Working in International & Diverse Teams
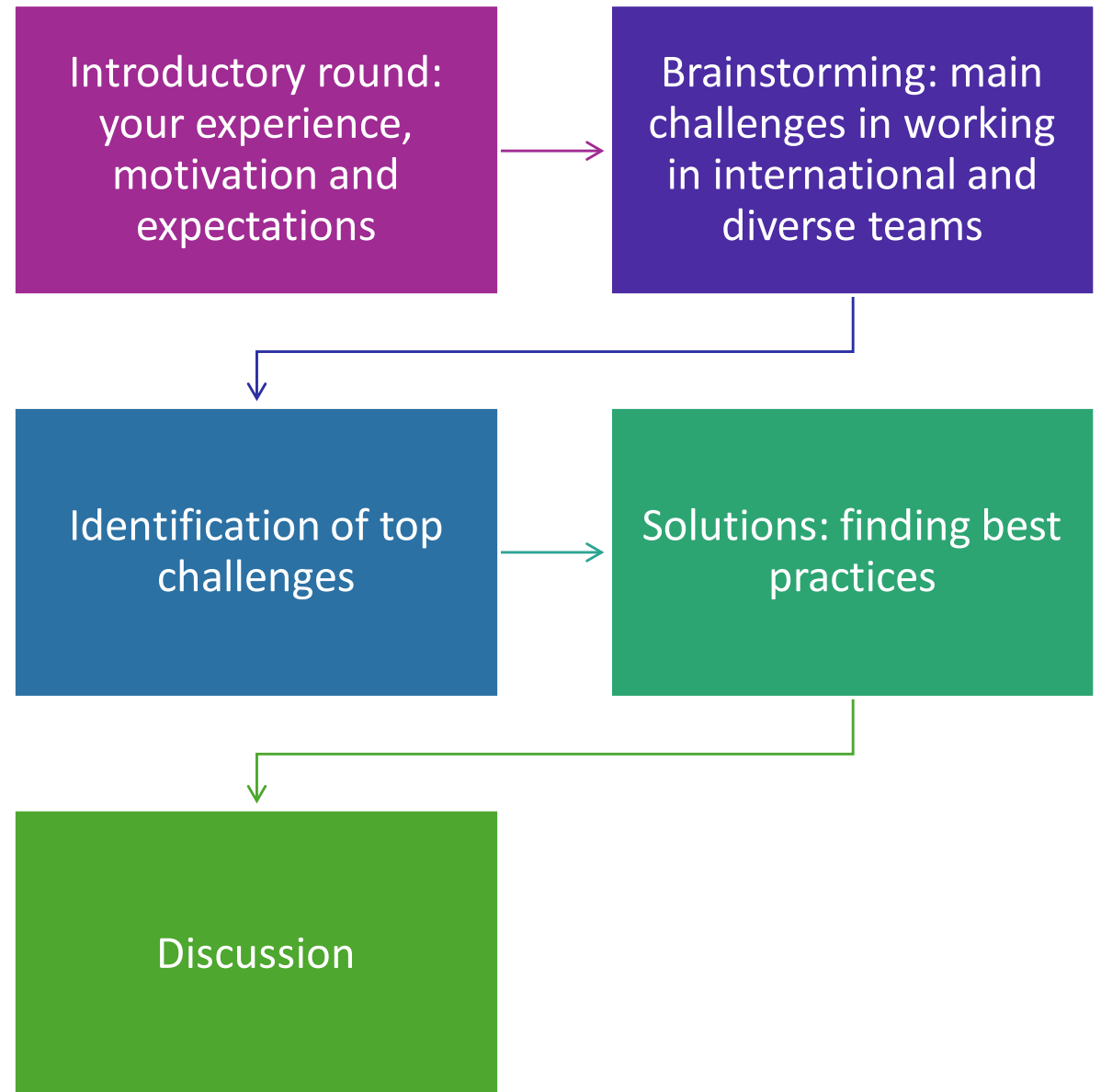
Emmy Noether-Treffen 2025, Seminaris Seehotel Potsdam

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Schedule (1,5 Hours)

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┌─────────────────────┐       ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Introductory round: │       │ Brainstorming: main │
│ your experience,    │  ──▶  │ challenges in working│
│ motivation and      │       │ in international and │
│ expectations        │       │ diverse teams       │
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│ Identification of top│  ──▶  │ Solutions: finding best│
│ challenges          │       │ practices           │
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│ Discussion          │
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Introductory Round

Your name, field of research, and institution

Your experience in working in international and diverse teams:

- Have you already worked in an international and diverse team?
- Is your current team international and diverse? How big is your team?
- Are you an international researcher?
- What has been your overall experience so far?

Why did you decide to join the workshop?

What are your expectations from this workshop?

Brainstorming

Image:
https://conceptboard.com/de/blog/brainstorming-methoden-vorlagen/

Challenges

- Feedback culture
- Conflict culture/ discussion culture
- Communication culture
- Bureaucracy
- Different academic cultures
- Different views on hierarchies
- Communication language/clustering according to language
- Fostering diversity

My Research and Ideas

WORKING LANGUAGE

COMMUNICATION STYLES/ WORK CULTURES

DIFFERENT ACADEMIC CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS

Working Language

trouble with accents and insufficient fluency:

feeling of isolation

little participation in discussions

troubles with publications/presentations/lectures

troubles with bureaucracy

frustration/impatience on another end

names (pronunciation, transliteration, etc)

Communication/ Work Cultures

Direct communication (communicated message) vs. indirect communication (way of communication): messages can be misinterpreted across languages and cultures

Language, communication tools which require extra skills or specific technology

Non-verbal communication: comfortable levels of physical space, making or maintaining eye contact, and gesturing

Different understandings of professional etiquette, expectation of formality (or relative informality), approaches to punctuality, confrontation, or dealing with conflict

Different Academic Cultures & Backgrounds

Team members have their own career goals (often bound to a specific adacedemic culture).
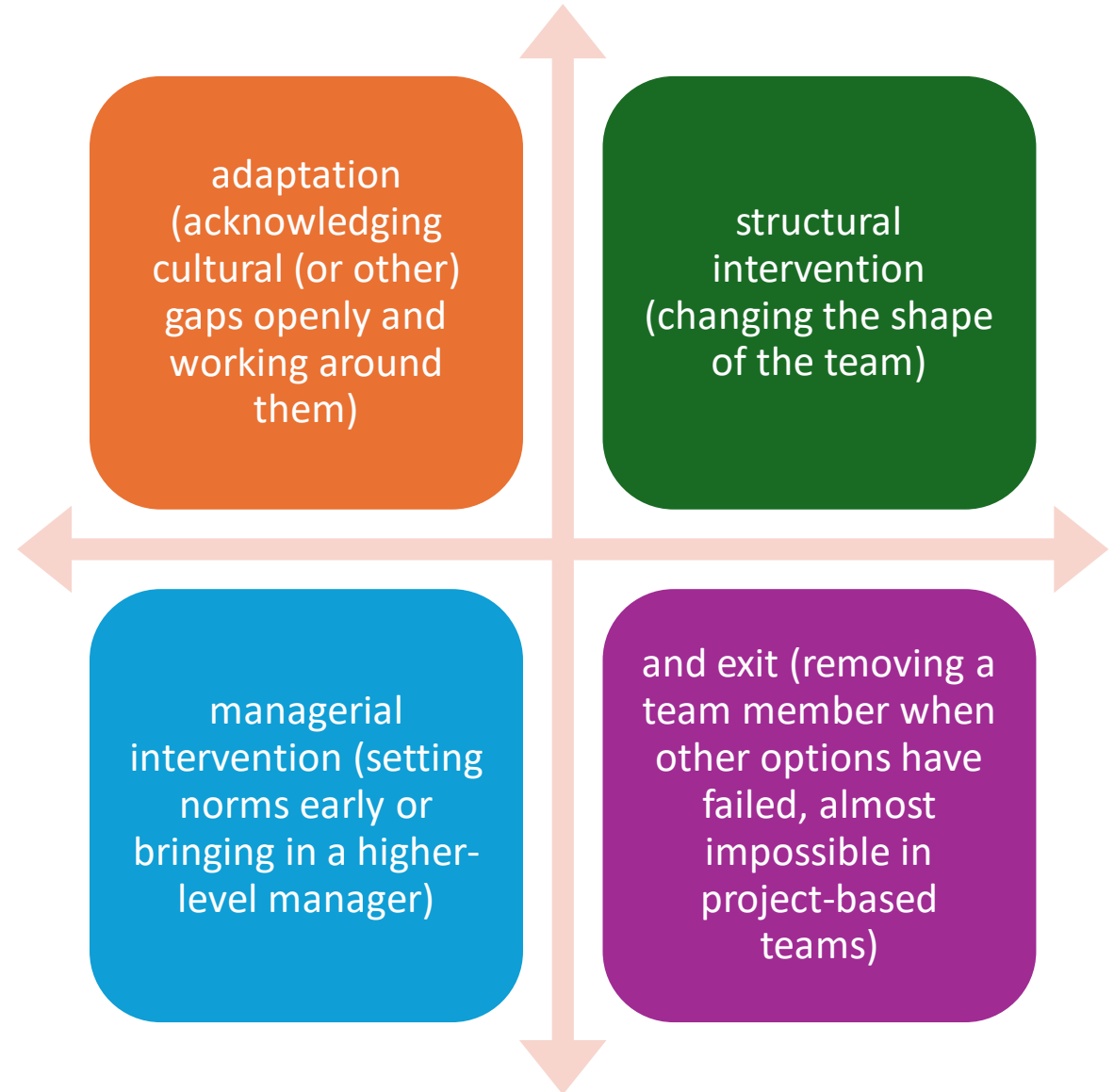
Expectations: preferences in publishers (journal rankings) and in language of publications

Interdisciplinary projects mean different:

backgrounds

vocabularies

functions: academic services vs. research

Two Strategies

adaptation (acknowledging cultural gaps openly and working around them)

managerial intervention (setting norms early or bringing in a higher-level manager)

Adaptation

Adaptation works when team members are willing to acknowledge and name their cultural differences and to assume responsibility for figuring out how to live with them.

It's often the best possible approach to a problem, because team members participate in solving the problem themselves, they learn from the process. When team members have this mind-set, they can be creative about protecting their own substantive differences while acceding to the processes of others.

Fusion: creating added value from differences.

(Early) Managerial Interventions

- standardized communication tools accessible to everybody
- clear communication rules for transparency
- internal cultural norms or "house" rules for everyone to get on that same page
- organizing social interaction
- finding common grounds between different academic cultures
- proactive discussion of future career plans with your team members
- individual appointments with team members (to give a person more time and space to share ideas or concerns)
- onboarding and integrating new members
- encouraging using the facilities of the university (language courses, trainings, etc)

More Ideas?

- Giving feedback: take your time and reread your comments, add a disclaimer/general positive feedback at the beginning; ask for the possibility to make changes/corrections/suggestions

- Communication: add a signature in your e-mail with your working hours, pronoun and other information – establish this rule by this proactive action

- Write down your house rules (do not forget to inform new members on the existence of them)

- To foster diversity in recruiting process ask for assistance from your HR department

More Ideas?

- Bring food/snacks for your team meetings
- Organize the space for meetings in an inclusive manner (a circle of chairs instead of a 'classroom' arrangement)
- Organize social events: find the right balance between private life and work life.

Managerial Interventions

YOUNG PROFESSORS PROGRAMME (YPP)

Das Young Professors Programme unterstützt und begleitet Juniorprofessor*innen und Nachwuchsgruppenleiter*innen in ihrer individuellen Karriere- und Persönlichkeitsentwicklung sowie in ihrem beruflichen Alltag.

Die Angebote des Programms bieten eine Hilfestellung, um die vielfältigen Herausforderungen und den aktuellen Karriereschritt erfolgreich zu meistern. Unser Ziel ist eine bedarfsorientierte und flexible Begleitung. Alle Angebote können individuell genutzt und kombiniert werden.

- Offers at your university: conflict management, intercultural competencies, etc

Self-Management for Group Leaders

Being conscious of your identity, your strengths, and areas of improvement will help you understand and accept those from your team members.

Be aware of unconscious bias: It's natural to have biases. However, good leaders will exercise self-awareness to identify their prejudices and those from the team.

Mentoring programs at the universities

Discussion

Sources and Further Readings

https://hbr.org/2006/11/managing-multicultural-teams

https://www.hult.edu/blog/benefits-challenges-cultural-diversity-workplace/

https://www.troophr.com/blog/what-working-with-international-teams-has-taught-me