

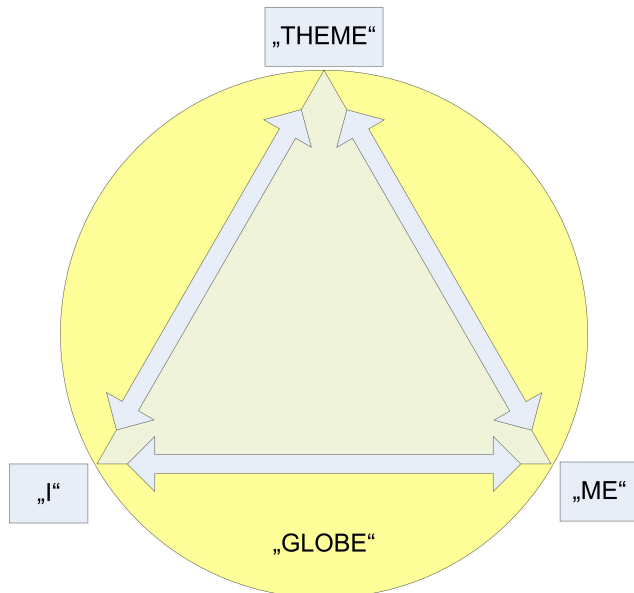
TCI Theme-Centered interaction

TCI is an interaction model for groups and teams and was developed in the early 60s by the Psychotherapist Ruth C. Cohn. Today TCI is represented by the RCI (Ruth Cohn Institute International), located in Switzerland with local organizations in other European Countries. TCI is characterized through a holistic approach based on the unity of Body-Mind and Soul. It is being used in different professional fields as education, personal and organizational development, coaching, consulting management and others.

The “4 factors”, **I-WE-THEME and GLOBE** are the overarching factors of the TCI system. Each factor has an interactive relationship with the other. The group or team leader has to consider the 4-factors throughout the planning and working process, especially during meetings. He/she should also take care of a “*Dynamic Balancing*” between the 4 factors. For the team it means to agree to ground rules as for example the need for a reciprocal acceptance and estimation of everybody who is involved in the process, or “disturbances take precedence” or “be your own Chairperson”.

The aim of TCI is to achieve individually and collectively efforts and cooperation within the team.

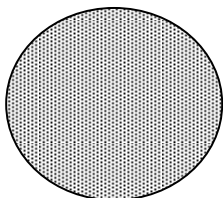
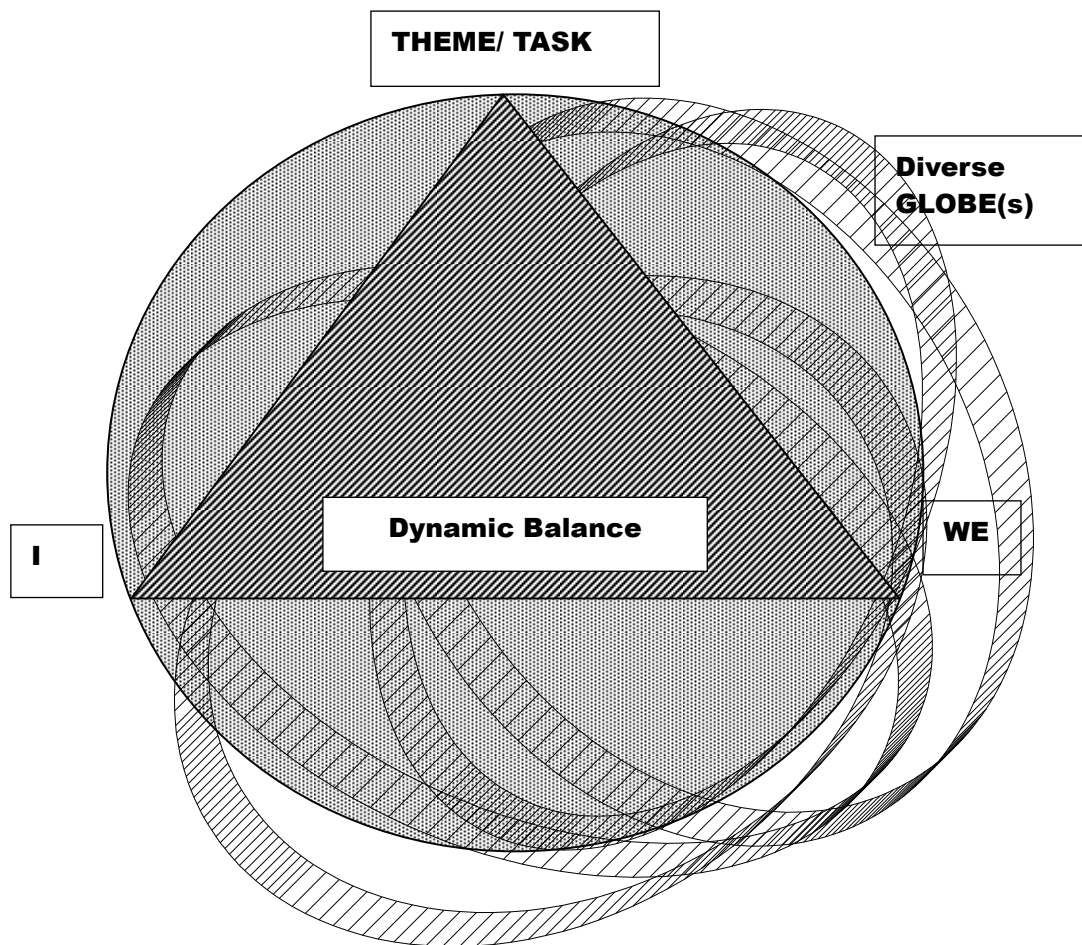
The 4-factor Model of TCI



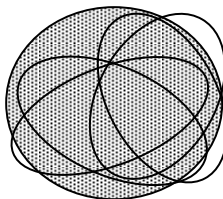
Theme	<i>refers to a specific goal or task a group or team share together</i>
I	<i>refer to each individual in the team or group</i>
We	<i>refer to the group or team as a whole, it changes with the change of participants, including time and space</i>
Globe	<i>means the surrounding circumstances of the individual and the group as a whole.</i>

For more information on TCI see Ruth Cohn Institute International: <http://www.ruth-cohn-institute.org>

Intercultural aspects on TCI



The circle is the common “Globe” or environment a group shares at a certain time in a certain space with each other.



The different colours symbolize the diverse “Globe(s)” - in the graph above, shown as 3-dimensional circles. It relates to the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and environments a group or team shares at a certain time and space with each other.



The triangle is a social frame where a group or team is acting at a certain time and space regarding to a specific theme or task. The team leader should always keep attention that there is a “Dynamic Balance” between the 4 factors I-We-Theme and Globe(s).

How to practice TCI in Intercultural Project Management?

The reflection on a specific situation or phase of the project under the perspective of the 4-factor model of TCI, helps to take into consideration professional, personal, organizational and dynamic

factors within team-interaction. It helps to realize goals through an integrative participation of all team members by taking into consideration all their possible resources. It helps the leader and the team members to be sensitive about changes or irritations with regard to one of these factors. It helps also to conduct the project through a dynamic balance between individuals, team, tasks and the surrounding circumstances.

A constant reflection on the *Theme, I, We and Globe* helps especially project leaders to keep an eye on intercultural factors during the whole project cycle and in every phase of the project to integrate and use the potential of every individual and all possible resources.

To set up a common “The me”

Every group shares a common *theme*. It is the reason why they are together as a group or team. In TCI the *theme* means the concern, which has to be formulated and it is the focus where the group puts attention to it.

The *theme* should be formulated in a process oriented way like: What is our aim? What do we need to achieve our aim? Where are we now, what has to be done and how do we bring this to a topic, which is oriented towards the process? What is the common task? What are the diverse work packages and tasks within the team? How does it relate to personal and organizational goals or circumstances? What are the diverse approaches to the common theme? Does it take into consideration socio-cultural (diversity) backgrounds? Is there anything I have to consider regarding the factor *I, We or Globe*?

4 steps to develop a suitable “the me”

A leader has to consider 4 steps in following the process around the “*theme*”:

1. to **find** a goal (task based) and process (group resources based) oriented theme
2. to **draft** a theme by questioning important points relating to the 4 factors
3. to **formulate** the theme by taking the connotation of the words into consideration. Words could be understood differently from one culture to another. It has to be checked if the theme is comprehensible to all and if necessary changes must be made. There should be no negative terminology within the wording. It should not be too complicated and it should be constructive, motivational and activating.
4. to **introduce** the theme through certain activities, exercises, inputs, reflection loops or presentations. The method of introduction has to be oriented to the needs and resources of the other factors. This means as well, that intercultural aspect has to be taken into consideration with regard to the Diversity of the *globe*. The leader might ask the participants, how they understand the theme and if there are any questions or propositions regarding the theme?

Because the social interaction in TCI is centred on a specific “theme”, the “theme” is the centre of the triangle where all other factors are concentrated on. The selection of the “theme” should be based on the needs and interests of the group or team, on the resources of the individuals and on the globe circumstances of the common and individual globe.

If the group leader does not take into consideration the other factors it could happen that the group will not accept the theme or participants might intervene through protest or reactions during the process as described in the following:

“If the group climate were basically negative, especially in the beginning, participants would have a hard time working on any other theme than their hurt feelings, rage, taking sides etc. It is preferable that a group leader react to every statement, including hostility toward him/herself in a receptive way.” Kathleen Scaccia in: www.motivationalinterview.org (Volume 8, Issue 2, May 1,

If the group climate is basically negative and the leader would not take them seriously “disturbances would take precedence” because the group was not given enough time to get to know each other, to have enough information about the theme, to break the ice and to form a positive working climate. In all group interactions, especially in the beginning participants need time and space to accommodate, to speak about their expectations, feelings, provisions and fears.

Selective Authenticity and the factor “I”

- **Self-reflection - “I” in relation with the “Theme”**
How do I relate to the theme? Are there possible cultural differences?
- **Self-reflection - “I” in relation with the “We”**
How do I relate to the team and to the common Globe? Do I experience differences/ similarities between my “own Globe” and the “Globe of other team members”? Do/ did I feel or experience differences? What is my motivation on the common task? What are my objectives? What is my role in the project/task? How is my relation with the other team members?
- **Intercultural and Diversity awareness – Reflection on the factor “Globe”**
Different approaches and cultures occur in every project. In EU-Projects Team specifically participants usually have different language backgrounds, participants usually have different cultural, organizational and personal experiences. Are all cultural and diverse circumstances taken into consideration?

Teambuilding – The development of a “WE”

“We live together in one reality, however our experiences and perspectives differ. I must acknowledge the heterogeneity of my fellow men and not want to press them into norms. However, I have to represent my own values. We can help ourselves mutually in expanding our perspectives....” Ruth Cohn part of a citation in: Kuebel, Mary Anne: Living Learning. Dehli 2002

The process from “I” to a related “We” needs time and space and forms the basic of reciprocal trust and productive working climate.

The Diversity of the “GLOBE”

“Critical questions” facilitate a reflection on the “Globe”, which means to consider the diverse determining circumstances of each project partner within the project. Those determining circumstances could arise from national, regional, local, organizational and personal level and they might even include historical, political, economical and social components. Some European countries might have a stronger common history with each other than others do. Some Countries might have more or less tight relationships. On the other hand some of the project partners might have a strong and some might have a weak national identity. Nevertheless the Diversity in each European Country might be bigger than it is supposed to be in comparison with each other. European Society seems to be more diverse than national representatives might present them.

Because of a high Diversity in European Society there might be occasionally a stronger focus on the individual culture as on the national culture level. In teams with high diversity components, like European Projects are usually supposed to have, there exists a number of different “Globes”. Globe factors might not be clear right from the beginning of a project. To get as much information as possible about them, would help to avoid misunderstandings during the project.

To accept the Diversity of the Globe, how to deal with the differences or better to say how to deal with Diversity and to use the Diversity for a common purpose, might be the biggest effort within transnational projects.

Everybody's Globe has an influence on the way on how the project is proceeding. I might be lead to look on uncertain spots among my own values, attitudes and behaviours deriving from culture and individual experiences. Because of the numerous different Globe factors within the project team there is a need to develop a new system everybody can share within the team. This new system, which needs time to be developed, forms the common Globe of the project team.

Self reflection and the Chairperson principle of TCI

To realize and analyse the cultural aspects of Globe factors of the others would help me, as a member of the team, to get more conscious about my own Globe factors I might reflect e.g. on what is my own cultural background, professionally, organizationally, socially and individually? How are my values and attitudes and what do/might provoke others?

It might also be helpful to get more **trust on personal feelings** about a situation. Beside of considering about, what do I think in a certain moment or situation, I might also request myself, what do I feel. Through this, I give attention to any (disturbing) feelings and keep on listening to the "inner team" (a term, which was introduced by communication scientist Schulz von Thun, who had a lot of exchanges with Ruth Cohn. The "inner team" also reminds us of what was expressed by Ruth Cohn in a sentence as "Look inside and outside and decide then".

Dynamic Balancing

"A crucial goal for the trainer and team is to create a harmony and balance between the individual, the group, the topics explored and the environment in which all of this takes place, while recognising that this balance is dynamic. There is a continuous flow and counter flow from the individual needs to the group needs to the topic to the individual, and onwards."

Salto-Youth: Theme-Centered Interaction in: Tkit on Training Essentials, p.76-78, France 2002;

Keeping the Balance between the *4 factors* is a dynamic process. Sometimes the concentration will be more on the team (e.g. getting to know each other, how is our cooperation working...), another time on the theme (e.g. intercultural aspects in EU-Projectmanagement) or on one or two participants (e.g. intercultural conflict) or on the Globe (e.g. the chairs of the meeting room aren't very comfortable, there are not enough electrical outlets in the room or where do we place the screen?...). Other factors to be balanced are emotional, physical and mental signals of individuals within the group process. Dynamic Balancing means to be attentive to recognize what's going on and to be aware of a correct timing between all factors.

Participative Leadership

The leader in TCI is part of the group or team with his/her own socio-cultural background and personality. Therefore she/he cannot be neutral but authentic in her/his decision making while keeping an eye on the "*Dynamic Balance*" of the interaction process within the team. The Leader tries to keep a balance between her/his guiding authority and the self-organisation of the group or team.

A participative leader participates in the team process as much as the situation allows him/her to participate, regarding his/her tasks of leadership, where he/she has to keep the balance between the *4factors* and to conduct the team towards the goal of the meeting, project or working package.

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