroonian culture but also to French culture which has a stronger monitoring of its employees. In this sense, the German development cooperation is regarded as more flexible than others despite its structures.

In contrast to where I was with the French, it's a bit more self... we'll say what? the staff are a bit more autonomous, there's not too much tracking. That means that people are quite autonomous in their way of doing things and in their way of carrying out activities in fact. This is the particularity of what I felt when I made the difference between French management and German management, it is really very different. And moreover, not only is there this empowerment [orig.: autonomisation] of the team, but there is also, I would say... I'm going to associate, to avoid a bit of administrative burden compared to where I was before, it's... when I make the two comparisons, it's the two main elements that come to my mind. So,

there is not too much administrative burden and the empowerment of the staff.
(Interviewee A, pos. 24)

This interviewee reflected upon this in the manifestation that the employees have a higher degree of autonomy working for a German organisation than in a French organisation. This autonomy might stem from the early internalised rules, which then serve as guidance and make Germans, already German children, act independently and autonomously from an early stage (see Schroll-Machl, 2013, 103f).

Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 98) sets this inclusive decision-making process into context with the love for structure: rules should ideally be consensus-based because it is the rules that later will lead the people. Transposing this rule-oriented approach to the situations at hand, we can understand the formal idea of equality because leadership is technocratic: the rules are above everyone, and it is up to the individual to follow them. On the other hand, those who have the last word on defining the rule do have the power, which we might see in the fact that participation of the team seems to be superficial.

6. Reserved

Additional to confirming the common knowledge of the German strictness, a few Cameroonians spoke about not knowing much about the Germans' private life, which is in line with the beforementioned cultural definition of Germans as having a strict distinction between work and private life (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 141). This has been manifested in the fact that the German employer does not call their employees in their free time or holidays and checks in and asks about the family. The Germans seem to be quite active in their free time, but the personal sphere of the Cameroonians and the Germans is usually separated.

Eight interviewees from all three organisations claimed that there was not much socialisation outside of the office. Even though the work relationship was good, or even great and the team was enjoyable, the Cameroonians did not know much about their German colleagues' private life or met them in a leisure context. As we saw before, Germans tend to have rather brief informal conversations at work. As Steixner (2007, p. 42) collected similar results during her interviews about the interrelationship between Europeans and Africans: The understanding of friendship and the distinction of the private is different, Europeans do not mix the professional and the personal relationship so much, whereas in collectivistic cultures friendship is understood differently. Steixner (2007) embeds this in the example of Europeans having trouble connecting profoundly with Africans as the latter do not talk much about their emotions despite being in close connections with their extended families. At this point, I would also like to counter that even within European culture we can observe various degrees of closeness to colleagues at work and Germans might stand out even within the group of Europeans. As Steixner's description focuses on the macro level, it describes continental differences.

In one case, a German colleague left Cameroon for personal reasons their Cameroonian counterparts are yet trying to understand as everything went well at work because private life is not part of the interaction at work:

But what I noticed also was that we had... there was little follow-up. There was no space. Not that we did not want to, but there was very little space to follow up privately. That is private life. That is like I choose where I would stay, where I would live and work is work, and my private life is my private life. (Interviewee G, pos. 30)

This describes the German attitude toward separating work and private life. The findings here go in line with the cultural standard of “Separation of Personality and Living Spheres” (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 139). The Cameroonians were not aware of her personal issues, whereas a Cameroonian boss would check in on their Cameroonian employees in their free time which is part of a good work relationship:

So [one] thing is make somebody feel loved, like you have more concern for him, not just about the work but you also have concern for him as a person. You have concern for him. Because we have a culture... Even the Minister asks his... My sister works for [a Ministry]. When we travel, and go to somewhere, maybe a family trip, the Minister of [] will call her and ask her; hey how is your trip going? Did you travel with your child? Or left your child home? You see, those are aspects, which makes you feel like this person values you. This person, I mean, has concern for you, and not just about the work that you render. You see, those are things that matter in an organization, they make you also feel ... cared for. (Interviewee H, pos. 177)

Metz (2018, p. 56) would see this as an example of African leadership seeing the employees and the company in an intimate relationship. However, this is in contrast with the German value of objectivity as discussed before.

On the one hand, an interviewee noted that Germans would talk little about their extended family at work and gave the family a different value in the two cultures. On the other hand, an interviewee mentioned that family is very important for the Germans and he gives the example of a male German expat who left his post in Cameroon because his wife and children could not follow him to Cameroon, so he needed to return. The importance of family is thus expressed differently, and the understanding of what is the nucleus of the family is different in the Cameroonian context. For instance, one interviewee pointed out the importance of uncles and the extended family.

Two female interviewees experienced Germans in their workplace as reserved. In this aspect, a gender divide was mentioned. One interviewee gave a hint that the Cameroonian men might connect better with the German men, while the Cameroonian women do not get so close to their German colleagues:

I don't know, I'm not... other people will be able to tell you because... especially the men, they often meet up with each other, they have places where they maybe go for a drink and so on, and they can exchange, but with us I would say no. (Interviewee D, pos. 75)

Compared to other Europeans, Germans tend to be harder to socialise with. The opinions were divided on this matter. One interviewee felt more comfortable joking around French colleagues and experienced a US-American supervisor that was more open to a chat or joke during work which he could not compare to their German counterparts. This feeling can be illustrated by the peach vs. coconut allegory that is used in intercultural training: In the US, everyone seems friendly and open in new encounters, easy to cut into new circles like a fruit of a peach, but then it is hard to turn these many acquaintances into close friends because you reach the hard stone, whereas German friendship building seems hard at the beginning like the coconut shell, but once overcoming the barrier is easy and flowing like the coconut milk. The particular long German process of going from strangers to friends is described by Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 151). Another person felt that the German environment felt more friendly than other foreign organisations in Cameroon that tend to be more *hautain*.

7. Germanocentrism

Some interviewees pointed out that Germans tend to continue speaking German even in meetings with Cameroonian staff, which makes the Cameroonians feel uncomfortable or left out. Speaking German is an important part in connecting with Germans, which gives the GIZ employees an advantage who speak fluent German.

when you speak German to a German there's already some bonding going on but for the local staff, they really found a distance with the other German staff [working at the embassy]. (Interviewee J, pos. 43)

Despite flat hierarchies, those speaking German have advantages, on a technical level because they understand documents from the headquarters in Germany, but also because important conversations happen in German. One interviewee described that their German colleagues switch to German to emphasize their point in case of a misunderstanding or disagreement in the group and to win the other German as an ally to then convince the Cameroonians of their standpoint:

The Germans present here, when they discuss among themselves, they always discuss in German, that is to say even in... we are in a meeting, but when they want to discuss among themselves, they discuss in German. [...] If, for example, we don't agree on a point, the German will go and explain to the other German in German to try to get his point of view across separately, to the employer, even if we've already discussed this point and I've expressed my disagreement for example with a situation, there's a bit... So that's what I'm going to say. (Interviewee M, pos. 38-39, translation by author)

Regarding German speaking, one interviewee made a positive point about colleagues switching to English immediately to include non-German speakers.

The supervisor, there is no distinction at all, yeah. I have never picked this up, you know, and if for example I come and they're speaking in German to each other they will immediately change to English even though they are not involved in the conversation. So, they're sensitive to that, that they shouldn't be speaking something that you are not understanding in your presence, so they will just, they will switch to English or the conversation ends or something like that. (Interviewee L, pos. 41)

Several interviewees mentioned that, even though not a formal requirement, leadership positions can only be reached for people being able to speak German and ideally have studied in Germany or another OECD country.

I think, those who speak Germans here seem to have some kind of added advantage, I think, even for openings in maybe even within other projects and out of Cameroon it's an added advantage because then, it shows that you can communicate even with the headquarters and definitely it's more convenient for a German boss to have someone under them who speaks and understands German as well. It might not be explicit or communicated out that way but it plays a role, the background as well, maybe even the educational background or the exposure you have, for those who have had some international exposure too, I think it plays a role too on how you are treated. I'm not saying that there's discrimination here or what but it might even happen without ... happen unconsciously, yes, that there's some level of respect given to people who have some international exposure or who have some higher educational background, who speak several languages and so on. (Interviewee J, pos. 65)

Within the teams at GIZ, there is very little hierarchy per se, however, the head of project is usually German, says one interviewee:

Managerial positions? I cannot... that's a bit complicated because we don't have managerial positions per se in the project, we are supposed to have just one coordinator and the rest of the staff are technical staff or administrative staff. Since it's a very small project, we cannot have... the management of projects as a whole is done at the level of cluster or at the regional level, but in the projects, they are mostly concentrated on technical staff and the project head. [Interviewer: And the project head is a German?] Is a German. (Interviewee E, pos. 21-23)

This description is exemplary for most teams of interviewees I met at the GIZ. Germans usually fulfil coordinating and supervising roles, hold positions of direction, work with the finances, are responsible for the hiring of new employees and have representative tasks in the work environment of my interviewees.

I think they can promote more of Cameroonians to work in leadership positions. I think it's something that is lacking because you'll need to have probably studied in Germany; that's the requirement for Cameroonians taking leadership positions is very high that most people who get into the cooperation find it hard to achieve. (Interviewee E, pos. 69-70)

This was supported by a second interviewee who highlights the glass ceiling even for German-speaking capable Cameroonians if they haven't studied in Germany. As an example, he lists the work doctor at a local hospital that was allegedly chosen not for the criteria of superior equipment but because he studied in Germany and the case of an intern of African origin who was given higher credibility than a usual intern because he studied in Germany and was very familiar with German culture. If staff members haven't studied in Germany, they might not reach higher-level administrative positions. This tendency might explain why it was hard to find higher-level management interviewees who did not previously study abroad during the limited scale in the scope of this study.

Priority is always given to anybody who studied in Germany. Like you see two colleagues on the same position or doing the same kind of thing, they are all staffs, but the one who studied there, though a Cameroonian but the fact that he studied there, he has an upper edge. He has a different treatment. He is treated differently. We have had the case here, two colleagues, both technicians, both heading teams, same kind of teams; but one who studied in Germany but who is a Cameroonian is treated with preferences than another one. That the other would never ever have. [...] And one thing I have noticed, those who speak [German] who may have studied the language here, it is good for positions held by Cameroonians predominantly, because there are positions which are only held by Cameroonians. So, for those positions held by Cameroonians predominantly, they likely give it to a Cameroonian who speaks and understands German as compared to... which is very normal. Because by that position of responsibility, there are documents which are in German, there are so many, there are write-ups, which are in German, there are mails, which come in German, and you have an upper edge, which is very normal because of communication issues. But that is in the case of a position which is only for nationals. But if it was in the case of a position which is general, a Cameroonian who speaks German would never ever get that position over a German national. So, it is not a matter of language. Of you speaking the German language, no. It is a matter of some ethical or cultural things... of cultural beliefs that they have. (Interviewee H, pos. 92-95)

Germans tend to prefer convening with other Germans or expats and seem to stay within those communities. All interviewed Cameroonians didn't relate to the Germans outside of the office context.

There are some who don't even want contact with Africans, there are some who are here and just do their job and have no contact with colleagues or local friends, they don't want to, they just keep to themselves, some of them have had bad experiences maybe or some of them are so limited to what they hear at the official level, the prejudices, the ambiguous speeches for example about Africans and Africa, so there are some who don't have any contact with the local people at all and are just here for their job. So it's very different, there are some who are integrated, but it's rare, and who have a lot of contact at the local level with Africans and who mix with Africans, sozusagen (!) it's rather rare and I think it's often due to a fear, to a system that makes them be in a small world together, the Germans who are here. [translation by author] (Interviewee I, pos. 41)

An interviewee added that Germans prefer to sell their remaining belongings to other Europeans when leaving Cameroon, even when a Cameroonian colleague was offering to pay the same price, which he could not see an economic reason for.

when an expert is leaving and wants to sell maybe some of his belongings, nobody pays attention any longer because we definitely know that they are going to sell to their counterpart nationals. It is only in the absence of their counterparts nationals that they prefer to sell it to another person. [...] I think, it is an aspect of culture, because [it is] not an aspect of economic. It is not an economic aspect, and social and culture, they are seemingly the same thing. Because if I say economic culture, if I bring 5000 to buy something and another person brings 5000, considering the fact that I have been in the same organization with you. I am more prone to be used to you than another person, who is a national of your country, but who has not had the experience of working with you. Or sharing many days of his life with you. Because I think that, if we are working in the same place and we have been colleagues for one year and you haven't heard any bad news about me, like somebody come to get me, you haven't seen any police come here to check on me, you haven't heard anything about me being locked up, or you haven't heard anything about me not paying my bills, I don't see any reason why you shouldn't give me a certain degree of trust. I do not want to refer to it as racism; I don't think it is racism, but I just think it is a cultural thing. (Interviewee 7, pos. 67-69)

In an attempt of understanding this behaviour, I would situate this preference as in-group solidarity within the expat community: Expats have more trouble buying goods in Cameroon for not having local knowledge and being offered goods at higher prices, so selling it to other expats facing the same hardship can be seen as a needs-based decision while a close Cameroonian colleague might have more possibilities based on his local ties.

8. Other characteristics

In connection with the aspect of respecting the rules, "transparency" was mentioned by three interviewees as a characteristic of German management culture which was appreciated.

Three interviewees alluded to long-term planning as part of the German management style. German management is future-oriented. This is a characteristic that is related to

the findings of the Hofstede dimensions and the German cultural standard of scheduling (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 122).

It's very forward-looking [orig.: prospectif], in other words, we know in advance what we want to do and it's... the style I find gives a... for the employee who follows this type of rule, you are less stressed by the work because you plan things in advance, we do a lot of things in advance and we plan for the long term and it's... so it's quite a forward-looking style, which is very forward-looking and in relation to the context - it's out of the ordinary. That's what I can say. [translation by author] (Interviewee M, pos. 25)

One Cameroonian reflected on German humour and the tendency to take jokes literally, which made it difficult for the interviewee to relate with the Germans:

But with the German culture, they kind of assess so much of a joke. So, any joke you make, they reason it circumferentially, couple of times, and try to make meaning out of it to see whether you have been biased, or whether you minimized them, or whether you mock them. So, they try to find negative meaning, out of mere jokes. And they actually take their time to analyse it's a joke, even though they act as it's a joke. And then they can come back to you, at times, and with a very rigid way of responding, that is not free-minded. So, it is like they hold a lot to themselves, no matter the duration they have been with you. (Interviewee H, pos. 43)

In another situation, the Cameroonians did not take the jokes well. There seems to be a mismatch in humour in the workplace. This is not surprising as humour is known to be culture-specific and especially hard to get across in a foreign language.

I left the house, there was a lot of traffic on the way, then I called my colleague and told her that where I was, I couldn't arrive on time, so it has to be said at the meeting that I was in a traffic jam, and then I arrived, the meeting had started, and I went in, and the director said to me, "Yes, Mr [name], yes, you say you're late, but there's traffic every day. When you want to arrive quickly, you have to leave very early." [...] it was a way of saying that there is traffic for everyone and that is no reason to arrive late. But I couldn't do anything, I was there and the traffic didn't move, I had left early, but I was stuck there. I couldn't get in the other cars, I couldn't do anything and then I called my colleague to inform her, she had... so my colleague passed on the information well, but the answer is that you can't be late. But one day, she [the director] also arrived late, she was caught in the traffic jam, but I didn't say anything. But it's just to say that it made me a bit... I said well, it happens, but it was a German joke, that's what I understood. I said to myself, the Germans are like that, you say what happens to you, and then they say "well you can always say that, but you have to be on time". (Interviewee B, pos. 17-19)

This incident has overwhelming similarities with an anecdote included by Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 101) which described the boss pointing out the importance of punctuality under the idea of the importance of principles which falls under the internalised rule control that Germans exert on themselves and expect of others. This can be perceived as weird by others. Cameroonians do have their own important values and rules, but the principle of punctuality disregarding a person's situation is not one of them.

To summarize the findings, we saw that the outstanding feature of German culture for Cameroonians is its structuredness, that gets displayed in its meticulousness and rules-based organisation. Germans work according to their regulations, which they have for every aspect of the work sphere. Accountability is key to measuring outputs and out of a sense of responsibility to fulfil the task. The rules are made to ensure objectivity and the

greatest efficiency, however, they can cause friction with the local context. Nonetheless, the structure offers a relaxed environment for the Cameroonian employees, as the planning prevents unforeseen changes of plans and provides stability. The leadership approach within the organisation aims at flat hierarchies and asks for their employees' feedback. On the other side, the Germans have a strict distinction between the private and the professional sphere, which is why the Cameroonians don't interact with them on a more personal level. There seems to be a preference for the culturally similar, especially fluency in German creates an advantage when communicating with Germans. Other characteristics aligned with the idea of rigorousness are also transparency and long-term planning.

Concluding, the structuredness of the German working style - rule-based decisions, the separation of different spheres and the universalism of standards regardless of hierarchy – is what stands in greatest contrast to Cameroonian working culture.

5.2. Areas of cultural divergence

In the previous chapters, we have seen the main characteristics of German culture from a Cameroonian viewpoint. In the following, we will focus on the frictions that the different understandings are causing based on anecdotes of my interviewees.

5.2.1. Cultural friction during the adaptation process

1. Areas of Cultural Shock for Germans

The issues for newly arrived Germans according to their Cameroonian colleagues were an adaptation to the circumstances. First of all, the climate and the environment are different. Some German expats or their families had health issues and had to move away for better access to healthcare. Another topic is insecurity which is elevated for White people. A recurrent difficulty the Cameroonians ascribed to the Germans is the language barrier. So, fluency in French and English is of high importance for Germans working in Cameroon. Two interviewees mentioned the difference in traffic; the asphalt of the streets might not be intact, fast motorbikes pass along the cars and the city of Yaoundé faces long traffic jams during rush hours.

Given that Cameroon is a highly diverse country, moving to different parts of the country can challenge a new adaptation process: one interviewee mentioned the different social contexts in the North of the country which is predominantly Muslim compared to the predominantly Christian South of the country. In the North, people culturally cover more with clothing, even though not everyone might be Muslim. Differences can also be experienced between the Anglophone and Francophone regions. According to an interviewee from Buea, people there are more cordial and receptive. Due to the Anglophone Crisis, many Germans working in the GIZ Buea office had to relocate to Yaoundé which is in the francophone part of the country.

Another issue for ethnic Germans is their positionality as White people in the country. Cameroonians commonly assume that all White people have money and request higher prices. Linked to the undeniable appearance as White people is the possibility of harassment in the streets which could pose a great challenge to some Germans. One interviewee mentioned the complaints of a German colleague who was stopped by the police every day at the same place. Generally, the police controls of cars might be a problem

for the Germans if they “want to insist on [their] rights and everything and you spend an hour on the road not going anywhere” (Interviewee J, pos. 69).

2. Adaptation

Most Germans show great potential for integration and adaptation, even though they might have troubles in the beginning. Interviewees describe prejudices of Germans when arriving in Cameroon, but also their process of adaptation to the new environment. Often German expats arrive with pre-formulated ideas in Cameroon, based on what they’ve been taught in Germany. Nonetheless, despite having one-dimensional answers at first, they usually get moulded into the new task by the environment.

So it's... in my opinion it's that, that is to say, they adapt in small steps, they adapt, but they still keep... because also what we notice is that some people can come with fixed ideas, preconceived ideas, but when they arrive on the spot it changes, they see, they had told them: the Cameroonians are... they are people who love money too much, they are corrupt, they are... but when they arrive, they see that it's not quite like that, there are still people who are honest. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 39)

The cultural differences in customs and artefacts are met with mutual interest and exchange. The interest in the other is one step toward cultural sensitivity according to Bennett (1986). It has been said during my interviews that the Germans are adapting well and show an interest to learn.

For example, we have already... when we organise parties, we prepare them ourselves when it's private; recently we were at a colleague's sheep party and he... it was Cameroonian dishes and it's the dishes they eat because you invite them, they come, they eat what we eat and when they invite us to their party, we eat what's there without any problem. So, it's really the sharing of experience, the sharing of culture, we're forced to live with it, and we want to beat the idea of domination a bit; that because it is my culture, it's necessarily what's good and that's what I do. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 43)

Two interviewees spoke very highly about their supervisor who manages to understand the subtleties of Cameroonian politics and culture and integrates well into the Cameroonian context. Several interviewees also mentioned that most Germans already have experience abroad and were recruited for the position especially because they have intercultural management skills.

I think, most of the German co-workers I have, have had a lot of experience out of Germany, so, they kind of blend in very easily and most of them have worked in Africa before. So, I think, for them that, like adapting to the Cameroonian culture and [...] Cameroon has a bit of everything in it so, anyone can easily find themselves in Cameroon and Cameroonians in themselves are also very open people and very flexible, to adapt to other cultures as well. So, if it has to do with the German colleagues, I think they fit in quite well, there might be a few things they might not understand when things don't go strict the German way but we always say ... there's an expression they say 'le Cameroun, c'est le Cameroun' after a few months or a few years, you find yourself adapting to certain things which you could not even stomach in the first month here. (Interviewee J, pos. 67)

Even though the Cameroonian culture and context can be tough at the beginning, which brings a culture shock to the new arrivals, they adapt to the environment. Further

research would be necessary to understand the German perspective on this adaptation process and their culture shock phase.

The adaptation process has also been improved historically, a senior interviewee tells me. Comparing his experience working with Germans in the 90s and working today, he has seen improvement in adaptation because the personnel coming to Cameroon now seems to be younger and henceforth more open according to him.

It's getting better precisely because of the openness I mentioned, and we have the impression that when the Germans arrive here, and as you arrive younger and younger, you arrive like people who go to their home [vont chez eux] and who say to themselves "Well, I don't know my new home [le chez-moi là, je ne connais pas très bien] very well, but I'm going to arrive and I'm going to fight, I'm going to adapt". And then after a few months, you don't see them anymore, as I said, you don't see them anymore, they're lost in the neighbourhoods, you see them go by, they go up and down. I think things are improving, but there's still a base that seems common. [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 108)

Compared to other foreign development actors in Cameroon, the GIZ environment seems more friendly for some local staff than other international organisations. An interviewee expected to feel unwelcome in a foreign space in their own country because it is highly likely to find international organisations in Cameroon that make greater distinctions between local and foreign staff. An interviewee describes this as resentment towards the local staff:

I'll like to appreciate, first of all, their ability to be receiving, they are very receptive in terms of collaboration with Cameroonians in the workplace given that it's a German organisation first. So, we are... when we get in, it's expected that maybe we can feel some... we can feel a bit of the resentment or... but they try to make it as equal as possible, make it as friendly as, the environment as friendly as possible. [Interviewer: What do you mean with resentment?] Like, when I say resentment, I feel like I'm... it's kind of like, I don't know, maybe a higher... that's compared to other people who come and establish in the country, yeah. The working environment is more friendly yeah, it's friendlier. It feels like it's more of a family thing, there's no difference in culture, each person is willing to adapt to the other person, you don't see that gap. [Interviewer: But you see it in other organisations?] Yeah, other foreign... working in other foreign places is highly likely to find something like that. (Interviewee E, pos. 81-85)

This is supported by an interviewee who spoke about the United Nations System and confirms that the German space of the GIZ is more welcoming and open than other international organisations because the Germans seek to understand and try to give a space for Cameroonian culture.

I have worked a lot with the United Nations system, but when I came here, I am in a team with Germans, I have always found that, for me, I would say that there is a lot of intercultural openness, which seems to me like an instruction that was given that you must always ask yourselves if you are in the field of the culture of others, if you are making a space for the culture of others. So, I'm quite comfortable in relationship to others, because there are others who don't even ask themselves the question, i.e. they have something in their head, they think that's it, but with the Germans, of course there are also some Germans who are like that, but since I've been working on a daily basis, you can feel that there is, that we give importance to understanding. [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 58)

3. Superiority

Most interviewees are happy about the working relationship with their current supervisor. However, many isolated incidents of negative experiences with Germans occurred where the German colleague showed an air of superiority or behaved even condescending towards the Cameroonians. It has to be taken into account that the following descriptions do not apply to everyone. This global analysis of many individual cases can give a broad overview but does not describe individual manifestations of Intercultural Competence as many interviewees spoke highly of the current management or their colleagues.

An interviewee spoke about a German colleague who had a very strict communication style on the thin line between reprimanding and conversing which even made some Cameroonian colleagues cry. The team accepted it as her very “German” style that was not warm and friendly, yet it cannot be spoken of as a general “German” rude behaviour as other German colleagues display greater people skills, and the colleague in question left Cameroon for personal reasons after. Another colleague describes it as follows:

For me, I don't see it too badly, I don't know. It depends because sometimes it depends on the person you're with, the person you have in front of you, but otherwise I had a colleague here before, I had a good relationship with her, me in particular, but it wasn't the case for everybody and sometimes we had the impression that she's too German, or it's that we're the blacks and she's... - you see a bit of a rapport there. [translation by author] (Interviewee M, pos. 95)

Another interviewee described one of his German colleagues as one of the best people he ever worked with, but a different colleague as an unlucky negative experience who also made his colleagues feel disrespected and of less value:

I remember at my work there was another, [German colleague 2], one seconded personnel that we used to work with also. Back then, when I used to work in [organisation], I think he somehow did not believe that, an African or maybe a Cameroonian could also be something. Because of the way his approach, the way he treated, so he was like this god up there and there was another person lower down there. That was the only moment I felt like this, the culture or others were not respected. Even moments when many people who worked with him complained, so they tried to compare him with the other colleague, my direct colleague who was [German colleague 1], who left Cameroon in 2018, and they were trying to compare him with [German colleague 1] who was very nice and open but [German colleague 2] was not as open as [German colleague 1] and did not regard people as [German colleague 1] did. So, for me, that is the only incidence that I experience. [...]
The approach, the difference was in terms of character or behaviour. How people are treated and how do you regard people. Take, for instance, if you come late, you have to apologize, because you know that you are late, and it is very important that you take note of that. Another person comes late and feels that I do not have to apologize for coming late because I am one big, one superior White man coming from somewhere. That is where the difference was. (Interviewee F, pos. 20, 24)

Another interviewee was happy with the current management but critiqued the former leadership, who was very germanocentric and imposed her ideas on the team:

So as far as the management culture is concerned, I would say that it depends on the people. At the moment we have someone who has a good management practice, a leadership that is sufficiently satisfactory. Before that, we had a person in charge, a coordinator, a CTP, as they say, a senior technical advisor, who had, I'll say it, a bit colonial ideas. Yes, who only wanted us to hear what she said, what... what

should be done, etc. So it was quite difficult, relations were quite difficult. (Interviewee D, pos. 27)

These negative assessments of a German are almost always attributed to individualised behaviour while, generally speaking, German culture gets appreciated.

So, I would say that maybe... I don't know about me, I take it as the personal behaviour of the person, but it doesn't really reflect who the Germans are, for example, it can be the disagreements you have with a person, but not necessarily all Germans. So, I'm not saying that all Germans are like that because the ones I knew are not like that. [translation by author] (Interviewee M, pos. 95)

Most interviewees felt treated equally in their team. Nonetheless, a few cases stuck out: One interviewee gave voice to the experience of a driver who was called out for stopping the car to give a lift to a Cameroonian colleague who went the same way to the office. The driver had to explain himself whereas my interviewee assumed that it would not have been an issue if the colleague had been German.

"Tatillon" [transl.: fussy, meticulous, niggling] is... yes, it's always that you have to... I'll take an example; someone goes out with a driver. The driver recognises his colleague who is going back to the office, he stops to say, "Well, as you're going to the office, let's go to the office" and then he's asked for an explanation because he stopped. Well, I haven't experienced that myself, but drivers who complained like that when I came in. But it's not everyone who does it, this is just to give an example, it's not only the driver, but because it's written in the rules and regulations and he understands in his own way, the other also understands in his own way and then it becomes difficult. So, me, I find that some people are a bit fussy and that gives the impression that when the employees get together they say, "She's doing this because we're Cameroonians and that's why she or he treats us like that, whereas when it's themselves, well, if it was one of his brothers, I would have taken him and he wouldn't have said anything," you see. So, it's a bit like that, but it's not generalised, it's a few people who are like that. [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 42)

In a particular case, the team refused to go to a common meal if the boss would have been present because the work relations were very bad.

It happened like that, we said, "Well, it happened, it doesn't matter", they said that as we had to go and eat, if the boss came, we wouldn't eat, we wouldn't go there. We had to beg the boss not to come because the boss was alone and then the others were three or four people, not everyone, but they were adamant. (Interviewee B, pos. 82)

Even though we have seen that Germans like rules to be applied universally to everyone, there seems to be a distinction between the in-group (Germans or expats) and the out-group (local staff).

4. Tolerance

Two interviewees spoke about the limited tolerance of Germans for accepting norm deviation. The GIZ work culture has an institutionalised onboarding process and aims at flat hierarchies, yet, one interviewee felt not accompanied in his learning process:

it is more like the tolerance level is either very minimal. Tolerance. Tolerance level. Is quite minimal. They do not tolerate a lot and they do not give time for learning. Like the learning period allowed for persons to get use to something or to pick up on-the-job training is quite minimal, is quite very reduced. And the number of, let's say

also, opportunities or chances given to someone is very negligible. (Interviewee H, pos. 47)

German culture is known for its limited tolerance for mistakes. A mistake can be forgiven if the person is generally known as being reliable and usually rule-conforming (Schroll-Machl, 2013, 101, 106): The Germans invest a lot of time in planning, which can seem excessive from the outside, to have no mistakes later, because mistakes are not seen as desirable. But when they occur, the responsible party should learn from them so that they don't repeat themselves. Understanding German processes as meticulous planning that lead to an assured success is the opposite of other innovation alternatives, which have a higher focus on trial-and-error learning. This goes along with the general German risk aversiveness.

Another interviewee explained this aspect where Germans generally have a certain level of tolerance, but at a point cannot cope with the transgression of rules anymore. A few deviations are accepted but repeated mistakes or disrespect of schedule leads to an extreme amount of frustration.

It is a challenge. It [the Cameroonian context] is a different world, it is a different world and if you do not have a very high level of tolerance and perseverance, you can just say, no it is not possible. Or you can ... Because as I said, you tolerate, you tolerate and at a certain time, you say "no (hits on the table)! It is no more possible, I can't accept again" and when they say that the cup is full, it is really full and there is no way back. (Interviewee G, pos. 101)

This cannot just be seen as low Intercultural Competence of the Germans in question, but it could also be understood as a sign of low tolerance for norm deviation that seems to be a feature of German culture in general (see Schroll-Machl, 2013). Flexibility as a character trait is a sign of good intercultural competence or adaptability. However, the German collective does not value this trait as a whole, so a greater show of flexibility might be valued in an intercultural encounter but might be sanctioned by their peers. This might illustrate the conflict of the German expats, who have to fulfil their role as employees of a German institution while also trying to fulfil their role as flexible partners to the Cameroonians. This finds an example within the friction of the per-diem we see in 5.2.2. §7.

5. Politics

In general, Cameroonian society is not very politicised. Politics are not a common topic of discussion in the public sphere and there are no antagonistic public demonstrations²¹. In my experience, Cameroonians might discuss political issues with close friends and within their communities, but people generally refrain from including political comments in small talk and with strangers. The reasons for the apparent apolitical space in Cameroon are manifold, but I can just speculate on the reasons behind this: One reason might be that the current political system was installed by a Cameroonian elite after the French model at the time of independence and does not include the form of political participation that

²¹ I was working with Cameroonian Youth (that is considered up to the age of 35) in peace work in Cameroon. A certain political apathy towards the government was noticeable because the young people only experienced one president and one political system during their lifetime. The Cameroonian government is experienced as following a rather reactive than proactive governing style, reacting to crisis but not surprising by innovative new policy proposals that would create a discussion among the general population.

fits the Cameroonian context. A lot of respect is given to the local rulers who have a great social sphere of influence, combining spiritual and administrative tasks, as well as Christian leaders. There are a lot of grassroots organisations and local actors that try to implement change in their communities and beyond, and advocate for different ideas locally. From my experience, these involved actors in the communities working on development and peace call themselves advocates rather than activists and do not frame their work as political, even though with a Western lens, we would classify them as grassroots political activists.

However, despite the cautious non-discussion of politics, the Anglophone Crisis is a recurrent topic of conversation with both Anglophone and Francophone communities as the violence in the anglophone North- and South-West regions of the country does affect the country as a whole because of migration flows of internally displaced people and higher insecurity in the anglophone part of the country. The narrative of the violence and the framing of the crisis changed with different speakers I met, which is interesting for future research, yet not part of the analysis in the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the dynamics of the crisis have to be taken into account by the Germans working in Cameroon.

One factor of the so-called Anglophone Crisis are cultural and political identities and discrimination of (linguistic) minorities in the supposedly bilingual Cameroonian context. Thus, Germans in their work in Cameroon must accord due respect to both official languages of the country. One of such highly controversial cases retold by an interviewee was an exam that was only available in the French language, even though the public were graduates from both the Anglo-Saxon and the French education systems. This led to an outcry which was responded to with a stronger focus on the availability of all documents in both French and English. One interviewee mentioned sensitivity to these issues as an important skill for Germans working in Cameroon as it could fuel the divide and play into current discrimination. Documents coming from the headquarters are usually available in German and also English, while there are also forms available only in French, which might pose a problem in a bilingual country where bilingualism is a tool of politics and inclusion should be handled thoughtfully.

Another issue is the polarisation of the main political parties CRM (Cameroon Resistance Movement) and the CPDM (Cameroon People's Democratic Movement) which is a very sensitive issue. A German coming to Cameroon might not understand the history and context of why members of these two parties will not get along with each other, and that heated discussions are expected if both are invited to an event. One interviewee also mentioned that it is important for German employees to show neutrality in face of Cameroonian politics because a little thoughtless remark could cause friction and deteriorate relationships.

So, if for example, because you have heard a speech from the leader of CRM which wants to take over CPDM and then you say, 'Oh, that man is very powerful', in front of people who are part of the CPDM, they'll start looking at you like, 'These foreigners they are the ones supporting MRC', and then they can create a kind of diplomatic incident. (Interviewee C, pos. 126)

6. Local Structures

One interviewee narrated that German development workers placed within Cameroonian-led organisations sometimes clash with the organisations when they surpass their job descriptions, and the local organisations feel like the hosted personnel is interfering with issues outside of their job description.

Another clash could happen on the organisational level. An example would be when Germans understand decentralisation by directly interacting with the municipalities as project partners instead of passing through the government first. Whereas the Cameroonian understanding of decentralisation favour a different approach and interacting with communes without prior consultation of the government can arise a political debate.

On some occasions, the German rigorousness and rules conflict with the Cameroonian context. Sometimes it is a struggle for the local team of the GIZ to implement the strict wording of the headquarters which is in contradiction to the Cameroonian context and which is not always to be labelled an intercultural issue but an issue of the relationship between the headquarters and the local branch.

The rigid structures of the German headquarters do not work well in the collaboration with the Cameroonian partners. The teams then try to find a compromise within the team, however, it is often returning to the imposed rule:

If, for example, there is a partner who has not been able to do such and such a thing and we cannot pay his fee, I want to understand the reason for the rule that is being imposed on us, to understand the reason, the validity of this rule, to see... to present the context to the colleagues in question to say that this is how it is and very often we arrive at a compromise. And I don't know if it's that... and very often I also have to point out that compromise is the fact of going back to the rule, that is to say respecting the rule, it is not so much adapting to a context, but respecting the rule. Of course, there are derogations, for example, sometimes a service provider does not do his work on time and we try to understand because we need to maintain good relations with the partner. So, of course, we respect the rule, but we also have to adjust a lot and try to say that well, it's a partner we've known for a long time, we just have to communicate with him to tell him that from now on it's going to be like that. [translation by author] (Interviewee M, pos. 31)

In other instances, a German supervisor discarded documents from the headquarters that did not make sense in the Cameroonian context. The local team thus has to adapt. For this process, German colleagues consult the Cameroonian staff about their best practices:

Certain technical subjects because someone who thinks in German as it happens over there sometimes doesn't happen in the same way here, and it's... for example when I had my team leader who was German, he said, "With us, we do it like this, but how do you think we do it here?" And we felt that he thought that I could tell him how things are done here so that we could see how we could work with the partner and that's important. Knowing the partner, that's one of the strengths of our programme; it's that we work according to the perception that the partner has of the subject that we're treating. So we don't come in and say, we've seen that this is what should be done, that is what we should do, but we come in and say, "Well, how do you see things?" [translation by author] (Interviewee B, pos. 48)

It was criticized that some Germans seem to have great theoretical knowledge but not the necessary information that applies in the Cameroonian development context. In this example, an interviewee criticises the direct transfer of Western knowledge in the Cameroonian local context, especially concerning the role of women or how the fabric of society works:

It is more like... a cover looking... to us, we actually see that there is more, that could be done, if they have a grasp of the actual understanding of the field, here. So, they are adapting superficially based on, what they can attain and not on what is

actually required. For instance, let me lay on gender issues: You might want to empower certain communities, so females in communities, as a way to fight gender issues, but in that doing, they fail to embed themselves into the cultural heritage of that environment, before introducing the concept, which they are bringing in. So definitely, they cannot actually realize, what they intend to realize in terms of socio-economic development in that area, as compared to what is actually... or what measures they can actually take, because if you go to our communities, for instance, there are areas still in the East and the Northern Regions, where men are predominantly leads in families, lead in villages. You cannot want to empower women, without, in one way or another, grouping the men, and maybe getting them involved superficially, and then laying more emphasis on the women. Because if you want to... if go to those areas, with rigid cultures, if what you want to do is to develop women, get men involved there as well, let them just get involved superficially and then give more of the task to the women, and you make the men believe that because they are dominant, so they are kind of more of like "supervising" the women. So, that is why more of attention is paid to the women. Then the men would have a satisfactory knowledge about the concept and the knowledge, why women are involved more. Or the knowledge, why more attention is paid to women than men. But you see, they just go directly and then cave out just women and start developing women... (Interviewee H, pos. 106-109)

5.2.2. Differences in values and the understanding of the nature of things

1. Time

In the previous section about German culture, we have seen that respecting schedules is important. The different in management and perception of time is a major difference between the Cameroonian and German contexts which has been mentioned by half the interviewees. It frustrates the German participants at an event if the time frame is not respected: One example is that the person who gives the welcome speech at an event finds themselves in front of a still rather small audience and the beginning of the activity has to be pushed to a later point. Another derivation from the schedule is that pauses are longer than expected. It is common in the Cameroonian context that an activity might start up to two hours later and goes two hours longer. Punctuality is such an important quality for the German work environment that it is the first attitude a Cameroonian interviewee mentions as a requirement for someone working with them.

you know when a German says that an occasion starts at 10 o'clock, it has to be 10 o'clock and the Germans will always ... - the Cameroonians will just be drinking coffee and waiting for the minister to come whenever he comes but I think after a while they get used to it, and I think the ministers now are of a little bit of the younger generation who are trying to change a few things so, even they too are trying to adapt now to the German style or to the foreign way of life. (Interviewee J, pos. 6)

Flexibility is essential for events in Cameroon because external influences might disrupt schedules like the late delivery of food for the break by the external contractor. Most friction happened during events where the schedule could not be respected. Cameroonians used to this perception of time would wait, while the Germans might get annoyed with the situation. An interviewee experienced in both cultural contexts found a compromise by identifying the time that is the most relevant for the Germans to attend and letting them leave early if the event goes over the planned time slot:

Usually, I was flexible, I will tell them, look it is possible. I never looked for any dispute to say, no you must be there. Just tell me when it is possible. Let us negotiate,

maybe we could add one hour or 30 minutes, or at certain points, maybe you have to be there. We negotiate and we find our way. It is through negotiation, discussion and looking at, trying to understand also the German colleague and to gain also. That's to gain... That's like I know, there are certain things, let's say it is a meeting, I can understand, that they are there, and they are bored because there is nothing happening. So, I can understand this period, from this time, it would not be interesting, you can leave when we start doing this. So, we negotiate, and we find a way. (Interviewee G, pos. 50)

This time consciousness is judged positive and negative. On the one hand, Germans do respect resting time and work efficiently during the time that is considered working time. On the other hand, this rigidity in time does not work well in the Cameroonian context. One Cameroonian pointed out the colleague who took her lunch at the German lunch hour of noon and saw it as a moment to start chatting, which she wouldn't do during her work time, while the Cameroonian did not forcibly take their lunch break at the same time but whenever fitting in their own schedule.

Time consciousness is like I know you have to start work at this time and I leave at this time, no flexibility is like this: I come at this time and leave at this time. That for the Germans is clear. This is when I begin, this is when I end. Now, on the other hand, Cameroonians, we others, on our own side, we work, and even if we are sick, we come to work and if we have to work extra hours, we come and work extra hours. And then, while German colleagues or collaborators would say I have already done this number of extra hours, which means that I can stay at home or I would not come to work, because I am sick, even if it is a fever or you catch a small cold, but we would force and come to work. And even if we have worked extra hours, we would not say we can convert them to one day holidays or two days holidays. (Interviewee G, pos. 20)

Germans have a different understanding of time: They are very strict about their work, but also about their free hours. Germans would not stay overtime too much, and take a day off to compensate when they worked on the weekend. Cameroonians are much more flexible. They would chat during work and not take the start and end times so strict, but they would not count the extra hours they have to stay longer for a meeting in the evening.

You [Germans] have the watch, but we [Africans] have the time. (Popular Saying)

I've heard this statement in various contexts and I think it is fitting to illustrate the dichotomy in understanding the concept of time. In my interpretation, time gets experienced as fluent and abundant in the Cameroonian context because there is the underlying assumption that there is enough time for important things. Meetings get thus scheduled according to priority, and there will always be time for urgencies and addressing relevant issues. Importance is given to the outcome; the time frame plays a minor role in the Cameroonian context. This could be an example of putting relationships before tasks, an opposite of the German standard of objectivity, where priority is given to the task and personal issues are minor in the work process.

In the German context, early socialisation teaches us that time is precious [*„Zeit ist Geld.“*] and one of the rarest goods. Experiencing time as restricted, Germans try to make the best of their time and use it efficiently. Within this thought, unproductive moments or waiting for the other “wastes the time” of the German [*„Zeitverschwendung“*]. Even German linguistics illustrate the concept of efficiency in resource management of the precious resource time in this example, and many more idioms related to the importance of using time efficiently can be found in the German language. Meeting according to schedules is

not just an act of courtesy but respect for the most important good of the German and being late is a disrespect to the German's plans and priorities because the latecomer put his personal affairs before the needs of the German and his scarce allocation of time to various tasks of the day. Understanding this underlying value of efficient resource allocation and the scarcity of time can help us understand why Germans intrinsically feel disturbed by disrespected schedules and waiting time.

2. Communication of difficulties

One interesting difference between Cameroonians and Germans is to be found in dealing with difficulties. Cultural differences most strongly manifest themselves in the way we deal with difficulties, as also conflict management is very influenced by culture. For Germans, explicit, verbal communication is key while Cameroonians tend to solve their problems and issues without informing about the progress. Cameroonian communication can be more indirect so knowledge of the cultural codes would be necessary to understand the message. Not attending a meeting or arriving late could be the communication of discontent. Silence can be seen as part of communication: As Germans usually voice their opinion in factual objective discussions, silence is seen as consent. Hierarchies do not matter much when discussing a new process or the optimization of an issue, however, communication can be less direct and equal when conflicts arise and the relationship with the superior decides whether to voice discontent openly (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 184). In the Cameroonian context, silence does not necessarily mean consent.

An interviewee, who self-declared as rather reserved in speaking about personal issues, experienced tensions because she did not inform about her delay. The Germans would be understanding but expect her to communicate adequately.

I can be late because I had some problems on the road, etc. The good attitude would be to call the leader to tell him that I'll be late, but I'm on my way, but I don't do it all the time, I forget and it creates little tensions: "But you should have said it, you should always say", he says that to me all the time: "You always have to inform", I know that, that's my... that comes from me because I still have a lot of difficulties, this is my way of communicating things that seem a bit private to me, if I'm late it's perhaps because I've had difficulties, I tell myself that it doesn't interest anyone so I can... But nevertheless, it's useful so that they know that I won't be there on time and that we can do, rearrange schedules or work from home, yes. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 39)

This issue of progress communication was very well analysed by another interviewee who laid out the different scheme of information flow: Whereas Cameroonians would work on the issue and explore all possible options and feel stressed for not being able to make the deadline, the Germans only expect sufficient communication about the difficulty and follow ups about the current state, and thus are able to push the deadline with a plausible justification. As the Cameroonians are not providing information in a for the Germans appropriate way, it can easily lead to mistrust which will be the topic of the next section.

What is particular, I think there is the flow of information. It is not that you have solutions for everything, it is like if you are blocked somewhere, what you only have to do is to inform and explain what is wrong. So, that one I think is something positive. Our own culture is that we will stay quiet, and we will be stressed-up but will not express it out. We will think they are struggling to solve a problem. And the German is thinking there are doing nothing to solve the problem. When the problem is really a priority even, but we do not talk. So, with the German management culture, you give deadlines, and you respect the deadlines. We will think, we have to

respect the deadlines. We do not know that, if we do not respect the deadlines, we only have to explain. To say this deadline won't be respected because there is something that come across and will not be able to respect the deadline. So, there is this communication, that is always there with the Germans. And, which means also, that if at all, we are not communicating and they want something from us, at times it may be a problem because they keep asking: "where, when, what is happening with the rest?" and we say "but why are they disturbing". They can just wait and when we have the solution or when the work will be done, we will transmit, so it can also be a problem. [...] If the person is not here, the person has the impression you people are doing nothing. And the person can easily think it is a lie, that you are not telling the truth if the person does not know the culture. (Interviewee G, 34-38)

This cultural standard can be phrased as the "obligation to inform" where rule-deviation is accepted, as long as it is self-reported because it shows a high commitment to the task and responsibility (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 106).

Germans tend to solve interpersonal issues in an equally straight way whereas the Cameroonians would not communicate so openly about problems. With the idea of efficiency and improvement in mind, Germans believe in constructive criticism: Room for improvement gets addressed directly to help the other progress. It is usually not aimed at the person but phrased objectively regarding the task or the role.

There was room to clarify things like communication. Like the Germans would prefer that is better you communicate when things are not going well. You don't keep it in you, you have to say it "this is what is not going on well", and on the other part, the [Cameroonian] colleagues, they keep things. That is, they would not express themselves openly. So, they would be thinking; no, I cannot tell her this thing maybe because it will hurt her, it will hurt them, while for the Germans they would be open to tell them, "this and I believe that", "I think we should do things the different way" or "we should not do this type of thing again". (Interviewee G, pos. 16)

On the other hand, an interviewee emphasized that Germans do not share much information publicly regarding their work, like announcing every step of their projects and which sums of money they are handling, and employees are asked to not share this project information either. In this regard, Germans are less communicative than Cameroonians.

That's the German culture, be more focused on what you are doing, don't tell more. Work more, but don't tell more. If somebody says, 'What are you doing?' say, 'I'm doing this' OK, finish, the person does not need to know, 'I have to do an office here, I have another office there' the moment you are talking like that you are divulging information that is not relevant to... for example, the questions that are not relevant to your work. (Interviewee C, pos. 61)

This can maybe be traced back to the issue of focusing on the content, rather than the form. A possible explanation for this behaviour might be the focus on the work but not the public display of greatness, as Germans do prefer to convince with objective results and colouring presentations with non-goal-relevant details might be seen as unprofessional. Reporting details is very important however in the Cameroonian context. In my personal experience, even small progress of NGOs does get promoted through WhatsApp stories and personal introductions go along achievements. One explanation for the Cameroonian way of reporting successes is the need to justify one's position in a hierarchy and the amount of experience or higher position a person has determines the level of respect attributed to them. Another explanation might be the general higher connectedness

through communication that is not result-oriented but to stay in contact and curate relationships.

3. Mistrust

The German need for constant feedback on the process, has been perceived as a sign of mistrust by some Cameroonian colleagues. Six interviewees mentioned cases in which they do not feel trusted by the German management. An interviewee referred to the benefit of the doubt that is not given to Cameroonians and who then felt mistrusted:

I would mention that there is an aspect of trust, which is not there. Because one thing we learn from the British system is that the British, they are strict, but they give you the benefit of doubt. They trust you and give you that benefit of doubt, they say I will trust you, but I hope you do not betray the trust. But the Germans, they don't trust at all, and don't know if you get that. They don't trust you at all. They just know, you are there probably to render a service or to do a task and they just focus on the task. Nothing else. (Interviewee H, pos. 62)

This goes along with the before described specific mistrust given to Cameroonians when dealing with orders from Germany when they are the agent on the ground: Even though they explain the reasons for a delay, they feel suspected of lying. This might go along with the previously mentioned differences in communication. Another factor for the mistrust might be existing stereotypes towards Cameroonian seriousness in accomplishing this task.

This differentiation in treatment however would also be done by a Cameroonian boss: An interviewee described that Cameroonians would get sanctioned for behaviour which would be tolerable for a White person, such as taking a laptop from the office home even though it is not supposed to leave the office. In this example, the White person receives a higher benefit of the doubt. For lack of data, I cannot frame this yet within the general dynamics of the belief of Western superiority, where a White person receives a higher starting level of trust, but it should be a phenomenon interesting for future research.

4. Corruption

While talking about German-Cameroonian relationships, six of my interviewees mentioned corruption without me asking for it or having it on my research agenda which I found curious. So, I decided to include this as an interesting sidenote in my research. While most interviewees mentioned corruption as a negative stereotype Germans have of Cameroonians, which should be fought as prejudice because it is not a factor in their work, nonetheless, it is a factor in German-Cameroonian relationships in one way or another: The prejudice of corruption is what makes many arriving Germans mistrust Cameroonians at first, says one interviewee. Another interviewee mentioned being faced with corruption is a shock for Germans arriving in Cameroon. Three interviewees spoke out against corruption in Cameroonian spaces and appreciated the higher transparency of German spaces.

This shows that corruption has an impact on the German perception of Cameroonians, no matter if the particular environment or individual is subjected to this, but also that corruption plays a role in Cameroonian work environments more than in German ones. The interpretation of what corruption is can be a more sensitive issue for Germans. Schroll-Machl (2013) mentions that the German “objective” treatment of colleagues, especially with friends in the work context is a statement against nepotism. Favouring people with whom you have a close relationship is already seen as a sign of non-

professionalism in the work context. Deriving from the analysis of this literature, the German perception of corruption compared to the Cameroonian perception of what is expected from friends and what is immoral behaviour could cause friction. This will be further elaborated within the dimensions of universalism vs. particularism and individualism vs. collectivism.

5. Bureaucracy

Despite Germany having a high level of bureaucracy in its national structures, and despite being known for the institutionalisation of many processes, Germans in Cameroon struggle with the level of bureaucracy that six interviewees referred to.

One aspect is the irregular processing time of requests in ministries and other authorities. The projected period can be exceeded if external circumstances influence the regular procedure – and the expectation of a certain time frame can frustrate the Germans.

Sometimes you have that reproach, 'but you said it was going to take 2 weeks, but I said I'm not the one responsible, someone ... I said based on the information I had at that time. So, it's just that they should be a bit more understanding that things don't always go as planned, especially in Cameroon, things don't always go as planned and what is typical with a German is that when you say something is going to take 2 days Zwei Tage Bearbeitungszeit [2 days processing period], it should actually be 2 days or less not more but sometimes you really need to understand, put yourself in the position of the person and understand why it's not functioning that way. (Interviewee J, pos. 95)

The process can be improved with knowledge of the local context but not through pressure. Cooperation with the German organisation might not always be the main priority for the local authority and the bureaucratic procedures do not follow a technocratic scheme like German institutions do routine paperwork.

the system of bureaucracy here, [...] you do not pressure them for immediate... for emergence... in the treating of your documents. Because they have... Priority to them is upholding that position, so if they have other political issues, that have to do with their offices, before coming into other issues of cooperation or routine, office routine. Understanding that atmosphere of public administration, how it works here, is a very essential thing. Because for most of them, if something is not done, collaborators here, they find difficulties in actually going through many public administrative process. They find difficulties in resolving public issues, which are things which, if they have the understanding, they would know, oh for this issue, this is what temperament you need to put. [...] Most of them think it is about bribery, I don't do bribery, but I know how public administration functions, and I look at the weaknesses in the administration and that is where I emphasize to have maybe my problem solved. [...] I know who to talk to. [...] And you need to know what duration a document takes before it is treated. And you need to know what duration it takes for a document to leave this office to this other one. So, despite the charge of work, despite the socio-political environment; in terms of maybe, there is a campaign, there is something like the African Nations Cup that took place, despite all those other things, that are periodical, which are not fixed, you need to know the normal routine of things. So, they pay more attention on knowing, they just think oh you come in and you submit something, just like it is an office where people are there to serve. They are politicians and more of those high offices are political appointed, so somebody would prefer to adhere to that which may maintain him in that political position as compared to rendering public services, routine public services, you understand what I mean? (Interviewee H, pos. 136-139)

Germans expect the bureaucracy to work as technocratic as the German system, emitting documents in similar ways, but the context is different and should be taken into account. Bureaucracy in Cameroon is more political than in Germany. Germans believe in structures. This very structured society was created historically because of various reasons, among them the importance of the military and the values of duty and obedience (see Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 112). This long habit of rigid structure created an impersonal system of bureaucracy: also, because blame can be pushed towards the structure or the person responsible who made the rule, and not the individual (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 73). Germans do see structure as objective, and bureaucratic processes as technocratic aspects.

We may see here a value conflict of universalism versus particularism. The Germans might expect that the same values, treatment and time apply to everyone in the same way, yet in Cameroon tasks and people usually do not get detached. Relationships are very important for the functioning of a collectivistic society. Objectivity is not the goal. Rules are applied on a case-to-case basis to respond to particularities. Metz (2018, p. 49) sees this particularism of evaluating cases *ceteris paribus* as a result of the understanding of the self as part of a community: The individual exists through ties with its community that creates moral obligations towards those who are closer, and thus partiality is expected from good leadership in favour of the own.

The structure of Cameroonian bureaucracy can be understood as less fixed than the German system, but flexible to get altered according to current priorities. Ministries might fulfil their own political agenda that is not verbalised in a way that is comprehensible to the German. This is important to keep in mind as some issues might not be acknowledged as very political in Germany, such as the translation of documents, bureaucracy, protocol or general assessment of an individual, can become very political issues in Cameroon.

6. Hierarchy and Protocol

Another difficulty for Germans is the high importance of protocol and the respect for hierarchy. When organising an event and addressing public figures, the appropriate amount of respect has to be given. This includes not just properly calling out titles of dignitaries but also making sure the hierarchy order of dignitaries is strictly respected. Germans in contrast would like to see everyone on an equal status level. Germans do understand justice in the way of fairness where the same rules apply to everyone regardless of status. Rules are thus universal. Within traditional German companies, hierarchy and formality are respected by staying with the formal “Sie” (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 154), however, within the GIZ, this German cultural standard is not applicable as people are usually on a first-name basis. In Cameroonian culture, titles are very important.

We have this culture here [in Cameroonian administration] of directors: directors tend to be - not proud - but tend to be like directors in Cameroon. They sit in their office, some of them are, not nervous, but some of them are... it's like kind of power [...] So, you as German you have to actually understand that and then see the person and say, 'M. le directeur'. [...] Here, for example, you call the director [first name of director] he asked us to call him like that but now you cannot do the same at the level of the ministry, you cannot see for example M. le directeur, let's say the name of the director is... yeah, this is an invitation [Full Name of host] you say, 'Bonjour [Name], 'Hello [Name]. You cannot say like that or [director first name], 'Bonjour [director first name]'. No, you say, 'Bonjour M. le directeur'. (Interviewee C, pos. 89-93)

As mentioned before, the Cameroonian context is more hierarchised than the German context where titles are very important, as three interviewees pointed out, and every member of society expects the social order to be respected.

But the Germans, some Germans, some, want to feel that everyone should be the same. Another thing is this issue of titles; Madam, Doctor, Professor, it is minor, but it is always so difficult. This protocol way of "it must be so" than bringing innovations is a challenge. (Interviewee F, pos. 66)

Regarding titles, Schroll-Machl (2013, p. 52) writes that in Germany titles are very important, as the status of an "expert" is regarded very highly, and titles are a sign of expertise. In the above-mentioned excerpt, we see that Germans do prefer to regard everyone as equal and seem to struggle with the protocol in Cameroon. This could be explained by the backlash that this German cultural standard has on contemporary Germans. As it is always given so much importance in the past, some modern Germans developed an aversion to titles and wish to move away from this paradigm. In her foreword, Schroll-Machl explains how the Cultural Standards can be understood as generalist value, and that Germans love structure but also turn to fight against as now archaic regarded German rules to create new ones, and that in different moments from different groups the different standards might not be true (Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 19). This could be an example of such a changing cultural standard that is not so much regarded in younger or international spaces.

7. Per-diem

The particularism of applying different standards to people can also be seen in the issue of the per diem. According to my interviewees in the GIZ, external contractors get a supplement when on an external mission that amounts to the same for a driver as well as for a minister, which creates friction in the Cameroonian context where the higher-ranking person should receive higher compensation and inequality when serving respect for the hierarchy is seen as a good thing.

This goes along with the issue of payment of per-diem for a workshop. In the Cameroonian context, high-level participants of a workshop expect to be paid for attending a meeting, even when it predominantly is favourable for their own goals. The GIZ however chose to provide food and beverages, and reimburse only travel costs, but not pay for attendance. Multiple interviewees emphasised this as one of the biggest frictions with the local context.

Well, it doesn't go down very well yet because in the regulations here that's what's provided for, i.e. if... when a director attends a meeting, we must be able to give him, to pay for his transport, which is even done. We'll give him, for example, let's take an example like that, 20,000, he'll get angry, he'll say, but that's not what I expect, I expect to receive 50,000, but we say no, our regulations, our rule stipulates that we give you rather so much, and that creates friction with the partners and also here internally we still can't agree on how we can manage that with our partners. It's still quite a big subject, quite delicate because it sometimes frustrates the parties, we say to ourselves, we think... sometimes our German colleagues want us to fit completely into their way of thinking and we say no, we mustn't forget that we are here to support our partners. So, we are also Cameroonians, it is true that we work with Germans, we are in a German company, but at the same time we are not going to completely de-cameroonize ourselves to be completely German. There is still this pride in remaining Cameroonian, also saying that you should treat them a bit as if it was us you were treating. So that's where conflicts can arise, but we're finding a way to overcome that. [translation by author] (Interviewee N, pos. 47)

In another department of the GIZ, the same issue occurred but the Cameroonian partners are gradually aware of the German way of not paying for workshop participation.

I think one thing, one issue that was... it was not an issue it's like kind of tradition as you were saying, it's the workshop. Usually, Cameroonians are used to, or civil servants are used to the fact that when they go for a workshop, they give them money, so they sign for money. Normally, among them, when they organise their own workshop, after the workshop, somebody will come and sign like, I don't know, 100 euros just for the workshop, for attending the workshop. So, Germans are not like that, especially in GIZ, they don't pay for that. Instead, if we organise a workshop and we invite them, it's like a kind of HD (human capacity development). If they are present, it's for... it's, I mean, it's for their benefit to be there so, we don't have to pay and that's why some people till now do not understand, I mean, at the level of the ministries. We don't... we only pay for taxi fare, that is you come for a training it means that you will build up your skills, we don't give you money but we give you taxi fare just for the fact that you took your taxi or you took your car, you drove to the workshop it's a good sign, we just refund your fuel, we stop there. So, people were like after the workshop they'll eat and they'll go again and sign 100 euros and stuff like that. I think that's, it was a big... you know... for them, not for me, because when I joined the team I understood, but now to explain that to partners that we don't pay for participants, we don't pay for that, and they'll be like, 'Vous les Allemands vous êtes trop durs' [You Germans are too hard (translation by author)]. (Interviewee C, pos. 39)

Managing this difference of receiving money for attending a workshop instead of paying for it is a clash of two different systems. It is a fundamental difference in how to understand the presence of participants at a workshop.

A German answer to respond to unsatisfactory rules for a certain context would most likely not be the abolishment of rules altogether and a flexible application of a case-to-case basis, but it could be the creation of a new adapted set of rules. We saw that the Germans responded to the Cameroonian claim for payment of a workshop which contradicts the common German practice with the updated measure of paying a fixed small sum, higher than the German standard but not following the Cameroonian standard of paying sums on a case-to-case basis depending on status.

8. Finances and Friendship

German culture is individualistic compared to Cameroonian culture. It can make Cameroonians sour when the Germans are not accepting their friendly offer. Germans refuse to take money from colleagues or do not let themselves get invited for a beer. Cameroonian culture includes taking rounds of buying beers when going out, whereas in German culture everyone pays for their individual beer.

It is more of like in their culture. They find themselves superior in terms of... They have like a mental superiority, which I do not know if it comes from economic reasons. Honestly, I do not know where it comes from but they have a mental superiority. Because I don't think that, if you have a change problem, if you have a problem with change like coins, like cash, and you want to buy something and a colleague wants to help you, with a 100 FCFA you would say No, it's okay. So you prefer not to buy it than taking a 100 FCFA from a colleague. [...] It is really not cool. Like, even when we travel, maybe I had that experience when we went on mission, like we can drink together in the same place, but you see, a German person... I would drink and maybe I buy you a drink and I buy the other person a

drink, but the German person says no. He buys his drinks, he buys for him alone, although we have a culture system of one person buying for all the others and then another person buying for the others and buying and giving the round. Maybe we are five: A gives a round for everybody, all the five; B gives a round for everybody, but the German that would... isolates himself and then buys his beer and consume alone. And likely refuse to take your offer, so I think that, that's their cultural thing. It is not an individual thing. (Interviewee H, pos. 77-79)

Without explaining the context and the underlying value, these two systems of managing finances and invitations might collide. In the international context, Germans are known for being very exact with money, especially taking care of one's respective share and paying back debts to friends are taken seriously. One explanation for this behaviour might be that Germans do not like to ask for favours as they do not like to "owe" someone something and being in debt, even if it is a small amount, is undesirable. This feeling might be explained by the notion of an individualistic society where the goal is to be responsible for oneself (see also Schroll-Machl, 2013, p. 201). In other cultural contexts, owing someone could also be seen as intertwining the relationships and creating a positive connection as it marks the weaving of the fabric of a collective where people are depending on each other. Thus, dependency is seen as something positive in a culture that places the collective over the individual. The Cameroonian culture of buying rounds for people instead of focusing on individual consumption might be an expression of the opposite idea: It sends the signal that you are providing for the group and understand yourself as part of it where everyone contributes to the well-being of the collective without breaking it down to each individual's needs and consumption.

5.2.3. Conclusion: Value Conflicts

To link these findings to some of the cultural dimensions we've seen, we can speak about low- and high-context communication in the decision-making process and the communication of difficulties.

In the previous description of areas of friction, I used two main normative frameworks for explanation: The understanding of the relation of the person to the world. They can be seen as linked.

- Collectivism vs. Individualism

The understanding of the individual as sovereign and entering social groups upon their free choice contrasts with the understanding of the individual as part of fixed collectives that are above the individual's choices. We saw this conflict in the differences in paying rounds of beer at social events, the understanding of family and the degree of cordial relationships with colleagues.

Understanding the individual as interconnected in a web of relationships creates different rights and obligations towards the group compared to seeing the individual as the principal actor.

Based on this idea, we explain the following dichotomy:

- Particularism vs. Universalism

Based on the importance of collectives and those close to oneself because there is a relationship of mutual dependency, rules get applied differently to members of the in-group or on a case-to-case basis.

This cultural dimension might explain the importance of hierarchy in Cameroon because the collective is organised through a social hierarchy. People higher up deserve a different treatment. While in Germany, the social system is not governed by relationships but by a seemingly objective rule system. This applies to everyone equally, and everyone is equally expected to follow rules, as they are placed above the people. The Cameroonian way can be seen as a subjective system, where the application of rules is based on a case-to-case-evaluation, taking the relationship and the circumstances into account, while the German system tries to objectively apply the structure to everyone and forgets that this technocratic structure has been historically shaped by what people in power regarded as “objectively good”. This is of course only one way to explain the logic behind these values.

Germans still do make emotional assessments and have very subjective behaviour; the ideal is however seen in greatest objectivity which gets used as an argument in conflicts. An example is the reminder of a boss to their employees that punctuality is key. The boss might try to set an example in punctuality, yet they would never want to be reminded of this value once they are late - because they have more leeway of impunctuality because of their position in the hierarchy. The value of universalism is shaping the thinking and limiting exceptions. The belief in the universalism of one's own rules, making its moral aspect invisible in a narrative of objectivism, might be a factor while Germans are experienced as ethnocentric or showing superiority. Following the apparent universal rules is regarded as good, and judgement is rather technocratic. But it can also lead to displays of German superiority, where those who follow the German cultural rules most correctly are regarded as better.

Cameroonians do put relationships first. However, there are some rules that apply for all and are considered a high value to be followed no matter the hierarchy or relationship. At this point, I cannot describe the complex cultural mechanisms of which rules get applied in which context as this is culture-specific knowledge acquired by intense acculturation or extensive research.

Thus, this dimension serves for explaining general differences in priorities but has to be used with caution as different factors influence cultural viewpoints. These are very generalised statements, abstracting the daily life struggles to a macro level of worldview analysis. It has to be proven whether this applies to each situation and every single person. Yet, this abstraction is helpful to situate seemingly small incidents within a bigger picture.

Another finding is that these two worldviews are fundamentally different and on opposite ends of a scale and thus not easily reconcilable on an philosophical level. It is important to keep the other viewpoint in mind as a valid alternative to seeing the world. Maybe it offers innovative solutions. Finally, it is up to the individuals to find a compromise in their interaction and negotiate a common ground on a case-based assessment.

6. Intercultural Competence of the German employees

There are limited studies on the assessment of Intercultural Competence by a third party. I did not want to use a quantitative survey asking questions that follow a US-American definition of Intercultural Competence and where the answers once again will be clouded by cultural filters as well as limited by answer possibilities. For the scope of this research, the assessment follows the answers of the qualitative interviews and not a standardized scale-based test. There are intercultural differences in responding to scales in surveys, additionally to the difficulty of putting complex answers into scales, therefore, semi-guided interviews were the most interesting option for this research. This choice accepts deliberately the loss of quantifiable data and a higher subjectivity on part of the researcher and interviewees. The external assessment of a group of people is relatively little researched and culture is very hard to quantify, the additional value here lies within the subjective external perception.

We return to the definition of Deardorff (2006) that marks Intercultural Competence as what can be experienced as “behaviour and communication that is both effective and appropriate in intercultural situations” and let the Cameroonians, who are working with Germans, be the judge of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the behaviour. Hence, translating this definition of Intercultural Competence to an external point, it is the behaviour, skills and knowledge that an individual shows in intercultural situations that seem appropriate and respectful to the Other. One issue for the analysis is the interculturally different understanding of the research terms. I gave a working definition of Intercultural Competence before asking for the assessment but I often had to repeat it to my interviewees as it was not clear.

During my interviews, I realised that the concept of “culture” in Cameroonian linguistic usage refers to the set of customs, food and traditions that is shared by an ethnic group or a larger collective. The term “mentality” would have better described what I mean by “culture”. One interviewee pointed out that there is a cultural exchange in terms of culture: “from the point of view of culture, it's really a discovery, they come, they discover as we also discover, it's really an exchange, there is this exchange of experience, this exchange of culture [translation by author]” (Interviewee N, pos. 43), while he says that there could be problems with the different mentality in Cameroon. “the mentality because when I say mentality, I mean Cameroonian culture, the cuisine, the way people behave, how people are. Cameroonians are quite welcoming people, very warm when you arrive, we welcome you with what we have, that is to say we welcome you with what you have, we welcome you as we welcome a brother who arrives [translation by author]” (Interviewee N, pos. 77)

For Cameroonians, a successful cultural adaptation is shown in the respect of these cultural artefacts and protocol which affirms the respect of traditions and hierarchy as a sign of intercultural competence according to Nwosu (2009). When asked about the adaptation process of the Germans, six interviewees focused on culinary aspects and appreciated Germans eating and liking Cameroonian food. Few pointed out that Germans had problems with it in the beginning but grew to like it. Food is an important factor in Cameroonian culture: The tropical country has a great variety of locally grown fruit and vegetables, and the Cameroonians esteem their cuisine as “sufficiently excellent for many people to like it, all foreigners like it” (Interviewee D, pos. 75). This finding can be corroborated by my personal experience as an exchange student where I found the level of

importance of food in social encounters very curious. New acquaintances would ask me in the early stages of communication which Cameroonian dishes I appreciate the most. Eating together is a very important form of socialisation and asking someone whether and what they have eaten is a common question when you are caring about someone. This struck me in particular as, even though Germans usually like their national food, it would not be such a common topic of small talk, nor would eating certain dishes be taken as a primary factor of good integration into German culture.

The adaptation to Cameroon culture comes with the interest in Cameroon: Two interviewees saw the wanderlust of Germans within the country as a sign of good adaptation as they explored and saw many things. Another indicator of good integration is that some German expats find a spouse in Cameroon which four interviewees mentioned.

Concluding, according to what Cameroonians expect from foreigners, most Germans they met showed the necessary interest in their culture.

Apart from the salary discrimination, four interviewees felt treated equally within the organisations. From a cultural point of view, my interviewees did not point out major difficulties. Regarding equal treatment, one interviewee felt that Germans would give other Germans preferential treatment, yet another interviewee said that a Cameroonian boss would regard the German as more competent. This might have something to do with general dynamics between Western expats and Cameroonians in Cameroon, or White people in Africa, and is of interest for future research.

However, as most interviewees mentioned, the management competence and the intercultural sensitivity depended on the person as they have experienced many different leaders in their teams.

Limitations of this Intercultural Competence Assessment Approach

Intercultural Competence is a skill that is usually ascribed to a person, while the focus of this master thesis is to evaluate Germans as a collective. The global analysis of many individual cases can give a broad overview but does not describe individual manifestations of Intercultural Competence as many interviewees spoke highly of the current management or their colleagues while also mentioning their negative experiences.

Few can be said about the Intercultural Competence of Germans in general. We've seen Germans as a people that is very interested to learn and explore other cultures. This speaks of an ethnorelative approach, according to Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity: It could be connected with the stages of an adaptation process up until the integration of differences.

In all three institutions, Germans receive training before going abroad. Likewise, they usually have already some experience working outside of the EU. However, it was criticised that one cannot generalise all experiences in Africa as Cameroon is culturally and politically different to its neighbours. Other interviewees said that sometimes people seem to know things from books but not in practice.

However, there seem to be a few unreconcilable differences between German values and what is generally believed to foster intercultural competence: Tolerance for deviation from given structures is limited in German culture, so rigid structures are to be expected. Asking Germans to work less with schedules is asking them to be a little less German. Adapting to the context requires thus a deviation from one's own culture, where we return

to the struggle that Moosmüller described: Expats are required to work efficiently in the international context while still fulfilling their role requirements of the headquarters and the expectations of their fellow nationals.

7. Recommendations for Training

I would say that it really depends on the people and the spirit with which the people arrive in an African country, in a country like Cameroon, and if I may say so, it also depends on how you describe, you at the level of... at the departure, the country in which the German or at least the technical assistant is to arrive. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 27)

As this interviewee summed up, the success of the German integration to Cameroon depends on the mindset of the Germans arriving in Cameroon and good preparation can set the foundation for openness toward the new culture or prejudice that hinders the learning process.

Generally, German expats are trained before coming to Cameroon. Not all interviewees were aware of the existence of pre-deployment training for the Germans, but some confirmed that it was general practice. One interviewee however said that in one case, because of the Covid19-pandemic, the training in Germany by the GIZ had to be suspended. In the GIZ, both German and Cameroonian employees get an onboarding workshop when they start. In the scope of this study, I did not analyse the current training methods by GIZ, FES or BfdW. The following recommendations are an ideal training proposed based on the previously examined difficulties my interviewees highlighted for me and might or might not coincide with training already in place.

There is no service of cultural counselling or mentorship available where Germans could address their questions on site. According to the best of the knowledge of my interviewees, some Germans seek advice from their fellow expats, a few come to speak to their colleagues. There is an official onboarding process on-site and a manager is welcoming them with an open ear for all questions regarding Cameroon.

When the international staff comes, they also have some kind of an onboarding, an in-country onboarding and it's usually done by myself or my colleague [Name] and then they're open to ask anything, we have, we share some information and administrative formalities but then, they know that they can ask any question, where can they find what? And how to react in what kind of situation? So, I wouldn't say it's an official cultural desk or info desk or what but they know where they can get the information if they want to. [Interviewer: And do they come and have questions like, I don't understand why Cameroonians are doing it this way so, can you explain it to me?] All kinds of questions and we also have a welcome guide, a welcome brochure which I worked on, and we update it every time when there's new information. (Interviewee J, pos. 85-87)

1. Context of Training

As one interviewee pointed out, not only the context of the training is to be discussed, but it is most important *who* trains. One interviewee explicitly focused on the need for cultural sensitivity when describing the situation in Cameroon. The trainer in Germany should be a Cameroonian, and the important part of the training shall be done upon arrival in Cameroon.

I would first say, not about the content of the training. What I would insist on is: who trains?!. Who is training them? Because I believe there are certain things, the person training should be. Like if they are training co-workers to come to Cameroon. There are certain aspects; it is a Cameroonian to train. It should be a Cameroonian

training and not a German, thinking I know the culture very well and I can communicate to them. You know, there are certain things it has to come from the Cameroonians. It would be better understood. That is, even if at the end, it is a training, you give the content, you train and the person can use it the way he wants to use it. That is the first thing I would say. (Interview 8, BfdW, pos. 79)

Further insight came from an interviewee who studied in Germany and suggested that the Cameroonians who live in Germany and know both contexts should be the ones being involved in the preparation in Germany for the future assignment.

There are so many Cameroonians in Germany, there are so many Cameroonians who have returned to Cameroon from Germany that we could form a community to better understand the context and it would go faster than just between the Germans themselves. I think there is a big possibility that the know-how and experience of Cameroonians who know Germany can be used to prepare Germans who come to Cameroon. [translation by author] (Interviewee I, pos. 57)

Another interviewee focused on the fact that Cameroonian culture is hard to explain and culture shock cannot be overcome by pre-deployment training, but that the focus should rather be on the job and based on the concrete reality that the new expat is facing in Cameroon. The idea of a training would be some formal knowledge as methodological input for observation on the ground, that then is the actual cultural learning.

Cameroon is very diverse and I don't think you can train people how to cope with the different cultures here but I think every training happens while you are here, I think an on-the-job training is better than, an experienced training is better than you being fed with information because it's not every time that somebody says, 'You don't react this way, it might be different for another person so, personally I would say come observe with whatever formal information you have from out there before coming, they should come ... take some time to observe before diving into the pool and taking rash decisions. (Interviewee J, pos. 91-92)

On a critical notion, an interviewee pointed out that this training should be culturally sensitive and not reproducing stereotypes. The transmitted knowledge should leave space for differentiation between different African countries and also a respect for different knowledge and methodologies. While preparing for being a consultant in development cooperation abroad, Germans should be aware that there is already knowledge and structures on the ground and the development model of the North might not be working in a different context.

You have to understand that Africa is not a country, you have to understand that countries have to respect each other, that you don't come on conquered ground, that cooperation is Vier Augen²² (!) and that you don't have to come knowing everything. You have to understand that when you come to a country, you find people who have know-how and who are also intelligent. You shouldn't think that you come to a world where everything is worse and that you have nothing to learn. You have to value the know-how of your colleagues, you have to consider the people and avoid the classic pattern of the North giving everything to the South, and the North knowing everything and the South knowing nothing, and you end up in trouble. (Interviewee I, pos. 61)

²² Reference to the Four-Eye-Principle: German concept of having two parties overlook a process/outcome in order to reach a better judgement and have mutual cross-checking of work.

Based on the recommendations of my interviewees, a Cameroonian expert, possibly a member of the diaspora community in Germany, should take over these two aspects in my proposed training and there should be follow-up training on the ground.

2. Content of Training

So, the German who comes here should be able to observe, learn and understand. Observe, learn, understand, these are really the three words that seem important to me, and not to come and impose his... his way of doing things. [translation by author] (Interviewee D, pos. 27)

The aim of a training should be to counter the friction described in Chapter 5.4. and reduce the culture shock and adaptation process of the new German expats in Cameroon. This chapter includes the training recommendations gathered during the interviews with Cameroonians.

Knowledge

First of all, the contents that Cameroonians repeatedly recommended for training were mostly Cameroonian history and language skills:

Essential to understanding Cameroonians is understanding their history, their political and social context, and their culture and customs. Examples of relevant history were the German colonial history and the following colonial rules of France and Britain, but also the geography of Cameroon as it is a very diverse country in landscape, climate and culture. Cameroon is also nicknamed “Africa in miniature” for its great variety of cultures. Food, customs and clothing from all over Africa can be found somewhere in Cameroon. This diversity, but also its unique history and political situation makes Cameroon more complex than other African nation-states which two interviewees referred to. Understanding the political situation, as mentioned before, and the importance of staying neutral towards Cameroonian politics should also be content of training.

Language skills in English and French are very important to work in Cameroon. Bilingualism is essential for good integration and culturally sensitive work in Cameroon. Within this thought, sensibility to language issues and identity in the context of the Anglophone Crisis is crucial.

One interviewee also mentioned that it would show interest in the Cameroonian culture if the German expats arrived knowing some words in two or three of the local languages. As a great way to start connecting with Cameroonian colleagues and culture, this idea is worth remembering.

So, I would say that if training is needed in this case, it's to give the basics or words of daily life perhaps in 2 or 3 languages which is ours in fact, in our country. It allows you to at least have 2 or 3 histories that are common to the population and it allows you to integrate, when you come in front of them you know that you can say 'hello' whether it's in Bassa, in Duala or in another language, that you have this story, it allows you to strengthen the links a little more and it allows the other person to see you differently. [translation by author] (Interviewee A; pos. 52)

Derived from my personal experience and the differences in the definition of culture during the research for this study, I would also suggest a training on the importance of

Cameroonian culture for Cameroonian identity. There is a huge discrepancy in what Cameroonians and Germans understand in culture – and the importance of tradition and folklore. Customs from the pre-colonial era and heritage from the village of origin might be getting even more important for Cameroonians living in the fast-paced urban life. While traditional attires and customs linked to the spiritual and administrative local authorities and heritage might not be worn and seen in everyday life or the work context, their impact on identity, loyalty, self-understanding and belonging shall not be underestimated and their due respect paid. Germans will have an easier time bonding with Cameroonians when showing interest and understanding of culture as an intangible good and heritage.

Another aspect was practical information about the work culture of Cameroon, the hierarchy and bureaucracy as mentioned in Chapter 5.2.2. §5. In preparation for a deployment to Cameroon, one interviewee suggested, the reality of daily life had to be portrayed realistically, including the simple aspects such as going to the market, cooking, the life in the neighbourhood – and the experience of being White in Cameroon. Three interviewees mentioned the Othering that White people experience in Cameroon, being called *le blanc/la blanche* [the White man/woman] in the street, receiving higher prices, and passing through more police car controls as a hardship that should be addressed in training. This knowledge would be a good foundation for reducing culture shock by managing expectations of what the future expats will find on the ground.

Cameroon is a very Christian (or Muslim in the North) influenced country, and irreconcilable ideological differences in the understanding of gender roles and freedom of sexual and gender orientations might occur. From a standpoint of ethnorelativism (in opposition to ethnocentrism), training can help foster understanding of each other's cultural background and focus on commonalities instead of differences. Transcultural competence includes the acceptance of differences but the “creation of commonalities beyond existing cultures” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 52). Having a theoretical education about the historic and cultural context of Cameroon would be the basis that is necessary to observe and understand the context, to then act culturally competent but also to mitigate the phase of culture shock in Cameroon and move towards the creation of a common bond.

Attitudes and Skills

Second, when asked for attitudes and skills, open-mindedness, sociability and serenity, ‘*Gelassenheit*’, were mentioned. The competence most mentioned was flexibility, which was found in eight interviews. Flexibility was usually contrasted with the rigid structures of German work and the rigorousness described in chapter 5.1.2. To thrive in the Cameroonian environment and be able to do work that is valuable for the local partner, the structures given by the headquarters have to be adjusted when translated into the Cameroonian context.

Another competence that was cited by three interviewees was empathy, as in being able to take other people's standpoints and understand the other. Patience was enlisted as an important trait by three interviewees. The interest to learn was part of 6 interviews.

Resilience or (frustration) tolerance was included in six interviews as important for adaptation and work in Cameroon.

<i>Code</i>	<i>Coded segments</i>	<i>Associated Documents</i>
<i>Empathy/Perspective taking</i>	3	3
<i>Open Mindedness</i>	9	9
<i>Communication</i>	12	7
<i>Patience</i>	4	3
<i>Resilience/Tolerance of the Different</i>	9	6
<i>Interest to learn</i>	11	6
<i>Flexibility</i>	12	8

Table 4: Codes with relevant attitudes and skills by their occurrence

An Intercultural Competence Training tailored for Germans selected for work in Cameroon should focus on these aspects. These attitudes and skills seem especially relevant to the Cameroonian context, in addition to the general Intercultural Competence (see Chapter 3.3.).

3. Implications of the Colonial Legacy

So, the point I'm making is that Germany does not have a kind of negative connotation or history or something and so they should embrace it, people hate France, you know, for good or ill, people hate America, you know, whatever, policeman of the ... nobody likes China; Chinese invasion, whatever and so forth. Germany is innocent, really and they should work on that, they should take advantage of that, they are much more popular than they know. (Interviewee L, pos. 73 – 75)

As we saw, the German colonial legacy in Cameroon receives little criticism. The interviewee highlights the potential for future cooperation because German work in Cameroon does not seem to be overshadowed by dark history and German intervention is generally welcomed. The interaction between Cameroonians and Germans seems to be taking place in a room free of colonial legacy apart from a cultural connection.

Nonetheless, as we have assessed previously, this has to be placed into a context where the education curriculum is still influenced by 20th-century imperialism and sources about German colonial history are non-existent or not widely accessible. Post-colonial power dynamics do exist, especially in the fact that Cameroon is in a dependency relationship with German development organisations.

These power dynamics have to be taken into account by the institutions and by each German individual in Cameroon, as they operate in a system that is favourable towards them. As we saw in 5.1.1., German knowledge gets regarded as superior. Hence, what Germans say might be taken at face value and will receive a more uncritical acknowledgement from Cameroonians compared to when a Cameroonian would say it. This creates a space where Germans are respected, but also the danger that statements that are wrong or not adequate for the context or that reproduce ancient power dynamics get accepted. The local staff of German development organisations in Cameroon has a differentiated opinion about German policies but might not always be in a position to openly criticise their employer's actions. The societal fabric in Cameroon is based on acceptance of hierarchy and defines who has a right to voice opinions and criticism. Germans on the other hand rather expect to be treated as an equal and receive direct criticism and, without loud objections, take decisions as consented to. Silence is mostly seen as a sign of consent. This value of authority as nature-given combined with the

positive image of Western knowledge and German work might create a space where direct criticism by subordinate employees is not always possible and German managers should be sensitive to creating it.

As we learned, the organisations have already feedback mechanisms in place that try to mitigate this power balance and listen to the opinion of the Cameroonians, yet awareness of existing power dynamics in the structure of the workplace and based on the colonial history is of great importance for the future.

This is also why the knowledge of Cameroonian colonial history, the German domination of Cameroon as well as the following period of French and British mandate and the cultural reshaping of the country should be an important topic of pre-deployment training as it enables the German to observe, understand and counter the power dynamics in place.

4. Proposed Training

For the context of preparing German expats for their assignment in Cameroon, a country-specific training with the before-mentioned areas of knowledge done by a Cameroonian expat in Germany would be recommendable (see parts 1 and 2 in the following table). Additionally, the training should be rounded up by realistic depictions of the work reality and daily life for Germans in Cameroon which can be done by a German expat who worked in Cameroon in a team with a Cameroonian expert (see Part 6). I am acknowledging that trainings require sufficient funding and will not be possible to the proposed extent, yet I would like to urge on its importance. For this reason, the non-country-specific part of training can be done with other groups preparing for different country assignments.

Additional to this, I recommend a training on German culture, fostering awareness of one's own culture and work style so that future German expats have a better notion of the Cameroonians' difficulties with German communication styles and can explain themselves better. My focus in training would especially be on awareness of one's cultural values to be able to culturally sensitively react or know when culture makes you sensitive and understand underlying value and priority conflicts. More than learning about what elements of Cameroonian culture mean to Cameroonians, it is relevant to know what seemingly obvious and "normal" actions mean to Germans. Understanding why certain aspects, the management of schedules and the following of rules, are an integral part of German culture, and how disrespect of those can lead to frustrations on the German part, will help channel emotions and tensions in an intercultural situation. The awareness of the importance of efficient resource management, including time, because of a constant perceived scarcity will help understand the feeling of annoyance when things do not go according to plan. This can be learned through case studies and dialogue that provide a useful mirror to the German participants. In this session, members of other (national) cultures might be trained together, so that the experience of difference can already be a topic of discussion in the classroom (see part 3 below).

As a next building block, I recommend a training for intercultural competence, especially focusing on acquiring a higher level of resilience and flexibility on the side of the Germans, and the other skills mentioned above. This training can be grouped with future expats of other countries for financial reasons. For these aspects of the training, I would recommend methods of experiential learning and gamification (see part 4).

After having focused on the differences between the German and Cameroonian ways of seeing, doing and understanding things, a module of the training should be on the mitigation of culture shock and the creation of a shared space beyond the differences (see

part 5). For this, experiential learning is the preferred method regarding the preparation for future culture shock, but also a handbook of tools that can be of use for reflection and making sense of the observations after having gained experience on the ground. These should include simple methods and tools for reflection and perspective-taking, but also practical tips to create room for exchange with the colleagues, such as connecting through food in the Cameroonian context and focusing on commonalities to foster friendships. The goal is to build not only a multicultural space but a new hybrid space with a common corporate culture.

Content for Training

1. Cameroonian history (Lecture-based)
 - a. German colonial past in Cameroon
 - b. French and British colonial times
 - c. The process of independence and conditions of unification and its implications on the current political system
 - d. Current Post-colonial Dependencies and their impact
2. Cameroonian culture (Lecture-based)
 - a. Systems of local authority and spirituality
 - b. The role of culture in everyday life
 - c. Introduction to food and language to show respect and initiate dialogue
 - d. Politics and customs in Cameroon
3. German culture explained through contrast with Cameroonian culture (gamified learning and discussion)
 - a. German focus on rules and regulations
 - b. Communication styles
 - c. Individualism vs Collectivism
 - d. Universalism vs. Particularism
 - i. Hierarchy and Respect
 - e. Understanding of Time
4. Intercultural Competence for Germans (experiential learning and handbook of uncommented tips)
 - a. Reflection on own positionality
 - b. Tolerance for Norm Deviation
 - c. Flexibility and Dealing with Uncertainty
 - d. Listening to the Silence
 - e. Power Dynamics and Creating Room for the Other
5. Mitigating Culture Shock and Creating a space of Positive Interculturality (experiential learning and peer sharing)
 - a. Understanding Patterns of Adaptation Processes
 - b. Reflection Tools to understand complex and difficult situations
 - c. Creating mutual spaces
6. Particularities of German Development Work in Cameroon (lecture-based)
 - a. Daily Life and Situation in Cameroon
 - i. Security, Risks and Precaution
 - ii. Hardships and Taboos
 - b. Positionality as a German Expat worker
 - c. Cameroonian view on and expectations from Germans

Table 5: Structure of an Intercultural Training for Germans going to work in Cameroon

5. Additional Cultural Assistance

The interviews focused on the contents for a future pre-deployment training which has already been done for almost all employees before being sent abroad.

Additional to the rather knowledge-based preparation training, a second training after a first time on the ground is recommendable and helps Germans react to the circumstances encountered during their first weeks of work. Most interviewees told me about a preparation training in Germany. I've learned that the GIZ has an onboarding process for all staff in the local office, which includes rules, regulations, security and GIZ work culture. The interviewees were not aware, however, whether there was a cultural training or counselling service during the period of working in Cameroon.

Therefore, I propose a second intercultural training after the first culture shock phase to reflect on the lessons learned in the first training compared with the reality in Cameroon. This feedback mechanism will not only help to update and improve the contents of the first training but also give space for open questions and confusing experiences and help the settling-in process.

Additional culture-specific training can be set in place inviting both expat and local staff to reflect on German and Cameroonian culture and learn from and with each other. This could be organised as a half-day workshop that is focussing on talking about cultural norms and characteristics. This space can serve as an opportunity to find out about differences and similarities and make the issue of interculturality central in the workplace. An open, guided discussion about culture and mentality has the potential to enhance mutual understanding and greater team cohesion and foster a "third culture" in the workplace. Beneke (2020) suggests workshop methods to negotiate the new organisational culture of a multinational team: Instead of one-sided adaptation based on the territory, he suggests working towards a mutual culture of intercultural teams. Yet he also clarifies the limitations of such: It assumes a Western style of communication that is willing and experienced in verbalising cultural norms and conflict to then find compromises (Beneke, 2020, p. 74). One of the findings of my master thesis was that the understanding and importance of culture are different, this is why I had issues communicating my interview questions despite carefully curating them. Based on this insight, a discussion about culture should start from the different concepts and the importance of culture and create a common vocabulary to be able to verbalise cultural norms and values in the future. What is experienced as a conflict might also be labelled differently in diverging cultural contexts, as my interviewees voiced little criticism or conflicts.

A third suggestion for the improvement of the cultural adaptation process would be a mentoring system that creates a defined space to ask questions and discuss new cultural elements. A mentor, who is local staff, could help understand behaviour in a culturally different context, it creates the first contact on-site, and it also offers the Cameroonians a possibility to share their culture. This would signal interest in the culture which is important to Cameroonians as they love to display their culture. Festivities and celebrated rituals are not such much part of German culture compared to Cameroonian culture which is why the understanding of culture between the two groups might differ. A Cameroonian driver expressed that he would love to know more about German culture by being invited to German festivities and national holidays. However, in the German self-understanding, as I experience it, these are not so relevant for the identity or widely celebrated as Germanness is rooted in other aspects than celebrations. On the other hand, we saw that

the upholding of traditional festivities and the connection to pre-colonial customs is very important for Cameroonians, especially those living far away from their villages of origin and see their daily life characterised by customs of modernity and influenced by Western standards, as it marks an important part of identity and empowerment – and to grasp German culture, Cameroonians would find it more accessible through such festivities.

8. Conclusion

This study has analysed the current intercultural relations between Germans and Cameroonians working in development organisations in Cameroon to give an outlook on how to improve such through training. This informant-based approach to describe German-Cameroonian relations has given us great insight into differences that stand out. There are more facets and particularities of German (and Cameroonian) culture that have not found their way into this study. However, this selection of foci done by my interviewees displays those that are sources of friction or are generally remarkable. One of the most useful findings for practice is this emphasis: We learned what Cameroonians expect of Germans for a good adaptation and what they deem important for a good relationship. Notwithstanding, the interview questions limited the bandwidth of answers, yet it left room for participants to answer what they regarded as most relevant from that angle. One aspect that has been a dimension in Hofstede's study, masculinity vs. femininity – or the division of gender roles, has not explicitly been addressed in my interviews. It is particularly hard to analyse what has been omitted, and especially if we don't know if the cultural characteristics are simply not relevant, in harmony between the parties, minor – or silenced by power dynamics: either not vocable during a short interview or regarded as the natural order.

It struck me that during my conversations, racism was not discussed, even though some anecdotes narrated about individuals that clearly showed racist behaviour and made people feel a racial hierarchy, it was not named as a structural problem – a conversation that social sciences and activists are pushing today within Germany. One interviewee surprised me by relating a racist incident but stopped themselves from labelling it racism. I proceeded to analyse the findings from the interviews from a cultural perspective whenever such negative behaviour came up, using terms of ethnocentrism and superiority, which are manifestations of racism but do not engage with the view of racism as a global system and a social structure. Hesitating to enter a field I do not have enough data about, I purposely did not ascribe racism where my interviewees did not. It is thus up to the reader to interpret the findings and it is an inspiration for future studies regarding the internalised racism in development cooperation, in Germany and in Cameroon.

While I tried to stick to the field of culture, it is hard not to make any critical assessments of the situation. One is that there are certain power dynamics in place that create a hierarchy in the workplace. Even though in intercultural teams a hybrid cultural space gets created, this is not an equal process of negotiating which norms dominate, especially when financial dependencies on the employee and national level persist. German-Cameroonian development cooperation is a German enterprise on Cameroonian soil where Cameroonians have to conform to the organisational culture, which they describe as accommodating. Within their scope of action, the German organisations use their power to create a space that is more and more culturally adept and diverse and the employees do feel treated equally in most cases.

Nonetheless, the current North-South power relations and the positive image of Germans based on the oral transmission of history in the present's prioritization and the current educational curriculum on imperialism lead to an enhanced position for Germans that has to be taken cautiously: Germans should be aware of the country's ambiguous legacy in Cameroon. As we have seen in Chapter 5.1., Cameroonians do still attribute good things to the German colonial past and hold the Germans in high regard, which is a positive

factor for entering into collaborations. Even so, Germans should be aware of the power they are yielding and especially the power of their word, which many Cameroonians take at a higher value. This is important so as to not reinforce existing experienced hierarchies and racist beliefs created throughout the colonial era.

While Cameroonians, on the one hand, learn a lot about German colonial history in school and would evoke it in small talk, and since they do not feel any guilt or shame linked to it, they contrast with Germans who, on the other hand, usually do not know much of Germany's colonial legacy but for whom their own national past is nonetheless charged with a lot of collective guilt mostly due to the Holocaust. Germans school education makes Germans develop a troubled relationship with their past and are not very proud of their past – at least regarding some of its aspects – and thus they often feel uncomfortable if these topics are evoked. Entering into dialogue will therefore profit both sides.

Without being able to distract the factor of the organisational culture and Cameroonian context, the recommendations given are for Germans working for development in Cameroon. For similar contexts, these results can be an inspiration and a starting point for context-tailored research. The takeaway from chapter 5 are the identified macro-level differences of collectivism and a particularistic worldview in contrast to individualism and a universalistic worldview. This distinction applies to most Global North-South cultural relationships in various degrees, yet the culture-specific manifestation of this will vary. Trying to solve this value conflict would require talking about cultural assimilation and convergence which will open a normative debate. These differences in priorities on how to structure social relations and all aspects of life collude in some instances, yet they will only be eradicated by imposing one's value over the others – which is not the goal of intercultural communication. From an aspect of anthropology, this difference is to be celebrated as the diversity that leads to a greater richness in perspectives. For the work in intercultural teams, this means peacefully managing multiple approaches as a resource for more ingenious problem-solving.

This asset can be explored by creating awareness and understanding of the other without becoming like the other. For increased confidence in acting in this diverse space, combining German work ethic with Cameroonian problem-solving skills, a training for intercultural competence can improve these work relationships. Training for the German expats will help make the Germans more sensitive to what is important in Cameroon and what experiences might be clouded by their own cultural embeddedness.

German culture from a Cameroonian viewpoint is characterised by its rigidity and praised for its focused and efficient work. While working goal-oriented and not so much presentation-oriented, the importance of protocol is reduced, and the working environment seeks flat hierarchies (compared to the Cameroonian context) and seems more relaxed as fewer unforeseen actions happen. The structuredness of the work comes with an exceptional amount of accounting which is seen as a good thing compared to inefficient resource management and funds that could get lost. But rules of accounting are also criticised for their technocratic dictation that often does not perfectly fit within the Cameroonian context. Intercultural Competence is characterised by flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity which collides with German structures.

The assessment of the intercultural competence of Germans is mixed. We saw the friction caused by the different work cultures and particularities of German culture. The Cameroonians do see a process of adaptation and willingness coming from the Germans, which is what counts for appropriate intercultural behaviour: the judgement by the other.

Nonetheless, further fields of improvement have been identified: Most Germans do have a general interest to learn and there are individuals with marvellous intercultural sensitivity, while a few German managers did make their team feel their superiority.

Germans do face culture shock in multiple areas when arriving in Cameroon. They need to adapt to the Cameroonian way of doing things and the local structures. Many learn well during their time in Cameroon, while a few continue to show an air of superiority and ethnocentrism. In the context of work, the expats also have to take the political sphere into account which might include different aspects than in Germany. Hierarchy, protocol and even positive comments of a public person can be highly political. This knowledge can be transmitted in a training.

Other cultural differences are on the level of “mentality”, the differences in values and the understanding of the nature of things. These can be linked back to the cultural dimensions of high- & low-context communication, collectivism & individualism, and universalism & particularism. Based on the different worldviews of the relation of the individual to the group and time and space, we see friction on the level of scheduling, communication, respect of hierarchy, financial distribution, and socialising in Chapter 5.2.2. African intercultural competence is based on respect, the value of hierarchy, and referring to cultural norms, which can conflict with the German ideal of egalitarianism and universalism.

The proposed training methods in Chapter 7 would not eradicate these differences but propose an understanding for them to work together in an intercultural way that is both most efficient and appropriate for the other. Therefore, knowledge of the cultural, historical and political context of Cameroon combined with an awareness of German culture and its implications would be a good foundation for the cognitive level of intercultural competence. For the affectionate level, experiential elements and a toolkit for culture shock and detecting intercultural issues should be part of the training. This will hopefully help future German expats in having greater tolerance for deviations from the structure, more flexibility and less stress in dealing with uncertainty, as well as being able to understand the Cameroonian communication style by listening to silences and creating room for new input.

Lastly, this master thesis tried to lay out fields for future research. There is unfortunately little information available for Germans leaving for Cameroon, and existing literature is often focusing on Africa as a continent, which always poses the question of how applicable it is for the particular context of Cameroon. Cameroon and many other African countries are not often included in cultural surveys, such as the Hofstede dimensions or Erin Meyer’s dimensions. Additional research in the field would help to prepare future expats better, but also offer differentiated information about African culture that was not created in colonial settings and/or through an external Western research team. This knowledge gap in the African context and of an African vision of Intercultural Competence will hopefully be addressed by future research. Another angle to deepen this research would be adding the German experience by interviewing the German colleagues in contrast to my Cameroonian interviewees to compare self- and external vision and both sides of the dynamics. Finally, this study is exploring a small scale and it would be very interesting to situate the findings of this master thesis within the analysis of the Global Systems and the broader context of the described German-Cameroonian interactions in which they are taking place.

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10. Annex

10.1. Interview Guide

English Version

Hello and welcome! Thank you very much for taking your time for this interview.

Let me give you a brief introduction to the research. The following study focuses on the intercultural competence of Germans working in Cameroon in German-led development cooperation organisations. The aim of the study is to gather information about dynamics in the German-Cameroonian work context. One goal is to describe the image of Germans by Cameroonians and characterize German work culture. The next step is to find points of friction between the cultures, the cultural dynamics. The results of the research shall be valuable recommendations that can be used for training of German employees.

I will ask you about your subjective view and about your experiences working with Germans in a German organisation. It is very important that you give me your personal opinion to my questions, so that I will hopefully gather a big variety of experiences through my different interviews. Don't get too focused on the title of intercultural communication. I am rather more interested on how you experience your work reality. The interview will be divided into ten big questions. We will start with a few general questions and then continue talking about German culture.

Question 1: What does your work look like?

- What are your tasks?
- What does your daily routine look like?
- How did you find yourself working in this position? What is the story?

Question 2: How would you describe the culture of your team?

- Are there many different nationalities/is there one group more present than other?
- Is there diversity in age and gender?
- What is the working language?
- How high is the percentage of Germans working in your team?
- How many Cameroonians are in managerial positions?

Question 3: Could you tell me about an incident that happened, it could be funny or frustrating, where you realized there was a cultural misunderstanding happening.

Question 4: How would you describe German management culture?

- Describe the German management style?
- What seems particular to you about the management style?
- What differences have you noted compared to working with Cameroonians?
- What would have helped you be better prepared for that difference?

Question 5: Which have been points of difficulties interacting with your German colleagues?

- Do you attribute this to cultural differences?

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- How did you solve the conflict?

Question 6: Do you feel treated the same as the Germans in your organisation?

- By your team/by your supervisor?
- Are diverse backgrounds valued equally?

Intercultural Competence are targeted knowledge, skills, and attitudes leading to behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions. (Deardorff, 2006, 2017)

Question 7: How would you rate the intercultural competence of your German co-workers?

- Are they adapting to the context?
- Which problems do they face?
- What are the typical tasks of a German co-worker in your field of work?

Question 8: In which areas would you recommend training for German workforce before coming to Cameroon?

- Many organisations train their employees for new contexts before sending them abroad. Do you know if this was provided for your German colleagues?
- Are there services for cultural counselling available?
- If there were such a training in place, what contents would you recommend?
- Which competences are most relevant for your German co-workers in your field of work?
- Which knowledge is most relevant for your German co-workers in your field of work?
- Which attitudes are most relevant for your German co-workers in your field of work?

Question 9: How could the German-Cameroonian cooperation be improved?

- How is the topic of German colonial history addressed at your workplace?
- Do you see any legacy of the colonial past in your current work?

Question 10: Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

French Version

Guide d'entretien !

Bonjour et bienvenue ! Merci beaucoup d'avoir pris votre temps pour cet entretien.

Je vous présente brièvement cette recherche. L'étude suivante porte sur la compétence interculturelle des Allemands travaillant au Cameroun dans des organisations de coopération au développement dirigées par des Allemands. L'objectif de l'étude est de recueillir des informations sur la dynamique dans le contexte de travail germano-camerounais. Un premier objectif est de décrire l'image des Allemands par les Camerounais et de caractériser la culture de travail allemande. L'étape suivante consiste à trouver les points de friction entre les cultures, la dynamique culturelle. Les résultats de la recherche seront des recommandations précieuses qui pourront être utilisées pour la formation des employés allemands.

Je vous interrogerai sur votre point de vue subjectif et sur vos expériences de travail avec des Allemands dans une organisation allemande. Il est très important que vous me donniez votre avis personnel sur mes questions, afin que je puisse recueillir une grande variété d'expériences au cours de mes différents entretiens. Ne vous focalisez pas trop sur le titre de la communication interculturelle. Je suis plutôt intéressé par la façon dont vous vivez votre réalité professionnelle. L'entretien sera divisé en dix grandes questions. Nous commencerons par quelques questions générales, puis nous continuerons à parler de la culture allemande.

Question 1 : A quoi ressemble votre travail ?

- Quelles sont vos tâches ?
- A quoi ressemble votre routine quotidienne ?
- Comment est-ce que vous vous êtes retrouvé à ce poste ? Quelle est votre histoire ?

Question 2 : Comment décririez-vous la culture de votre équipe ?

- Y a-t-il beaucoup de nationalités différentes/un groupe plus présent que les autres ?
- Y a-t-il une diversité en termes d'âge et de sexe ?
- Quelle est la langue de travail ?
- Quel est le pourcentage d'Allemands travaillant dans votre équipe ?
- Combien de Camerounais occupent des postes de direction ?

Question 3 : Pourriez-vous me raconter un incident, drôle ou frustrant, où vous vous êtes rendu compte qu'il y avait un malentendu culturel.

Question 4 : Comment décririez-vous la culture de management allemande ?

- Décrivez le style de management allemand.
- Qu'est-ce qui vous semble particulier dans ce style de management ?
- Quelles sont les différences que vous avez notées par rapport au travail avec les Camerounais ?
- Qu'est-ce qui vous aurait aidé à mieux vous préparer à cette différence ?

Question 5 : Quels ont été les points de difficultés dans l'interaction avec vos collègues allemands ?

- Attribuez-vous cela aux différences culturelles ?
- Comment avez-vous résolu le conflit ?

Question 6 : Vous sentez-vous traité de la même manière que les Allemands dans votre organisation ?

- Par votre équipe/par votre superviseur ?
- Les profils divers sont-ils valorisés de la même manière ?

Les compétences interculturelles sont des connaissances, des aptitudes et des attitudes ciblées menant à un comportement et à une communication à la fois efficaces et appropriés dans les interactions interculturelles. (Deardorff, 2006, 2017)

Question 7 : Comment évaluez-vous la compétence interculturelle de vos collègues allemands ?

- S'adaptent-ils au contexte ?

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- Quels problèmes rencontrent-ils ?
- Quelles sont les tâches typiques d'un collègue allemand dans votre domaine de travail ?

Question 8 : Dans quels domaines recommanderiez-vous une formation pour la main-d'œuvre allemande avant de venir au Cameroun ?

- De nombreuses organisations préparent leurs employés à de nouveaux environnements avant de les envoyer à l'étranger. Savez-vous si cela a été fait pour vos collègues allemands ?
- Existe-t-il des services de conseil culturel ?
- Si une formation culturelle existait, quels contenus recommanderiez-vous ?
- Quelles compétences sont les plus pertinentes pour vos collègues allemands dans votre domaine de travail ?
- Quelles connaissances sont les plus pertinentes pour vos collègues allemands dans votre domaine de travail ?
- Quelles attitudes sont les plus pertinentes pour vos collègues allemands dans votre domaine de travail ?

Question 9 : Comment la coopération germano-camerounaise pourrait-elle être améliorée ?

- Comment le thème de l'histoire coloniale allemande est-il abordé sur votre lieu de travail ?
- Voyez-vous un héritage du passé colonial dans votre travail actuel ?

Question 10 : Y a-t-il autre chose que vous aimeriez mentionner ?

10.2. Aggregated Data of Interview Participants

14 Interviews have been conducted in the time of the 15th February to 14th of March 2022.

Classified by		(Total = 14)
Gender	Male	8
	Female	6
Origin *Anglophone Regions of Cameroon	Centre	2
	Littoral	1
	North West*	2
	South West*	2
	South	1
	West	5
	Undefined	1
Years of Employment in a German Development Organisation	< 1 year	2
	< 2 years	3
	< 3 years	1
	< 6 years	5
	< 8 years	2
	> 10 years	1
German Language Ability	yes - and studied in Germany	3
	yes	2
	no – but started to learn German	1
	no	8
Organisation	GIZ	9
	FES	3
	Brot für die Welt	2
Language of Interview	English	7
	French	7
Place of Interview	Yaoundé	12
	Douala	1
	Buea	1