

Cultural misunderstandings between the Polish and the Dutch

How to make common business more successful
in the Polish community Stara Kamienica?

Sylwia Kaftanska

Preface

The following thesis is one of the parts of my course where I can demonstrate my ability to do research individually. I am a student of the International Rural Innovation and Development at Dronten Professional Agricultural University, the Netherlands.

The main target groups that will be interested in the conclusions of the research are the employees of the Nemo Foundation and inhabitants of the local administrative district Stara Kamienica, due to the fact that they are dealing with the subject it in their daily life. The research might be helpful for them to improve mutual relations and understand some types of behaviour that have so far been unknown to them. They will also be able to understand what they have done wrong. Moreover, this thesis can also be interesting for those Dutch and Polish citizens who would like to co-operate within a business undertaking. Using the experience acquired by Nemo, they can avoid making mistakes. Finally, the thesis will be of interest to those who will research for information about intercultural management and cultural differences, in particular between Dutch and Polish cultures.

I would like to thank Mr Peter Spruijt for giving me the opportunity to have a company placement in his organisation, as without this I would not have been able to write this thesis. I am also grateful to all interviewees for their help and friendliness. In addition, I would like to give my heart-felt thanks to Kamila for long common talks. And last but not least, many thanks to my thesis coach Mr Roel Veen for helpful tips and remarks about my report.

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Summary

The following thesis report is written with a purpose to show cultural misunderstandings between the Polish and the Dutch based on the experience of the Nemo Foundation which has its premises in Poland, in the community Stara Kamienica, Province Lower Silesia. Its founders and managers come from the Netherlands. After eight years of running their activities in Poland they can still experience misunderstandings and problems in the common cooperation with Polish partners. Most of the problems can be linked with cultural differences.

The report is based on interviews that were conducted during the company placement period. On the basis of collected information four areas where misunderstandings occur may be distinguished. These areas are the issues of uncertainty, time, equality and attitude. Each of them is divided into smaller units, where factors having an influence on these main issues are explained. The last part consists of the lists of tips for the Dutch and the Polish in which suggestions on how to improve the situation are given.

The first area is linked with the problem that the Dutch feel uncertain in the Polish society and they are not sure about their position. Uncertainty is caused by the following factors:

- the difference regarding requirements of needed information, which is explained by high and low context communication;
- gossip: a powerful tool which may have both advantages as well as disadvantages;
- barriers in using the language, the Dutch cannot speak Polish and the Polish often do not speak any foreign languages.

Feeling time and its managing is a second area. The distinction between the rural and urban style of living and using time is felt differently. This clash causes problems for each side. Other factors are differences between monochronic and polichronic people and also between those who are past or future oriented.

The third area – equality – is divided into two sub issues:

- power distance, where differences of the status between employers and employees and are explained and also the status of those with different positions in the society;
- gender, where inequality between male and female is mentioned and it is discussed what kind of status men and women have in each culture.

The fourth area is attitude. This issue is focused more on personal relations and feelings than on general cultural differences. It is divided into four sub issues:

- personal promotion;
- hospitality;
- problems;
- expectations.

There are many factors that influence gaps and misunderstandings in cooperation between the Dutch and Polish partners. A lot of effort will be required to improve the situation. It should be taken by both sides which are together responsible for reconciliation. Using the experience from the past and being aware of the cultural differences will help to make common business more successful and to improve the communication between the Dutch and Polish actors.

Introduction

When people start businesses in a foreign country and in the different culture, the cultural collisions will appear sooner or later. It is not to be avoided. The Dutch-Polish Foundation Nemo had many experiences in this aspect. The following thesis deals with the cultural differences between the Polish and the Dutch, which contribute to the formation of problems and misunderstandings, when it comes to cooperation. Moreover, possibilities of improving the situation are pointed out. The thesis is based on research which was carried out in the Polish community Stara Kamienica in Poland.

Nemo is a Dutch association of walkers that was founded in 1980. Its aim is to promote the sustainable development and to protect the countryside. It has an office in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In 1998 Nemo opened information and visitors centre in Miedzylesie-Kopaniec, in the in the community Stara Kamienica, in Poland, province of Lower Silesia. Nemo founded a separate Polish organisation called Foundation Nemo for the administration of the centre¹. It cooperates with other Polish non-governmental organisations in the community and with local inhabitants.

After eight years of carrying out their activities in Poland, Dutch leaders of the organisation have found gaps and misunderstandings in the cooperation with Polish partners. The aim of the report is to find out areas where problems occur, to describe factors which cause them and to suggest possibilities to improve the situation to make common business more successful.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first one is dealing with definitions of culture, cultural theories and possible solutions for the foundation. The second describes the Dutch uncertainty in the Polish society and factors contributing to this uncertainty. In the third chapter issues connected with the aspect of time are mentioned. The power distance and the equality issues between men and women are discussed in the fourth chapter. The last chapter shows different attitudes to personal promotion, hospitality, dealing with problems and different expectations.

¹ based on: <http://www.nemoland.org/>

1. Culture

In this chapter theoretical information about the aspect of cultural differences will be presented. The first part will provide the definitions of the word *culture* and the second one information about two cultural theories: Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's patterns. Moreover, this chapter contains the part about possible solutions which can be done by Foundation Nemo.

1.1. Definition

Culture can be defined differently depending on the context. It can mean:

- the arts (e.g. music, cinema, theatre, literature);
- learning and development (e.g. cultural studies, physical culture, a cultured person);
- scientific (e.g. cultivation – agriculture, a bacterial culture, horticulture);
- sociological/anthropological meaning (e.g. the culture of the North American Indians, local culture, adapt to a new culture).²

Geert Hofstede defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.”³ According to Hofstede culture is learned rather than inherited. It should be distinguished from two aspects:

- human nature, which is inherited and shared with other human beings and determines physical and basic psychological functioning such as: the ability to too feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, etc. However, the way of expressing these feelings is modified by culture;
- individual's personality as a unique personal set, which is partly learned and inherited.

Edward Hall treats culture as communication.

Spencer-Oatey defines culture as a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behaviour.⁴

The four different definitions of the word culture have been shown in this chapter. The first one is the most general and shows culture from many aspects. The remaining three have been proposed by authors dealing with cultural differences.

Hall's definition is very short and does not provide much information as to what culture exactly is but how it can be viewed. Hofstede's definition does not show what the patterns of the culture are. He treats culture rather in a technical way as if people's minds could be compared to computers. Without the introduction about his culture theories the definition cannot be understandable fully. The Spencer-Oatey's definition shows patterns present in the term “culture” in a comprehensive way. References to culture throughout the report will be based on Spencer-Oatey's definition of culture.

² Kristin Ockert-Axelsson, David Norman: *Across Cultures. Coursebook*; Studenlitteratur; Sweden 1993

³ Geert Hofstede: *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*; New York; McGraw-Hill; 1997

⁴ Helen Spencer-Oatey; Publications: *Introduction: What is culture?* for the Centre for Intercultural Training and Research; <http://209.15.42.137/ic.org.uk/publications/>

During the research it has been discovered that the Dutch and Polish understand the word “culture” in a different way. For Polish culture has meant “arts, learning and development”, while for Dutch culture has the sociological and anthropological meaning.

1.2. Cultural theories

Two cultural theories are introduced in this part of the report: Hofstede’s dimensions and Hall’s patterns. Some aspects of both theories will be used in subsequent chapters to explain cultural differences and to deepen understanding of them. In order to avoid repetitions and misunderstandings in the following chapter detailed information about the theories is presented.

1.2.1 Hofstede’s dimensions

Geert Hofstede analyzed a large data base of value scores of employees collected by IBM between 1967 and 1973, when he was working as a psychologist at IBM Europe, covering more than 70 countries. Out of these countries he first covered the 40 largest only and afterwards extended the analysis to 50 countries and 3 regions⁵. Results of this research led to the creation of a model of four dimensions of national culture difference, to which lately a fifth one was added:

- power distance;
- individualism versus collectivism;
- masculinity versus femininity;
- uncertainty avoidance;
- long versus short time orientation.

Each of those dimensions will be explained below. They take value from 0 to 100. Knowing scores of each of them it is possible to compare different cultures and to describe their factors.

1.2.1.1. Power distance

“Power Distance Index (PDI) focuses on the degree of equality, or inequality, between people in the country's society. A High Power Distance ranking indicates that inequalities of power and wealth have been allowed to grow within the society. These societies are more likely to follow a caste system that does not allow significant upward mobility of its citizens. A Low Power Distance ranking indicates the society de-emphasizes the differences between citizen's power and wealth. In these societies equality and opportunity for everyone is stressed”⁶.

1.2.1.2. Individualism versus collectivism

“Individualism (IDV) focuses on the degree the society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships. A High Individualism ranking indicates that individuality and individual rights are paramount within the society. Individuals in these societies may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships. A Low Individualism

⁵ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

⁶ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

ranking typifies societies of a more collectivist nature with close ties between individuals. These cultures reinforce extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group”⁷.

1.2.1.3. Masculinity versus femininity

“Masculinity (MAS) focuses on the degree the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. A High Masculinity ranking indicates the country experiences a high degree of gender differentiation. In these cultures, males dominate a significant portion of the society and power structure, with females being controlled by male domination. A Low Masculinity ranking indicates the country has a low level of differentiation and discrimination between genders. In these cultures, females are treated equally to males in all aspects of the society”⁸.

1.2.1.4. Uncertainty avoidance

“Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) focuses on the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within the society - i.e. unstructured situations. A High Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. This creates a rule-oriented society that institutes laws, rules, regulations, and controls in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty. A Low Uncertainty Avoidance ranking indicates the country has less concern about ambiguity and uncertainty and has more tolerance for a variety of opinions. This is reflected in a society that is less rule-oriented, more readily accepts change, and takes more and greater risks”⁹.

1.2.1.5. Long versus short time orientation

“Long-Term Orientation (LTO) explains us the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short term point of view. Countries scoring high on this dimension are the Asian countries. These countries believe in many truths, have a long term orientation, easily accept change and have thrift for investment. Cultures scoring low on this dimension believe in absolute truth, are conventional and traditional, have a short term orientation and a concern for stability.”¹⁰

1.2.2. Hall’s patterns

Edward T.Hall is an anthropologist and one of the founders of intercultural communication study. His works have played a key role in describing people’s view of the world and human behaviour as determined by a complex grid of unconscious cultural patterns. ¹¹ His model deals with three patterns:

- context;
- space;
- time.

⁷ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

⁸ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

⁹ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

¹¹ <http://ishkbooks.com/hall.pdf>

1.2.2.1 Context

“Context is the information that surrounds an event”¹². Taking context into consideration the world culture can be divided between those who have low context communication and those with high context communication.

“High context refers to societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behaviour are not made explicit because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other. Low context refers to societies where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration or for some specific reason. In these societies, cultural behaviour and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave.”¹³

1.2.2.2. Space

Skin is a physical and visible boundary which separates every living from its external environment. Besides this visible boundary, there also exists an invisible boundary. The boundaries are determined by the culture and personality of each person. When the boundary is crossed by somebody it can make feelings of inconvenience. Hall mentioned the following types of those boundaries:

- territoriality – space which is required for survival and showing power e.g. in some cultures the highest floors are reserved for people with high status;
- personal space – space which is like an invisible bubble around each person;
- multisensory space – space which is perceived by all the senses e.g. auditory space by the skin, kinaesthetic by the muscles etc¹⁴.

1.2.2.3. Time

Each culture is characterized by a unique concept of time and manages it in a different way. Hall distinguished the following types of time according to the number of activities performed a time:

- monochronic time – paying attention to and doing one thing at a time
- polychronic time – being involved with many things at once.

and according to the culture's orientation on

- past
- present
- future.

¹² Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990

¹³ <http://www.culture-at-work.com/highlow.html>

¹⁴ based on: Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990

1.3. Discussion of possible solutions

“We are looking at the other people by the filter of our own cultures, like by glasses which are constantly worn on the nose. After some time we stop paying attention to it. The problem is that the glasses handicaps understandings people from different cultures.”¹⁵ The Foundation Nemo needs to deal with this Dutch and Polish “glasses”. The Polish and the Dutch are behave in the way which is accepted in their cultures but when it comes to common cooperation it does not have to work properly. What is normal in one culture, in the other may not be.

Dealing with the gaps and misunderstandings caused by cultural differences the foundation has a few choices for its position in the Polish society and how to overcome those problems.

The first one and the easiest solution is to closed the organisation and move to another place. This action will finish all problems with the foundation needs to deal. The leaders have considered this kind of the possibilities to avoid new disillusionments. But this will lead to lose and destroy everything what has been achieved till now. After eight year it will be a pity to do this. Besides, in a new location in Poland or other country the same problems may occur.

The second possible solution is to remain in the so far localization, but not cooperate with other Polish organisation. Just be there and realise own ideas. This alternative will minimise the occurrence of the gaps and misunderstandings. By avoiding contact with the Polish, the possibilities with cultural clash will be increased. On the other hand, it is hard to working and acting in the other country without contacts with its citizens. Besides, the foundation, as its aim, has the cooperation with Polish organisation and local authorities to improve the local conditions and support actions for the local development. In that case, the foundation needs to change its profile and start focusing on the different kind of activities.

The third solution is to remain in the community Stara Kamienica and accept the situation that acting in the different culture brings problems and can cause the gaps and misunderstandings. By founding out the reasons what caused them and how they can be avoided the position of the foundation will be easier. The all actions which have been taken up till now by the foundation will not be missed and the experience can be used in the future. The patience and willingness is required to be managed to overcome the problems.

The first and the second solutions will cause that the foundation will not working according to the aims which has been put in the status. All actions which have been taken up till now will be gone. The best solution is to find compromise. In this case the best solutions and worth for everyone is to accepted rules of the different cultures and sometimes wear off the own “glasses”. The thesis will show that the common cooperation is possible. Those differences can be explained by the theory to better understandings and some advises will be given.

¹⁵the translation form the Polish article: Kwiatkowska Anna: *Przez kulturowe okulary*; Charaktery, number 5 (113) June 2006

2. Uncertainty

This chapter is dealing with uncertainty which is felt by the Dutch in the Polish society. It describes three factors which have the biggest influence on creating uncertainty. These factors are: the difference between high and low context culture, gossip and the language barrier.

2.1. High context versus low context

2.1.1. General overview

“I feel uncertain here as I do not know what people think about me.”¹⁶

“I have an impression that local people hide some information from me, some businesses are made under the table.”¹⁷

“I do not know if inhabitants are satisfied with what I am doing here. Are they pleased with the ‘Day of Holland’ or with the existence of NEMO in the community?”¹⁸

“Shall I continue my work here or should I stop?”¹⁹

Those questions are very often asked by the Dutch employees of Nemo who are dealing with the Polish. They feel very uncertain about themselves and about all activities which were organised by them. They have an impression that inhabitants or business partners hide some information and do not want to tell everything on a given topic. The Dutch expect that people will share with them their opinions and that they will be informed about all steps which have been done or are being planned.

On the other hand, Polish are sometimes irritated about being constantly asked for information and facts. They have to make a lot of effort to prepare and get background knowledge on given topic. In their opinion it is a waste of time because “everybody knows about it”. Moreover, they think that even if it is not known, nothing bad will happen. They can do more interesting and useful or pleasurable things in that time when they are asked difficult questions.

This difference can be explained by the theory of Edward T. Hall. He divided cultures in two types depending on context: high context and low context. The Netherlands is a country with the low context culture while in Poland a high context culture exists.

“A high context communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low

¹⁶ said by Mrs Mathilde Andriesen, leader of the Foundation Nemo, May 2006

¹⁷ said by Mr Peter Spruijt, leader of the Foundation Nemo, February 2006

¹⁸ said by Mr Peter Spruijt, leader of the Foundation Nemo, May 2006

¹⁹ said by Mr Peter Spruijt, leader of the Foundation Nemo, May 2006

context communication is just opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.”²⁰

Table1. Comparison of the high and low context culture.²¹

High context culture Poland	Low context culture The Netherlands
– a lot of background information is not required	– a lot background information is required
– existence of extensive information networks among family, friends, colleagues and clients	– compartment of personal relationship, work and many aspects of day-to-day life
– family, friends, colleagues and clients are involved in close personal relationships	– for each interaction with others detailed background information is needed
– irritation of being constantly asked	– impression that something is hidden when it is not said directly
– businesses are made with people	– businesses are made with companies
– being more reserved	– being more direct
– emotions are always involved in making businesses	– emotion are hidden and never shown in making businesses

This table shows the main differences between high and low context communication, thus at the same time between the Dutch and Polish culture in the area of context. There are more characteristics of low and high context communication but here only the most noticeable features which were observed during the research in the community Stara Kamienica in Poland.

2.1.2. Background information

As it was mentioned before the main issue within the “high and the low context” field is about the requirement for information. In the Polish society information is passed around by word of mouth. There are also some unwritten rules and types of behaviour that are known by everybody but for the foreigners they may not be noticeable. Everybody knows these rules so

²⁰Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990; page 6

²¹Based on: Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990;

they never have to be explained, but for the Dutch they are not so obvious. For them explanation and background information is required to function without doubts and uncertainty.

2.1.2.1 Network

One of the aspects of the low and high context culture is a meaning of the network and the way it is built. The Polish have and can create a considerable network within their family, friends and colleagues. Although in some cases it might be overstated, this kind of network provides a lot of information and it is a framework for each decision making process. Everybody shares with others what they have already heard or noticed. People usually trust each other and they believe the information that is being passed on so it does not have to be checked.

The Dutch, on the other hand, can separate their life and work. They have a different type of network which is divided into private and formal. The formal one is mainly used for working and business purposes. When one task is finished the network also stops and is not used for another one. That is why in each new task renewed collection of the background information and creation of a new network is necessary. When these nationalities meet together and need to cooperate, this situation can lead to irritation. The Polish lose patience when they are always asked and the Dutch have a feeling that something is hidden from them. From this point on there is only one step to lose trust and stop common cooperation.

2.1.2.2. Business with people or company

The next reason is that businesses in high context culture are made with people and not with companies. It takes some time to build trustworthy relationships. This is something that is hard to understand for the Dutch, as for them the company and making business is more important than personal relationships. An extensive network has an influence on this. This difference prevents Nemo and local organizations from good cooperation in the area of Stara Kamienica because Nemo is more associated with its Polish worker than with the Dutch leaders. The reason why this happens is that the Dutch members of Nemo spend too little time in Poland - only a few months per year. It is too short to build trust and be more known by the Polish. Even during the time when the chairman of the Foundation Nemo is in Poland there are so many obligations that there is no free time to improve the relationship with the Polish. The Polish employee is here for the whole time but she is not a person who is responsible for making decisions and this kind of responsibility is not wanted. The worker cannot substitute the Dutch leaders in building trust with people. When Polish employee's working contract terminates the chairman of the Foundation Nemo will remain with nothing and will have to start everything from the beginning.

One of the opinions of the local inhabitants is that the Dutch create a special "Dutch zone" at Nemoland. They spend most of their time here and in the surroundings. All activities take place here. Local people can see them only when they make their walking trips and when they walk to the shop. This also causes uncertainty and the lack of trust, as the local society does not know what happens in Nemo's enclosed space. If they do not see this they will just imagine. These imaginations are often not true but it is very hard to change their way of thinking. That is why the openness on the neighbourhood and contact with the people is very important. As when it comes to cooperation it will not be cooperation with Nemo but with the Dutch.

2.1.2. Direct versus reserved

The difference in low and high context communication leads to a different way of behaviour in getting information and a different attitude towards other people. By this it is meant that Dutch are more direct and Polish are rather reserved. The good example of this was observed during one of the interview:

“I think that the Dutch are more direct. When my friends think that I am wrong or they do not accept my behaviour they will come to me and will say it, so after this we can discuss what we can do with it and how it can be changed. They are not afraid of giving and saying aloud their opinions even if it is not polite and it can hurt me. The Polish are different in this respect; they never say directly what they think about me and about my steps. They keep this for themselves or say this to their neighbours. They are a little bit afraid of saying loudly what is hidden in their mind. What is also strange for me is that they do not share their disagreement with me but they can be unpleasant to me or even offend me. I have no idea how they can behave like this. I am confused here but after the time spent here I am used to this, and I do not feel able to make any efforts to change this.”²²

The low context culture requires background information not only for business but also for day-to-day life. It means that the Dutch ask questions also about their way of doing things and if their behaviour and attitude are correct. “What is your impression about something?” is one of the most popular questions asked by the Dutch. They want to hear what people think about various issues also what they think of them. That is why they are not afraid of asking and giving opinions. “In the Dutch society, everybody has the right to say what they think, no matter what their social position, and thus opinions are easily voiced (...) they [the Dutch] rather appreciate honest criticism over flattery and compliments.”²³

The Polish behave in a different way. They do not have to ask to feel certain about their position. They can read between the lines and they do not have to ask people directly to know what they are thinking about them. They can draw conclusions from somebody’s look on the face, postures and words that are used during the conversation. For example, when Polish do not like somebody they will not say it directly but they will avoid this person, the conversation will be very short and very formal, on the street they will behave in a way as if they have never met before, on seeing this person smile from their face will disappear. These are very light and delicate signs but when they are recognisable they simplify life and existence in the Polish society.

The Polish are not used to give and receive direct opinions. Their feelings can be hurt when they suddenly hear something that is not expected. They treat it like a criticism and being criticised is not very liked among the Polish. The Dutch do this unwittingly, in good faith as they would like to improve or explain the situation but instead of the willingness for the cooperation they meet the disapproval and hostility.

The good example that the Polish are reserved is a small scale conflict which Nemo has with the Association “Pod Kamienickim Grzbietem”, in particular with its chairman. This conflict has lasted for a few years and is connected with the lobby against the establishment of a mine

²² said by Mrs Mathilde Andriesen, leader of the Foundation Nemo, May 2006

²³ Jacob Vossestein: *Living and working in other cultures. Dealing with the Dutch*; Royal Tropical Institute (KIT); Amsterdam, 1999; page 28

in the surroundings of Nemo and villages Chromiec and Mała Kamienica. The chairman of the foundation said without any problems what he thinks about this and what kinds of barriers are seen. For example he felt that the Association stopped sharing information with Nemo or that they were very angry about the advocate who was hired to help to explain the administrative procedure. The task of the interview was to confront his opinions with those of the chairman of the Association "Pod Kamienickim Grzbietem". It was a very difficult task as there was no willingness to talk sincerely, short answers were given and the conversation was very formal. Besides this, the leader was distrustful and kept distance, checked very carefully what was being written and what kinds of notes were being made.

Very helpful in getting information by the Polish is their extensive network. They do not have to ask directly anybody of his or her opinions. They can get it very easily from friends or from people who have a good relationship with this person. Polish like talking about others and good listener can gain a lot of information about other people without knowing the speaker. The information is always there; what needs to be done is only to catch it and use it.

When the Polish were asked during the interview what their impression about the Dutch was or if they noticed any cultural differences, they always answered that know the Dutch not well enough to say anything. This is a proof that Polish focus on personal relationships. The Dutch, on the other hand, can point some differences after one visit in Poland. Their first sentence was that they had too little contact, but in the second one they mentioned their observations.

2.1.3. Emotions

In the high context culture emotions are always on the first place. Each conversation or business is led in an emotional way. The success of a good cooperation depends on feelings which are never hidden. The private life and business life are always mixed. People at home talk about the job and at work talk about the home life. When there is a meeting with the Polish, the stories about past, families, children etc. can be heard. If the Polish are hurt by somebody, they will almost never forget it. This resentment influences further communication or rather the lack of it. For example there is a clash of personalities between the Polish employee of the Foundation Nemo and the leader of the Association "Pod Kamienickim Grzbietem" which affects the communication between those two organisations. The contact exists only when it is necessary or in the case when it may not be avoided.

Low context culture can separate their private life from work. Moreover, the Dutch can hide their personal feelings while making business. When they organise a meeting they concentrate on the topic or issue that is brought up. Their resentments and feelings can be hidden and not shown. Business is business and private life is private life.

Especially the issue of money causes many emotions. Nemo is a provider of funds from the Dutch programme Matra. During a meeting when a donation was handed over to non-governmental organisations active in the district of Stara Kamienica, the atmosphere was full of emotions and excitement. Everybody was thrilled and discussed what kind of purpose the money will be used for. Members of the organisations wanted to take photos during this special moment. The chairman of Nemo remained reserved, tranquil and down to earth in that situation. He did not show his emotions.

2.2. Gossip

Differences between low and high context communication are one of the reasons why the Dutch feel uncertain in Poland. Another one is the power of gossip that is also linked with the aspect of gathering information. “It is a vital source of information in business circle (...) quickly updates and bypasses facts and statistics, provides political background to commercial decisions, and facilitates invaluable debate between people who do not meet officially.”²⁴

Gossip is a powerful tool, especially in a small village where almost everybody knows each other even if they pretend that they do not. It may destroy somebody’s reputation, but people like talking about others behind their back even if it is not true or they overstate the situation and facts. Usually some gossip is popular for a short time and then some other will become popular. Nobody can escape from this. It is useless to deny the gossip it can only make things worse. It is better to wait until the end of this inconvenient time.

Centres of exchanging information are shops or churches. The shop is often in the middle of the village. Almost everybody goes there to do shopping but not only for this. It is also a place where people can meet one another, share their problems and provide new information to be spread around. If some topic is interesting for the clients, the shop assistants may be asked and they give the required answer. Shop assistants are often very talkative and spread information on their own. Sunday is the day when people can meet in church. After the mass there is exchange of information, especially about those who are absent or new. By going to church people can get more respect in the local community.

The Dutch are foreigners in the village so local people watch them more carefully and only wait for new sensational news which can be later used to create new topics for gossips. They do not know a lot of about the Dutch and what exactly happens at Nemo because of the “Dutch zone” so they need to use their imagination. The location of Nemo off the beaten track in the village also influences the creation of gossips.

In the beginning, when Nemo had just started its activities in this area, people said that gypsies were living there as they let children stay outside till late hours and play in mud; later, that Nemo has cooperated with the investor who wants to open the mine in the surroundings although Nemo is against this investment. It seems silly and innocently but it can destroy mutual trust. The Dutch not knowing about this can feel uncertain that something is said about them but they do not know exactly what. Furthermore, they are irritated that lies are spread around.

²⁴ R.D. Lewis: *When cultures collide: Managing successfully across cultures*; Nicholas Brealey; London 2001; page 12

2.3. Language

During the interviews it was often mentioned that one of the barriers in the communication is ignorance of the foreign language. After eight years of existence of Nemo in Poland its founders cannot speak Polish at communicative level. They know only some basic phrases but it is too little to talk freely. They can speak English and German fluently but it is not enough in the Polish reality.

At rural communities like Stara Kamienica there is a problem with knowledge of foreign languages, especially among elderly people. They had no opportunity to learn languages at schools and it was not necessary for farmers. Those who completed universities and have more international contacts have no problems with communication. Youth now are in different situations. They can learn western languages at schools and can easily travel abroad. But the problem is that young people who come from this area move to big cities or abroad to look for better future and salary. It seems a vicious circle leading to a communicative problem.

The chance to communication is tendency of moving to this place people who are bored with urban life and has fascinated with surroundings. They can usually speak foreign languages. Nemo has a wide network of contacts with these people, as they are open to new contacts.

Nemo would like to cooperate with all inhabitants. For cooperation dialogue is required. It is hard to lead it when you do not understand each other. So an interpreter is employed to overcome this obstacle. But translations may change the meaning of words.

Misunderstandings during translation and the ignorance of foreign languages lead to uncertainty as not everything can be expressed and explained. People cannot freely say their opinions. It builds mistrust and resignation from further communication and cooperation when conversation is blocked.

2.4. Tips

The tips are based on information provided for in the last chapter. They will show how to improve the situation in the community Stara Kamienica based on problems that have appeared so far.

2.4.1. High versus low context

1. To avoid irritations the Dutch should be more careful with asking a lot of questions.
2. It is useful to observe what is going around as this can also provide some information.
3. The Dutch should avoid asking in the direct way.
4. The information can be acquired in an indirect way, also from third persons.
5. The Dutch should not be upset when everything is not known.
6. The Dutch should spend more time in Poland.
7. The Dutch should have more personal contacts with inhabitants
8. The Polish should provide as much information as possible even if they think that it is useless or silly.

9. The Polish should try to be patient and not get angry when they are asked to answer a lot of questions.
10. The Polish should not be afraid of being very direct as Dutch will be angry at somebody who gives sincere answers and opinions.
11. The Polish should try to separate personal emotion from making business.
12. The emotion should be hidden when situation requires it.

2.4.2. Gossip

1. The Dutch should behave more carefully than other inhabitants as they are foreigners here so local people watch them more carefully and wait for new sensations which can later be used to create a new topic for gossips.
2. It is useless to deny gossips as it can only make things worse. It is better to patiently wait until this inconvenient time is over.
3. The Polish should be more reserved with believing in gossips.
4. The Polish should try to check information that they hear and not believe it outright.

2.4.3. Language

1. Leaders of Nemo should study Polish up to the level which will enable them to communicate on a basic level, they should focus on speaking rather than writing in Polish.
2. They should not be ashamed of using Polish even if it is not an easy language to learn, as inhabitants will appreciate all efforts.
3. They can organise language courses for local people to let them know foreign languages.
4. They should try to reach to people who can speak foreign languages.

3. Time

The following chapter is divided into three parts dealing with different aspects of time and attitudes of Polish and Dutch cultures towards it. These three sub parts are: the different treatment of time, the difference between past and future orientation as well as monochronic and polichronic ones.

3.1. Treatment of time

A slow pace of life characterizes living in small villages, away from big cities and urban areas. Nobody is hurried. Everything will be done in appropriate time but nobody knows when exactly. If it is not done now, nothing bad will happen. Everything can be postponed. People are doing what they feel like doing in a proper moment. There is peaceful and quiet atmosphere. It is a perfect place for people who are tired and depressed because of the urban style of living. The area of Stara Kamienica belongs to this kind of places. The leader of Association "Kopaniec" described the situation in these words:

*"A group of friends is sitting together and talking about trivial things. Suddenly one of them suggests doing something. Their answer is: 'If you really want to, go on.' I was in Ireland for one year and nothing bad happened and nothing new started. Everything remained in the same condition as it was when I left this place. Nothing changed here during a year of my absence. The Association did not stop existing and it works like always in its own tempo."*²⁵

For people who are used to urban and fast style of living this situation is very strange at the beginning. They have an impression that laziness and unwillingness are dominant in the countryside, but after some time they change their minds and are fascinated with other standards of living, without stress and haste.

As a result of different treatment of time the Dutch have a problem with adaptation to the existing conditions. Members of Nemo usually come from big cities in The Netherlands. The Dutch leaders of Nemo live in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. It is hard for them to cooperate with the Polish side as they would like to do something for the local community faster but they cannot. They start being a little bit disappointed with it and think that they do something wrong. It is not their fault, but it has an influence on their mood.

Local people are not used to take decisions in a hurry. It takes some time to decide to do something. It can last one hour or one year, nobody knows exactly how long.

²⁵ said by Mr Piotr Kurowski, the leader of the Association "Kopaniec"

3.2. Past versus future oriented

Below the description of the meeting which took place in Kopaniec with a local politician and a formal representative of the village, and two Dutch teachers. It will show directly the difference in this aspect.

Two Dutch teachers were visiting one Polish farmer. They were observers during the interview conducted by two students. First the students asked their questions and afterwards teachers had their chance to pose questions. They were interested in the area of the farm, what kind of production it has and what are the plans for the future. The farmer's answers focused on the past, that a few years ago the agricultural sector had a better position than it has now, his farm prospered very well, there was a market for his products but now he was rather pessimistic about his future. He would like to return good old times when the agriculture yielded benefits. Teachers wanted to know everything about his strategy for the future and the farmer always came back to memories of the past. The dialogue lasted without any complications but it seemed like they were talking about two different topics.²⁶

This example shows how people from the Netherlands and Poland treat time and to which aspect of time they are oriented. Polish are past oriented while Dutch are future oriented. This difference explains why the conversation between the farmer and teachers looked like in the aforesaid example.

The collision of the past and future oriented culture can cause misunderstandings in cooperation and conversation. The dialogue is conducted in a nice atmosphere, there is no inconvenient silence, but it seems that one side is talking about something else than the second one. After the meeting there is an impression that not everything was explained and that the interviewees did not gain the required information. The past oriented person is not used to talking about future and feels uncomfortably, while future oriented people are a little bit bored with the past.

The Polish like talking about the past and past events from their life. During one conversation it is possible to hear hundreds of stories about events that happened in their life and not only in their life. They will remember them for a long time and will share them as the opportunity arises. What happened in the past has constant influence on the future. Polish look at the future from the point of view of the past.

The Dutch are different in this aspect. They focus on the future and future plans. They enjoy asking questions: "What are your plans for the future?" They expect a sincere and a precise answer which most of the Polish cannot give, as they are not used to these kinds of questions. The Dutch are able to forget about accidents and incidents from the past and they can go further without regrets. If it is required in a given situation they can cooperate with a person who in the past was not fair to them e.g. the Dutch leader of the Foundation Nemo, despite having arguments and misunderstanding in the past, can and wants to cooperate with the leader of the Association "Pod Kamienickim Grzbietem" in the case of mining and for the improvement of life of local inhabitants, while the Polish worker of the foundation does not.

²⁶ The situation took place during the meeting with Mrs Lipinski (local politician and formal local representative of the village Kopaniec) May 2006

The Polish are a nation attached to their history and cultural heritage. All historical events or anniversaries are celebrated with seriousness and in sublime atmosphere. It does not matter if it is a national or a local holiday, everything should be celebrated with proper care and in appropriate settings. It is very important for the Polish to know how foreigners treat and what kind of attitude they have to tradition and the history. If they pay respect, they are liked by the Polish, if not they can have troubles like animosity, lack of cooperation, trust. The Dutch have a good position, as they are fascinated with history and legends of the area. Furthermore, they would like to encourage inhabitants to cultivate local traditions that slowly disappear. They do not want to repeat the situation that happened in the Netherlands where some of traditions are already gone. It is a good point to find a common field to cooperate together even though there is a different view on time.

3.3. Polichronic versus monochronic

The third aspect of time noticeable during the research is a dichotomy between the monochronic and polichronic time system. Due to T.E. Hall: “Monochronic time means paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time. Polichronic time means being involved with many things at once.”²⁷ Poland is regarded to be within polichronic time system while Holland within the monochronic time system.

Table 2. Characteristics of monochronic and polichronic time system cultures²⁸

Polichronic culture Poland	Monochronic culture The Netherlands
– do many things at once	– do one thing at a time
– are highly distractible and subject to interruptions	– concentrate on the job
– consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible	– take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously
– are high context and already have information	– are low context and need information
– change plans often and easily	– adhere religiously to plans
– are more concentrated on those who are closely related than concerned with privacy	– are concerned about not disturbing others

²⁷ Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990

²⁸Based on: Edward T.Hall and Mildred Reed Hall: *Understanding cultural differences*; Intercultural Press, Inc. Yarmouth, Maine USA 1990

The table shows selected differences between polichronic and monochronic culture that could be observed in the community Stara Kamienica. Some of them were described in more detail in the chapter about uncertainty, in parts on the high and low context culture.

The Polish always do a lot of things at one time. They cannot divide time into segments and focus on one task in a proper moment. Schedule is something that almost nobody uses; in the local communities like Stara Kamienica improvisation and spontaneity are in common use. They do not have to plan what they will be doing next week as everything can be changed in one second. It is better to wait when the week comes and then one can decide what to do. They can deal with many problems at a time so it is not necessary to plan anything. One of the employees of the local authorities said: "Poland is a country of improvisation" and it is exactly how it looks like.

The Dutch need to have everything planned in every detail. They do things one after another in a fixed order and concentrate on one thing. It is better not to disturb them during their task, but let them finish it. Everybody possesses his or her own agendas where almost everything is planned in detail. When something goes wrong they feel uncertain.

The Dutch appreciate their privacy and are not very happy when somebody interrupts them when they are doing their job and perform tasks and also they respect the privacy of others. It is better not to disturb them. Polish are used to share problems with their colleagues or relatives right when they appear and for sure it cannot wait. People are more important than work and a given task. The job can be postponed but the conversation rather not.

Appointments in Poland do not have to be arranged in advance. Everything depends on the level of importance of the given matter and if a person to be met has a busy life or not. It is polite to inform the person about the visit but it is not necessary. Nobody will be offended because of that. Some words of complaint can be heard because of not having informed the person in advance but actually nobody is really worried about this fact.

The length of Polish meetings is very flexible. When it should last one hour it does not mean that it will be like this, it can last one hour or two or more and nobody will be angry about this. It also does not mean that it will start punctually, as it is common that the beginning will be postponed when somebody is late or for some other reasons. This time is not wasted as it can be used for social talking.

The Dutch treat schedules very seriously and everything should go like it has been planned. Every meeting, business, trips etc are planned in detail to avoid the improvisation and unnecessary stress. A good example is again the visit of two teachers at Nemo.

Two Dutch teachers came to Nemo in the evening. During the dinner they suggested to meet the next day in order to prepare the schedule of their weekly stay in Poland. The next day in the morning everybody was present, but the Polish came with some delay while Dutch were there too early. The meeting started, the Dutch with agendas, the Polish without. Every day of the visit was discussed in detail: where to go first, who should be visited, who arranges the meetings and so on. Any doubts were discussed, also alternatives for the first version of the schedule. Everything lasted for about one hour.²⁹

²⁹ the situation took place at Nemo, May 2006

The above example shows the importance of the schedule in Dutch life. The preparation of the circumstantial schedule is rather not practicable in the daily life in Poland. Everybody knows only a framework and the rest is established later or at the last moment. If something is gone wrong the improvisation will help. The preparation of schedule in Polish eyes is a waste of time as everything can be done without this. Alternatives solutions do not have to be discussed; it will happen only if it is necessary. The Polish do not see the reason to talk about the possible meetings, it is easier to simply call that person or just go.

Polichronic and monochronic people can have a problem with working together. Polichronic people cannot cope with schedules and deadlines, it is possible that will not be able to keep the deadlines or they will be very stressed that they cannot do this and will wait until the last moment.

On the other hand, monochronic people cannot work in the world of improvisation, they feel anxious that something will go wrong or cannot be made in due time. They have an impression that not everything is well done and properly organised.

3.4. Tips

The tips are based on the discussion above. They will show how to improve the situation in the community Stara Kamienica based on problems that have appeared so far.

3.4.1. Treatment of time

1. The Dutch should be very patient as not everything can be done outright.
2. The Dutch should give the Polish partners time for thinking about the proposal.
3. It is better to take some things in one's own hand than wait for help.

3.4.2. Past versus future oriented

1. The Dutch should be very careful with what they are doing or saying as it will be easily remembered, especially if it is something bad, and it will be brought up at every further occasion.
2. The Dutch should pay respect to the Polish cultural heritage and Polish history.
3. A good impression at the beginning is a key to the successful cooperation.
4. When something goes wrong it is good to change it and admit to making a mistake.
5. The Dutch should participate in anniversary events.
6. The Polish should not be afraid of questions about their future.
7. The Polish should try not to talk all the time about how it was in the past.

3.4.3. Polichronic versus monochronic

1. The Dutch should try to be more flexible.
2. The agenda is not in common use in Poland, so sometimes it is good to forget about it.
3. The Polish should inform the Dutch about their planned visit.
4. The Polish should avoid being late.
5. All actions should be prepared in small details.
6. Deadlines will help in cooperation so both sides should keep them.
7. The plan that was made earlier should not be changed in the last moment.

4. Equality

This chapter will be about equality and inequality in the Polish and Dutch cultures. From a lot of examples in this field only the field of power distance was chosen, mainly regarding the employee and the employer. Differences in this regard were mentioned during interviews.

4.1. Power distance

The issue of power distance can be divided in two aspects. The first one relates to the differences in status between the employee and the employer, the second one is the status which people have in the society.

4.1.1. Employer versus employee

Nemo as a foundation provides temporary work places for local inhabitants. Work includes physical activities in the garden, cleaning surroundings, small repairs, cooking for guests etc. Foundation has also one employee who stays there for whole year and takes care of all issues connected with Nemo: keeps an eye on the Nemo's properties as well as takes care of guests. The chairman of the foundation contracts tasks out to people. That's why some problems occur when the Dutch style of work is introduced which is not suitable in the Polish realities.

“A man comes to me and says that he is interested in a job, so I ask what his qualifications are. After this question his face becomes red and he does not know what to say.”³⁰

This description of a short job interview was said by the chairman of the foundation. He treats a worker as an equal partner and wants to give him a task that will be appropriate to his qualifications. The Polish man was surprised by this question because nobody has ever asked him anything like that before. He expected to be told what to do and not to have to choose himself. The unemployed local people in the district Stara Kamienica have not usually got any qualifications. They tend to do easy manual labour where no special qualifications are needed. They always do what the employer requires; they have not got any influence on the employer's decisions.

Why do situations like in the above-mentioned example occur? It can be explained using one of the Hofstede's dimensions called “power distance”. Polish power distance index is estimated at 68 while the Dutch score equals 38³¹. From this comparison it can be seen that Poland is regarded as a country with a high power distance index whereas The Netherlands have a low power distance index. Power distance can be observed in families, schools, and workplaces.

Since their childhood Polish children have learnt respect to parents and older relatives. Nobody imagines that a child can call their mother or father by their first name. It is strange for Polish when can hear that the Dutch children call their parents using their first names

³⁰ said by Mr Peter Spruijt, (leader of the Foundation Nemo), May 2006

³¹ data from: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php

instead of “mother” and “father”. This kind dependence that is learnt in families influences later life and reflects on behaviour at schools and workplaces.

In the Netherlands at workplace most of the employees call each other using their first names, it does not matter if it is a boss or a trainee. In Polish the first name is used between employees on the same level or those who are in close relations with each other. In other cases a formal phrase Mr or Mrs is used and then first or family name.

There is a big difference regarding how organisation looks like and works in The Netherlands and how it is in Poland. The table below will show in which field, according to Hofstede’s research, it can be observed. It is also found out during the research in the Stara Kamienica that those patterns are repeated.

Table 3. Comparison between small and large power distance countries at workplace³²

Small power distance The Netherlands	Large power distance Poland
– superiors and subordinates consider each other as equal	– superiors and subordinates consider each other as unequal
– hierarchical system is based on inequality of rules, established for convenience	– hierarchical system is felt to be based on existential inequality
– subordinates are expected to be consulted	– subordinates are expected to be told what to do
– the ideal boss is a resourceful democrat	– the ideal boss is like a good father
– privileges and status symbols are frowned upon	– privileges and status symbols are expected and popular

Foundation Nemo is a small organisation with a double structure but the difference can be noticed. The Dutch leader would like to know everything what happens in Nemo during his absence in Poland. When it is not done irritations and dissatisfaction occur. It concerns equally the Polish employee as well as the students who have their internships at the foundation.

The difference how Dutch and Polish students work was noticeable when they were at the same time in Nemo. The Dutch treated the boss like a partner while the Polish avoided him and kept distance.

One Dutch and two Polish students were at the same time in Nemo doing their internships. The Dutch one spent a lot of time with Peter and Mathilde when they were in Poland during this period. Her task was to take care of the garden. She

³² based on: Geert Hofstede: *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*; New York; McGraw-Hill; 1997 ; page: 35-37

*asked and consulted everything with her supervisors. She also spent a lot of time with them and worked together, shared doubts. Polish students, on the other hand, kept distance to the boss, they did not feel meeting him all the time or rather avoided him. They always said that everything was going well and they would manage with their projects. They just could not wait when the Dutch leave Nemo and they would not be constantly observed by them.*³³

Polish employees and students like doing their task alone and without control as they can feel more comfortable. But this is only an impression and feelings. Because when the boss does not see the job is made more slowly or less carefully, or left for the very last moment. That is way the inspections are needed to have better results. The Dutch boss is not so strict and even when something is going wrong they will be angry for a short moment and then the situation will return to normal. So the Polish do not treat them seriously as they have no respect and are not at all afraid.

4.1.2. Hierarchy in the society

With the power distance and hierarchy in the workplace and society it is also important what kind of job somebody is doing. In Poland when somebody has a profession that is admired by or important for the society, this person gets respect and privileges among people. In small villages like those in Stara Kamienica these kinds of people are leaders of associations, formal representatives of villages, doctors, priests, teachers, local authorities. They are at the higher level in the social hierarchy and they can have influence on inhabitants e.g. the priest during the homilies can ask people to take part in some actions or inform them of events or can explain something and in most cases it will be listened to, especially by elderly people as younger generations has rather a negative attitude to religion.

During formal meetings it can be easily observed who plays more important roles in the Polish society than others e.g. the person with a higher status will always talk first and it is important to talk to him or her while standing, it can be recognizable by formal dress as well. In a Dutch society it is not so easily noticeable as everybody is equal there; there is no obvious group of those who have special privileges.

*Two meetings took place at the local authority's office within one week. One was organised by a Polish representative to discuss the organisation of local festival, the second by a Dutch leader of Foundation Nemo to pass on money from Matra project to local non governmental organisations. At each of the meeting mostly the same persons were present, but the leader of the meeting was different so the outlook and character was different. At the first meeting everybody was sitting except the leader who was standing and talking. During the second meeting everybody was sitting and introducing themselves to know each other.*³⁴

An example of those meeting shows how the equality in each culture looks like and how people treat each other. As it was said once by the Dutch leader of the foundation “over dominant behaviours in Holland are not acceptable” but in Poland it is in common use and

³³ the situation took place at Nemo, May 2006

³⁴ the meetings took place at the office of the local authorities of the community Stara Kamienica, May 2006

nobody protests against this. That's way the Dutch have a problem when they treat that person as equal as it is regarded as lack of respect.

4.2. Gender

The Polish and Dutch culture has a different view on equality between men and women. According to law "all are equal before the law"³⁵ but culture does not always agree with the law.

In Poland there is still a traditional division of gender role in family and society, men are responsible for physical and technical tasks at home, they should also earn money to maintain the family. Women are responsible for upbringing children and taking care of home life. In very traditional families they do not have to work professionally. Each partner is responsible for their own task and they consult each other only on very important issues. They are not angry at each other if a decision is made without the knowledge of the second one. In many cases men have a higher status and women lives in their shadows.

In Holland both partners have the same functions. They are responsible together for each field in the same part. Each decision is consulted and should be discussed. They exchange roles in the families and it does not cause any problems. That's way the chairman of the foundation is not taken seriously by some Polish men, as he cannot make decisions independently and each time he needs to consult his wife.

The difference in the field of equality and inequality of gender in the society can also be explained by using one of the Hofstede's dimensions which is called: masculinity. Polish masculinity index is estimated at 64 while the Dutch score equals 14³⁶. From this comparison it is seen that Poland is regarded as a masculine culture while the Dutch as a feminine.

*"I think that women in Poland work harder and have more responsibilities. Men only complain and drink beer. In my country men and women are equal. Men do not have to do technical things as women will also manage with that."*³⁷

This was the answer given by a Dutch woman to the question if she sees any differences between men and women in the Polish society. In a community like Stara Kamienica this Polish traditional division of gender and the role in society is a little bit mixed after the political changes: at the end of the communist system men cannot adjust to a new reality. They have problems with looking for a new job, whereas in the past the government provided workplaces. It was easy to find some activities, unlike presently. Because of their abandonment and the feeling of hopelessness, they often start abusing alcohol, which leads to creation of pathologies in family life. Polish men are very proud and they cannot admit that they cannot manage with the situations and need help. They will solve their problems with the aid of alcohol, which only destroys their life instead of helping. That's why women take over men's duties. They have become responsible for maintaining the family and tasks at home. That's way a Dutch woman said that Polish women work harder as they need to combine work with home life, which is not so easy.

³⁵ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/217, December 10, 1948 at Palais de Chaillot, Paris),

³⁶ values from: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php

³⁷ said by Mathilde Andriesen (leader of the Foundation Nemo) May 2006

In the opinion of the leader of the foundation it is better to cooperate with Polish women than with men as women are more responsible and trustworthy while men change their mind according to the seasons. This is a result of the fact that men lost their responsibility for finding a job and working and they count on somebody else.

The difference between the position of male and female in Polish and Dutch societies is noticeable not only in family life but also in everyday activities. Although Polish women have a lower status than men they require respect and special treatment like for example: a man should open the door for woman, let her go first, help with carrying heavy things etc.

After the meeting in Kopaniec with local representatives, which was mentioned in earlier chapters, hands were shaken on farewell. The Dutch teachers were close to the man so one of them made a move to do this action while the man turned and first shook his hand with students who were female.³⁸

This example shows how females are treated in Poland. The men are used to give them respect, while the Dutch treat them as equal. Even when a Polish woman says that she would like to have the same status as the man has, she expects respect from the side of a man; it is an example of good manners.

A Polish writer describes people and history of Stara Kamienica in a novel. One of the heroes is Foundation Nemo and Dutch people Peter and Mathilde. The author of the book included an interview with them in her book. Mathilde after reading it was touched that she plays a second role because the author always said that Mathilde 'added' or 'mentioned' something during the interview, not that she 'said' something.³⁹

This example shows what kind of the position women have in the Polish society and that they are in the shadow of their partners. The Dutch women do not like a situation when they are not equal.

"I was in a restaurant with two Dutch men. The waiter brought only two menus instead of three. The Dutch first looked through it and then gave it to me. Then, he first gave them cutlery and only afterwards he gave it to me. I felt like being less important, treated with no respect as a female."⁴⁰

This is a relation of Polish student who went for a lunch with the Dutch. The Dutch treated her like an equal but she expected something else and therefore she felt frustrated and neglected.

All above-mentioned examples focus on the position of men and women in the society. There are very few differences that are hard to notice at the first sight but in the long term they can change into big problems which can have an influence on further communication.

³⁸ the situation took place during the meeting with Mrs Lipinski (formal local representative of the village Kopaniec) May 2006

³⁹ mentioned by Mrs Peter Spruijt (leader of the Foundation Nemo) February 2006; mentioned book: Małgorzata Lutowska: *Dla siebie znalezioną ścieżką*; ATUT; Wrocław; 2005

⁴⁰ the situation took place at the restaurant in Jelenia Góra and was said by the author of the thesis Sylwia Kaftanska

4.3. Tips

The tips are based on the information presented in the last chapter. They will show how to improve the situation in the community Stara Kamienica, based on problems that have appeared so far.

4.3.1. Power distance

1. An employee should be chosen very carefully to avoid disappointment.
2. It is good to ask somebody if he or she knows a reliable person.
3. An employee should never be paid in advance.
4. It is worthy to control the work of and keep an eye on the employee.
5. At the beginning the employee should be warned that if the task is not made in time there will be no pay.
6. Do not ask worker what competences they have or what they would like to do as people are not used to this.
7. Polish workers expect that the boss gives them tasks which they have to do.
8. The Dutch should keep distance in the relations between the boss and a worker.
9. The employer and the employee in Poland are never equal.
10. The Dutch should pay respect to a person with higher position or status.
11. Formal clothes are welcome during official meetings.
12. The Polish can treat the Dutch employer as their partner.
13. Using the first name is possible between the Polish workers and the Dutch boss..
14. The Polish should be motivated to work on their own and stop thinking that if the boss does not see me I can rest.
15. The Polish should come to the Dutch with proposals regarding what can be done.

4.3.2. Gender

1. Dutch men should try to treat Polish women with respect as in Poland females are treated as a weaker and gentler sex.
2. Polish men should treat Dutch women as an equal him.
3. Dutch women should not be offended when than she is treated as less important than men.
4. The Dutch should accept the traditional division between men and women in the Polish society.
5. The Dutch should be more self-confident in making decisions, maybe not everything should be discussed with the partner.
6. The Polish should be more patient and give the Dutch more time to take decisions.
7. The Polish should not treat the Dutch men as weaker when he needs to consult his wife.

5. Attitude

Attitude can be defined as a complex mental state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways⁴¹. In this chapter I will deal with Polish and Dutch attitudes to issues like personal promotion, hospitality in the areas of problems and expectations. Each of the sides has a different point of view on some issues. Working together they cannot find common solutions and wonder what is going wrong.

5.1. Personal promotion

The Polish have problems with the promotion of themselves not only as a person but also of their businesses. If they have an interesting hobby or are fascinated with something they keep it for the nearest relatives and friends. For example the wife of the local representative of the village Chromiec makes beautiful paintings using embroidering techniques, but almost nobody knows about it. People often think that it is not anything special and there is no reason to boast. With this attitude a lot of opportunities for development can be missed. The popular tendency is rather to underestimate than appreciate somebody's skills.

Lack of a personal promotion has a negative influence on poor and small scale promotion of businesses. The PR strategy is not in common use and information is spread via networks of people. People trust it more than having signs or posters which inform about services. Everything happens inside houses, when a doorstep is passed than real offers can be noticed e.g. local people know where they can buy fresh handy-made white cheese, but foreigners does not know it as there is no noticeable information about this. Most of houses look damaged and neglected from outside but inside the view is different, everything is in good condition.

The Dutch have a different attitude in this aspect. They can use and sell their strong points, are more confident in this what they are doing and are not ashamed to show it. PR strategy is well developed. They can attract potential clients, even small and meaningless things can find their market. They take more care about gardens than about houses inside.

Nemo would like to cooperate with local artists and craftsmen to open a Dutch market for their products. Nemo's role in this process will be only that of a mediator, but it has a problem with finding such kind of people who will be interested in cooperation and who are not afraid of showing their skills. The task is obstructed as what for Dutch is special and valuable for Polish seems worthless and without any value.

Apart from finding willing people there is also a problem with taking the initiative. This task mostly belonged to Nemo as it made offers to local people and tried to persuade them to cooperation like preparing workshops for Dutch tourists, vegetarian meals prepared by a lady who owns a stained glass studio. When the suggestions about the cooperation were given at the first moment she was against but after some time she changed her mind and now she is very pleased. She did not suppose before that her style of cooking can bring her some profits.

⁴¹ <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=attitude>

5.2. Hospitality

Hospitality is a way of welcoming and taking care of guests. In Poland there exists something like “Polish hospitality”. The hosts will always do all the best to entertain visitors. They want to share everything what they have at home with them. Mostly it is demonstrated by food. At the meeting there is always something to drink and eat. The guests have an impression that they become very important and play a special role during the visit. When the host has not got anything to offer she or he feels embarrassed and ashamed and always tries to find excuses. It is like in an old Polish proverb: “Guests home, God home” that’s why they require a special treatments.

The Dutch have a different attitude to hospitality. “Frugality restricts guests to just one piece of cake wit their coffee”⁴². “Among the ethnic Dutch, food does not play the large role in hospitality that it does in most cultures. Offering food to guests is not considered essential for making them feel welcome.”⁴³

*A Dutch choir came to Poland to give a few performances in churches for the local people with the cooperation of Women Village Association. After one of the concert members of the Association prepared a feast consisting of various sorts of handy made cookies, tea and coffee. The Dutch took only one cookie and one cup of tea or coffee. After eating they were looking at the tables but did not take other slices. So the priest took the initiatives and he put more on their plates.*⁴⁴

This story was told by one of members of Women Village Associations. She was shocked by the Dutch behaviour and she first thought that cookies were tasteless.

The same situation is with leading tourist business as it is connected with guests. Dealing with people, especially with the tourists, requires a special personal attitude and characteristics. Not everybody can manage with this responsibility. Guests require a lot of attention, patience and care. They expect some standards of treatment and even when conditions are poor they would like to spend their time in a nice atmosphere and feel like at home. Different understanding of hospitality causes that a Polish employee is ashamed with the conditions which Nemo offers for the tourists while the Dutch are rather proud of them and treat them as strong points.

5.3 Problems

Each culture has own recipes how to deal with and solve problems. The Polish in this field have a specific attitude. Problems are not treated as a challenge to overcome and go further but barriers which can stop all actions. It is better to sit and talk about them than to try to find solutions. In many cases when problems do not exist, Polish will create a new one. They also have a tendency to enlarge them and try to find out a complicate resolution while the easiest one is left out. The responsibility of solving is put on somebody or something else.

⁴² R.Bolt: *Xenophobe’s guide to the Dutch*; Oval Books; London; 2001

⁴³ Marylin Warman: *Living in Holland*; Nuffic 2003; page 63

⁴⁴ descibed by Mrs Leokadia Niedźwiecka (leader of the Village Women Association)

The Dutch have more modest and flexible attitude on the field of problem solving. They have no tendency to create problems where there are no reasons for it. They try to overcome them in an easiest way and leave them behind. From all situations there can be way out. They have an optimistic attitude that helps them to deal with adversities.

The Dutch become frustrated and irritated with those situations. They do not understand how it is possible to sit and talk rather than take everything in one's own hand and face the problem. Looking for responsible people or blaming the political situation and actions taken by the government is a waste of time. It is much faster to start acting than to sit idly.

5.4. Expectations

Expectations as part of this research report will concern less cultural differences and more personal behaviour and attitudes which obstruct communication and cooperation between Dutch and Polish stakeholders.

5.4.1. Ideas

Firstly, the chairman of the foundation is a man of ideas. He has a lot of interesting concepts how to develop Nemo and community, but unfortunately in most cases these are only empty ideas. At the beginning he wanted to establish an ecological farm on the area of Nemo to give Polish farmers the example of how it works in the Netherlands but until now he does not done it. He also suggested exchange between Polish and Dutch pupils but it also has not been realised etc. Almost each concept is not realised. The Polish side would like to see any tangible results of those ideas. As they could not see them, they start treating the chairman less seriously because he has a problem with keeping a given word.

5.4.2. Mining problem

Secondly, one of the most important issues which Nemo has to face is an attempt to open mine in the neighbourhood. Nemo is one of parties in the protest which fight against it. The leaders of Nemo thought that the enemy is common so he could use arguments of other organisation for common well-being. He was wrong and made a mistake, using somebody's ideas he exposed himself on anger of the leader of one of other Associations. It was caused not only by his mistake but also by a difficult, over dominant and self-confident character of that person. He expected that they can cooperate together and build solidarity against the mine but he was wrong so now Nemo starts working independently. Personal feelings and mistrust make the whole situation worse.

5.4.3. Tourists

Furthermore, Nemo would like to attract also the Polish tourists to visit Nemo, not only individuals but also groups which can organise some workshops and actions. The area is very attractive and peaceful and could be a wonderful place for such activities, but unfortunately the Polish have special expectations about living conditions. They expect higher standards than Nemo cannot offer. Dry toilets and showers outside is not what they want to have during

holidays or work. On the other hand, the Dutch are fascinated with these poor conditions as Nemo offers something else than the rest of agrotourist farms in the surroundings. The leaders of Nemo are surprised why each of them provides the same standard and sort of activities. This is caused by focusing on different target groups which have different expectations to the place where they are going and staying. The Polish during their trips and holidays would like to have better standards than they have at home. Holidays are expensive for them and treated as a reward after hard work so they expect a little bit of luxury.

5.4.4. Local authorities

Moreover, local authorities and Nemo have a dissimilar point of view on the development of the community Stara Kamienica. Nemo wants to persuade the local authorities that walking tourism should be a dominant branch of tourist development in this area. As evidence it is said that almost two thousands guests⁴⁵ have visited Nemo and tendency is still growing so each year more and more people are interested in coming. Local tourist strategy is focused on bicycle tourism and this branch is developed by the local authorities. In their opinion this branch can be profitable for the community in the future when walking tourism is offered by the surrounding communities, so they would like to attract tourists with something else. The next argument is that through the window of the office more cyclists than walkers can be noticeable. That's why so many efforts are made for creation new bike routes and maintaining the old ones in good conditions.

Finally, Nemo and local authorities have a different attitude to organising common actions. Polish usually expect 100% of involvement and all actions are prepared with on a big scale and on big scale with splendour while small things can make Dutch happy e.g. Nemo organised a group of Dutch scouts who were supposed to clean the area in the surroundings of all castle. Local authorities arranged an action to prepare the area, hired workers to cut trees and branches. They expected that all area will be cleaned while scouts came, were working for two hours and then went without finishing. The remaining part had to be done by Polish pupils. After that Nemo claimed that scouts cleaned the area while in Polish eyes they did almost nothing.

5.5. Tips

The tips are based on the information presented in the last chapter. They will show how to improve the situation in the community Stara Kamienica, based on problems that have appeared so far.

5.5.1. Personal promotion

1. The Polish should be more self confident about their skills.
2. The Polish should not be afraid of showing their skills.
3. The Polish should start using PR strategy to promote themselves.
4. The Dutch can encourage the Polish to cooperate.
5. Initiative should be taken from both sides.

⁴⁵ date introduced by Peter Spruijt, leader of Nemo

6. The Dutch can ask people if they are interested in cooperation.
7. The Dutch can give ideas what the expectations are from Dutch tourists.

5.5.2. Hospitality

1. The Dutch should not be afraid of taking second cookies.
2. The Dutch should not be reserved to the guests.
3. The Dutch should make home atmosphere.
4. Be patient with dealing with guests.
5. The Polish should not be offended when the Dutch do not take another cookie.
6. The Polish should not put everything what they have to eat on the table to not feel Dutch embarrassed.

5.5.3. Expectations

1. Each side should explain their expectations in details.
2. Empty promises should never be made.
3. Postponing to carry out of certain projects should be avoided
4. Sometimes it is worth to do things separately than together.
5. It is better to refuse or say that at that moment something cannot be done rather than make empty promises.
6. Nemo should not try to persuade local people to its ideas as the most important and interesting as it is only one of many organisations that work in this area.
7. Nemo should accept Polish rules of behaviour as it works in a foreign country.
8. When something is organised, it should be done with 100% of involvement.

Conclusions and recommendations

Dealing with another culture provides a lot of problems as during common cross-cultural cooperation gaps and misunderstandings appear. Each person unconsciously uses types of behaviour which are normal for him or her but it does not have to work in other cultures. Nemo is an example which has experienced such kinds of problems. After eight years of being in Poland, this Dutch organisation has still difficulties in dealing with Polish partners and local inhabitants.

The aim of the thesis was to find out areas where problems occur, to investigate what kind of factors cause them and to propose solutions as to how the situation can be improved to make the common undertakings between the Dutch and Polish more successful in the community of Stara Kamienica. After the research all misunderstandings were divided into four areas which were uncertainty, time, equality and attitude. Each of them consisted of two parts. In the first one there were the descriptions of problems, how each side saw the problem and what kind of influence it had on common cooperation. In the second part, the list of tips on how the situation can be improved was given.

The first problem which was found out it was the uncertainty which was felt by the Dutch. They have difficulties to fully adapt to the Polish conditions as they are not sure about their position in the society. The first reason for this is a difference between low and high context communication. Members of each culture acquire information in a different way and amount of it is also not the same. The second reason is the powerfulness of the gossips in the Polish society. Information which is used in gossips is not always truth, but people like to talk about this and do not do any efforts to check its authenticity. The third reason is the language barrier. The Dutch cannot speak the Polish language and most of the inhabitants cannot speak any foreign languages. If it is not possible to talk together it is hard to talk about communication. In this case uncertainty is caused by difficulties in expressing true opinions and building trustworthy relationships.

The second problem was connected with time. Everywhere time runs in the same way but it is felt and treated in a different way. The factors which influence time are: the difference between urban and rural style of living, monochronic versus polichronic and past versus future oriented. Each factor has its own time characteristic. When it comes to a clash communication can be stopped and also misunderstanding can appear e.g. agenda which is very popular among the Dutch is not in common use by the Polish.

The third problem dealt with inequality of gender in the working place and in the society. In the Dutch and the Polish culture each of these aspects is experienced differently. In the Netherlands everybody is equal and does not have any higher status in the society because of the gender, work position. The Polish society in this case is different. Each person has a special role to play in the society. The head of the family is usually the man and the woman is taking care of children. However in the community Stara Kamienica it happens often that woman is taking over male tasks because men often abuse alcohol and they can not manage the responsibility of the family.

The fourth problem is linked with the attitudes of each side towards certain issues. The attitude to personal promotion, hospitality, problems and their solving and expectations were mentioned. This area of the problems is concerned more with personal attitudes than with general cultural differences.

It is not true that only cultural differences are the reasons of gaps and misunderstandings in cooperation. Apart from this also personality and individual differences in character have a strong influence. Not everything can be explained with and ascribed to cultural differences. Cultural differences as well as the personal attitude can be blamed to answer the question why things are not going well.

The leaders of Nemo have a tendency to forget that they are working in a foreign country and in a different culture. They would like to introduce their ideas as the best ones. However, they should always keep in mind that what is normal in the Netherlands does not mean that it is also normal in Poland. They should behave in a way like the proverb says: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Time will show if Nemo and its employees will be fully accepted in Polish community. They are on a good way. Mistakes made in the past have made them stronger and have showed them what types of behaviour are not acceptable in Polish culture. The willingness to run activities in Poland should not be wasted as there are partners who are interested in common undertakings.

The Foundation has been experienced by the lack of the willingness and interests of the cooperation from the Polish side. It is impossible to satisfy all needs, especially if it is not appreciated and expected. It is useless to persuade the receivers of help to be satisfied. In each local group people can be found who will be willing to cooperate. The Foundation Nemo should find and cooperate with these people. Maybe after some time others will also become interested in co-operation.

The Polish should show a great deal of patience and understanding during common contacts. If both sides are interested in cooperation and invest an effort and willingness, small gaps and misunderstandings will not destroy the final results.

Being aware of the cultural differences and their influence on the common cooperation will lead to improving the communication between the Polish and the Dutch and to increasing success of common business undertakings in the community Stara Kamienica.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviewees

Foundation Nemo:

Peter Spruijt (chairman)
Mathilde Andriessen
Westerpark 2, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, nemo@pz.nl

Kamila Jeleńska
Kopaniec-Międzylesie, Poland

Leaders of local non governmental organizations:

1. Association “Pod Kamienickim Grzbietem”

Katarzyna Andrzejewska
Chromiec-Antoniów, Poland

2. Association “Nasz Barcinek”

Edyta Bagrowska
Barcinek, Poland

3. Association “Kopaniec”

Piotr Kurowski
Kopaniec, Poland

4. Association “Izery”

Józef Zaprucki
Mała Kamienica, Poland

5. Association “Trapez”

Wiesław Czerwiński
Stara Kamienica, Poland

6. Association of Friends of Wojcieszycze

Adam Czajkowski
Wojcieszycze, Poland

7. Association “Friends of Rybnica”

Krystyna Smolińska
Rybnica, Poland

8. Village Women Association

Leokadia Niedźwiecka
Rybnica, Poland

Formal local representatives of villages (“soltys”)

1. Mrs Toczyńska, Antoniów
2. Mrs Domańska, Mała Kamienica
3. Mrs Jankowska, Kromnów
4. Mrs Żurowska, Stara Kamienica
5. Mr Lipiński, Kopaniec
6. Mr Poczynek, Rybnica
7. Mrs Kuczewska, Wojcieszycy
8. Mrs Kozdeba, Barcinek
9. Mr Sikorski, Chromiec

Representatives of local authorities:

Adam Spolnik (person responsible for preparing development plans), Stara Kamienica

Teachers from the Netherlands:

1. Klaas Eeuwema
2. Rex Broehuis

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

1. Do you have any contacts with the Foundation Nemo?
2. How often do you contact with the Foundation Nemo?
3. Who has made the initiative?
4. What are your impressions about the Foundation Nemo?
5. What kind of the cooperation is between you, your organisation and the Foundation Nemo?
6. How does the cooperation look like?
7. Have ever you ever been invited to the Nemoland, for example for the “Days of Holland”?
8. Have you noticed any difference in behaviour between the Dutch and the Polish?
9. What kind of problems do you see in the common cooperation with the Foundation Nemo?
10. Do you have any solutions for solving them?
11. Do you know about any misunderstandings that the Foundation Nemo has with the other organisation?
12. What do you think about the chairman of the Foundation Nemo?
13. What kind of differences can you notice between the Polish and the Dutch?
14. What types of the behaviours has seemed strange for you?
15. What kind of differences can you see in the male and female status in the society?

Sylwia Kaftanska

student of International Rural Innovation and Development at CAH Dronten

sylwia-kaftanska@wp.pl

Tips for NEMO how to improve communication in Stara Kamienica

Research in the community in Stara Kamienica has led to find out the barriers and misunderstandings which block the communication between Polish and Dutch. These tips are based on the interviews and own observations which were made during the period of company placement from 24th April till 2nd June 2006 in Foundation Nemo. I hope that these tips will improve the communication, in some parts they are my subjective opinions so not everybody may agree with me. It will more focus on the tips for Dutch but it also contains some tips for Polish, by Dutch I mean members (workers) of NEMO and by Polish inhabitants of community Stara Kamienica.

The main barrier mentioned by Polish interviewees, especially for the elderly inhabitants, is the language. They do not know foreign language so they can not communicate with Dutch. It will be good to study Polish on level which provide the basic communication, mainly on the field of talking, not necessary written. You should not be ashamed of using spoken Polish, inhabitants will appreciate your efforts and will not treat you as a foreigner.

Almost everybody was very pleased of the organisation of the "Days of Holland". It is a good idea to continue this event. It should take place in Nemoland to show people what is going there, to create chance to know better Dutch and Dutch culture and what the aims of Foundation are and what it is doing. Make personally invitation for the leaders of local associations and local representatives (for example the sołtys from all villages from the community). It will be nice to ask local people to support action connecting with the organisation of the events (before and during).

The community and local government are opened on the cooperation but they would like to see the result of this cooperation for example: if the students come to make some research they would like to see reports or results from this research; if some actions is organised they expect 100% of involvement not only showing that something could be done or done in a small part.

You spend in Poland too less time. People have opinion of NEMO that here is created the "Dutch enclave" or "Dutch zone". Everything happens here and inhabitants have not enough contacts. Even if you are here you are so busy with your problems that have not got enough time to meet and talk with local people.

It is good that NEMO has gone with the initiative to the inhabitants like for example preparing meals for NEMO guests. Polish are sometimes to shy or to proud or so disappointed with their life to come and offer something. Of course everything depends on person.

You should never say or promise people that you do something and you will not do this or you will postpone the realisation. They will not treat you seriously and they will not willing to cooperate with you next time. It is better to refuse or say that in that moment you can do this than make empty promises. Remember that business in Poland are making with people not with the company, that's way the common trust is very important.

You have a lot of ideas but you have a difficulty with realisation them. It is better to focus on one branch, realise it and than start another one. Nobody wants to deal only with ideas. People

want to see the results of everything. So you should stop thinking about new possibilities for NEMO until you realise what you have started till now or you should put responsibility for the realisation on another person and then you will have more time to prepare a new strategies for development.

When you invite guests to NEMO or students for making stage you should very carefully and in detail inform them about the living condition and all issues connected with staying here. Each side should say what expectations they have and than try to find the compromise. This will provide to avoid conflicts or some kind of misunderstanding in the future. Maybe not everybody is so strong to survive or get used to such kind of condition that you offer, especially when they expect something different or have a different imagination of this place.

It is easier to cooperate with Associations which are in some distance from Nemo as they treat Nemo as a partner for making business not like a neighbour. Do not be worry that there are some gaps in communication with your nearest partners. You can make valuable actions with the others which do not create any problems and are very pleased with cooperation with you (for example those from Wojcieszycze, Barcinek, Rybnica etc.).

Dealing with people, especially with the tourist, require a special personal attitude and characteristic. Not everybody can mange with this responsibility. Guest will require a lot attention, patience and care They expect some standards of treatment and even when conditions are poor they would like to spend their time in a nice atmosphere and feel like at home. Maybe it will be good to change attitude to encourage guest to come to NEMO again with more friends. It will be loss for NEMO that the guests will come here only once.

Small things can make Dutch happy. They can find positive side in each situation. When they face to problem they try to overcome it and go further. Polish are different; they like creating problems and overstate the situation. That's way it is hard sometimes to cooperate with them. When you are sure that everything is overcome the small thing can destroy everything as one person think up another problem which should be solved. Good preparation and clear situation can prevent from this kind of behaviour. Try to cooperate with people which have optimistic attitude to their life.

As Mrs Adam Spolnik one said during meeting in the community "Poland is a country of improvisation". Here, schedule and agenda are not in common use. People do not plan their life in every detail. There should have time for everything. They think up some ideas today and tomorrow they will be realised it. It is strange for Dutch who want to be organised in every detail. Everything should be planned in advance and all possibilities should be discussed. For Polish side these discussions are useless and only take time and no results after that are seen. In this case Dutch should try to live without schedule and make things more spontaneously. Polish on the other hand should give more time for some action and be prepared for making schedule of this action.

Polish always use emotion in making business which is made with people not with company. They can not separate their feelings from their job. Often they listen to their hearts not common sense. If they have bad feelings to some person they can not cooperate. That's way building trust is so important. If people are have a good opinion of you, it is easier to work and making businesses.

In Poland there is still traditional division of the role in family and society, men are responsible for physical and technical task at home, they should also earn money to maintain family. Women are responsible for upbringing children and taking care of home life. This is the reason why Polish do not understand that Dutch everything need discuss with partner. Polish expect that the man will be the man and will make the decision alone in the areas where he is responsible. The same is with the women. Dutch should be more self-confident in making decision, maybe not everything should be discuss, and Polish should more patient and give more time to make the decisions.

Time in the community Stara Kamienica is running in different way, not like in the big cities, here much slower. Everything will be done in appropriate time but nobody knows when exactly. If it is not done now, nothing bad will happen. Everything can be postponed. People are doing what they feel like doing something in that moment. That's way nothing can be forced to local people. The proposal can be offered to them and then patiently waiting what happens. On the other hand it is better to make efforts to do this not rely on the others and waiting for their helps.

It is hard to find a good worker. Some of inhabitants can not find out themselves after the political changes (end of communist system) in new reality. They still expect that they will get help from the government or they get money from doing nothing like in the communist phrase: "if you are standing or you are laying you will be given 1000 zlotych". Men have often problems with abusing alcohol. That's way women are more reliable as they take responsibility for the family. Worker should be chosen very carefully, it is good to ask somebody if he or she has known a reliable person. They never should be paid in advance. It is worth to control their work. At the beginning warn the worker that if the task does not be made in time there will be no salary. Do not ask what the competences and of worker or what they would like to do as people are not used to this. They expect that the boss gives them task which they have to do. Keep distance in the relations between you and worker. Boss and worker in Poland are never equal.

Poland is a past-oriented country. Holland on the other hand is future-oriented. This difference also leads to block the communication. It seems that people meet from these countries but they are talking about different topic. Dutch do not care what was in the past, they are interested what are the ideas and proposal for the future. Polish another way round, they like talking about past; if somebody hurt them, it will be remembered for a few generations. Dutch should be very careful what they are doing or saying as they will be easily remembered, especially if it some bad, and use in every occasion. Polish will not forget easily.

Besides this, Dutch should pay respect to cultural heritage and Polish history.

Gossip is a powerful tool, especially in the small village where almost everybody knows each others even if they behave that they do not. It may destroy somebody's reputation, but people like talking about others behinds their back even if it is not true or they overstate the situation and facts. Mostly one gossip is popular for a short time and then other will become popular. Nobody can prevent from this. It is useless to deny as it can only make things worse. It is better to **przeczekać** this inconvenient time. Dutch should behave more careful than the others inhabitants as they are foreigners here so local people keep their eyes more careful on them and wait for a new sensation which can later used to create a new topic for gossips.

In the theory in the field of cultural differences there are phrase like “high-context” and “low-context” communication. Holland is a country with low-context communication, and Poland on the other hand is a country with high-context communication. “A high-context communication is one which little has to be said and written because most of the information is either in the physical environment or within the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message. (...) A low context communication is one in which the mass of information is vested in the explicit code.”⁴⁶ These differences cause that Dutch feels uncertain and Polish are irritated with constant questions. Some information for Polish is self-evident but for Dutch need to be said. That’s way sometimes Dutch feel that some information is hidden under table or for some reasons somebody does not want to tell everything. Polish thinks that not everything should be said and they do not feel like talking about some issues as it is obvious for them and for surroundings; they can feel controlled and they do not like it. Knowing this can lead to better communication and prepare an efficient strategy. Dutch should be more careful with asking a lot of questions; better observe what is going around as this can also provide some information; not ask in the direct way; get information in the round way, also from third person; do not be upset when you do not know everything. Polish should provide as much information as possible even if they think that it is useless or silly; not be angry to answer on a lot of questions; be very direct as Dutch will not fall out with somebody who gives sincere answers and opinions.

Considering mining problems it is good that NEMO is active side against this investment. It should continue this actions but it should not treat itself like a representative of local people. It should deal like a separated body. People do not like when their opinion and information are used by somebody else. NEMO should separate actions on these that it has done and on those that other associations have done and tried not to use others information. It is good to ask it this information can be used. Even if it seems that it is a common problem and everybody should cooperate to defeat it, it not so obvious in the real life where you have to deal with personality of different people.

Remember you can not make people happy if they do not want it.

⁴⁶ Geert Hofstede: *Cutures and Organizations Software of the mind Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*; 1997