



# Refugee Reinclusion: Cultural Adaptation

## Intro

My latest [two articles](#) recommend changing our attitude towards refugees from passively waiting for people to [irregularly](#) arrive via smugglers, to handling proactively via organized relocation and evacuation.

For refugees, being dislocated from their culture and frequently facing cultural communication differences in their new environment, interaction is complicated. There is often a severe lack of understanding. This third piece will therefore in more detail explain some of my propositions for integration and people's cultural adaptation to new communities.

The root of my vision is cultural communication improvement through enhancing the use of one's communication dimensions. The article is as a result much more general and less refugee specific than the previous ones.

The concepts used, are derived from my work in information science and analyzing cultural differences over the past three decades. This effort has led to building detailed new dynamic cultural communication models which I am currently finalizing. For this article, being more about the practical application than about the theory, I am strongly simplifying my approach. I will thus only use very basic theoretical ideas to elaborate my vision on refugee integration.

## Refugee integration

A big part of my proposed sustainable integration solutions for refugees are founded on [reinclusion](#) at locations that possess a culture that differs from people's home country. Currently, this very frequently leads to a life in an [excluded](#) parallel cultural bubble, which, in turn, often causes [acceptance](#) problems. The question is thus whether inclusion levels can be influenced so that refugees can adapt to and better integrate in their host communities and what is required for this to be successful. After discussing the basics of my theory, I will propose and outline a framework for such cultural communication improvement.

## Three dimensions

My observations started during a trip around the world by car at the end of the 1980's. [Working internationally](#) for many years, taught me afterward that humans have three potential methods to communicate or as I call them dimensions. These are Rational, Emotional and Spiritual communication, and each possesses an observed different focus of attention (as I will explain this more in detail later). The three dimensions are further also not static, their application and balance can substantially change over time. However, in order to establish an exchange between people, one of these dimensions, in any culture, at any time, is always used as a clear starting point and is therefore dominant. Each of the above three dimensions can be this first normative mechanism though and thus become the dominant communication method in a community, resulting in cultural differences between societies worldwide.

In the event that the first chosen method of finding a common frequency is unable to establish proper information exchange, establishing communication between people is too important to just fail. Instead, there now starts a second attempt to set-up a connection. An alternative method, a secondary dimension or new perspective is chosen. It is used to replace the old, non-functioning, first one, and comes in as a new optional point of view. The chosen secondary dimension thus serves as a kind of pre-agreed "emergency" attempt to connect. An approach that is quite similar to using a pre-defined fallback frequency in order to improve the safety of technical communication.

My observation is that the choice of this second dimension is, like the first one, strongly coded and rigid in a community at any point in time. This leads to the phenomenon that there is in general no room for a third communication option to be used. Simultaneously using a third dimension would mainly generate confusion or noise. It would, namely, become necessary to choose which of the two remaining dimensions (after attempting to use the dominant first one) should be activated as one's "emergency" secondary dimension.

This aspect in turn leads to the remaining third communication dimension becoming disabled or disconnected. As a result, humans use a two-dimensional information exchange whereas we possess a three-dimensional communication potential. All people worldwide use in practice a distinctive balance between their two chosen dimensions instead of their more extensive capability. This has strong impact and makes us culturally "different" from each other. Thus, while everyone possesses a fully universal three-dimensional human communication potential, we tend to simplify this more complex reality via our two-dimensional reduction approach.

Analyzing a by definition common denominator — communication, my theory and models strongly stereotype people. Yet, all people differ and possess a personal cultural identity. This implies that an individual has and uses the freedom to behave differently from a general cultural norm or expectation. But, there is a trade-off in doing so; people pay “a price” for this freedom or deviant behavior in a community, and will have to accept the noise or misunderstandings their communication behavior causes. Not respecting norms can eventually mean that they become an outcast or a member of a subculture and no longer belong to the mainstream of a society. Still, it is important to be able to recognize the general cultural norms and expectations. Making them visible is an important outcome generated by my models. The models further show eventual miscommunication in and outside of a society. Analyzing these results — and as one of its main conclusions knowing where one’s personal theoretical cultural position is — my models can, if desired, finally help to address a possible mismatch.

However, fully independent of the tools we select to communicate, there is another [overarching factor](#) to take into account. Namely, [how](#) we use our selected instruments. We, in practice, seem to possess an overall attitude for all our dimensions in use, or as I call it polarity. We can either primarily focus inward or outward. The resulting conduct strongly determines all human behavior and causes substantial differences between societies. The polarity people use is entirely separated from which communication dimensions people apply and possible miscommunication caused by the mismatches in this selection.

Rationality becomes polarized in either personal “integrity” (*self-reliant=inward looking*) or “individuality” (*living by comparison=outward looking*). Inward looking means to weigh the interests of others as part of one’s personal responsibility or integrity, whereas outward looking means to consider everything as an exclusive private possession and to build one’s individuality or personality on comparison with the outside world.

Emotionality becomes polarized in either “us” (*empathy=inward*) or “them” (*rivalry=outward*). Inward looking means to focus on the group one belongs to, whereas outward looking means comparing this community with other groups; easily leading to envy and rivalry.

Finally, Spirituality becomes “respect” (*voluntary being part of entirety=inward*) or “discipline” (*involuntary, forced=outward*). Inward looking means that one considers oneself to be part of a greater unity and that one voluntarily respects the mentorship of this entirety, whereas outward looking means that one is forced to accept the span of control of an autocratic leader and behaves disciplined.

The final dynamic result of the above polarization is [convergence](#) or [divergence](#) in a society. People either grow together or grow apart. There is a build-up of [trust](#) in, or [fear](#) of others.



## Saying Yes! or No!

Before one can start applying polarity, it is first necessary to determine the dimensions in use. I will therefore begin with illustrating some examples of how to observe the presence of these dimensions in a society.

Every human being needs to guard his or her privacy. In order to protect this, one needs to be able to regulate the distance to others and be able to say “no”. This saying “no” is very important and therefore easily visible in daily life. Without this, one can psychologically [damage](#) individuals and one can also [disrupt](#) a society. This aspect is thus strongly socially regulated and can therefore be well observed and analyzed in any culture.

The first type of “no” is rational, people are able to express a direct “no” or “yes” and can say directly what they think. This “no” takes the individual interest as its basis and does hardly mind what others’ opinion is about someone or something. It is the inside-out communication, seeking for answers to one’s questions. An example is to just say “I do not want this” or “I like this”, without tuning-in to or respecting possible objections of others. However, those others involved may actually find this too blunt or direct.

The second type of “no” is emotional. Its externalized form is storytelling and the “no” is packaged between the lines of the story told. It is a way of expressing feelings and sharing a temperature with someone. People one knows well, will understand the message between the lines. Others or strangers, those who one has a more distant relationship with, will not. This is also caused by the fact that the story is mainly about expressing sentiments and does not have to be factually true. The starting point is the other and tuning-in to someone. From this contact, a dialog is supposed to arise in which both parties are enabled to exchange a temperature representing their feelings. The quality of this tuning-in and the resulting distance is the actual way of regulating proximity or indirectly saying “yes” or “no”.

The third type of “no” is found in the spiritual. In the spiritual dimension everything is one and fully interrelated. Individuals are not supposed to disturb this unity or consensus; it would imply defiance. Expressing a “no” or an explicit (non-consensual) “yes” would result exactly in this, namely, showing resistance against unity and would be a sign of opposition. This is both true in relation to accepting God or to human leadership. The solution found is to either give wishful answers or remain silent in order to contribute to (re)finding consensus ([convergent](#)) or to shut-up and be disciplined ([divergent](#)). The result is silence or politeness. Not expressing or not being allowed to express any explicit “no” or “yes” is the individual spiritual alternative for one’s distance to others being regulated.

The above three types of behavior are relatively easy to recognize on the surface of any society as individual behavior, and are therefore a good indicator of the cultural communication mechanisms used.

Allowing others to come [too close](#) can permanently damage people. Using only one dominant dimension to address everything in life does, in practice, not sufficiently protect people against getting psychologically too close to each other, regardless from which direction or dimension someone intrudes. In any culture therefore two out of the three “nos” are used, one dominant, one if respecting the first one fails. This behavior clearly follows the two-dimensional reduction logic I previously described. One type of “no” is being primarily used, followed by a secondary type of “no” as an emergency brake. This secondary “no” is only used in case the first one fails to create sufficient distance. In that case the second dimension is activated. The third option is mostly ignored after selecting a second dimension.

An example of this behavior is people who dominantly rationally express their direct “no” or “yes”. If others keep on pushing them by repeating their questions, ignoring the direct “no” they receive from them as an answer, people tend in the end to start making up a story and this way become indirect (emotional) or they will start to either change the subject, thus avoiding the topic, or turn silent or “polite” (spiritual). These are the indicators for secondary usage of either their emotional or spiritual dimension. Similarly, primarily storytelling, thus dominantly emotional, people will become direct if someone comes too close to them and will express a direct “no” (rational) or, instead, turn silent or “polite” (spiritual).

Finally, if people do not respect the consensus or silence in a dominantly spiritual society, this is considered to be very rude or a lack of discipline. All of a sudden other people may start expressing anger as a sign of a direct “no” (rational), or under circumstances they may become emotional and break out of their silence, clearly showing their, until then, controlled feelings (emotional).

### **Time and physical personal space**

Besides recognizing people’s “no”, there are a few other, well observable, indicators which communication dimensions are primarily used by a society; for example, timing or the individual requirement of personal space and its related noisiness. Rational timing is fixed, fast, logical, predictable, efficient and punctual. It can be this way because only the individual is responsible and no time is lost with tuning or achieving concordance with others.

Emotional timing is instead flexible and related to the temperature shared; decisions are mostly not made individually but are an indirect result of collective dialog and asking friends for their opinion.

Spiritual timing is strategic, meaning waiting for the right moment. Although this waiting seems to be a very slow mechanism, it actually can become very fast and precise as soon as there is consensus or when a leader orders the execution of his or her strategy. Once there is such decision, it is everyone’s accepted non-negotiable decision. Mobilizing an entire society this way can, due to its mass, be extremely impactful.

Again, two dimensions are used for timing in a society, for example, if projects are not going according to plan (rational), there is a secondary mechanism taking over, this is either improvisation (emotional) or people start to wait for orders or for the development of a new plan or strategy (spiritual).

A final example of an indicator is the personal space people require. Dominantly rational individuals need a lot of space and are loud because they are not in tune with others. They mostly take up all space they can get and prefer to travel individually; for example, standing close to them in an elevator can annoy them.

Emotional people sometimes need little personal space, for example, if they are close to friends or lovers, but at other times they entirely try to avoid their enemies. They can both be very noisy as well as silent depending on the shared temperature. In the spiritual, personal space is either huge because of isolation or reclusion, or it can be minimal because of a high population density of (spiritual) people who share the available physical space together. In both cases people are silent and “personal” space and time are actually relatively unimportant and subordinated to the entirety.

### **What are the dimensions meant for?**

In my opinion, the three dimensions are lenses or angles of views and each of them is originally meant to serve a specific biological purpose. However, if one strongly develops one lens, there is a tendency to universally use it for everything, thus also for the aspects of life where the individual dimensions are not intended/suited for. Although one can philosophically freely contemplate about and relate to all three dimensions, from an actual communication perspective their practical use is much more restricted. For example, one can develop personal emotions, but one may not be allowed or able to express/exchange them in some cultural contexts.

The rational dimension is meant for survival. In case someone is threatened, there is a kind of question-answer argumentation mechanism triggered that leads to immediate individual action. This way it increases one's chances to get out of trouble in comparison to emotionally panicking or spiritually waiting for things to happen. However, rationality being used to argue about emotional or spiritual aspects of life, leads to unanswerable questions, like questioning the existence of love or of a god. The dimension is meant to arrange a relationship with oneself.

The emotional dimension finds its origin in reproduction. Without emotionally taking care of our children beyond the rationality of feeding them, mankind would likely not be able to secure next generations. Associating or taking care of others is about socially bonding with them; it is about their and our social well-being. This dimension establishes a relationship between human beings beyond focusing on oneself. Its principle arranges the relationships with everyone one knows.

The spiritual dimension finds its source in being part of something bigger which surpasses humankind. We are part of an eco-system or universe and will have to respect this fact of being subordinated to it. One way of doing this is religiousness, contemplation or meditation in which we submit ourselves to a ([convergent](#)) omnipresent force being God. The other ([divergent](#)) side is that we can become disciplined towards an autocratic leader who represents the “power of humanity”. The spiritual dimension arranges the relationships with the unknown beyond our control, and on a more mundane level it represents an attitude towards nature in general, and towards all other human beings one does not know personally.

As observed, we do not use our full potential for communication, but try to reduce complexity by dominantly only using one out of the three dimensions with a second one activated in case of emergencies instead. This implies that we always fail to properly address the left-over third domain. Therefore a question becomes what effect has disconnecting of our remaining third communication dimension.

### **Side effects of improper or non-use of the third dimension**

Disconnecting one’s third dimension is not without effect. However, societies tend to compensate for this, which makes the deficits visible.

If one fully disconnects the rational dimension, there is little personal initiative left. This can easily produce the effect that essential necessities, such as food and housing, become scarce. To compensate for such scarcity, impacted societies often tend to [collectivize](#) and [subsidize](#) the basic necessities in order to properly function economically.

If one disconnects the emotional dimension, people can individually become lonely because not everyone feels fully part of the overarching consensus ([convergent](#)) or discipline based entity ([divergent](#)) that now also should cover the relationships with all people one knows personally. To compensate for this effect, these types of societies tend to have special emotional zones, such as for example the [Japanese bar culture](#). Here people can be emotionally irresponsible being intoxicated by others, and then express their emotions and connect socially, whereas they are not allowed to do this in their ordinary regular life.

If one disconnects the spiritual dimension, this leads to a lack of reflection or control, speeding up individual life. In societies which face this, people tend therefore to compensate for it by creating a body, health and [fitness culture](#) in an attempt to accomplish more stress resistance and, this way, be better able to cope with the competitive, high and demanding potential workloads in such a society.

Compensations such as the ones described above, certainly do not replace or fulfill the lack of availability of a third cultural dimension. Globally, it becomes meanwhile obviously clear and visible that in many countries increased disconnection of our third spiritual dimension is taking place. Replacing spirituality by forces like rational individuality or emotional envy, strongly dissociates us from our connection with nature and from compassion with others (beyond the friends or enemies we know). However, there are aspects of life, which humans are not able or supposed to control and thus must spiritually respect as they are. Furthermore, [divergence](#) seems to gain influence, increasing conflicts. These topics, unfortunately, go beyond the scope of this article and I will now try to focus on refugee integration instead.

### **Refugees: how to adapt?**

In case of refugees, being disconnected from their origin and therefore not seldom facing cultural communication difficulties in their new environment, the situation is often very complicated since there is a lack of commonly used cultural dimensions with their hosts. Therefore, in my opinion, a better alternative to two dimensional reduction will be described. Namely, to adapt to all three available dimensions simultaneously.

[Reinclusion](#) of refugees is, in case of cultural differences, based on bridging the communication gaps between refugees and their host communities. There are three scenarios here, one of culturally identical communication dimensions, one of reversed priorities, and the last remaining one of dimensional incompatibilities between host and refugees.

Even in the first situation that host and refugee use identical communication dimensions, there may be a difference in polarity or other strong variations in interpretation. Spirituality dominant, for example, can mean a ([divergent](#)) balance between authoritarian leadership and discipline, but, it can alternatively also mean a ([convergent](#)) religious balance between a guiding “primus inter pares” type of mentorship and consensus. Although there are vast disparities between these opposite approaches, the fact that a society uses a leadership-based model remains a common aspect. To be included, refugees may thus communicatively still be able to recognize this, and be able to adapt by interaction with and participation in their new host society.

On a more complex, second, level there is a reverse in priority. Whereas for example the refugee is primarily emotional, the host is not, but only uses emotionality as a secondary mechanism. Still, both share the same cultural dimensions. Although certainly more complicated, also here, interaction and participation can lead to adaptation. There still remains a common basis for developing understanding of each other.

However, if it is not possible to select refugees according to cultural communication dimensions shared by both refugees and hosts (and their polarity), there is a third situation of principle mismatch or incompatibility. Hosts and to be included refugees are lacking commonality of one of the two communication dimensions (either primary or secondary). This situation is almost impossible to adapt to. There is a fundamental difference in reaction. The knowledge on how to communicate with each other is fully absent in many situations. Refugees and hosts possess only one cultural dimension in common.

Adaptation can in this incompatibility case not be achieved by “just” interaction and participation. For example, it is nearly impossible to give up or forget one’s cultural heritage and adapt to or copy someone else’s cultural behavior, especially if one does not possess knowledge about the lacking basic communication tool. Yet, one can try to enhance one’s background with this missing (incompatibility causing) cultural dimension in order to learn to establish communication.

### **Cultural Boundaries?**

In most cases, cultural identities are related to ethnicity, geography, and language or country borders. A difference of culture is very often being identical or reflecting the dissimilarity in the communication dimensions used by groups of people. Although there are [examples](#) of neighbors using the same communication mechanisms but possessing another polarity interpretation, mainly the cultural forms of reversed priority and, above all, incompatibilities are mostly present as cultural boundaries, separating people.

What is said in the rest of this article about refugees and their adaptation is therefore, besides to refugees, also more universally applicable between other groups of people such as inhabitants of neighboring countries, and for improving the understanding or relationships in a global population.

### **The effects of cultural mismatch or miscommunication**

Not sharing dimensions has a strong effect on information exchange between people; the outcome can easily lead to avoiding contact with each other and in case of refugees to the creation of parallel societies.

On the first level of difference, people use the same cultural dimensions and dominance. However, they follow another interpretation. There is understanding but disagreement, mostly this is handled in practice by establishing proper political democratic representation and finding compromise. Still, possessing the same dimensions and dominance but using [divergence](#) as a polarity is another huge source of conflict. Increasing [trust](#) worldwide is thus much needed in general.

On the second level, if people face a reversed balance between the dominance of their two dimensions, others usually consider them eccentric and therefore on the outside of a society. Yet, there remains a basis of understanding because of the shared communication mechanisms. To some extent deviant behavior may be tolerated, being an emotional person in a rational society, and vice versa.

The main problems start on the third level, the possession of cultural incompatibilities. In this case, people share only one dimension. By definition, there are misunderstandings arising because of a partial lack of accepted mechanisms to express oneself; this makes one a definite foreigner. Currently, the only way to socially function in this situation is to establish and become part of a fully separated parallel community or sub-culture.

This disconnected situation is what one clearly does not want to achieve in case of refugees. Surely not in situations when people are in need of a relocated new future and in the process of [reinclusion](#). Especially in relation to smaller communities, this is an important issue to address. The question is thus whether there are available alternatives.

### **Acquiring communication dimensions**

If one goes back to which purpose the cultural dimensions serve without simplification, the question becomes if it would be possible to acquire access to one's lacking third cultural mechanism and to learn how and when to use it.

In my opinion, the answer is yes, and this creates future perspective for non-adapted refugees and, more general, for everyone. I will therefore briefly (unfortunately very shallowly in this context) describe where possible starting points can be found.

Rationality can be acquired by study and the development of knowledge and/or rational practical skills, in case of relocation of refugees, this type of [education](#) comes mostly first as an important factor for [reinclusion](#) and labor market connection. However, important is to share one's knowledge ([convergent](#)) instead of protecting it as a property and shield oneself from others ([divergent](#)).

Emotionality can (for example) be grown by developing [empathy](#) through identifying with characters while reading [fiction](#); a next contribution can be to be taught and perform arts or music, thus enabling emotional [self-expression](#). In turn, this can evolve into becoming "part of an orchestra", where the total becomes more than the sum of the individual instruments and where one learns what engagement can achieve. Obtaining [foreign language](#) knowledge, beyond basic communication skills, is also contributing to acquiring emotional communication potential. Finally, the exposure to cultural traditions, which often tend to contain social/emotional stimuli, can be optimized. However, essential is to become [convergent](#) and to focus on what one has in common with others instead of focusing on the differences between people or groups, such as between refugees and hosts.

Spirituality, beyond becoming [disciplined](#) or compliant, can be taught by learning meditation or contemplation techniques or by participation in religious practices. Such involvement is a catalyst and gives people access to their personal [consensus](#) path of the spiritual dimension. From here they can further explore their domain. Besides the above, there can also be a program for leadership development. Such [education](#) can be either [divergent](#) or [convergent](#), but only the convergent mentorship variant will be harmonic.

There is a huge spectrum of scientific material available on how to develop each personal dimension and there are also many discourses going on. It is, of course, fully impossible to cover this all here. However, the above tip of the iceberg indicates, that it is more than likely possible to develop one's lacking third cultural dimension and this way to learn to communicate in any cultural setting. If non-matching refugees start doing this, they actually obtain a cultural communication advantage over their hosts who are probably still using communication reduction. This may, in turn, inspire the hosts to change their behavior as well and enlarge the common ground. By starting to live a [convergent](#) full three-dimensional life, people get enriched in my opinion. I will finish with an example how this could change the concept of perceiving home for refugees.

### **A “feeling home” example**

Depending on the cultural balance, feeling home currently depends on the two dimensions in use.

Rationally feeling home means “to be there where the money is”, it generates a strong mobility. People move easily for jobs or improvement of economic circumstances. Being or feeling home becomes fluid and mostly quite shallow this way.

Emotionally being home means to be there where social life, in the form of family and friends, is located.

Spiritually being home is, besides sharing religious practices and experiences, also connected to the soul and to ancestry or heritage (a concept found with [tribes](#), but also in countries like [Japan](#)).

Currently for most people, one of the three concepts is dominant and frequently causes conflicts. There is a kind of choice to be made. The relationship between the two dimensions in use, is one of “or”. Home is mostly a one-dimensional outcome with some flavor of a second element and with some compensation, either in the form of commuting to the money, travelling to friends or to one's places of ancestry.

In case of relocated refugees, starting a new life at a new location, there is in principle currently no other “home option” than “following the money”. People are in the beginning neither socially nor spiritually connected to their new location and community. If refugees possess a disconnected rational dimension (which is quite frequently the case) there is even no feeling of home at all. This often leads to the legitimate wish to cluster with compatriots and share (mostly an emotional) home in a bubble that way.

Alternatively one can, of course, try to build new emotional friendships over time. Prerequisite being that both the refugee and their new community are open for this. However, by changing the relationship between the cultural dimensions in a simultaneous “and” relationship and by gaining control over all of one’s three dimensions, people can potentially develop a much richer multi-dimensional relationship with their new community and feel home easier and faster.

Although in small communities work, friendship and religion are also currently often locally combined, their priorities are not. The mechanism of a dominant factor in combination with a secondary one and an ignored third one can be found everywhere. The resulting choice causes unbalance and “forces” people to leave their birthplace for opportunities in one dimension (being work, marriage, or oppositely they stay passively waiting for times to come where they are right now). Changing this mechanism into developing all three dimensions equally and using them for what they are intended for (preferably [convergent](#)), creates, in my opinion, a much stronger balanced society, which is more attractive and has better chances to survive or counter urbanization tendencies. In case of forced climate-change type of displacement, one can even opt to relocate the entire balanced community, instead of spreading its individual members.

### **Moving forward**

As can be seen from the previous example, it makes sense for everyone to exploit one’s full three-dimensional potential, by balancing the currently used two dimensions better, and enrich oneself with one’s lacking third dimension. It means to start using each mechanism individually for what it is meant.

However, it will take time to achieve this because to fully communicate, one needs others also behaving similarly. If the interpretation aspects of the dimensions can at the same time be made [convergent](#), it would imply creating a single united, much more harmonious, civilization.

Refugees’ willingness, or likeliness to possess a desire to escape the “[fear](#)” that made them flee, may be the needed catalyst to avoid [divergence](#) and to establish [convergence](#). They would obtain a much better cultural understanding and increase their communication richness. As a result, could “cultural” conflicts between groups, over time, start to disappear.

This richer type of cultural relationship establishes people’s economical participation, social inclusion and a home for the soul. Doing so simultaneously will also generate new [forms](#) of [community](#) compared to the current ones. It is what [Refival](#) with its [reinclusion](#) approach in rural areas envisions.