



NEW ZEALAND - MY ADOPTED HOME

SILKE NOLL

**A CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINER'S PERSONAL PORTRAYAL
OF NEW ZEALAND AND GERMANY
AND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LIVE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.**

New Zealand

—

My Adopted Home

A cross-cultural trainer's personal portrayal
of New Zealand and Germany

—

and what it's like to live between two worlds.

Silke Noll

For Verena

He who returns from a journey is not the same as he who left.

Chinese Proverb

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Editor: Marja Stack

Illustrations: Edgar Noll

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Endorsements

For my work as a cross-cultural trainer and consultant, I read many books and articles on the subject. They are very often dry and scholarly, with few interesting examples to illustrate some complex concepts. It's strange when you consider that cross-cultural studies are actually based on the observation of human activity. This book was an enjoyable read because of the colourful anecdotes the experienced traveller and recent immigrant to New Zealand references.

The young author seasons her experience with some intercultural theory, and blends these with observations made on her travels around the world into a fascinating and entertaining memoir about life in New Zealand and Germany, garnished with bits and pieces of trips to other places. Cultural facts in conjunction with introspection is a good recipe for cross-cultural competence. *New Zealand – My Adopted Home* demonstrates how to do it. I award full points!

– Susan Hoppe, Intercultural trainer, Hawaii

Anyone who has ever been to New Zealand says, 'It's a wonderful country and its people are so great and relaxed...!' I worked for a year in New Zealand and shared a flat with three Kiwi girls. I could never say why exactly it was so hard for me to leave New Zealand. As I read *New Zealand – My Adopted Home*, there were numerous 'Aha' moments. I got a lot of answers to why I love the country and the inhabitants. As you read what the author shares about her personal experiences, you will learn a lot about your compatriots and other countries.

– Petra Lenz, Returnee from New Zealand, lives in Hamburg

It was a pleasure to be one of the first people to read *New Zealand – My Adopted Home*. The author vividly captures the Kiwi soul through her personal experiences, flavouring it with deep intercultural knowledge. I am a born-and-bred New Zealander, and reading the book got me excited and emotional about my own country! I even gave some pages to my Mum to try to translate, as she took German for fun in her fifties. My mother is 94 and still sprightly.

One example of my mother's adaptability – one of the things described in the book – is when I picked her up at the airport the other day, she had no hesitation in coming to our bach where there was no power on. So she coped with no



electricity, no running water, no flush in the toilet, no oven to cook or quick way to make a cup of tea! She took it all in her stride and enjoyed the simplicity of it. She brought out her knitting as she said she could still do that no matter what! I put it all down to the pioneering spirit.

My father, aside from his chosen profession as a medical doctor and engineer, had many skills up his sleeve. Carpenter skills – he added a new room to our house each time a new member of the family came along – there are six of us(!) and electrical skills. He sorted these problems out in our house and built retaining walls and garden sheds. He could also upholster and deep button furniture, lay out vegetable gardens and make compost. He built us kids a 15-metre concrete swimming pool with solar heating! He even cut his own hair – you would never have guessed! He was also a reasonable artist, violinist and could whip up a decent dinner.

Of course, some of these skills were passed down from his father and mother but at that time the DIY was even more strongly evident than today. He said sometimes you could easily do a job properly and better yourself! Do a good job. Be independent. Be resourceful. Instead of relying too much upon others. The pioneering spirit is still alive! The early settlers (1840s and onwards) needed to be resourceful, self-reliant, adaptable to survive a new life in a strange land inhabited for that time only by strange people. These traits are clearly seen in my parents. And in theirs before them.

The book stirred up so many memories! It is a must read for people who love New Zealand and like to live in this beautiful country. Long live the Kiwi pioneering spirit!!

– Susan Sellers, a genuine New Zealander with a pioneer spirit

New Zealand – My Adopted Home not only gets you in the mood for New Zealand, but it examines unique characteristics and cultural differences with lots of humour and introspection. The result is a comprehensive, world-embracing account that depicts not only the author's childhood country, but her new home in the South Pacific. You can experience the interaction, lifestyles and quirks of New Zealanders through the eyes of the author, as well as their problems and worries, all delivered with a smile. It's an absorbing read, a diverse compendium of information about New Zealand and a wonderful comparison with Germany and Europe and how people there master their lives. The author's love for the country she grew up in shines



throughout, even as it throbs for her island home. It is an accomplished work of storytelling and interwoven cross-cultural insights about a rather unusual life on the other side of the globe.

– Marika Mochi, Editor

I have been living in New Zealand for nine years and have read several books about life here from the German perspective. *New Zealand – My Adopted Home* is different, because the author has successfully managed to reflect daily life in New Zealand and its people with authentic examples and a lot of humour and charm. The most important cultural differences have been cleverly highlighted by enlisting the help of her companion, the tui, Kaitiaki. The author clearly identifies and analyses background information to the many hurdles we immigrants must conquer. The New Zealander's view is also present; the book actually looks at two cultures in tandem with tangible descriptions by the author. Her knowledge as an intercultural trainer is built into the story without being too dry. Adventure, humour and deep intercultural insights are guaranteed.

– Manuela Mühlbauer, German immigrant to New Zealand



About the author

For a long time she was there, never here, until she discovered New Zealand. Of course, seafaring discoverers found it first. Nevertheless, author Silke Noll eventually discovered the far ends of the Earth for herself.

A certified cross-cultural trainer, author and New Zealand expert, Silke has always been keenly interested in other cultures and peoples. As an Agile Coach and Scrum Master, she has worked on projects all over the world. Recently, she mutated from world traveller to New Zealand immigrant, and lives (most of the time) in her beach house in Wellington. A New Zealand Christmas tree, a pōhutukawa, grows in her front yard and blooms in the Antipodean summer.

In this book, Silke shares her very personal experiences of the multicultural world of New Zealand. She interweaves many other stories from visits to other countries into this comprehensive look at New Zealand from a cross-cultural perspective. Her trainer expertise and her background in the Palatinate region of Germany provides an additional dimension. (That is, as a Palatinate, not as a German – she would probably be the first to admit to actually being typically German, something Germans don't typically do!) Silke's love of both countries shines through every hurdle and stumbling block to successful immigration. With Middle-earth now at the centre of her life, only a closer look unmasks what at first appear to be similarities with other Western cultures. Yet, there are so many unexpected challenges – even one that made her lowly wall clock go crazy. Germans are not usually known for their humour. Trying the impossible, Silke luckily had lots of support for the writing of this book from her multilingual companion and mentor, the cheeky New Zealand tui, a native bird – named Kaitiaki. Without his help, the attempt to keep a light-hearted tone throughout might have failed.

More information: www.wahlheimat-neuseeland.de

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/wahlheimat_neuseeland/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wahlheimatneuseeland/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/silke-noll-79a609/>

Kanban University: <https://edu.leankanban.com/users/silke-noll>

Beach House overlooking three seas: <https://bo3seas.co.nz>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bo3seas/>



Stages of a journey

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He kupu whakataki – Introduction

Who hasn't experienced that wonderful feeling of being back home? Throughout my life, I have returned home to Germany from holidays, from my studies abroad, or from a great job in another country. Each time, a little less of me went back. Each time, a little more of me remained out there in the big wide world. And once I discovered New Zealand, my wanderlust only grew. After every visit to that far-off land, more of me stayed behind, until I finally decided to move to the 'most beautiful end of the Earth'.

On my most recent return to the country of my birth – the first time since permanently moving away – I decided to look closely at Germany from the outside in, and explore, through writing, the differences and commonalities between New Zealand and Europe; what it feels like to reintegrate. I wanted to take a good look, in a light-hearted way, at my perception of myself as a German, and of Germany as well as Europe, New Zealand and the rest of the world. This trip begins and ends in New Zealand, and transits through Cuba and Nicaragua. In Europe it takes us through Germany, Barcelona, Tuscany, England and France. Accounts of adventures with my Italian friends are a feature, and a trip to Brazil, which played a crucial role in paving my way to New Zealand.

All of these places have helped me to understand my own culture – and many others – better.

No matter where we are in the world, whether a traveller or an immigrant, we cannot avoid comparisons. Usually, we view our own culture uncritically as *normal*. Deviations might capture our attention. But our own way of life is the yardstick against which we measure ourselves and other cultures.¹

Such comparisons have become daily a feature of our increasingly global and international lives. Therefore, I can't reflect on New Zealand only from a German/European point of view. Asian cultures and many other influences have shaped the originally bicultural and nowadays multicultural society of New Zealand. Aspects of British culture, and certain facets of the indigenous Māori people, build the historical base for my observations. My experiences in Cuba, Nicaragua and Europe impacted on my perspective from a Western



angle, while other observations result from my perceptions as an immigrant to the other end of the world.

In particular, I was interested in figuring out how New Zealand has influenced me, culturally speaking. As a facilitator and trainer for intercultural communication, I advise and coach people who are relocating to a foreign country (integration) or people who are returning to their home country after spending time overseas (reintegration).

Countless publications document the characteristics of specific countries and what to look out for when immigrating to a foreign land. There are far fewer books and articles about returning home, though it is often a far more dramatic experience. In a foreign country you expect to encounter strangeness. When you return, you don't realise how much you have changed and how much your home might have changed in your absence – or not. Both can turn out to be a surprise. I was interested in what would happen to me when I returned to Germany and Europe. Would I experience the usual reverse culture shock? Shouldn't someone like me be well prepared? We shall see.

While travelling, cultural mannerisms and differences manifest themselves on many levels. In intercultural theory, these are often explained using the analogy of an iceberg. Language, clothing, literature, symbols, etc., are visible above the water line in the model. Values and expectations are located deeper, below the water line. The tip of the iceberg is only the smallest part of a given culture. The essential qualities are hidden, and are often only subtly discernible. The structure of this book will emulate the iceberg model, though I would like to base it on a special *berg*: White Island, one of New Zealand's many volcanoes. The craters on this active volcanic island, located off the north-eastern coast of the North Island, are mostly submerged. Under the sea it is superhot and eruptions occur unexpectedly.

A native bird, called a tui, and which I have named Kaitiaki, will accompany me on my journey. He is able to analyse and explain what is happening below the surface.

The Māori use the word *kaitiaki* to denote a protector, guide or



anchor. Kaitiaki reflect the ancient Māori custom of assigning a mentor to a stranger. The mentor will instruct the newcomer on the internalised rules of Māori culture and society. My personal kaitiaki is the tui, which chirps around my house in Lyall Bay, Wellington, as I drink coffee or splash water on my face to wake up in the mornings. The tui is a typical New Zealand bird, both dashing and serious, with its neck feathers arranged like a white bow tie. Tui are known for their ability to imitate other birds. Kaitiaki can also empathise with others. He speaks several languages, so please don't be surprised if he interrupts with a chirp or whistle. He insisted on coming along on my trip to Europe, because he has never been there. Above all, he loves to be the cross-cultural smart-aleck.

In addition to the index and bibliography, starting on page 232, you will find a small *Kiwi Wiki* – or mini glossary – to aid you on your reading journey.

By the way, the cross-cultural content structured around White Island is the heart of the book – you can start reading the book from wherever your attention draws you. You can read it from beginning to end, or any way forwards or backwards as you prefer.





Intercultural (Cross-cultural) content

Designed to help you navigate the cultural differences between Germany and New Zealand, the following six pages highlight the intercultural/cross-cultural content of this book, modelled on New Zealand's volcanic White Island.

Above the water line in the picture you will find topics listed that you might already be aware of. These generally cause fewer problems in the understanding and communication between cultures.

Below the water line in the picture are the issues that often remain hidden and unconsciously tend to cause miscommunication and misunderstanding.

The page numbers refer to the corresponding intercultural/cross-cultural commentary in the book. The fonts are used to make these paragraphs easily distinguishable from the rest of the text, just as they do here.



23 Small talk, making contact and keeping a distance

How to use the right ritual at the right time when making business and private acquaintances.

35 DIY, or ‘Don’t you miss anything from Germany?’

What you will find lacking in New Zealand – and how to deal with it.

35 Themed parties

German Mardi Gras (Karneval), surfers, paragliders and truck drivers wearing Santa costumes.

36 Washing machines and the right temperature for washing clothing

A never-ending discussion in New Zealand and German households.

37 Kiwi ingenuity, pioneering spirit and the German engineer and handyman

All about Number 8 wire, German DIY home improvement stores, and Bunnings – adaptability and inventions that become national icons.

39 Houses in New Zealand

Why you won’t find German building standards in New Zealand.

40 Wine

Small differences and how to find the right wine for you in New Zealand.

47 Typically German

What is typically German anyway? First thoughts on questions every emigrant might ask themselves at some point.

30 Self-Determination, individualism and collectivism

How lending a hand and not telling people what to do are two sides of the same coin – and what you can do if you feel you need some help and support and nobody seems to notice.

42 Humour

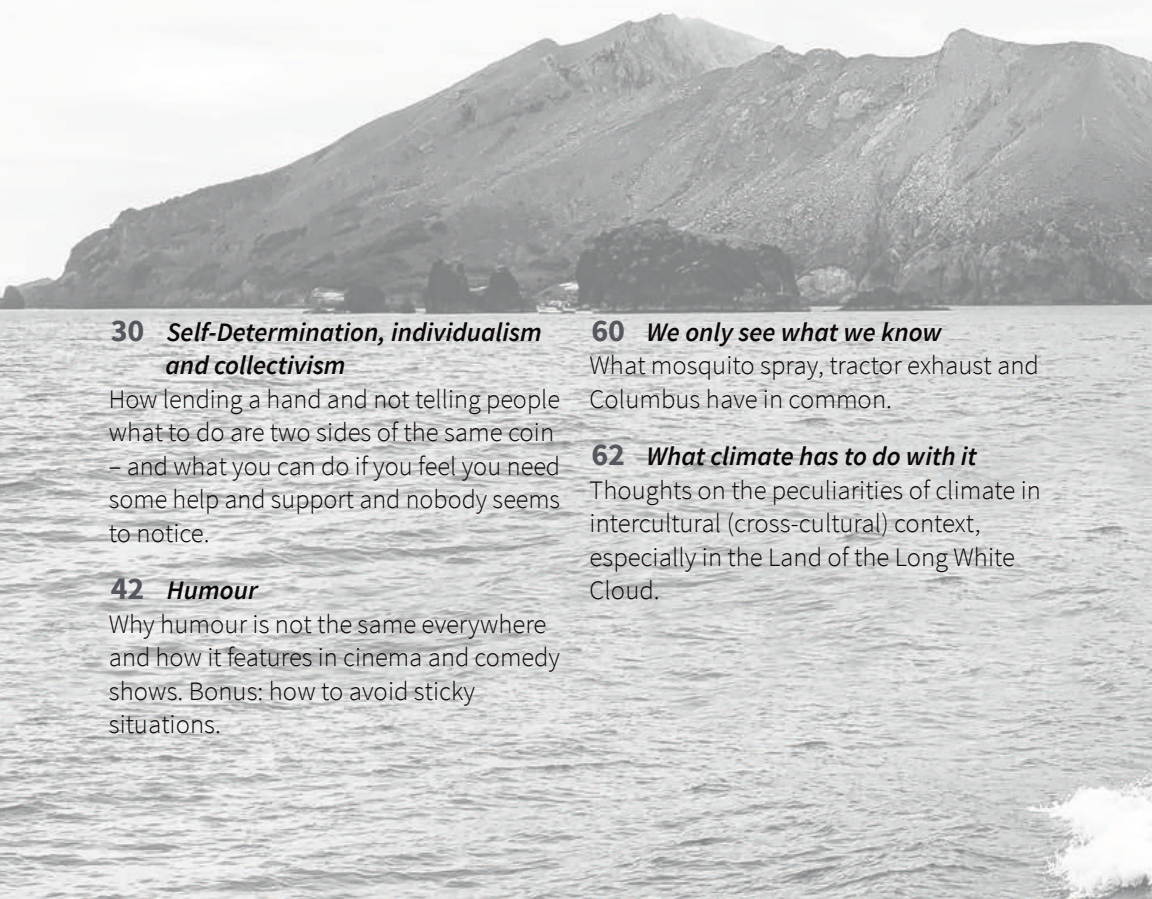
Why humour is not the same everywhere and how it features in cinema and comedy shows. Bonus: how to avoid sticky situations.

60 We only see what we know

What mosquito spray, tractor exhaust and Columbus have in common.

62 What climate has to do with it

Thoughts on the peculiarities of climate in intercultural (cross-cultural) context, especially in the Land of the Long White Cloud.



48 Food – or what a New Zealander misses while abroad

New Zealand's cuisine, often unappreciated or even believed non-existent.

55 The New Zealander – hunter, spearfisher and angler

About living with nature and being a hunter in a country that once had very few mammals.

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The 'other' right side.

61 German lead foot

An autonomous part of my body, trained on the German autobahn.

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How to safely enter and exit.

67 Airports, baggage belts, lifts and the German evil eye

A German phenomenon: unique, and which can neither be learned nor unlearned.

68 Airline safety videos

From the charming world of Hobbits and their German equivalent.

74 Insurance

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80 Ping-pong Poms

Back and forth between Europe and down under, again and again.

85 Help for DIY solutions

About defective gas heaters, electric garage door openers and bathroom doorknobs – money for service or service for service?

63 Toilets – nicer s(h)itting in New Zealand

Small but significant differences behind closed doors.

68 Security, risk, freedom, stability and flexibility

Important values in intercultural/cross-cultural studies; where I am really feeling the transition from German to a wannabe Kiwi.

73 Local pride (patriotism) in Germany

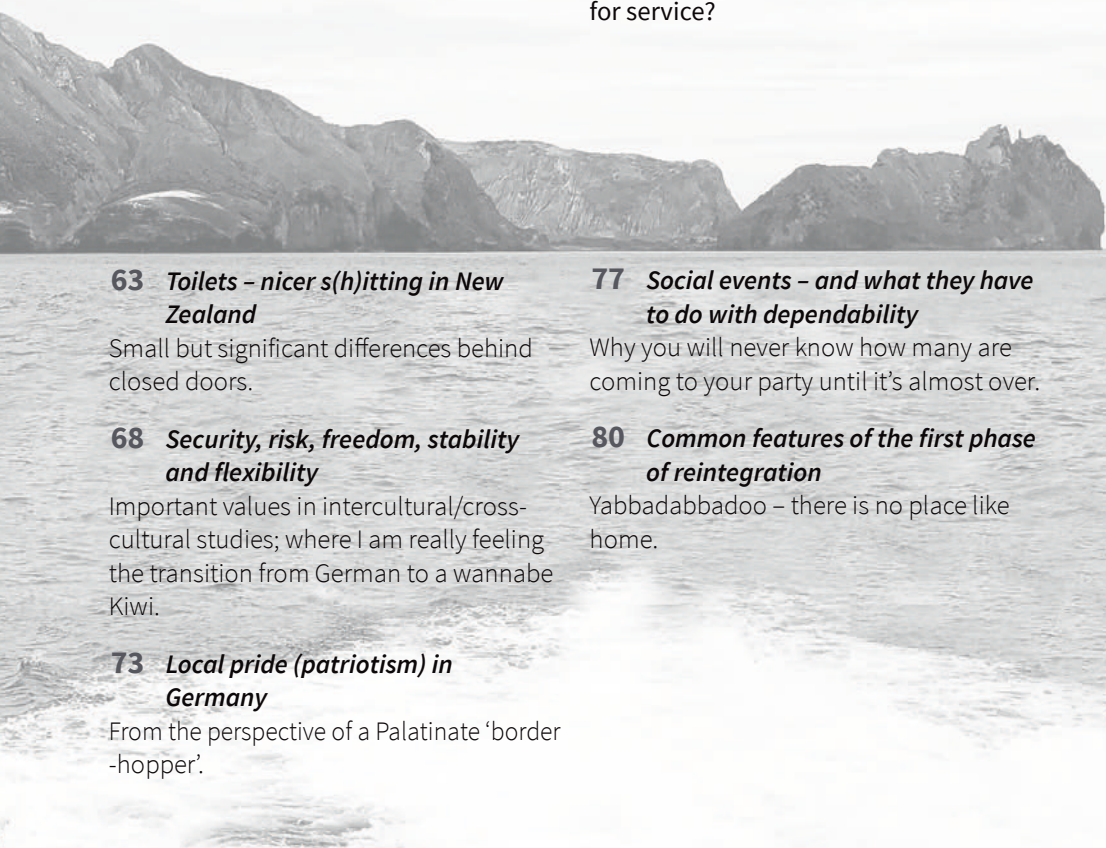
From the perspective of a Palatinate 'border-hopper'.

77 Social events – and what they have to do with dependability

Why you will never know how many are coming to your party until it's almost over.

80 Common features of the first phase of reintegration

Yabbadabbadoo – there is no place like home.



88 Distance: how far, far really is
Bus rides in the air with kids and the New Zealander's OE (overseas experience).

89 Flat sharing and German *Gemütlichkeit*
About micro cosmos, macro cosmos, intermittent ventilation (*Stosslüften*) and dehumidifiers.

89 Tipping and paying the bill
How I regularly dodged the bill in Europe and about *koha*, round-buying, free-loading and fair-playing.

91 A visit to sauna paradise
Hot springs, romantic sauna boxes, German parallel stereotypes, unisex changing rooms, and saunas, ice pools, cold-water hoses, infusions and reserved loungers. Bonus: nude competitions and nude beaches in New Zealand.

94 Down under in Germany, or a life in the dark: the German mole gene
And related things like feeling under the weather (*Wetterfuehligkeit*), spring fatigue (*Fruehjahrs-muedigkeit*) and the southern wind malady (*Foehnkrankheit*).

96 Germanised
Integration the other way around – first thoughts on immigrating to Germany.

97 German bluntness – how to deal with it
How do you say no without actually saying no? A field study of alternatives, including the New Zealand ‘yeah, naaaah’.

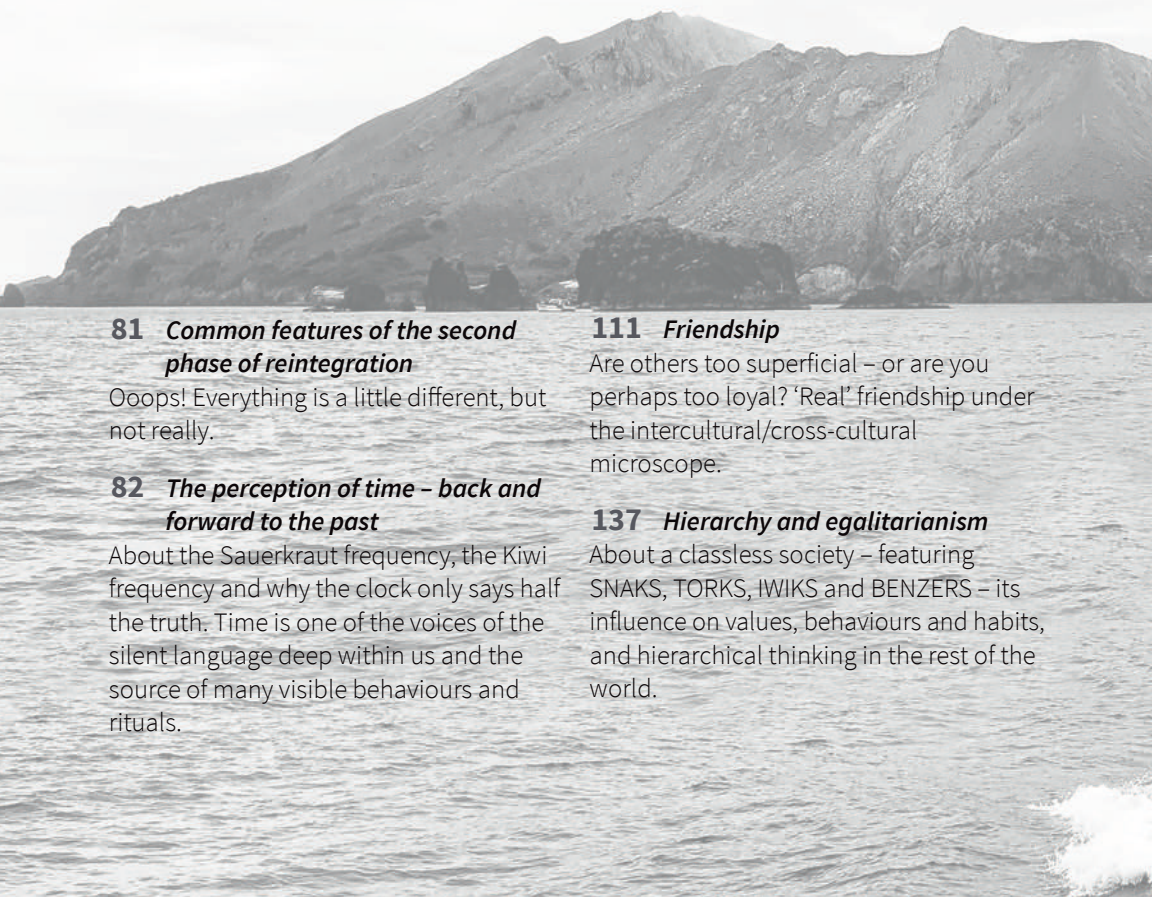
99 Tax-free shopping
A short description of how to get a VAT refund as an emigrant from the EU.

81 Common features of the second phase of reintegration
Ooops! Everything is a little different, but not really.

82 The perception of time – back and forward to the past
About the Sauerkraut frequency, the Kiwi frequency and why the clock only says half the truth. Time is one of the voices of the silent language deep within us and the source of many visible behaviours and rituals.

111 Friendship
Are others too superficial – or are you perhaps too loyal? ‘Real’ friendship under the intercultural/cross-cultural microscope.

137 Hierarchy and egalitarianism
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100 Dress codes

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102 Dancing

How much do you dance and where? And what else is a focal point of a party?

103 Laws, rules and supervision

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108 Coffee

No, it's not about the newest brewing trends when New Zealanders speak of short blacks and flat whites.

109 A cultural look at real estate

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114 The world of fitness

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115 Clubs

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117 Relationships, gender equality, dating and platonic friendships

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157 Peaches and coconuts

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162 Opinion – feedback – directness – low context – objectivity – honesty

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173 TCKs – Third Culture Kids

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176 Common features of the third phase of reintegration

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122 Christmas

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123 One of the best days

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125 Beaches

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126 Middle of Middle-earth

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127 Germans and their cars

Status symbol and national pride rolled into one.

132 Museums

About unique dinosaurs at the end of the Earth and what they have to do with education.

134 Children

A few thoughts on emigrating with children.

135 Delivery to New Zealand

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Ostensibly a symbol of equality and egalitarianism.

145 Residents' registration offices

About mailboxes without names on them.

182 Personal space

How you can end up on the other side of the street without wanting to.

183 Efficiency, planning and organisation

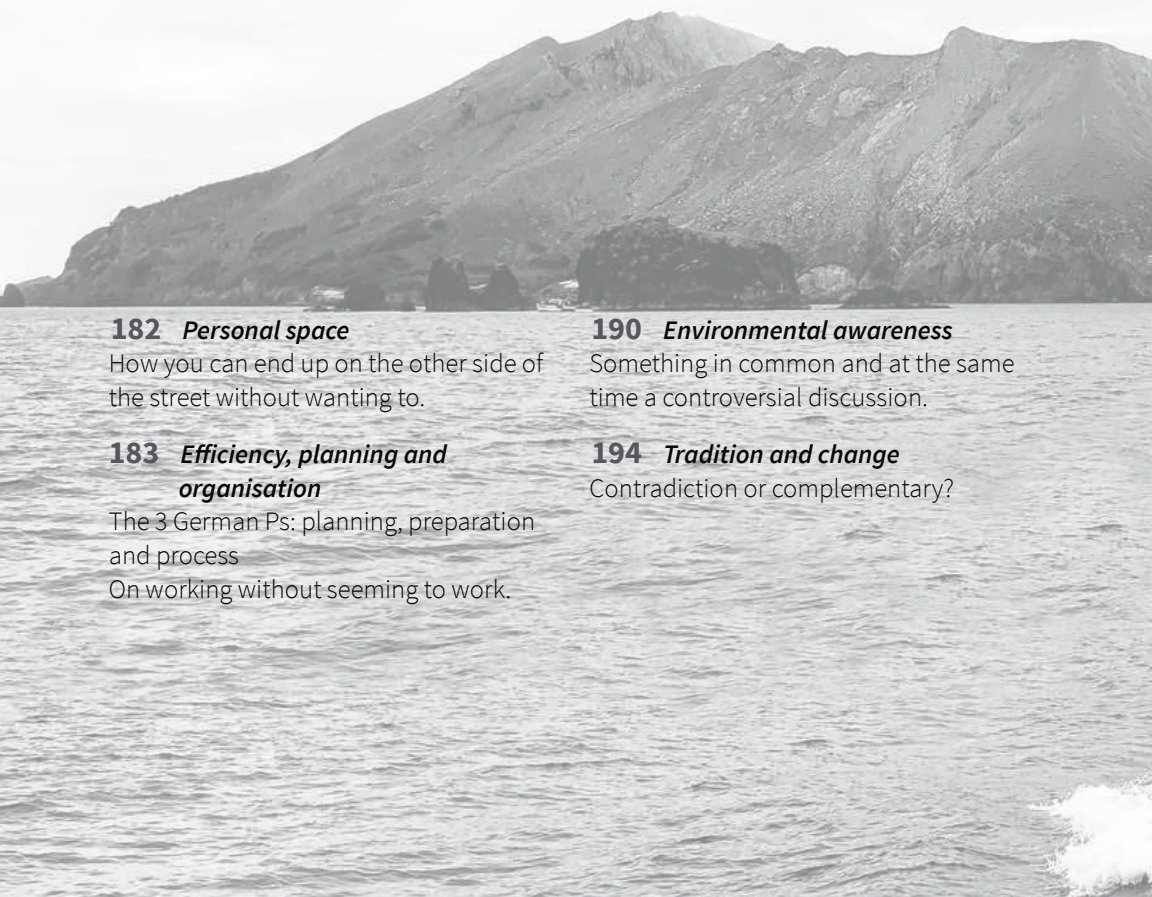
The 3 German Ps: planning, preparation and process
On working without seeming to work.

190 Environmental awareness

Something in common and at the same time a controversial discussion.

194 Tradition and change

Contradiction or complementary?



148 Four seasons in one day

About the other 'Moin', dunes, sheep, tides, gulls, lighthouses, whales and weather.

149 Riding the bus in New Zealand

'Thanks, Mr Driver' and what that has to do with crutches.

151 Tarawera Marathon

About the degrees of kinship, thermal and volcanic landscapes, geysers, a hot water beach and a country where dreams come true.

152 Unpaid leave

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169 Outside the zone of German efficiency and punctuality

How time can appear to speed up or slow down while travelling.

170 Zebra pedestrian crossing

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170 German history in school

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173 Expat community

Another kind of life abroad.

188 Great Walks and outdoor activities

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210 Neighbourliness

The meaning of neighbourhoods from pioneer days through to the present.

198 Meetings, hui and decision making

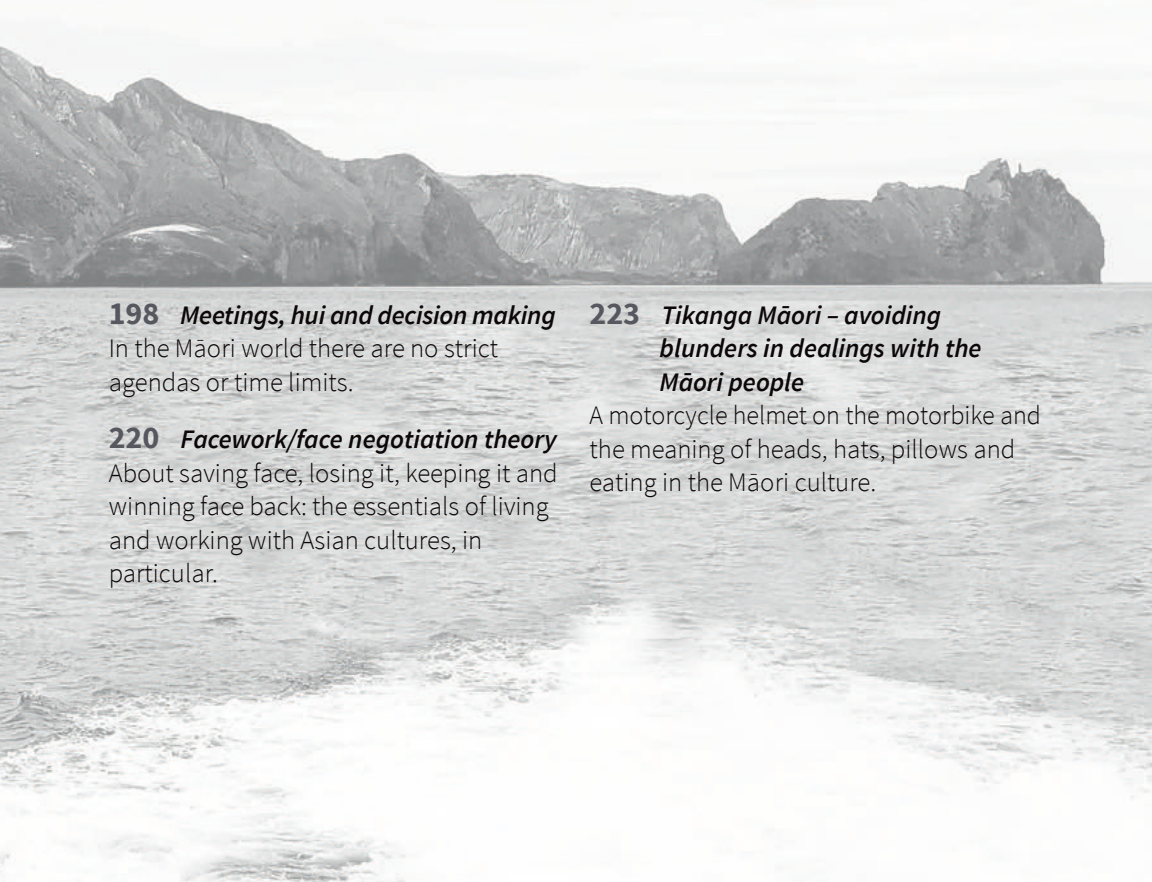
In the Māori world there are no strict agendas or time limits.

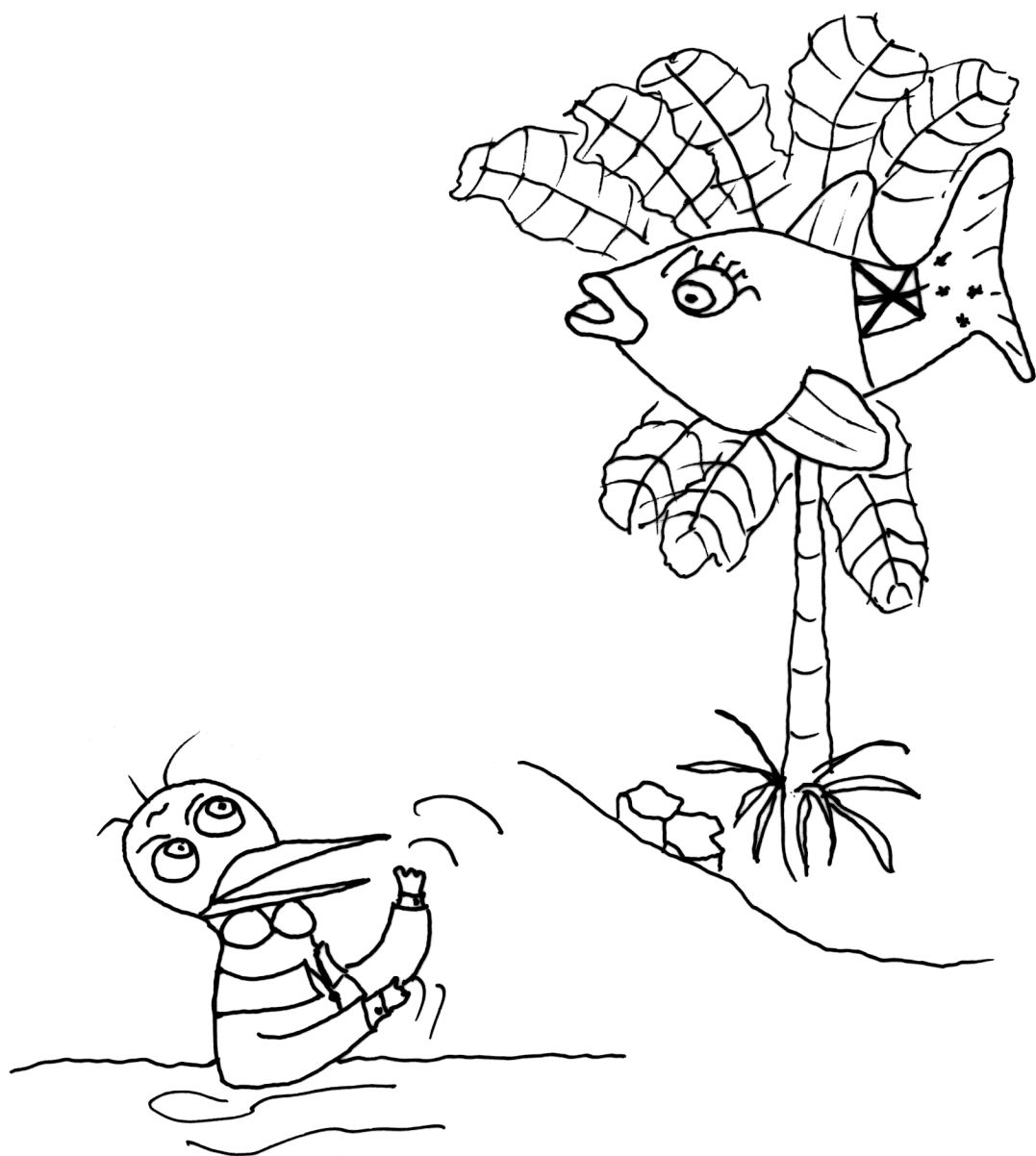
220 Facework/face negotiation theory

About saving face, losing it, keeping it and winning face back: the essentials of living and working with Asian cultures, in particular.

223 Tikanga Māori – avoiding blunders in dealings with the Māori people

A motorcycle helmet on the motorbike and the meaning of heads, hats, pillows and eating in the Māori culture.





anything. Kaitiaki was confused. ‘Why queue in front of the airport anyway?’ he wondered. ‘It doesn’t make sense. Why do you have to be first at check-in just so you can sit around longer until boarding?’

Airports, baggage belts, lifts and the German evil eye

I remember an episode from when I was a consultant. I was in Frankfurt Airport waiting for the luggage to arrive. Perhaps you have already seen the impatient, reproachful glare Germans give to every bag that is spit out on to the belt if it’s not theirs. Especially people who travel for business and really don’t have time. Poor suitcases really have to put up with a lot! I swear, only Germans can do the evil eye. It cannot be learnt. It’s very difficult to untrain because it’s completely unconscious. You will experience it if you try to push your shopping cart against the ‘natural’ flow in the supermarket, or if you try to get in a bus through the ‘wrong’ door. Don’t ever think about leaning on someone else’s car or putting something on the boot lid even for a moment! You will suffer for it immediately, skewered by the evil eye and lashed by the loud accusing voice of the owner.

That’s not all. There is also the unmalicious German stare. I experience this all the time if I am speaking at a seminar or to any kind of German audience. The stare is completely empty of expression or emotion. In elevators you might see the same inscrutable stare, but aimed at the floor or the changing numerals until the doors slide open again. There appears to be a secret understanding that you never look at someone in a lift in Germany. Laughing is forbidden.

I’ve tried bouncing into a lift with a merry New Zealand smile and a ‘good morning!’ It only perplexes people, making them genuinely uncomfortable and stare even harder at the floor.

At some point, I managed to check in and pass security at Havana airport. Near my gate, I sat down at a table where a middle-aged gentleman struck up a conversation. He told me that he was thinking of immigrating to Cuba. I told him I had immigrated to New Zealand.

On my trips, I have met a number of people who were considering



leaving Germany for good. The reasons why weren't ever very clear to me. Why that particular country? Did they know what they were getting into? What were they planning to do in the country they were going to live in? Strange to know of so many Germans, normally so mindful of their security, who would throw all caution to the winds. Yes, they really do. They even have a TV show about the boldest German emigrants into the world. One needs to understand that the German word for security is so portentous for their culture that it means many things, such as comfort, security, safety, guarantee, quality, financial security and *Geborgenheit* (a feeling of being homely, safe and warm). It may have as many implicit meanings as the Inuit have words for snow.

During my flight on Condor, I was pleasantly surprised and a bit confused. Their safety video actually tried to be entertaining. Do you know Air New Zealand's hilarious **safety videos**, some of them straight from the Land of the Hobbits?²⁹ Funny as!

I can't imagine something like that being shown on an early morning business shuttle from Munich to Hamburg. The passengers would probably short the circuits with their evil eyes. Having said that, the video on Condor was a nice attempt at showing that Germans have a sense of humour, too. It finished with the words: 'a small step for you; a large step for airline safety', which, besides echoing Neil Armstrong's famous quotation, tapped into a very important German cultural value.

Security, risk, freedom, stability and flexibility

Kaitiaki was very quick to explain that by security he didn't mean personal safety in New Zealand. 'People will run after you if you forget something and search for the owner of a lost item. We trust each other for the most part and help each other willingly. I hope it stays this way for a long time. New Zealand regularly has trouble with tourists, often backpackers, stealing things from supermarkets. Isn't that sad? If visitors abuse our famous hospitality, someday there won't be any left. They should take our good vibe home with them and share it there.'

This section is about the cultural value of *security*. People like to feel secure – some more urgently, some less so. For historical reasons, Germans are



a very anxious people, even if you only consider the ruin of the two world wars and the hyperinflation in between. There were many other vicious wars, like the Hundred Years' War, the Schmalkaldic Wars, the Thirty Years' War, the War of the League of Augsburg and the Napoleonic Wars, fought in earlier centuries and carried out on German soil. They weren't Germans' fault; Germans just happened to live where the larger powers' armies crossed paths. They rebuilt their country numerous times from the ashes. Anxiety is deeply rooted in the German soul and so they value security very highly.

In intercultural studies, this is a cultural standard and dimension called *uncertainty avoidance*.³⁰ In German culture it manifests as the need to be extremely organised and efficient, highly ethical, dutiful, perfectionist and thrifty, and with very high regard for regulations and relying on government agencies. It is uncertainty avoidance that makes us stop at a red light even if nothing is coming. Regulations, traffic lights and an innate sense of order have, however, reduced our concept of responsibility and accountability. Why are we not allowed to look out for ourselves? If you have ever tried to cross a street in India on foot, you will know what I mean. In New Zealand it makes me dizzy to think of how few retaining walls and fences have been built to protect its climbers and hikers, for example at the Paritutu Rock in New Plymouth or the Escarpment Track between Paekakariki and Pukerua Bay. Not even a warning sign. This is unthinkable in Germany. No wonder my father felt it necessary to yank me back onto the sidewalk one day while I was in Germany, admonishing me to remember I was not in New Zealand.

Uncertainty avoidance makes us plan and save for old age. It can also get in the way of living life. To a German it might be frightening to think you can just try something out without knowing if you will succeed, or do something without overthinking it. However, people from many other cultures don't interpret this as being irresponsible. They just do it.

There are two significant exceptions: one is the stretches on the German autobahn with no speed limit, and the other are the private fireworks on New Year's Eve everywhere in the streets. While flying along at 180 kms/hr or blowing things up at least on that one night a year, it appears our need for security is suspended for a brief time.

On my first New Year's Eve during my time at the university in Toulouse, I



automatically stepped outside at midnight to watch everybody let off fireworks. I was hugely disappointed. There were none. Boring darkness. In New Zealand there is always Guy Fawkes, a tradition adopted from the British, though they don't go as crazy as the Germans do with their firecrackers.

New Zealand has taught me about liberty. Life has taught me that there is no real security. It makes more sense to stay flexible and grasp every opportunity. You will always land on your feet. So what if I don't land a new freelance contract when I return to New Zealand? I'll find some other job. And what if my immigration plans hadn't worked out? I would have returned to Germany.

'Be careful with generalisations,' Kaitiaki said as he wobbled his little head from left to right. 'Not all Germans are such-and-such, and neither are all New Zealanders. Do not think in black and white. In comparing cultures, we find there are tendencies that grow from a deeper value and stay with us our entire life. Generalisations about countries and cultures are basically a national average, a mid-point on a scale. Individuals will slide this way or that based on how they were raised, their education, friends, travel experiences, other countries they have lived in and their environment as a whole.'

If you imagine the scale of a value like security, I tend to personally be more comfortable with uncertainty than many Germans because of my many experiences abroad and my life in New Zealand. Though compared to people from other countries, I am probably still more of a worrywart. If I look at uncertainty avoidance of New Zealanders as a whole, or of Germans, there is an average with variations. A bank employee or insurance employee might be more risk averse than others, and civil servants might have the greatest sense of security, especially compared to the self-employed.

Freelancers in Germany might be slightly more risk averse than their counterparts in New Zealand. The city or region they come from in their respective country might affect things, not to mention their individual life experience.

New Zealanders tend to react flexibly to situations that are not going well. 'Shbireitmeit.' If one way doesn't work, you can improvise. New Zealanders' expectations are generally lower because they believe you



can't know the future. Very often the outcome is totally different anyway. They almost expect things to turn out differently than originally thought. 'If you want to just let things happen, let life happen, then New Zealand is a good place to try it out.' Kaitiaki flew past me. He had a piece of Number 8 wire in his beak, intending to add it to the nest he was building.

A German psychologist and communications researcher, Friedemann Schulz von Thun, introduced an expanded version of an older model called the Value Square. It helps us to explore the relationship between pairs of values such as security and risk taking, liberty and obligation, and stability and flexibility, for example. On the website of von Thun's Institut für Kommunikation, he describes the Value and Development Square as the premise that every positive value is effective only if viewed in context of its complementary nature, and that without that tension between the two, values become useless exaggerations of themselves.³¹

On the bus from the plane to the terminal after landing in Frankfurt, I overheard this exchange: 'Helga, we should have got on the first bus.' 'You are right, Herbert. Then we'd be at the baggage belt sooner,' expressing the German-style desire to optimise everything – even to save a few seconds.

The first step was passport control, however. Would the immigration officer let me in after more than two years away, I wondered? Yes, he did, as if I had never been gone. Little did he know...



Whakawhetai – acknowledgments

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– and finally, Oliver, whose feedback has been simply invaluable.



For a long time she was there, never here, until she discovered New Zealand. Of course, seafaring discoverers found it first. Nevertheless, author Silke Noll eventually discovered the far ends of the Earth for herself.

A certified cross-cultural trainer, author and New Zealand expert, Silke has always been keenly interested in other cultures and peoples. As an Agile Coach and Scrum Master, she has worked in projects all over the world. Recently, she mutated from world traveller to New Zealand immigrant, and lives (most of the time) in her beach house in Wellington. A New Zealand Christmas tree, a pōhutukawa, grows in her front yard and blooms in the Antipodean summer.

In this book, Silke shares her very personal experiences of the multicultural world of New Zealand. She interweaves many other stories from visits to other countries into this comprehensive look at New Zealand from a cross-cultural perspective. Her trainer expertise and her background in the Palatinate region of Germany provides an additional dimension. (That is, as a Palatinate, not as a German – she would probably be the first to admit to actually being typically German, something Germans don't typically do!) Silke's love of both countries shines through every hurdle and stumbling block to successful immigration. With Middle-earth now at the centre of her life, only a closer look unmasks what at first appear to be similarities with other Western cultures. Yet, there are so many unexpected challenges – even one that made her lowly wall clock go crazy.

Germans are not usually known for their humour. Trying the impossible, Silke luckily had lots of support for the writing of this book from her multilingual companion and mentor, the cheeky New Zealand tui, a native bird – named Kaitiaki. Without his help, the attempt to keep a light-hearted tone throughout might have failed.

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