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The *Cultural Frames* Approach as an Alternative View to the Ethnocratic Idea of Culture.

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To the current important question of intercultural relations and communication, the concept of culture undoubtedly belongs. It is not only because of its importance as a technical analytical tool but because today the idea of culture -in the anthropological sense- goes beyond the interest of the academic milieu. The concept of *culture* has powerfully erupted in the political arena; discourses about preservation of determined cultural traits or about the need for cultural integration of immigrants today belongs to daily life. In all discourses regarding ethnic minorities, nationalism, immigration, multiculturalism, intercultural relations, etc. *culture* clearly appears as a key concept.

But the question is now: what are we speaking about exactly when we refer to *culture*? Until what point is the concept so drenched of romantic ideologies, concretely of the Herderian idea of the *Volksgeist*, really operative in understanding our current reality in a more and more globalized world?

Every day, anthropologists become more conscious that "the concept of 'cultures' and 'societies' as our central units of investigation increasingly seem outdated as regulative ideas, since they indicate a stability and boundedness in social systems which is unwarranted" (Eriksen, 1993: 2). Or in the words of Roger M. Kessing:

"I will suggest that our conception of culture almost irresistibly leads us into reification and essentialism. How often, still, do I hear my

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colleagues and students talk as if 'a culture' was an agent that could do things; or as if 'a culture' was a collectivity of people. Of course, we profess that we don't really mean that 'Balinese culture' does or believes anything, or that it lives on the island of Bali (it is all a kind of 'shorthand'); but I fear that our common way of talk channel our thought in these directions. Moreover, attributing to 'Balinese culture' a systematic coherence, a pervasive sharedness, and an enduring quality -so that Bali remains Bali through the centuries, and from south to north, west to east (even nowadays, despite the tourists)- commits us to essentialism of an extreme kind. Balinese culture is the essence of Bali, the essence of Balineseness." (Kessing, 1994: 302-303)

If it is true that today anthropologists call more and more into question the dominant paradigm in the discipline which still defines all societies as unique, virtually self-sustaining systems to be understood primarily in their own terms, according to their own, presumably unique cultural logic (Eriksen, 1993: 3-4), the fact is that this dubious view is well implanted in the population in general and especially also still has great importance in the practice of policy.

The Herderian idea, which assigned to each *Volk* its own ethnic spirit represented basically by its language and traditions, was a progressive idea for that time. From that point on, people granted each ethnic group its own personality and intrinsic value. Furthermore, the erudite invention of the *Volksgeist* justified the existence of ethnocratic states once que monarchs had lost divine justification. Each nation corresponded to a spirit and, in the same way, to an ethnic culture as well. Moreover, the first folklorists, among others, were entrusted to demonstrate this. In this way, people began to collect songs, fairly tales and traditions. Evidently, not all what was sung, narrated or belonged to the daily life accomplished the requirements of what was considered the *ethnic spirit*. However, the erudite Europeans of that time, believing in a *Volk* idealized by romanticism and in a spirit which nobody could actually see, built their selective criteria. The erudite ones took care of cleansing

the folklore collections of all which was not ethnic enough
In this manner, people began to speak of "one nation: one
culture".

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1.

This idea of culture is the reason that, if necessary, the term *culture* can be used as a synonym for *nation*, *state*, *people* (in the sense of *Volk*) or even *race*. That is why we can speak of *French*, *Italian* or *German culture*, for instance. Here we can see that, actually, the use of the term *culture* sometimes is not so far away from the use we gave to the term *race* some decades ago, a term that today has lost all credibility as an analytical tool for anthropology. It is also clear that through this use, we give mystical and unreal components to culture, unreal components which, nevertheless are easily used in power struggles; in part also because of their very vagueness: "Symbols are effective because they are imprecise" (Cohen, 1992: 21).

This manner of understanding *culture* is, evidently, a consequence of the marked ethnocratic conception we have from our societies, a conception which had a notable thrust through romanticism and which today still has great force. We are used to dividing the earth in discrete units of nations or states, each of them with a different color on our maps; and we do the same with culture. It is as though culture, in general, could be fragmented according to these categories, in this way showing different organic, systemic and discrete units.

According to our ethnocratic comprehension of the world, we speak very easily of *Basque*, *Spanish* or *English culture*, for instance, without knowing very well what these labels truly signify. We do this in relation to a territory whose culture is then organized conceptually and practically through collections of objects, texts and rituals through which distinctive signs are affirmed and reproduced (García Canclini, 1995: 92). For anthropologists it will be very difficult to define the culture of a particular country exactly, but they will easily see that, according to the

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bearers of the culture in question, the different constitutive elements of the culture can be classified into three different groups:

- A. Representative elements
- B. Neutral elements
- C. Rejected elements

A. Representative elements. The idea of representative culture is narrowly related to the ethnicity phenomenon and to those cultural products, which have to do with the expression of ethnicity. When people are talking about *Sardinian*, *German* or *Catalan culture*, for example, generally the anthropological idea of *culture* is not meant. When within anthropology we speak of the *culture* of a certain society, we are referring to the totality of cultural elements which belong to this society. However, in the case of the representative culture, it is a question of determined cultural elements which have been selected according to the criteria of concrete narratives. Such elements, to a large extent, are based on criteria not only of declared cultural paternity -that which has been created by autochthonous or what proceeds from a blurred antiquity and is supposed to have been created by our forbears- but are also marked by value and exclusivity criteria. It is a question of cultural elements, which can proceed from the so-called high culture and also from the popular one. In short, we have to deal with those cultural elements appearing in publications which treat the culture of a particular country. The stereotypical reproductions of these cultural elements very often appear on the shelves of souvenirs shops and, of course, these cultural elements always play an important role in ceremonies with representative value for a given country. If we take the example of Catalan culture, for instance, it is easy to find numerous examples of cultural elements which have a high representative value: the Catalan language, the architecture of Gaudí, some dances or foods, etc.

B. Neutral Elements. This group is the most numerous. There are cultural elements important for us but because they do not have exclusivity traits; or because they are clearly of foreign origin in spite of assimilation by the society; or because of a lack of social value; we do not relate them directly to a given culture. If we continue with our former example, Beethoven, tango, the habit of wearing necktie, the practice of skiing... It is clear that nobody would relate all these elements directly to Catalan culture. Still, they undoubtedly belong to the Catalan culture of every day.

C. Rejected elements. These are cultural elements which are also relevant for a given culture, but they are in contradiction with the idea of representative culture. People do not accept them as their own cultural elements. Thus, the introduction of these elements into society is always attributed to immigration or modern communications systems. All societies have plenty of examples for these kinds of cultural elements which, because of ideological reasons, are refused: For instance, the fight against the introduction of English language in France, or the well-known theses of Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. One of the main conclusions of the book is that the rulers of the Western countries have to safeguard the purity of the Western values with exclusively European roots. Since Western culture is seen to be threatened through immigration. Regarding the United States, Huntington attacks multiculturalist policy because it puts U.S. national identity in danger. According to him, this identity historically has always been defined through the legacy of Western civilization (Huntington, 1998: 304-305).

The representative and rejected cultural elements are, in quantitative terms much less important than the neutral ones. Still, they are very important in the configuration of reference points for people's cognitive orientation, which is very important for constructing ethnicity.

are seen to be the same. This is namely the rhetoric of culturalist ethnicist discourses. They take the part for the whole. In this way, people give much importance to what, in fact, is conjectural and depends on concrete narratives very often related to struggles of power. This, in turn has to do with the symbolic construction of reality. In the same way, we create the representative culture of our immigrants as well. To take this into account is also very important for the issue of multiculturalism and intercultural relations. The most important conclusion which we can draw from these reflections is that the cultural competence of any person will only coincide in small part with the explicit contents which people usually assign to the representative culture of their society.

In every society, the real culture and the representative culture occupy two different levels:

REPRESENTATIVE CULTURE

Selection processes

rhetorical

CULTURE
narratives

Selection processes

REJECTED CULTURE

to the idea of national cultures; that is to say to the concept of *culture* as this concept is understood in colloquial language, when it is used further as a synonym for *race* or *nation*. The main problem in using the idea of culture in this way is that the idea is based more in ethnicist presuppositions than in ethnic ones, the two being completely different from one another. Thus, as it has been said, "Defining a Culture is a question of defining boundaries that are essentially political" (Wallerstein, 1997: 94). Moreover, as already stated at the beginning of this paper, the concept of culture represents a category not only with potential analytical value for the social and humanistic sciences but has also a wide social relevance.

Concretely, four clearly negative aspects derived from the fact of understanding culture under the ethnocratic point of view can be mentioned:

1. The trend of understanding the representative culture as though it were really the true culture of society.
2. The standardizing view of the social system from the cultural point of view.
3. Cultural determinism.
4. The importance given to culture over and above its bearers.

The idea of the existence of a national culture distorts reality because: (a) This culture will only be a small part of the total culture of the population. (b) People assign social relevance of this (representative) culture to the whole population, which occupies a given territory. However, we now know very well that it is impossible to speak of a given culture as something concrete and well-defined or of "one nation, one culture". The idea of a *national culture* always gives a unifying image hiding the real cultural heterogeneity

of a social system. These ways of seeing reality are not the most appropriate -not in order to understand an ever more and more globalized world, nor in order to know the true nature of culture: which is always subjected to modifications as a continuous process of negotiation; which is not given by

nature but constructed day by day by the individual.

The determinism inherent in the concept of *national culture* is particularly important in the perception of the *other*; that is to say in the perception of individuals belonging to or coming from different social systems. The notion of national cultures suggests that the individuals of the society *x* have specific characteristics. This can have pernicious social consequences, especially in the case of societies with high rates of immigration. We shall remember that basic premise of symbolic interactionism, so as William Thomas formulated it: "If an individual defines a given situation as real, it is real in its consequences" (quoted by Joseph, 1982: 231). Obviously, if according to what we have already said that the idea of national culture will never coincide with reality, the danger of this determinism is clear. Actually, we often fall back on the idea that "they do what they do because they are what they are". And as Friedman wrote, the key term here is essentialism (Friedman, 1994: 73). We could mention many examples from our daily life through which the deterministic character of our idea of culture appears very clear. For example, Susan Miyo Asai discusses the rejections suffered by an American *Nisei* (second generation of Japanese immigrant) as an opera singer after having completed his academic training in Chicago. He was refused simply because he was identified with Japanese culture, in spite of the fact of having been born and educated in the United States (Miyo Asai, 1995: 434).

According to the ethnocratic view, culture is perceived rather as a supra-subjective entity, which has attributes such as persistence, homogeneity, continuity and territoriality (Wicker, 1996: 20). The concept of culture experiences a clear

reification process, as if culture could exist on the margin of its bearers or social agents. So, for instance, very often we speak of preserving *traditional cultures*, giving them an intrinsic value without asking us if this always corresponds to the general interest of society or of individuals.

With all those reflections, I do not pretend to deny the

possible existence of certain cultural traits, which can be characteristic for a given collective, which can be defined as a nation. It cannot be denied that there also exist cultures in this sense. The problem lies in giving too great of an importance to this notion of culture and at the same time of ignoring or at least undervaluing other cultural configurations in which people are immersed. Anthropology has the duty of changing, gradually, the ethnocratic view of culture through indicating different perspectives, which can be more adequate for the reality in which we live. One possibility is, for instance, to think in terms of *cultural frames (CFs)*.

A *cultural frame (CF)* is constituted by different facts and cultural elements, which are articulated among one another. In addition, a *CF* presupposes the existence of a systemic code, which is shared by the social agents who participate in the frame. All culture -in the singular and anthropological sense of the term- is organized through a countless whole of such frames. These frames can reach large dimensions transcending state borders; for instance, Western medical practice, military industry or universalistic religions. Yet these frames can also be infinitely more reduced, such as the frame constituted by a family, a company or a hiking club. In short, a *CF* is all which can be considered a system and which includes the active presence of social agents. Its main characteristics are the following:

1. The focal point, which constitutes, in fact, the defining trait of each *CF*. The focal point can be of a diverse nature: an ideology, such as nationalism; a human collective such as

organized groups of homosexuals; politically administrated borders such as the state, etc.

2. The existence of social agents -individuals- who create and participate in these frames.

3. The existence of a polydimensional whole of facts and cultural elements, which are articulated among one another.

The life of any person can be culturally defined through

the participation of such person in the different *CFs*. It is precisely because of this reality that, actually, all persons are culturally different. For reasons of birthplace, gender, age, profession, etc., we could hardly find two people with identical participation in their respective *CFs*. Thus, culturally, a person should be defined not by means of the ethnocratic sense of culture that we use to label this person (*Catalan, Spanish, German culture, etc.*), but by means of the whole of *CFs* in which he or she participates. A particular person, for instance will be culturally defined through the facts of being born in Barcelona, a woman, belonging to the 60's generation, being a lawyer, etc. In addition to these *CFs* of indubitable importance in the structuring processes, this particular person participates in many other frames of greater or lesser importance in defining her life: she belongs to the ambit of opera followers, the internauts, the hiking scene... The addition of all these participations in the different *CFs* which form the vital space of the person constitutes his or her cultural definition. Moreover it is obvious that within the same country we will never find two persons, who according to these criteria, respond to the same cultural definition. In the same way, in the current globalised world, a person who, for instance, has been born in the Netherlands will share many *CFs* with people of many countries. Within this perspective, returning to the above mentioned case of the frustrated opera singer who was the son of Japanese immigrants, it becomes easier to understand the nonsense underlying the rejection of him in his profession. Competence in a given field, such as

the opera of the previous example, should not be measured by the *culture* to which a person is socially ascribed but by the degree of identification which that person has reached within the *CF* in question, by the ability of negotiating the meanings of the frame and of acting efficiently according to its inherent set of values.

As has already been stated, one of the basic conditions for speaking about a *CFs* is the existence of social agents, which create a frame and participate in it. This implies a certain degree of identification among the different people who share a given system; with the whole set of meanings,

norms and rules of behaviour which the system presupposes. Obviously, this does not mean that all social agents participate in the same manner in a given *CF* simply because of the fact that, as already stated, there are not two individuals who correspond to the same cultural definition. In the music field, for instance, a jazz devotee will have many things in common with other people who also identify themselves with this musical style. But these people will manifest enough differences so that their respective manners of living and experiencing jazz will be never identical. A person who has studied composition in a music high school will never experience jazz in the same manner as some one without any kind of technical knowledge in music. A person who inhabits a big city and can frequently attend musical performances will not live jazz in the same manner as a person from the countryside.

Every *CF* is built by a polydimensional set of facts and cultural elements which belong to the ambit of ideas, concrete products and actions. We can understand the *CFs* in terms of *habitats of meaning* as expressed by Ulf Hannerz, according to the ideas of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (Hannerz, 1998: 41-42). The *CF* which is constituted by classical Western music, for instance, is built by all those sets of ideas (theory, meanings, values, etc.) which imply the creation of concrete products (from varied musical forms to instruments,

architectonical spaces for auditions, etc.) as well the actions which are produced in associated manner in the elements just mentioned (concerts, recordings, teaching, musical critique, etc.).

In each *CF*, as in the above example of classical music, the existence of an ideational basis which emically *justifies* and explains the frame in question is very important. This basis involves history, understood as a set of narratives; myths, theories..., so as well the existence of a specific code or symbolic frame which testifies to the established relationship between concrete realities and the human cognitive system. From the perspective of social agents, the fact of participating in a given *CF* means to share with others

a particular world of objectivities (Berger, 1999: 25). The clearest manifestation of this characteristic of the *CF* is the existence of particular linguistic expressions. In the *CF* formed by the world of classical music, we find a rich set of lexical expressions which, proceeding from different languages have often become independent even from their original meaning: *vivo*, *andante*, *bravo*, *cluster*, *suite*, *sarabanda*, etc. A Russian, Catalan or Japanese composer, for instance, knows the meaning of the word *cluster* within the domain of composition techniques, in spite of the fact that this composer may not master the English language and does not know to what this term exactly refers in the quotidian conversation of English.

The existence of a whole or set of values and meanings only understandable within the system which constitutes the *CF* entails reference points constituted by those system elements which accomplish, to a high degree, the particular horizon of expectations of the *CF*: in the field of a musical *CF*, for instance: the great composers, musicians, the famous concert halls, recording companies, etc.

The *CFs* do not necessarily have to be identified with a given territory; we have to think much more to the contrary.

The reality of increasing globalisation causes deterritorialization to be even the rule. This evidently breaks down that idea inherent to the ethnocratic concept of culture, which identifies cultures with territories. Regarding our previously mentioned example of classical Western music, we find social agents who participate in this frame in Germany, Portugal, Argentina as well in determined social sectors of Nigeria, etc. In contrast, this participation - regarding territorial boundaries- never occurs in an automatic or uniform manner. In all these countries just mentioned, there are many people who, because of diverse reasons, do not participate in the *CFs* of classical music.

The transnational enterprises which today consolidate within the globalisation processes may be seen as illustrations of the deterritorialized *CF*. Kenichi Ohmae,

specialist in the functioning of these companies in the global market states it very clearly: the companies have to lose the links which bind them to a concrete country; they have to create a value system shared by the company directors from the all over the world. "You have to be plenty convinced that people can work **in** different social milieus even though these people do not belong to these milieus; they belong to the global enterprise" (quoted by Hannerz, 1998: 141-142). Similarly, the same happens in the musical scene with reference points such as Beethoven, the Beatles or Kitaro, for instance. There is no doubt that within the nationalist view, these musicians can be glorified as German, English or Japanese. Yet what actually results pertinent is the musician's importance within a given *CF* -classical music, rock or New Age-, which transcends national borders. The musicians are reference points for the consumers of Western classical music, rock or New Age from all geographic corners of the planet.

The *CFs* form a complex web; although we can grant them a certain coherence and autonomy, they obviously interact continuously between one another. The infinite possibilities

of this interweaving produce the great diversity of cultural phenomena. It has been stated above that deterritorialization is a characteristic of the *CFs*, but we cannot speak in this sense, in an absolute way. In addition, nationalistic movements constitute powerful *CFs* and their overlapping with other *CFs* create precisely the image of national cultural elements. When we speak of national musics, national foods, national architecture, etc., we have to see all of this as the product of the interweaving of the *CFs* of nationalism with other *CFs* such as music, culinary traditions and architecture.

Understanding the cultural production of humankind through the idea of the *CF* allows as to avoid the fallacy in which we, for so much time, have believed; that is putting culture and society in the same basket. They are two concepts that, although used in determined contexts sometimes as synonyms, must not be blurred. This is for a very simple reason: it is clear that in our current world, all society

generates specific cultural traits. However, it is not true that the culture of this society has to be limited to such cultural traits or that the culture of this society has to appear in a uniform manner for all its members. The idea of culture as a synonym for society lends itself to reinforcement and justification for the idea of the cultural fact as a "means of marking out and limiting group entities", as non-Western anthropologists have accurately criticised (Gupt, 1997: 139), especially for the implications which this idea has had in Western colonialist history. This ethnocratic view is, definitively, what allows us to understand culture in terms of national cultures. This also very often implies the danger of understanding or conceiving of culture as a system which can even be seen to exist at the margin of its creators and bearers: the social agents.

I think, then, that it might be interesting to think more in terms of *CFs* rather to speak of cultures in the sense of national ones. All these considerations lead in short to take force away from the ethnocratic character inherent in the

concept of culture and gradually reach other views which can result much more suggestive and above all more useful. The idea of nation and all that it implies (national culture) does not correspond in reality to one culture in the holistic and all englobing sense of the concept but constitutes simply one *CF* more. The world of a person, a city, a society is built by many different *CFs*. Society *x* will have its own *CF*, which in quality of construct, can determine a nation, as an *imagined community* in the terms of Benedict Anderson (1983). Furthermore, this same society will have a myriad of different *CFs* which, taken as a whole, will allow this society to live as such. The very diverse *CFs* within one society interweave, overlap among themselves and very often also contradict each other and generate struggles.

When people speak of *national cultures*, the trend seems to be understand them as closed or self-sustaining systems, which in fact define the ideal and idealized bearer of these cultures. But what people understand as a national culture can aspire, at most, to be representative culture but never the total culture of the country's population. How could we really

confound culture -in the holistic sense of the term- with national culture, now that we are more conscious than ever that each nation is an imagined community?

As it is obvious, that all changes radically when we understand society as a whole of very different *CFs*, national culture being only one *CF* more among them. It is evident that two Italians, for instance, might feel between them a higher degree of proximity than between an Italian and an Australian. There are *CFs* such as sharing the same language or the same political administration, which have a great importance for the structuring processes. But these *CFs*, in spite of their importance, will never have an absolute validity. This greater proximity which these persons of our first example might feel is not due to the fact that they share the same national culture but to the fact that they might share a major number of *CFs* than in the case between an Italian and an Australian.

According to this perspective, thus, the real culture of a given territory, city or whole country will simply be the addition of all *CFs* that we can detect in this ambit. Yet in this regard, the idea of real culture for this geographical ambit will be very weak. It is weak in the sense that the concept of culture which we use in this case does not allude to a well-integrated and internally articulated whole, as the ideologies of an ethnicist nature imply when they speak of *national cultures*. Instead, it alludes to diverse set of different elements which will never be explainable only through the particular characteristics of the territorial system in which they occur.

The *CFs* generate *personalities*; in other words, coherent manners and characteristics of behaviour according to the contents and values of these *CFs*. However we should not understand this important aspect as if the individual were exclusively a product of these *CFs*, because on an other level, they are the persons who, in fact, precisely create, choose and modify the *CFs*. As already stated, to think in terms of *CFs* signifies to understand the person plunged into a myriad of *CFs* which, as a whole, will never be the same as the

national culture. In fact in daily life, the different kinds of *CFs* help to define the kinds of relationships, which can be established between people. Consider for instance: our reality as Westerners when a Moroccan enters our life because he has married our sister; or we share the bench with a Philippine in a Catholic church every Sunday; or we have an Algerian as a colleague in our work. We know these people as social agents from some *CF* in which we also participate: the *CF* of family, the frame of the religion, the frame of work. From this point on, we will know people by their proper names. Thus, the diffused ideas previously held which we could have about the Maghrebi or Philippine cultures lose importance. This is unless we have internalized racist discourses to such a degree that the interpersonal relationship results fatally poisoned.

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If the fact of seeing and understanding people according to the schemes of the *CF* through we establish mutual contact is something often practiced by the common sense of our daily life, we can think that this is what anthropology also has to pursue. This would help us to liberate individuals of those constructs which represent national cultures. The most important differences between understanding the individual basically as a social agent of a national culture or according to the view of the *CF* are the following:

1. National culture is easily understood as a determinative for individuals. This determinism disappears or at least loses intensity if we understand the person as a subject of many different *CFs*; not because other *CFs* could not also present determinative traits (gender for instance), but above all because of diversification. In this manner, then, in front of the idea of perceiving a person basically as having Zulu, Moroccan or German *personality*, we are confronted with a person configured by many different *personalities*. This allows us much better to understand the social agents as individuals

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2. A given person participates in many of these *CFs*, but not all people of the same society share the same *CFs*. This allows us to have more present the culturally heterogeneous character of every society.

3. Within the perspective of the *CF*, the idea of national culture has also its place. In this case, we have to understand national culture as a *CF* with its own ideational contents through which the society in question would subjectively define its own national characteristics. Still, we must always understand this *CF* as one more among the many *CFs* in which the person participates. This allows us to relativize the importance of such a kind of construct.

4. This perspective of the *CFs* allows us to grasp much better the arbitrariness of the political borders regarding the cultural facts. The *CFs* move clearly through the

boundaries of a concrete society, an aspect that is increasing with the current globalisation processes.

Understanding a person as a subject of many *CFs*, and each given person with his or her particular constellation of *CFs* allows us to come nearer to the sociological theses of *methodological individualism*. According to these theses, all social questions, especially the functioning of institutions should always be understood as the result of decisions, actions, attitudes, etc. of the individual. We should not conform with explanations on the basis of the so-called collectives (states, nations, races, etc.) (Karl Popper, quoted by Esser, 1980: 15); or in words from Esser: "Human behaviour can not be explained through the belonging to collectives and the characteristics of the framework in which the individual is set but through the knowledge of his or her individual history, of psychological circumstances and his or her particular situation" (Esser, 1980: 15). The person is plunged into many different *CFs* and evidently these *CFs* imply conditioners of a sociocultural nature. Yet in any case, "they limit the possibilities of what is possible but do not determine the reality" (Boudon and Bourricaud, 1992: 224). In the area of intercultural relations we should never forget that actually "Cultures do not meet, but people who are their carriers do" (Broom, Leonard et al., 1954: 980). Furthermore, the perspective of the *CFs* can help us to have this important fact more present.

The central idea of the *CFs* approach is that the view of a culture as built by an innumerable quantity of different frames can substitute the old ethnocratic conception that gives an absolute pre-eminence to a national culture: a culture conceived as a subject which, although people admit the possibility of the influence of external elements through transcultural processes, is viewed above all as a cohesive and integrated system; as a direct result of the Herderian idea of the *Volksgeist*. This is an idea, therefore, that we implicitly or explicitly carry for far too long already. There is not one

country's culture that is an ontological reality. What in fact constitutes the culture of the country is the combination of many *CFs* as they have been described in this paper. There are *CFs* with their focal points inside or outside of the country; with their reference points inside or outside of the country; with a whole of social agents who participate in them who can be from inside or outside of the country as well.

NOTES:

¹All this is perfectly illustrated by the dynamics of folklorism. See for instance: Martí, 1996.

²This also has consequences for the question of the potential universal relevance of discourses about human rights. See about this: Martí, 1999.

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