



# The image of Germany – a continuous process of change

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**When a former minister of foreign affairs hands over a prestigious media award in the category of lifetime achievement to a comedian ... yes, then you are in Germany (and not, as you might have thought, in the UK).**

**What have Dieter Hallervorden (German comedian, probably the equivalent of Mr. Bean) and Hans-Dietrich Genscher (former German minister of foreign affairs), Al Pacino und Max von der Groeben (new talent actor), Friede Springer (publisher and widow of Axel Springer – Springer is probably the equivalent of Murdoch) and Sigourney Weaver in common? In February 2013, they spent a Saturday night together in Berlin.**

On February 2nd, 2013 I switched on the television and was hooked accidentally by the 48th award ceremony of [“Die Goldene Kamera”](#) (The Golden Camera).

The gala show was transmitted live from the Ullsteinhalle in Berlin. Together with me 3,98 Million Germans watched the show. (According to [Quotenmeter.de](#) this is a rather bad quota.)

There are two reasons I did not switch to another programme and because of these two reasons I have to write this article about a changing image of Germany.

A changing image that is neither linked to the German economy or politics nor to - the often used and socially respectable context of – soccer. This time the observed change is in context of a media award.

First and foremost I was touched and impressed by the words of the international guests like Sigourney Weaver, Clive Owen, Joe Cocker, Lang Lang and Al Pacino. They expressed sympathy for our country, which was authentic and clearly not used in a manipulative way in order to sell more albums, to fill more concert halls or to fill cinemas. Above all the sustainable faithfulness of the German fans was appreciated and highly valued by the Golden Camera winners. They praised in unison this German attribute. A steadiness which caught the eyes of the world stars especially in international comparison and they all felt they had to mention their observation and appreciation publicly.

In our cross-cultural seminars and workshops the image of Germany always is one of our pillars. On one hand is the image participants from other countries have about Germany and on the other hand the image the German participants have about their home country. As you might expect, the perceived images are never congruent.

But the positive-negative image we observe over and over again is often striking and, for the multinational participants, a sudden insight and a-ha experience – “What, this is how you perceive yourself?!” or “This is how we are being perceived?!”. Drawing an image of Germany is always a fruitful foundation from which we start an open, critical, stereotypes-detecting and stereotypes-burring discussion.

A form of dialogue evolves in a safe environment in which participants speak openly about their (cross-) cultural question marks. "I have always asked myself, why this is like this ..." „Now I understand the source of this behaviour and can deal with it!" is the reaction we see.

Back to Berlin: The international laureates managed to hold a joint laudation on Germany – every single one of them in their very different way. In this concentrated form it was balm for the soul. One of the reasons why I did not switch to another TV program.

Secondly the German awardees like Dieter Hallervorden (legendary comedian) and Max von der Groeben (newcomer actor) atomised with their esprit and humour a feeling of tension release and lightness. I even caught myself stereotyping when I thought: This is like in the UK. We also have humour. One doesn't believe that we are capable of doing this but actually we are pretty good at it!

When finally, the former foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher held the laudation on the comedian Dieter Hallervorden, who won the Golden Camera for his lifetime achievement, then you felt that the image of Germany is in the middle of a process of change. Also from the inside-view!

One event, two impressions, outside view and inside view. There is truth in the statement: The image of Germany is in a process of change, in corners and niches, which have nothing to do with politics, economy and soccer.

This combination with the fast growing acceptance of the diversity idea within Germany enables us to not only look optimistically but with pleasant anticipation into the future.

In order to illuminate this trend in different areas of life we are participating in the 1. German Diversity-Day. Our contribution: [„Fahr' und Frag"](#) „Drive and Ask". We will be catching taxis only to ask the taxi drivers (as society ambassadors – they constantly feel and hear society trends at the frontline) about their image of Germany, their impression of diversity and their visions for the future. Last week we had some test drives and heard a lot about the process of change in the image of Germany. So stay tuned about more on this inspiring and interesting topic!

Do you feel the process of change with the image of Germany?

Has the diversity management idea entered your organisation yet?

Share your ideas and thoughts! We are looking forward to hearing from you!

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