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ABSTRACTS

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KEYNOTE ABSTRACTS

Prof. Dovilė Budrytė (*Georgia Gwinnett College, USA*)

Rethinking Crises: Memory, Identity, and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond

Since the end of the Cold War, Central and Eastern Europe has often been imagined in "Western" political and academic discourse as an insecure, crisis-prone region requiring external "stabilization." Since 2014, developments in Ukraine—culminating in Russia's full-scale war of aggression—have similarly been framed as part of a prolonged systemic crisis to be managed by strong and powerful actors.

This presentation challenges that framing by arguing that the study of crisis should be rethought through its relationship to social change. Rather than treating crises only as disruptions to be contained, we can understand them as engines of discourse and events that transform identities, generate new forms of political subjectivity, and reshape collective memory. In this respect, studies of historical memory and memory politics—long central to area studies of Central and Eastern Europe—can offer important insights for crisis studies across disciplines and across countries. They show how crises unsettle dominant narratives, open space for memories to be contested and defended, and create opportunities for new identity formations.

To illustrate this argument, the presentation examines memory politics in Central and Eastern Europe in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, with a particular focus on Lithuania. It traces major discursive shifts, the emergence of new identities—including Lithuania's vicarious identification with Ukraine—and changes in hegemonic memory regimes. Approached in this way, the study of crisis foregrounds actors previously treated as "peripheral" and helps conceptualize the decolonization of memory as a process of rejecting colonial narratives and prescribed identities.

Prof. Marko Siitonen (*University of Jyväskylä, Finland*)

Holding the Door Open: A Realist Perspective on Intercultural Education and Change

All of us want to make a difference. We want to have our actions matter, and to have an impact on the world around us. But it is not easy to promote change. Not in ourselves, and not in the complex systems and structures of which we are a part. Over the years, I have often thought about how these basic ideas, our drive for change, and the difficulty of it, manifest in relation to the theme of interculturality. This is evident not only in pedagogy, but also in many of the theories and models that are widely used in the field, whether they speak of contact, accommodation, competency development, or agency.

In this talk, I explore the idea of intercultural education and scholarship as agents of change, and the challenges of dealing with systems that are slow to change or resist change altogether. Drawing on both theoretical perspectives and practical experience, I propose a type of realist yet hopeful approach to the pedagogical practices we may employ when embedded in resistant systems. In doing so, I hope to show that it is possible to let go of unfeasible idealism, while not falling back on cynicism.

PANELS & WORKSHOPS

BALTIC AND NORDIC FILM CO-PRODUCTIONS AND COOPERATION PLATFORMS

Chair: Renata Šukaitytė (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

This panel explores Nordic and Baltic film co-productions and other forms of cooperation in the film industry from the perspective of intercultural communication. International film productions and events are not only creative and economic collaborations but also important sites for intercultural exchange, bringing together filmmakers, film policy-makers, financiers, distributors, and other industry professionals across national and cultural boundaries.

In the academic literature, collaborative production practices have been described as “extra-local linkages”, “global pipelines”, or “translocal, interfirm networks” linking producers across countries (Grabher 2002; Bathelt et al. 2004; Moravets et al. 2007). In our presentations, the term film co-production refers to both official and unofficial collaborations among film producers from different countries. This includes intercultural communication and transnational work practices, such as funding and marketing strategies, filming in multiple countries, involvement of international talent, intercultural storytelling, the use of different languages in the film narrative, and international post-production and transnational distribution (Hammett-Jamart et al. 2018; Zhai 2024; Mitric 2025). We also consider international film festivals and forums as vital cooperation platforms for filmmakers to exchange creative ideas and for films to gain global visibility and circulation.

The panel will examine the Baltic and Nordic regions' ecosystem of collaborative initiatives, highlighting vibrant co-production and co-funding initiatives, film event networks, and policy frameworks that support regional cooperation. These organisational initiatives not only facilitate economic cooperation but also generate intercultural dialogue and negotiate the importance of small languages, cultural identity, sustainability, and postcolonial relations in the region. At the same time, they reveal some of the key tensions shaping European co-production today, including the tension between the artistic and commercial value of films, participation of small and large European countries, Eastern and Western European countries, and tensions between acclaimed filmmakers and newcomers (Mitric 2025: 6).

Building on the presentations, the discussion will invite participants to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of intercultural collaboration in the audiovisual sector and on the role this cooperation can play in fostering cultural exchange and strengthening regional identity.

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Baltic Sea Docs in the Transnational Documentary Industry Landscape

Zane Krūmiņa (*Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia*)

Drawing on Marijke de Valck's conceptualization of film festivals as networks, this paper examines the Baltic Sea Docs co-production pitching forum as a key platform for regional and transnational co-production. Since the 1990s, network and systems theories have gained prominence alongside globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technologies, enabling scholars to analyze cultural phenomena through interconnected structures. Building on Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which emphasizes the coexistence of human and non-human agents within networks, de Valck proposes understanding film festivals as dynamic constellations of actors, including filmmakers, institutions, media, venues, and industry events (2007).

Within this framework, industry-oriented activities such as co-production markets, pitching forums, and training programs are integral components of festival networks. Their growing prominence since the 1990s and 2000s reflects broader economic transformations, including the expansion of neoliberal market logic and the rise of global cities, which have stimulated the proliferation of festivals and industry platforms, also in the documentary film field (Loist 2016).

The paper situates Baltic Sea Docs within this context, tracing its origins in the Balticum Film & TV Festival in Bornholm, Denmark, in 1997. Following geopolitical shifts and European integration, the forum relocated to the Baltic region and has been permanently based in Riga, Latvia, since 2006. Over nearly three decades, Baltic Sea Docs has evolved into a significant

node connecting filmmakers from the Baltic Sea region, Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus with the international documentary industry.

Through an analysis of its developmental stages and operational model, this paper argues that Baltic Sea Docs operates as a mediating platform, facilitating cross-border collaboration – including between Baltic and Nordic partners – and supporting the integration of regional filmmakers into the broader European documentary ecosystem.

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Nordic Co-productions in Estonian Documentary Film

Teisi Ligi (*Tallinn University, Estonia*)

Recent research on small European cinemas highlights persistent inequalities in international reach and circulation, showing that for smaller film cultures, transnational circulation is never a neutral process (Zemaityte, Rohn, and Ibrus 2025). At the same time, documentary scholarship has become more attentive to documentary as an ecology of relationships and practices (Aaltonen, Kääpä and Sills-Jones 2023). This paper draws these perspectives together in order to examine Estonian-Nordic documentary co-productions in relation to mediation, circulation, and cultural translation.

In the context of a small film culture, co-production can be understood not only simply as a background condition of filmmaking, but as something that may shape aesthetic choices, documentary form, and the representation of local experience (Hjort and Petrie 2007; Aaltonen, Kääpä and Sills-Jones 2023; Mitrić 2025). This includes the reworking of local experience into forms that travel, presenting culturally specific worlds to viewers who may not share the same historical memory, language, or social context.

The paper focuses on three Estonian documentaries with Nordic co-production links: Jaak Kilmi's *Disco and Atomic War* (2009, Estonia/Finland), Terje Toomistu's *Soviet Hippies* (2017, Estonia/Germany/Finland), and Anna Hints's *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood* (2023,

Estonia/France/Iceland). Through these case studies, the paper traces how co-production becomes part of the process by which local experience is translated, reshaped, and made meaningful for broader audiences.

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The Value of Marked and Unmarked Lithuanian-Nordic Film Co-Productions

Renata Šukaitytė (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

National and regional film funding bodies in Northern Europe support creative exchanges, filmmaker mobility, and co-productions among Northern European filmmakers. Festivals such as Nordisk Panorama, Tallinn Black Nights, Baltic Sea Docs, and Scanorama, along with other platforms, provide spaces for the circulation and reception of films produced in the Baltic and Nordic countries, both within and outside the region, and foster intercultural dialogue and regional identity. However, co-productions between Lithuania and other Northern European countries (i.e., Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland) in feature fiction or documentary films have been rare until the last decade. This is due to the relatively small number of films produced in the country and the low proportion of co-productions. Because of shared historical experiences, collaboration with filmmakers from Latvia and Estonia is more common than with those from other Nordic countries, especially when creating films with historical themes, such as Bridges of Time/Laiko tiltai (dir. Audrius Stonys, Kristine Briede, 2018, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia), or addressing social problems, as in Oleg (dir. Juris Kursietis, Latvia, Lithuania, Belgium) and Something Real/Midagi tõelist (Evar Anvelt, 2026, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia). However, in recent years, several successful films have resulted from collaborations with other Nordic countries, namely the feature fictions The Visitor/Svečias (dir. Vytautas Katkus, 2025, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden) and Solomamma (dir. Janicke Askevold, 2025, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark, Finland), and the TV series Vilko Gomurys/A Wolf's Prey (dir. Emilis Vėlyvis, 2025, Lithuania, Germany, Finland).

This paper aims to examine the value that Lithuanian-Nordic film co-productions provide beyond the "pooling of valuable resources, such as finance, talent, and government subsidies" (E Silva and Diaz-González 2025: 2), by analysing the nature and outcomes of both marked and unmarked cooperation in co-productions. Mette Hjort's typology of cinematic

transnationalisms (Hjort 2010) will be used to explore regional, continental, and co-production aspects, as co-productions “share characteristics with transnational cinema.” (Mitric 2025: 10)

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MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION: SWEDISH AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Chair: Jens Allwood (*University of Gothenburg; Marston Hill Intercultural Center; The Immigrant Institute, Sweden*)

This thematic session examines contemporary migration from Swedish and broader European perspectives, addressing migration trends, integration, labour mobility, and the role of intercultural communication in responding to current migration challenges. It consists of three presentations followed by an open discussion with workshop participants.

Building on the presentations, we will invite participants to reflect on key questions concerning migration, immigration policy, multiculturalism, and intercultural communication. Among the questions to be explored are: What have we done right? What have we done wrong? What lessons can be learned for the future? How can societies best respond to increasing cultural diversity? What role can intercultural communication play in supporting successful integration and social cohesion? We hope these and other questions will stimulate an engaging and thought-provoking discussion.

Migration, Integration and Intercultural Communication: Lessons from a New Book

Jens Allwood (*University of Gothenburg; Marston Hill Intercultural Center; The Immigrant Institute, Sweden*)

The presentation will begin with an introduction to a book I edited and co-authored with colleagues (Allwood et al., 2006). The book describes and discusses migration around the world, with a focus on Sweden. It was written in the hope of increasing understanding of one of the defining issues of our time by describing and illustrating many of the factors brought to the fore by migration. It has also been written in the hope of influencing our attitudes, policies, and actions. It would be desirable if we could leverage the difficulties currently associated with migration in many countries (Churchill: “never waste a good crisis”) to achieve positive change through multicultural synergy. The book concludes with an afterword presenting the main lessons and conclusions based on common themes that emerge across the chapters.

Presentation then will focus on my own chapter in the book, which presents a general overview of migration globally and in Sweden. It examines migration flows – where people migrate from and to, and why. It also discusses the possible effects on the countries of emigration and immigration and different possibilities concerning integration and

multiculturalism. Finally, it considers what policies should we have to enhance integration processes, and the role of intercultural communication in this context.

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Migration Trends and Future Developments: International and Swedish Perspectives

Elisabeth Ahlsen (*University of Gothenburg; Marston Hill Intercultural Center; The Immigrant Institute, Sweden*)

This presentation, based on the chapter in the book (Allwood et al., 2006), reviews migration statistics concerning refugees and others in need of protection, based on data from United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and labour migrants, based on data from International Labour Organization (ILO). Global statistics is compared to Swedish statistics from Statistics Sweden (SCB), discussing quantitative and qualitative aspects of migration and possible projected developments. Push and pull factors are discussed for international, European and Swedish migration.

The first part provides statistics for countries of origin and receiving countries, as well as for employment and unemployment of migrants.

The second part presents some conclusions, identifies problems and possible solutions for these problems, involving improvements in intercultural communication, with particular attention to Sweden. Finally, the latest developments in migration policy are commented in relation to the findings.

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Fill the Skill Gaps – Legal Pathways into EU

Tommy Josefsson (Municipality of Jönköping; Jönköping University, Sweden)

The current migration debate in Sweden partially reflects the new EU Migration- and Asylum Pact, particularly focusing on return of refugees from third country. Less attention has been given to the clauses on promoting legal pathways into EU. Mechanisms like the Talent Pool and Talent Partnerships seek to mitigate the effects on the growing skill gap in the Union, caused by a changing demography. Moreover, figures from Eurostat show EU countries'

ability to make use of foreign labour skills, where Sweden is lagging and Malta is taking the top position. While skilled migrant workers are expelled, skill shortages deepen in Sweden and mount a challenge to the sustainability of the welfare system.

The purpose of this study is to explore the differences in approach to the clauses in the Migration Pact on legal pathways into EU, comparing approaches of Sweden, Malta and Cyprus. 15 semi structured interviews were carried out with representatives of NGOs, or with foreign employees in various sectors in Malta and Cyprus. No interviews could be conducted with employers or with government officials, which limits the validity of the study. However, this was compensated by information drawn from public sources on governments' stand on the issue.

The result shows that all three EU countries share the view of a restrictive migration policy, aiming at a minimum of received refugees. However, Sweden differs on the Pact´s emphasis on fostering legal pathways, seeking to complicate the process of granting migrants work permits. Besides Sweden's documented struggle to make use of foreign competence, there is an increased focus on the return of migrants. The island states at the EU southern frontiers, on the contrary, have an accommodating view, appreciating how they fill the skill gap in their growing labour markets and contributing to the GDP of their evolving economies. The question remains how sustainable a restrictive and ethnocentric policy towards foreign labour and skills will be for the Swedish economy.

OTHER WAYS OF KNOWING: EXPLORING ARTS-BASED RESEARCH IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Facilitator: Raimonda Agnė Medeišienė (*Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania*)

Understanding complex social and intercultural realities requires ways of knowing that extend beyond language-based forms of inquiry. Arts-Based Research (ABR) has increasingly been recognised as a methodological approach that enables researchers and educators to explore lived experience, meaning-making and complex social phenomena through artistic practice (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Leavy, 2015; McNiff, 2009). Within intercultural communication, however, ABR remains relatively underused despite its potential to foster dialogue, challenge cultural assumptions and create spaces for reflective engagement with difference. Artistic practice is still often viewed as a means of illustrating research or communicating findings rather than as a legitimate research expertise and a way of generating knowledge.

This session is grounded in the idea that interdisciplinary collaboration between social scientists and artists can generate forms of knowledge that extend beyond the possibilities of conventional research and teaching. Drawing on Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (2011), it suggests that deeper understanding is achieved when ideas are explored through multiple modes of representation. This is particularly valuable in intercultural communication, where understanding often emerges through experience, reflection and dialogue rather than through conceptual knowledge alone.

The session combines a concise theoretical presentation introducing the principles of ABR with an experiential workshop, involving experiential haiku-writing session, live musical improvisation and collective reflection. Rather than functioning as separate activities, these elements create an integrated arts-based inquiry in which poetic expression, sound and reflection become processes of knowledge generation. Participants will not only learn about Arts-Based Research but will experience how knowledge can emerge through artistic practice.

Drawing on the author's long-standing practice in applied theatre and on projects developed with the applied theatre collective "4Rooms", the workshop demonstrates how artistic practice can provide a foundation for arts-based research, collaborative knowledge creation and transformative learning. Rather than simply introducing ABR as a methodology, the workshop invites participants to experience how artistic practice can facilitate intercultural dialogue, critical self-reflection and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1995; 2002). By integrating theoretical perspectives with artistic collaboration and shared reflection, the session encourages participants to reconsider who creates academic

knowledge and how alternative ways of knowing can contribute to more meaningful intercultural communication and education.

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INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Aslanov, Rauf (*Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania*)

Wartime Displacement and the Unmaking of Transnational Marriages: Ukrainian Women in Lithuania

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 produced a gender-selective pattern of wartime displacement: mostly women and children fled abroad while many men of military age were legally restricted from leaving. This abrupt separation placed many couples not only across an international border, but also within increasingly divergent moral and communicative worlds. This presentation examines how forced intercultural dislocation has contributed to the unmaking of transnational marriages among displaced Ukrainian women in Lithuania.

Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork conducted across five Lithuanian cities between 2024 and 2025 with 22 Ukrainian interlocutors, the presentation traces how wartime separation reshaped spousal communication, emotional intimacy, and gendered expectations. Rather than treating marital breakdown as a private failure, it approaches it as a relational process shaped by competing moral regimes across Ukraine and the Lithuanian host-society context.

The presentation highlights three interrelated dynamics. First, husbands and wives became subject to incompatible wartime expectations: men were expected to fight and endure danger, while women were expected to wait loyally, care from a distance, and suppress their own suffering. These expectations narrowed the space for honest communication and generated guilt, resentment, and misunderstanding. Second, the divergence of everyday life across the border weakened the shared life on which marital intimacy depended. Third, displaced women experienced a profound transformation of gendered self-understanding as they became sole breadwinners, decision-makers, and institutional navigators, captured in a recurring phrase from the fieldwork: "I became a man."

The presentation argues that these marital breakdowns are structurally produced outcomes of clashing moral and communicative regimes operating across two societies, contributing to discussions on displacement, gender, and intercultural communication.

Bučius, Žygimantas (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Negotiating Difference: Digital Communication, Cochlear Implants and Deaf-Hearing Interaction in Lithuania

This paper explores how contemporary communication technologies reshape intercultural encounters between deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing people in Lithuania. Rather than assuming that technologies such as cochlear implants, automated captioning, or digital media straightforwardly enhance inclusion, the study examines how they reconfigure experiences of difference, belonging, and participation in more complex ways.

The research draws on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews (n≈15–20), and elements of photovoice. It focuses on how individuals with different auditory and communicative trajectories, particularly sign language users, hard-of-hearing individuals, and cochlear implant recipients, navigate everyday interactions across linguistic and sensory boundaries. These interactions are approached as intercultural communication because they involve communication across distinct linguistic, sensory, and cultural frameworks, shaped by differing norms of embodiment, language use, and social participation.

Analytically, the paper engages with concepts of boundary-making and ableism to examine how distinctions within the broader hearing-impaired population are formed and negotiated. While cochlear implants are often understood in medical and policy contexts as enabling participation, individuals experience them differently, sometimes generating tensions around language use, identity, and expectations of adaptation to hearing norms. These dynamics are further shaped by digital communication environments, which can both facilitate new forms of connection and highlight existing asymmetries in access, recognition, and legitimacy.

Preliminary findings suggest that digital technologies do not simply dissolve boundaries between deaf and hearing worlds but contribute to their ongoing redefinition. By approaching these interactions as intercultural communication, the paper highlights how embodied and linguistic differences intersect with technological mediation, offering insights into broader processes of inclusion, exclusion, and social change in contemporary societies.

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Chubrik, Alexander (*Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania*); Natallia Shcherbina (*Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania*); Aušra Maslauskaitė (*Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania*)

Acculturation as a Dynamic Family Project: Navigating Aspiration–Practice Gaps and Uncertainty among Belarusian Immigrants in Lithuania

Utilizing a modified Relative Acculturation Extended Model (Navas et al., 2005), this study examines the domain-specific acculturation trajectories of Belarusian immigrant families who moved to Lithuania following the 2020 political crisis and the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Moving beyond the static, individual-centered focus of traditional models, we conceptualize acculturation as a dynamic, agentic family project. Based on 21 semi-structured in-depth interviews, we employ a two-stage analytical strategy—vertical thematic coding and horizontal case-centered synthesis (Small, 2009). The findings reveal that families act as strategic units (Kuczyński et al., 2011) that prioritize specific driver domains (such as schooling or professional integration) to secure a viable future. A central contribution of this research is the identification of two types of misalignments: (1) initial performance gaps driven by the shock of displacement and abrupt life changes (similar to the concept of acculturative stress, Berry, 2006), and (2) dynamic aspiration–practice gaps that emerge as families revise their intended strategies in response to lived experience. Our analysis highlights how intercultural communication and decision-making are shaped by pervasive legal and discursive uncertainty (Platūkytė et al., 2026). We show that success in a driver domain releases resources for integration in other domains and reduces overall precarity, allowing families to address aspirations in other spheres. Conversely, institutional barriers and volatile host environment may push families into “forced separation” or “preventive assimilation”. Adding a temporal dimension to the RAEM framework allowed us to demonstrate how migrant agency is either unlocked or constrained by the communicative and regulatory signals of the host society, arguing that a shift toward a policy mix that reduces uncertainty may foster sustainable integration.

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Čiuladienė, Gražina (*Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania*); Beata Grebliauskienė (*Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania*); Anna Szafranska (*University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland*)

Identifying Students‘ Intercultural Communication Competence: Insights into Intercultural Learning at Lithuania’s Minority-Language-Medium Schools

The main objective of intercultural communication is to appreciate differences. The interculturally competent individual is aware of his/her own cultural background and that of the interactant, and he/she knows as well that presumptions attached to the cultural background may be the reason for potential misunderstandings (Hiller and Woźniak, 2009, 116). Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is a tool that empowers individuals to relate successfully to others and develop more meaningful relationships (Krajewski, 2011). It emerges as an important predictor of satisfaction and happiness as it‘s related to a person's participation, integration, and feelings of inclusion into society (Balakrishnan et al., 2021; Solhaug & Kristensen, 2020).

Intercultural communication competence might be assessable as a concrete learning outcome. The study aims to assess the level of ICC of the adolescents (18–19 years old). The instrument chosen for this study was Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communication Competence Questionnaire. The modified instrument asked participants 13 questions, ranging on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The study was conducted in April, 2006 at 3 minorities‘ language schools in Lithuania. It is a part of the research project „Socio-cultural capital of the minority language schools in Baltic countries“ (S-A-UEI-23-8; funded by the State Budget under the initiative "Centers of Excellence Initiative").

Developing intercultural communication competence is of the essence in educational practice. Intercultural competence is to be clarified, actively taught, promoted, enacted, and supported (Intercultural Competence, 2013, p. 23). Assessing ICC is important for training and development purposes. It can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of intercultural learning experiences. Specifically, by comparing ICC levels, educators can better assess whether the educational objective is being met. In addition, examining levels of ICC can be valuable in designing interventions that improve intercultural awareness and understanding (Bean & Boffy-Ramirez, 2019).

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Donnellan, Mark (*Kindai University, Osaka, Japan*)

Developing Global Competence for Change: Relational Approaches to Virtual Exchange

In response to the conference theme "Intercultural Communication for Change," this study examines how Virtual Exchange (VE) can be reimagined beyond speech-centric models to develop adaptability in communication styles, a critical component of global competence in intercultural encounters. While VE has emerged as an accessible alternative to physical mobility for fostering intercultural knowledge, dominant pedagogical approaches prioritise verbal fluency, rapid engagement, and productivity. This potentially overlooks culturally grounded communicative practices that operate through different temporal and affective dimensions, necessitating a change in how educational institutions conceptualise intercultural dialogue. Drawing on Cultural Discourse Analysis (CuDA) and scholarship on silence in intercultural communication, this research applies a relational framework to examine student interactions in a Japan-Spain VE project. The study moves beyond verbal output to explore how timing, silence, and embodied presence contribute to intercultural meaning-making and communicative flexibility. Adopting a qualitative, interpretive approach, we analyse transcripts from recorded VE sessions involving Japanese and Spanish university students collaborating in English as a lingua franca.

The analysis focuses on pauses, overlaps, moments of silence, and embodied cues to interpret how communication unfolds through relational rhythms. We introduce the concept of "active silence"—culturally meaningful pauses that maintain relational presence and emotional attunement. Findings reveal how misaligned cultural expectations around timing and verbal explicitness can create communicative breakdowns, while demonstrating how developing adaptability between implicit and assertive communication styles fosters intercultural understanding.

Ultimately, this research proposes pedagogical frameworks that cultivate communicative flexibility and legitimise diverse rhythmic patterns. This study offers insights for designing VE experiences that develop students' ability to navigate between different communication styles, driving essential changes in intercultural educational practice.

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Erdoğan, Burak (*Ankara University, Turkey*); Esra İnce *(Ankara University, Turkey)*

Between Values and Persuasion: A Critical Analysis of Structural Inequalities in Education Diplomacy

Education diplomacy, conceptualized within the soft power paradigm, essentially refers to the execution of public diplomacy activities through student exchanges, language courses, online certificate programs, scholarships, project grants, and academic publishing. The mainstream assumption on which education diplomacy is structured is that if people around the world share similar values, conflicts can be experienced less and solved more peacefully. While education diplomacy fosters a wide range of advantages for disadvantaged groups around the world and strengthens ties between different cultures, it is also a domain in which existing global inequalities are reinforced. Indeed, education diplomacy practices require, above all, intensive economic power and significant scientific recognition. From this perspective, it is observed that in the field of education, which possesses the capacity to create and disseminate values, developed countries steer the scientific production processes of qualified human capital in developing nations through their material resources and human capital. This situation necessitates a reconsideration of Johan Galtung's (1971) Structural Theory of Imperialism in light of asymmetric flows. While education diplomacy provides benefits to individual researchers and meso-level educational institutions in a globalizing world, it presents a structure in which periphery countries remain disadvantaged. There are inherent risks such as brain drain, scientific bias, and detachment from national culture and context. Indeed, Daron Acemoğlu and Simon Johnson (2023) highlight that the powerful have a greater chance of persuading others to adopt their own perspective. This process of persuasion often serves the interests of the powerful, thereby consolidating their power and status. Within the scope of this abstract, a theoretical debate will be conducted by delving into various education diplomacy practices and focusing on the unequal practices to foster a more equitable and just scientific environment on a global scale.

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Erdoğan, Büşra Selin (*Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Turkey*)

Education Diplomacy as a "Driver of Change": The Turkish Model "Türkiye Scholarships"

In the post-truth era, characterized by uncertainty, crises, and rapid transformations, states are opting for tools beyond hard power to manage perceptions and gain sympathy. Education diplomacy is used by states as an element of soft power and a tool of public diplomacy. States make education a branch of diplomacy to promote meaningful (ex)changes of values and knowledge with global publics. In this way, states aim to increase their soft power, improve communication with educated populations in other countries, attract qualified people through enabling brain drain, increase foreign policy gains, and achieve economic gains. International competition in education diplomacy has intensified, offering additional advantages.

Türkiye implements education diplomacy through the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), the Yunus Emre Institute, the Maarif Foundation and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). Since 2012, the Türkiye Scholarships program, administered by YTB, has served as a central component of this strategy. The program features an integrated support structure that includes academic placement, language immersion, and social integration.

Using a qualitative case study method, this paper contends that the Turkish model surpasses conventional scholarship frameworks by acting as a driver of change for both recipient students and participating countries. The study examines the Turkish approach to educational diplomacy, which has undergone significant institutional transformation since 2012, and seeks to identify the factors that distinguish Türkiye from other states in this domain.

Gečienė-Janulionė, Ingrida (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Emigrants as Agents of Cultural Transfer: Social Remittances from Lithuanian Diaspora

The restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1991 lifted the Iron Curtain imposed by the Soviet regime, enabling Lithuanians to move freely around the world. During their time abroad, emigrants experience the cultural influence of their host societies on their values, attitudes, and behaviour. By maintaining contact with relatives, friends, and former colleagues in Lithuania, they become agents of cultural transfer through social remittances. The term *social remittances* was first introduced by Peggy Levitt to refer to "norms, practices, identities and social capital" and to emphasise the importance of the indirect social and cultural impact of migration on the transformation of countries of origin (Levitt, 1998, p. 927).

The aim of this presentation is to reveal the processes of cultural transfer in such areas as family life, the work environment, and political culture. The presentation is based on 42 interviews conducted with highly qualified Lithuanian migrants in 2025–2026 as part of the project Changes in the *US and UK Lithuanian Diaspora and Involvement in the Preservation of Lithuanianness and Relations with Lithuania over the Past 30 Years*, as well as previous studies.

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Grebliauskienė, Beata (*Vilnius university, Lithuania*)

Art Film as a Mediator of Cultural Experience in Intercultural Contexts

Presented research examines art film as a source of knowledge about other cultures and as a mediator of intercultural experience. It presents the results of an empirical study investigating how cinematic representation contributes to the formation, confirmation, and revision of cultural knowledge.

The study employed a comparative qualitative design involving two groups of participants. The first group consisted of young viewers who watched a selected art film and subsequently reflected on what they had learned about the depicted culture, which of their prior assumptions were confirmed, and which were challenged or transformed. The second group comprised representatives of the culture portrayed in the film; they engaged in reflective evaluation of the film's cultural representation, assessing its perceived authenticity, accuracy, and the presence of stereotypes.

The findings reveal a complex interplay between cinematic narrative, viewers' pre-existing knowledge, and culturally embedded perspectives. While the film functioned as a meaningful entry point into intercultural understanding for external viewers, it also reproduced certain simplifications and stereotypes identified by cultural insiders. The comparison of these perspectives highlights both the epistemic potential and the limitations of art film as a medium of intercultural knowledge.

The paper argues that art film can serve as a valuable pedagogical and interpretive tool in fostering intercultural awareness, provided that it is accompanied by critical reflection and dialogic engagement.

Gürbüz, Akın (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Cultural Echoes in Classrooms: The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on Teaching Practices

This study explores how lecturers' cultural identities and international experiences influence their teaching in multilingual higher education classrooms. While diversity is often seen in terms of teacher competencies or students' backgrounds, this qualitative research highlights lecturers as culturally situated actors whose identities shape their pedagogical approaches. Based on written semi-structured interviews with 10 lecturers from two public universities in Estonia and Lithuania, and analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, four themes emerged: cultural identity as a pedagogical lens; openness and growth through international experience; adaptive strategies in culturally diverse classrooms; and limited institutional support for intercultural work. Findings reveal that lecturers' cultural backgrounds act as epistemic lenses affecting classroom dynamics, authority, and judgments about "appropriate" practice, while international experience serves as intercultural re-socialisation. Adaptation is viewed as an ongoing process of identity negotiation rather than a set of technical methods. The study argues that demographic internationalisation alone is inadequate and advocates for sustained, identity-centred professional development in ELT and higher education.

Jakaitė-Bulbukienė, Kristina (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Between Polish, Russian, the official Lithuanian, and International English: Seven Families from Vilnius

This paper analyzes issues related to family language policy, language management, and identity. The data was collected as a part of the sociolinguistic project "Family Language Policy and Identity" (led by Prof. Dr. Loreta Vilkienė, 2025–2027). The paper presents seven in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted in Vilnius in 2025. All participants in the study were women (aged 39 to 51) born in Lithuania living with their families in Vilnius and raising school-aged children (from 2 to 5 children). The interview participants describe themselves as Polish, Russian, half-Polish or half-Russian, half-Lithuanian; one has chosen to identify as Lithuanian based on her country of residence (though she acknowledges that others consider her Polish).

The paper presents the linguistic environment of the informants: at home, at work, and with friends. It examines their relationship with the language(s) inherited from their family and environment, the official Lithuanian, and the international English. It analyzes why families decided to send their children to Polish, Russian, or Lithuanian schools, what languages they aim to teach their children and how they do so, what challenges they face, and how they solve them. It also examines how their own and their children's identities are formed, and the importance of the following factors: inherited family identity and language(s), religion, traditions, the school they themselves attended, life experience, and their connection to the Lithuanian state.

The research data shows that the informants' educational background, the difficulties they face in learning Lithuanian or English, and the changing job market, where English proficiency is highly valued, play a significant role in shaping family language policy and management. Qualitative interviews reveal that family languages (e.g., Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian), the language of the environment (e.g., Russian), the official Lithuanian language, and international English compete with one another. Sometimes, the decision is made to devote less attention to family languages and more to the official Lithuanian language. Other times, the decision is made to devote less attention to the official Lithuanian language and more to English. When developing language management strategies, there is a greater emphasis on pragmatism and adaptation to the state, the modern world, and children's opportunities.

However, the question of identity is different. There is a tendency to identify with the parents' and grandparents' identity, especially through the paternal line, religion, and traditions, even if the language is not spoken or is spoken minimally. Interestingly, the informants do not mention the influence of the schools they attended on their identity. When asked, they neither deny nor highlight this influence.

Many informants mentioned that their attitudes toward languages changed over the course of their lives due to various life circumstances and the political situation. However, only one informant described a more significant shift in identity.

Jensen, Iben (*Aalborg University, Denmark*); Geoffrey Olok Tabo (*Gulu University, Uganda*)

Intercultural Research Collaboration and Social Change

Intercultural research collaboration is intercultural communication in practice. For more than 10 years colleagues from Aalborg University in Denmark and Gulu University in Uganda have collaborated on various subjects such as pedagogical, hybrid and, alternative energy resources (Jensen et al. 2025). All projects have been interdisciplinary, and financed by Danida (The Danish National Development Agency). In this sense our research collaboration is also a partnership within a donor context (Andersen & Jensen 2015, Avacorach et al. 2021; Cordeiro-Rodrigues, 2022).

The aim of the paper is to 'read' our specific intercultural research collaboration story aiming at understanding the general challenges and rewards in intercultural research collaboration in a North South donor context (Rappaport 2016, R'boul 2022).

Intercultural research collaboration will be seen from a practice theoretical approach (Schatzki 2002, Nicolini 2013, Kemmis 2022, Jensen & Halkier 2011), claiming that culture is to be seen as series of practices (Jensen 2006, 2011). This theoretical approach allows for a nuanced theoretical understanding of the challenges in research collaboration. Based on a thoroughly analysis of the practice and the concepts doings, sayings, relatings, and practice landscape (Kemmis 2022), the study analyses which existing practices the researchers draw on when we collaborate.

Methodologically, the paper is structured around two practices: 1) 'The-monthly-meeting-practice' and, 2) 'researching-in-the-field-practice'. The two practises represent the best and the worst of our research collaboration. While monthly meetings highlight areas of disagreement, our shared fieldwork is positively affected by our diverse positions and interpretations in the field.

The central question of the paper is how intercultural research collaborations for change can be conceptualised through practice theory. How can a practice theoretical perspective facilitate a constructive understanding of the challenges and rewards of intercultural research collaboration, despite the North/South donor framework?

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Juozapavičiūtė, Ugnė (*Vilnius university, Lithuania*)

Generic Greetings or Personalised Openers? A Pilot Study of Cross-Cultural Opening Message Strategies on Tinder

With over 380 million users worldwide in 2024 – a figure projected to exceed 450 million by 2028 (Statista, 2024) – dating applications have become a normalised mode of initiating romantic contact. Despite this scale, the discourse produced on these platforms remains underexplored, particularly in cross-cultural contexts.

This paper presents a pilot study examining first-contact messages received on the Tinder dating application, comparing the communicative strategies of local (Lithuanian) and non-local (non-Lithuanian) users. Drawing on Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and Commitment-Trust Theory (Choe et al., 2025), a corpus of 150 anonymised opening messages (82 from Lithuanian users and 68 from non-Lithuanian users) was analysed. Quantitative content analysis was conducted to determine differences between groups across five message characteristics: length, use of recipient's name, inclusion of questions, profile-based personalisation, and directness of meeting proposals.

The findings reveal notable differences between the two groups. Non-local users are significantly more likely to include a question (39.7% vs. 26.8%) and to reference information from the recipient's profile (20.6% vs. 8.5%), suggesting greater investment in positive politeness strategies and commitment signalling. In contrast, local users demonstrate greater reliance on minimal, generic greetings – over half of Lithuanian-sent messages contained three words or fewer (51.2% vs. 42.6%). Direct meeting proposals were twice as frequent among non-local senders (8.8% vs. 3.7%). Code-switching between Lithuanian and English also occurred, particularly among non-locals attempting to accommodate the local linguistic context (Stoicescu, 2019).

These initial findings suggest that cultural background influences opening-message strategies on dating platforms, with non-locals using more elaborate, personalised communication to reduce social distance. The results contribute to discussions on intercultural online communication and offer a basis for larger-scale research on computer-mediated intercultural contact.

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Kaminski, Lukaš (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Negotiating Identity among Polish Minority Youth in Lithuania

In contemporary societies shaped by globalization, digital media, and increasing cultural mobility, questions of identity become especially important for young people belonging to national minorities. The aim of this presentation is to introduce an ongoing PhD study that examines how participation in minority organizations can help to understand identity construction among minority youth, focusing on the Polish national minority in Lithuania. It explores how involvement in cultural, religious, and community-based organizations influences how young people understand, express, and negotiate their national identity in relation to the majority society.

The study is grounded in the Communication Theory of Identity (Hecht & Phillips, 2021), which conceptualizes identity as both formed through communication and expressed through it. The theory distinguishes four interconnected layers of identity: personal, relational, enacted, and communal. This framework allows for the analysis of identity not only as self-definition, but also as something expressed in everyday practices, such as speaking language, participating in cultural activities, and interacting with others in different social and intercultural contexts.

Methodologically, the research follows an interpretivist approach and is designed as a qualitative study. It is based on focus group discussions with young people aged 18–25 who participate in three types of organizations within the Polish minority community in Lithuania: a youth theatre group, a church choir, and a scouting organization. The discussions are complemented by an analysis of the organizations' publicly communicated aims and activities. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, combining theory-informed coding with openness to themes emerging from the data.

As the empirical stage of the research is ongoing, this text outlines its theoretical and methodological framework. The study seeks to verify if minority organizations function mainly as spaces, in which cultural values are preserved and transferred to new minority generation or also as environments where identity is negotiated and where young people respond to social and cultural change.

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Kirloskar, Pranjali (*GBSB Global Business School, Estonia*)

Strategic Ambiguity in Crisis: Fragmented Communication in Higher Education during War

In times of geopolitical conflict, universities are expected to respond rapidly while upholding commitments to internationalisation, academic freedom, and institutional neutrality. Existing research has primarily framed these responses as ethical dilemmas. This paper shifts the focus from what universities decide to how these decisions are communicated, arguing that intercultural communication becomes a key site through which institutional responses are negotiated, justified, and managed.

The paper proposes that universities do not communicate consistently across contexts; rather, they deploy fragmented and strategically differentiated communication across institutional layers to balance political risk, reputational concerns, and operational continuity. Drawing on examples from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Israel–Gaza conflict, the analysis focuses on three communicative sites: (1) official institutional statements, (2) mobility-related communication, and (3) interpersonal interactions between staff and students.

The findings indicate that official discourse tends to rely on ambiguity and depoliticised language, emphasising solidarity and safety, while operational communication is more direct and consequential, particularly in decisions affecting mobility, funding, and partnerships. Interpersonal communication, in turn, reflects urgency and emotional labour, as staff mediate institutional decisions for students facing uncertainty. These layers often coexist without alignment, producing multiple and sometimes contradictory communicative realities.

The paper argues that such fragmentation is not merely a result of poor coordination but functions as a strategic communicative response that enables institutions to diffuse responsibility, maintain flexibility, and selectively address stakeholders. However, this also leads to uneven access to clarity, support, and inclusion. By conceptualising fragmentation as structured and consequential, the paper contributes to a more critical understanding of intercultural communication as a site of power and negotiation in higher education during crisis.

Koswara, Aang (*Ludwig Maximilians University Munich, Germany*)

Constructing Intercultural Communication Competence: Insights from Indonesian Professionals in the German Workplace

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) has become central to understanding professional mobility and integration in increasingly diverse workplaces. Yet much of the existing literature remains shaped by Western and US centric epistemologies, often marginalising perspectives from the Global South. This study examines how Indonesian professionals in Germany navigate intercultural communication in professional and everyday work contexts, and how these communicative practices contribute to processes of individual, organisational, and relational change. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork including participant observation, semi structured interviews, and social media analysis, the study explores the experiences of skilled Indonesian professionals working in different sectors and German federal states. The analysis addresses expectations before migration, encounters with German workplace norms, and ongoing processes of adjustment, interaction, and belonging. Particular attention is paid to intercultural awareness and sensitivity, linguistic practices, and situational communication strategies as key dimensions of intercultural competence. Initial analysis highlights two interconnected challenges shaping communicative change. First, professionals must develop culturally sensitive interpretive frameworks to navigate direct communication styles, hierarchies, and professional norms in German work environments. Second, language functions as both an enabling and constraining resource, varying substantially across occupational fields. While English often mediates technical collaboration, German remains crucial for informal interaction, workplace participation, and broader social inclusion. By foregrounding the perspectives of Indonesian professionals, this study contributes to critical and decolonising approaches to intercultural communication. It conceptualises intercultural competence not as a static skillset but as a reflexive and context dependent process through which individuals respond to uncertainty, renegotiate identities, and enact change in professional practice. The paper concludes by discussing implications for organisational communication, integration policies, and intercultural competence training in European workplaces. These insights underline the transformative potential of intercultural communication research for policy relevant, inclusive, and sustainable workplace change.

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Kriaučiūnaitė-Lazauskienė, Gintarė (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Between Outsider and Insider: Intercultural Communication, Belonging, and Inclusive Teaching Innovation in Internationalised Higher Education

Background: Internationalised higher education institutions host increasingly diverse student populations, yet the lived classroom experiences of students from underrepresented and culturally varied backgrounds remain insufficiently understood. Cultural norms profoundly shape how students perceive belonging, disclose personal challenges, and engage with institutional support, yet inclusive teaching frameworks rarely account for this intercultural variation.

Aim: This study examines how students from culturally distinct backgrounds navigate participation, belonging, and support-seeking in internationalised higher education classrooms, and how these dynamics can inform more culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practice.

Method: Drawing on a cross-institutional teaching innovation project conducted at Vilnius University (Lithuania) and Maynooth University (Ireland), the study employed semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis with students from diverse cultural backgrounds spanning Europe (Lithuania, Ukraine, Ireland), also Africa, and Asia. Data collection across two institutional contexts enabled comparative analysis of both student experiences and the intercultural dimensions of the research collaboration itself.

Findings: Analysis reveals that responses to neurodiversity, disability, and wellbeing are culturally situated. Students from certain backgrounds actively conceal anxiety or neurodivergent traits to preserve a sense of normality and avoid stigma, while others engage more readily with formal or informal support. Shared outsider status among international students can foster solidarity, whereas interactions with local peers sometimes trigger self-censorship and withdrawal. Active, dialogic teaching methods consistently emerged as cross-cultural equalisers, while passive content delivery disproportionately disengaged already marginalised learners.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that inclusive pedagogy cannot be culturally neutral. Meaningful inclusion requires intercultural literacy embedded in teaching design, student support structures, and institutional practice. The paper contributes empirical insights and a replicable cross-institutional model for advancing equitable, culturally responsive higher education across the Arqus European University Alliance and beyond.

Latvytė, Neringa (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

The Difficulties and Complexities of Remembering and Silencing the Romani Holocaust: Intercultural Communication, Memory, and Semiotic Exclusion in Lithuania

The memory of the Romani Holocaust remains one of the least visible and communicated dimensions of World War II remembrance in Lithuania. Although historical research has demonstrated that during the Nazi occupation Romani victims were murdered alongside Jews and other groups at the mass extermination sites such as Paneriai, their experiences continue to occupy a marginal position within public memory. This paper explores the difficulties of communicating Romani Holocaust memory through the framework of Cultural-Semiotic Nexus Theory.

The study investigates how Holocaust memory is constructed, translated, and contested within Lithuania's semiosphere by examining interactions between different memory collectives, including Romani, Jewish, Lithuanian, and state actors. Particular attention is given to the Paneriai memorial site, which is analysed as a semiospheric Nexus where multiple narratives intersect but where symbolic agency is distributed unequally. While Jewish and Polish memory narratives have become institutionalized through monuments, commemorative rituals, and educational practices, Romani memory remains characterized by fragile memorialization, limited public visibility, and recurrent forms of symbolic exclusion.

The research combines archival analysis, memorial-site analysis, social media discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of the Romani community, museum professionals, and memory practitioners. The findings reveal that the marginalization of Romani Holocaust memory cannot be explained solely by a lack of historical evidence. Rather, it results from processes of semiotic exclusion, heritage dissonance, and the unequal distribution of communicative agency. Social media discourse further reinforces stereotypical prototypes of Romani as criminals or outsiders, contributing to what may be described as semiotic withdrawal from public communication spaces.

The paper argues that meaningful remembrance requires the creation of creolized spaces in which different memory codes can enter into dialogue and undergo processes of translation. Such an approach may contribute to more inclusive forms of intercultural communication and to the recognition of historically silenced communities within contemporary memory cultures.

Link, Renate (*Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany*)

From Buddy to Friend: Reframing Organisational Onboarding as a Relational and Intercultural Integration Process

This presentation examines the transferability of buddy and friendship programme concepts from higher education to organisational onboarding processes. Conventional onboarding frameworks predominantly emphasize formal training and procedural integration, yet empirical evidence points to persistent deficits in social integration, access to tacit organisational knowledge, and individualised support for newcomers.

Using a qualitative, concept-driven analysis of established university programmes, this paper identifies core mechanisms that facilitate effective integration. Buddy and friendship models are characterised by dyadic relationships, informal and sustained interaction, and an emphasis on intercultural exchange. In contrast to hierarchical mentoring approaches, these programmes foster reciprocal learning, relational trust, and authentic communication in low-threshold environments.

The findings are structured along four analytical dimensions: (1) relational (development of trust and social capital), (2) cognitive (perspective-taking and informal knowledge acquisition), (3) cultural (interpretation and negotiation of cultural differences), and (4) linguistic (situated language practice). A unifying principle is interaction on an egalitarian basis, which enables the co-construction of meaning and belonging beyond formal organisational roles.

Building on these insights, the paper proposes a reconceptualisation of corporate onboarding as a socio-cultural integration process. It introduces a “friend-based” onboarding model that incorporates affinity-based matching, structured informal encounters, intergenerational exchange, and iterative reflective practices. Furthermore, such models support navigation of critical cultural dimensions, including power distance, individualism–collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, temporal orientation, and communication context.

The proposal contributes to onboarding research by integrating relational and intercultural perspectives. It argues that embedding structured interpersonal relationships into onboarding design enhances organisational socialisation outcomes, including commitment, knowledge transfer, and retention, thereby fostering more inclusive and adaptive organisational cultures.

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Ločmele, Liene (*Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia*); Barbara Ruth Burke (*University of Minnesota Morris, USA*); Māra Arāja (*Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia*)

Swipe, Trust, Repeat: Cultural Construction of Trust in Student Interviews on TikTok

This paper examines ways university students in Latvia and the United States discursively construct "trust" when interviewing one another about their TikTok use. Treating these interactions as a deeply cultural communicative practice and applying Cultural Discourse Analysis (Carbaugh 2007; Carbaugh et al. 2017), the study approaches student interviews as data-collection tools functioning as culturally situated performances in which meanings of personhood, knowledge, and media literacy are actively negotiated.

Inspired by Lan and Tung (2024), the project analyzes a comparative dataset of semi-structured peer interviews, in which participants reflect on "fake news", credibility, and media literacy practices. While prior findings identify factors such as familiarity with creators, topic engagement, and educational exposure as shaping trust, this paper shifts attention to the communicative forms through which trust is articulated and made meaningful in interaction. It asks: How do students name, evaluate, and morally position "trustworthy" and "untrustworthy" content? What cultural premises about authority, authenticity, and responsibility are invoked?

The study identifies key radiants of meaning—discursive ways of speaking about action, feeling, and relating—that organize participants' accounts. Three recurring cultural themes emerge: trust as relational alignment with creators ("knowing" the person behind content), trust as procedural verification (cross-checking and critical scrutiny), and trust as affective resonance (content that "feels real"). These discourses are embedded in broader cultural sensibilities, including regionally inflected awareness of disinformation shaped by geopolitical proximity.

By foregrounding interview interaction as a site of intercultural meaning-making, the paper argues that students' media literacy is not only a cognitive skill set but also a nationally inflected, culturally patterned communicative practice through which trust is collaboratively constituted.

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The Burden of Culture in the Conceptualisation of Change: From Interculturality to Emerging Socialities

The centrality of the notion of culture both haunts and energises intercultural research and education. The call to abandon essentialism in favour of anti-essentialism and to move from static, often country-centred views to processual, discursive, or intersectional approaches has become part of a normative, post-multicultural critique of relativism and of the link between culture and "essences" such as national values or languages. Moreover, the ways in which disciplines and paradigms construe culture, implicitly or explicitly, have implications for how the adjacent notions of conflict, communication and human difference are understood and operationalised in intercultural research. This paper explores such lexicons and, first, suggests a shift from interculturality to a vocabulary of human sociality and emergence. The claim that any property is emergent if it is new to the social system and irreducible to its parts and antecedents makes a philosophy of emergence resonate with interculturalism and anti-essentialism in specific yet largely unexplored ways. Secondly, the paper takes the conference call seriously by critically examining contemporary and influential approaches to intercultural policies for social change, whether democratic, sustainable, convivial, or dialogical. By replacing a focus on interculturality and its "burden of culture" (Bhabha 1994) with sociality and its continuous yet unpredictable emergence, the paper aims to contribute to the development of viable strategies for studying social transformation rather than advocating for any particular form of social change.

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Beyond the West's Gaze: Cultural Authenticity, DEI, and the Global Reception of Black Myth: Wukong

This study examines how global gaming communities interpret and negotiate cultural meaning in Black Myth: Wukong (BMW), China's first AAA game, developed by Game Science and released in August 2024. Drawing on Chinese mythology and Journey to the West, BMW achieved international acclaim while sparking significant ideological debate — making it a compelling case for analyzing cultural representation in transnational digital media.

Despite existing scholarship on BMW's technological sophistication, soft power potential, and mythological storytelling, little research addresses how players across cultural contexts actually engage with its ideological dimensions. This study investigates: how global players evaluate BMW's cultural representations in relation to DEI standards; how these issues are debated in user-generated discourse; and what impact such debates have on power dynamics within the global gaming industry.

Using a sequential mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes 550,000 words of English-language Steam reviews collected in the three months following release, through lexical filtering, controversy mapping, grounded thematic coding, discourse analysis, and theoretical synthesis.

Four interpretive positions emerged: Critical Progressives find BMW lacking in female and minority representation; Inclusive Defenders argue it embodies DEI through its diverse development team and Wukong's journey as a metaphor for transcending identity; Cultural Relativists reject the imposition of Western frameworks onto Chinese cultural tradition; and Anti-Woke Resisters dismiss DEI discourse entirely, framing BMW as a symbol of creative autonomy.

Notably, resistance is directed less at fellow players than at perceived ideological gatekeepers — media outlets and consulting firms accused of enforcing conformity. Players expressed opposition both rhetorically and economically, supporting what they view as culturally authentic game design.

BMW thus functions as both mirror and medium for global ideological contestation, illuminating evolving power dynamics between developers, media institutions, and gaming communities worldwide.

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Mankauskienė, Dalia (*Vilnius University, Lithuania*)

Barriers and Bridges: Intercultural Communication in Migrants' Access to Mental Healthcare

This presentation examines how intercultural communication shapes migrants' access to mental healthcare in Lithuania, a country that has only recently begun transitioning into a migrant-receiving state. Since the increase in migration, especially following the 2022 war in Ukraine, public institutions and healthcare systems in Lithuania have faced growing pressure to respond to the mental health needs of refugees and migrants. In this context, intercultural communication plays a central role in interactions between migrants, healthcare providers, and non-governmental organizations that frequently mediate access to services. Yet, these transforming countries remain underrepresented in academic research on migration and access to healthcare (e.g. Urbanavičė et al. 2024; Ancite-Jepifánova 2024; Murauskiene et al. 2013).

The study draws on data collected during the MentalHealth4All project, including semi-structured interviews with migrants and language service providers, an online survey of health and social care professionals, and an evaluation study involving migrants and care providers. Drawing on the modifications to the classic model of dimensions of access by Penchansky and Thomas (1981), with a focus on Saurman (2016) and Levesque et al. (2013, 5-6), the analysis identifies four interrelated types of barriers shaping migrants' access to mental healthcare: systemic barriers, barriers related to information and awareness, cultural barriers (including stigma and discrimination), and language barriers. These barriers demonstrate how limitations in intercultural communication practices within healthcare systems can reinforce inequalities in access to care.

By focusing on Lithuania, the presentation contributes to discussions on intercultural communication as both a response to and a driver of institutional change in societies experiencing rapid demographic transformation. It also highlights the importance of integrating intercultural communication perspectives into healthcare policy and professional practice.

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Communicating Rights and Obligations to Foreign Residents engaged in Microbusiness Activities: a Case Study of Lithuania, Poland and Spain

This study conceptualises a comprehensive public communication model for the new residents of the host countries. The following research introduces a literature review-based communication framework which derives from supplementing integration and communication theoretical frameworks. It encompasses and presents the internal and external migration-related factors that contribute to the communication with immigrants.

The literature introduces primary aspects that need to be addressed while developing a public communication model dedicated to immigrants. It includes migration status related external and internal barriers as: a) the consolidation of information, as there is a barrier in finding fragmented information; b) information verifications, as it should address immigrants' precarity and the feelings of insecurity; c) the broad scope of consolidated information and range of limited resources to address the lack and fragmented knowledge; d) the variety of support methods including assurance of human assisted help for understanding information as well as guiding, e) the expertise knowledge and language proficiency which might not help to overcome the legalese; f) the cognitive barriers related to primary experiences of legal environment of the previous residence.

The research has employed the proposed theoretical lens while focusing on the case studies of Lithuania, Poland, and Spain and their public institutions' communication in the domain of obtaining and carrying on microbusiness. The results reveal that each of the countries' public communication methods would benefit from employing the aspects of comprehensiveness, verification and consolidation of information about microbusiness activities in the new legal environment. The proposed theoretical approach suggest for case-study countries to focus on migrant related communication via a) fully functional interlinked online resources; b) consolidation of information while applying a system knowledge based approach; c) introducing different forms of information verification; additional explanations and directions to the next steps of actions towards legalization of microbusiness; d) transparency and provision of a full scope of information (including outcomes in case of the breach of law); e) a range of support system with a priority for mediators or human assisted services; f) clear and precise communication while introducing microbusiness legalities in a plain language.

Nainová, Victoria (*Charles University, Czech Republic*); Ani Sukiasyan (*Charles University, Czech Republic*)

Between Countries and Platforms: How Immigrants Compose News Repertoires with Digital Media

Immigrants use digital media to create and maintain networks (Veazey, 2022), become familiar with local culture (Fogelman & Christensen, 2022), and learn the local language (Reichenberg, 2016). They use digital media to access news and information, which allows them to follow political developments, social issues, and events in both their home and host countries (Ahmed & Veronis, 2016). Rather than relying on a single news source, audiences typically engage with news through news repertoires, combining multiple sources, platforms and formats in everyday life (Yuan, 2011; Peters et al., 2022). Research on news repertoires has been focusing mainly on majority populations (Swart et al., 2017; Andersen et al., 2021) and youth audiences (Edgerly et al., 2017; Peters et al., 2022). Although the focus has been expanding to minority populations (Valgas et al., 2025), this group remains understudied. This study addresses that gap by focusing on immigrants living in Czechia.

Data were collected through semi-structured, focus group and in-depth interviews, with a total of 43 Russian ethnic immigrants from Kazakhstan living in Czechia. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, anonymised using unique codes, and thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. MAXQDA software was used for coding and analysis.

The initial findings show that participants' news repertoires are predominantly digital and platform-oriented, with little reliance on traditional formats. Immigrants use digital devices, such as social media and online platforms of traditional news outlets. Participants' news repertoires frequently combine mainstream media content with alternative and interpersonal sources accessed via social media. Overall, the findings show that immigrants' news repertoires are chosen based on language, trust, convenience, and personal engagement, resulting in the composition across Czech and international media sources and decreasing the boundaries between professional, alternative, and interpersonal news sources.

This study aims to expand research on the news repertoire with a focus on minority populations and to highlight the role of digital platforms in blurring the boundaries between professional journalism, alternative media content producers, and interpersonal communication across transnational media landscape.

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The Invisibility Loop: Intercultural Communication and Employee Mattering under Forced Mobility in Indian Public Sector Organizations

In Indian government sector organizations, forced geographical mobility is an integral part of administrative governance. Employees are often transferred across linguistically and culturally diverse areas to meet the service requirements. These obligatory movements of staff are rarely supported by structured onboarding processes or intercultural communication training. This research investigates how the concept of forced mobility creates institutional invisibility, a communicative condition in which employees experience reduced recognition, visibility and relational inclusion in the new organizational culture after transfer (Peticca-Harris et al., 2015). Additionally, this study explores how intercultural communication practices within rigid bureaucratic systems shape employees perceived mattering, defined as the extent to which individuals feel noticed, valued and significant in the workplace (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989).

This study uses a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, conducted both in person during a visit to India and remotely from Latvia via digital platforms. The sample includes 20 mid-level Indian government officials who experienced forced geographical transfers across different linguistic regions within the past 1 to 3 years.

Thematic analysis reflects the emergence of a silence culture (Milliken et al., 2003); where employees report reduced communicative agency and difficulties in adapting to new cultural and organizational environments often feeling professionally present but socially disconnected. The study proposes the concept of “invisibility loop”; a self-reinforcing cycle where limited intercultural communication (Hofstede, 2011) results in employee disengagement and reduces perceived mattering over time deeply impacting workplace interactions (Sias, 2009). The paper argues for a transition from perceiving employees as interchangeable units to recognizing them as culturally situated actors. By bridging the gap between intercultural communication and public policy, this study offers a framework for the management of organizational change and to prevent professional identity crises. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for policy changes that extend beyond mere administrating transfers to incorporate engaging communicative onboarding systems and intercultural communication trainings for supervisors.

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Tone of Voice Versus Brand Voice: A Systematic Literature Review and Conceptual Framework for Intercultural Communication

This research addresses the persistent conceptual ambiguity between brand voice and tone of voice in marketing communication by developing an integrative framework grounded in branding, linguistics, and intercultural communication theory. Through a semi-systematic literature review of interdisciplinary scholarship, the paper distinguishes brand voice as a stable, strategic expression of brand identity and tone of voice as a dynamic, context-sensitive modulation of that identity across communication contexts.

The findings demonstrate that while brand voice ensures consistency and recognizability across platforms, tone of voice enables adaptive engagement with diverse audiences, particularly within digital and social media environments characterized by intercultural interaction. The study further synthesises cultural frameworks to explain how tone variation facilitates effective communication across high- and low-context cultures, supporting localization and glocalization strategies.

By integrating marketing communication and discourse perspectives, this research contributes a novel conceptual model that clarifies the hierarchical and functional relationship between brand identity, brand voice, and tone of voice. The framework offers practical implications for global brand managers seeking to balance strategic consistency with contextual flexibility in digital communication. The study advances marketing communication scholarship by positioning tone of voice as a critical mechanism for intercultural engagement and relational brand management.

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Intercultural Communication and Transversal Competences for Organisational Change: Insights from the STEPS4EU Erasmus+ Project

In increasingly international and rapidly transforming work environments, intercultural communication has become a central mechanism for navigating organisational change rather than a supplementary competence. Transnational project teams are required to negotiate cultural differences, divergent work practices and persistent uncertainty, positioning intercultural competence as critical to both collaboration and adaptability.

This contribution examines how transversal competences — particularly intercultural communication — function as drivers of change in project-based European contexts. It draws on empirical insights from the Erasmus+ project STEPS4EU (Shaping The Engineers' Personal and Interpersonal Skills for Enterprises & Universities), which investigates competence needs across HE and professional environments.

A distinctive and original contribution of the STEPS4EU approach lies in its reflexive dimension: transversal competences are not merely studied as external objects of analysis, but simultaneously enacted and depended on within the research process itself: The diverse international consortium was required to mobilise the very competences (e.g. intercultural communication, adaptability, collaborative problem-solving).

The analysis focuses on how key competence domains — analytical, relational, self-management and ethical — enable individuals to engage with cultural diversity and respond to complex, evolving organisational demands. Rather than treating these competences solely as individual attributes, the paper conceptualises them as relational and communicative resources that shape project team dynamics, decision-making processes and organisational transformation.

Addressing the conference theme of “intercultural communication for change,” the contribution further explores how competence-based frameworks can mediate between research, educational practice and organisational application. It identifies persistent mismatches between these domains, particularly regarding how intercultural competence is defined, taught and operationalised in practice.

By highlighting these tensions, the paper argues that intercultural communication plays a pivotal role not only in managing change but in actively shaping organisational and educational transformation. It thus contributes to ongoing discussions on how intercultural competence can be mobilised as a strategic resource for sustainable change in complex, transnational settings.

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Communication as a Response to Change: Managing Uncertainty in Latvia

Guided by Uncertainty Management Theory (Brashers, 2001), this study draws on nine semi-structured interviews with Latvians I conducted in summer 2023. The goal of the study was to explore how Latvians navigate uncertainty amid ongoing geopolitical, demographic, and cultural change, particularly as local, Western, and regional influences intersect in daily life.

Participants encountered the following sources of uncertainty: financial (e.g., ambiguity surrounding increased cost of living, inflation, job market, housing); geopolitical issues (e.g., uncertainty around political leaders, the EU, NATO, Russia); social issues (e.g., uncertainty around declining workforce, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change, AI); and interpersonal and cultural issues (e.g., ambiguity involving Western influences, the prevalence of English, and high emigration rates).

Interviewees viewed uncertainty negatively, neutrally, and positively. Participants who viewed uncertainty unfavorably sought to reduce it by seeking information (talking with others, going on social media or online news sites, or turning to culturally rooted forms of knowledge such as folk songs; as Elizabeth said: “All of the knowledge in the world is [in songs]…”). Participants also reduced uncertainty by adopting tangible strategies (e.g., foraging, gardening, cooking at home, and temporarily moving away from Latvia). Others managed uncertainty by limiting engagement with ambiguity; for example: “I don't think it's useful to stress because you do not know everything…” (Amanda). Some adapted to it by “learning to live with it and accept it as it were” (Roberts) and engaging in hobbies and self-care, while others turned toward other countries and perspectives, drawing on transnational sources of information.

Participants’ accounts highlight how communication—across interpersonal, cultural, and transnational contexts—serves as a primary means of responding to conditions of change. By centering participants’ perspectives beyond a Western context, this study offers an exploratory account of how individuals communicatively navigate uncertainty in a rapidly changing sociopolitical and intercultural environment.

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From the Unhappiest Nation to the Happiest Youth? Happiness Rankings in Lithuanian Public Discourse

International happiness rankings have become highly visible features of public communication, yet research has focused mainly on measurement rather than on the social consequences of publishing such rankings. This paper shifts attention from happiness levels themselves to the public life of happiness indices. By developing a framework that combines reflexive modernisation, social constructionism, and performativity theory, it examines how the rankings are interpreted, contested, and appropriated through media representations and public discourse, and how they function as symbolic resources in processes of collective self-understanding and intercultural comparison. From this perspective, happiness rankings are not neutral statistical outputs – they become part of national narratives of progress, backwardness, or unrealised potential.

The Baltic states provide an especially informative regional context. As post-socialist small states shaped by rapid transformation, Western integration, and sensitivity to external evaluation, they often interpret international rankings as indicators not only of quality of life but also of civilisational advancement and symbolic proximity to Northern and Western Europe. Within this setting, Lithuania offers a particularly revealing case. Since the early 1990s, the country has consistently ranked below its closest neighbours – Latvia and Estonia – while other Nordic countries were even further ahead, which is why this issue has received considerable attention in the Lithuanian media and public discourse, in an effort to explain the reasons for this lag despite sustained economic growth and rising living standards. Only from around 2020 did public discourse begin to foreground a more positive narrative. Still, despite improving well-being indicators, public reactions often remain ambivalent or sceptical.

The empirical part of the study combines media discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews with Lithuanian residents. The paper argues that the politics of happiness lies not only in how well-being is measured, but in how rankings are socially communicated, culturally received, and incorporated into narratives of nationhood, progress, and belonging.

Tamaševičius, Giedrius (*Vilnius university, Lithuania*)

C'est la Vida: Multilingualism and the Comedy of Intercultural Communication in "The Adventures of Picasso"

This paper examines multilingualism in the Swedish absurdist comedy The Adventures of Picasso (Picassos äventyr, dir. Tage Danielsson, 1978) as a form of intercultural communication operating under conditions of linguistic uncertainty and cultural change. Unlike most multilingual films, it does not rely on subtitles or dubbing. While the narrator is localized for different audiences, the characters' speech remains largely untranslated, combining recognizable languages, hybrid utterances, and pseudo-linguistic forms. The film thus models communication without full mutual intelligibility.

The analysis argues that the film organizes languages into a graded and functional system. Spanish functions as a language of emotional immediacy and memory, often expressed through exclamations and associative sequences rather than syntactic coherence. Latin represents ritual authority detached from semantic transparency, while English operates as a parodic lingua franca marked by asymmetry, stereotyping, and communicative improvisation. Other languages (French, German) rely on cultural recognizability and parody, whereas hybrid forms and opaque cases – such as Finnish and pseudo-Russian – push communication toward sound, rhythm, and non-comprehension. The appearance of Guillaume Apollinaire further foregrounds language as performance, echoing cosmopolitan modernist experimentation.

Drawing on language ideology, semiotics, and heteroglossia, the paper shows that the film presupposes an audience capable of interpreting meaning through recognition, context, and cultural knowledge rather than full comprehension. At the same time, it challenges dominant language ideologies that equate communication with clarity and correctness, instead presenting language as a flexible and uneven resource shaped by power, emotion, and situation.

Finally, the paper situates the film within its transnational reception, highlighting its strong resonance in Central and Eastern Europe, including Lithuania, where it circulated through VHS and became part of shared cultural memory. The study suggests that the film anticipates contemporary forms of cosmopolitan communication, in which meaning emerges through partial understanding, improvisation, and cultural negotiation.

Tange, Hanne (*Aalborg University, Denmark*)

'This is Poland': emotional spaces and bodies in 'Ukraine Action' 2022

In Western Europe, Poland is often presented as an Eastern European 'other', with a government hostile to immigration and NGOs failing to mobilise in the 2015 'summer of refugees'. Yet within days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a nation-wide movement set up welcoming centres at Polish-Ukrainian border crossings and railway stations, providing food, shelter, and transport for Ukrainian refugees. The scale was massive, testifying to the organizational capacity of Polish civil society (Tange and Radecka 2026, Chimiak and McMahon 2025). Early Western research has explained this Polish movement with reference to Ukrainian 'whiteness' (e.g. Balogun 2023), reproducing the idea of a Poland less 'civilised', whilst ignoring the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations, which is anything but peaceful (Follis 2025, Copsey 2008).

Building on the concept of 'emotional geographies', as operationalized in Zembylas (2011) and Tange (2025), the paper presents a different take on 'Ukraine Action'. The paper builds on 10 ethnographic interviews performed with Polish volunteers who active in Kraków and at the Przemyśl border crossing in spring 2022. The analysis presents volunteers' emotional journey, from early sentiments of fear and anger to joy and solidarity when feeling part of an organized humanitarian movement. A central theme is 'Poland', with informants motivating their reactions with reference to Russo-Polish relations rather than perceived cultural proximity to the Ukrainians. When invited to reflect on their humanitarian work, other emotions are highlighted by informants, including the positive sentiments of capability, resourcefulness and (Polish) unity and emotional stress arising from the confrontation with chaotic settings, vulnerable people and a scarcity of human and material resources.

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Mediated Intercultural Communication in the Age of Generative AI

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools have become widely accessible just in the beginning of this decade, but they already influenced various spheres from public to private and affected the way we, humans, communicate and interact with technologies. The popularity of GenAI usage influences transformations, which can be understood as part of deep mediatization, as digital technologies actively involve and also affect various social and professional practices. The increasing integration of various GEN AI tools into communication practices raises questions about the maintenance of intercultural communication, which traditionally has always depended on human cultural knowledge, linguistic abilities, ability to adapt in the contexts of different cultural groups. GenAI becomes a kind of technological mediator in intercultural communication practices, because these tools translate, provide information about different cultural groups, is able to generate communication content and more. But it is also known that the content, generated by GenAI, contains algorithmic bias, homogenizing generalizations, hallucinations, filter bubbles, cultural cocoons, which not only poorly reflects, but even misrepresents cultural communication practices.

This presentation uses conceptual and exploratory qualitative content analysis, using academic production and secondary data related to GenAI, mediatization theory, and intercultural communication. From the theory of mediatization perspective, combined with increasing discussions about the AI in various communication practices, this presentation presents GenAI as less than just a communication technology, but more like an influential communication infrastructure able to mediate intercultural communication interactions by optimizing processes and, at the same time, standardizing intercultural communication, as well as creating other important effects of AI mediated communication on intercultural communication.

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Navigating Cultural Difference in Disruptive Times: Mastering Cross-Cultural Competence in Higher Education

Starting from the premise that our contemporary world, characterized by rapid globalization, technological advances, and recurrent crises, has turned cultural diversity into a norm rather than an exception in the international landscape, this paper aims to discuss cultural difference and its instrumental role in successful intercultural encounters. Intercultural communication plays an instrumental role in the ways in which change is experienced, negotiated and internalised. Therefore, acknowledging the fact that cross-cultural encounters require communicators to be fluent not only in other countries' languages, but also in their communication styles, we purport to identify innovative methods for teaching intercultural communication, and, thus, contribute to building cross-cultural skills for better and more sustainable higher education. Thus, drawing on core concepts in intercultural communication (e.g. communication styles, intercultural competence, or cultural intelligence), our investigations will look into the ways in which cross-cultural skills can be assessed and developed, with a focus on teaching intercultural communication to students enrolled at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration within the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza University" of Iaşi. We believe that training in intercultural communication in English contributes to improving students' ethnorelativism and, hence, increases their cultural intelligence.

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Language and Belonging: In-Group and Out-Group Construction in Public Discourse in Lithuania and Sweden

Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, public discourse in Lithuania surrounding minority languages and their education has intensified significantly. This discourse has included accusations of failed integration of minority groups into broader society, at times bordering on framing these communities as potential national security concerns (Motuzas 2024; Murauskaitė 2025; Spurga 2024). In parallel, discussions about closing schools where Russian and Polish serve as languages of instruction have raised concerns among minority communities about being out-grouped within their own country.

Sweden, by contrast, has long been regarded as a European model of minority language education. Its policy framework guarantees the right to education in one of the five officially recognized minority languages, alongside additional "mother tongue" instruction for other linguistic groups. In public discourse, multilingualism is generally framed as a cultural resource to be preserved. However, the practical implementation of such policies has faced challenges, particularly due to limited resources, as well as occasional debates regarding the necessity of mother tongue education for immigrant children (Paulsrud et al. 2023).

This study examines and compares public discourse on minority languages and their education in Lithuania and Sweden through the lens of Othering, focusing on the construction of in-group and out-group boundaries (Wiese 2025). Drawing on both political and institutional statements, as well as grassroots discourse on social media, the analysis explores how minority groups are positioned within broader society. In contexts where language is reductively framed as the primary marker of belonging, multilingualism may become a basis for exclusion rather than inclusion, thereby reinforcing social divisions.

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From Local to Civic Identities among Third-Generation Migrants from Soviet Belarus in Lithuania

This paper examines how and why forms of identification shift across generations among migrants from Soviet Belarus in the Vilnius region of Lithuania. It is based on anthropological fieldwork conducted in 2017–2019 and 2024, including biographical interviews, observation, and participant observation.

While migration during the Soviet period was largely driven by perceived economic inequalities between Soviet Belarus and Soviet Lithuania, its long-term consequences extend beyond material mobility. I argue that these migration trajectories have produced a gradual reconfiguration of identity, in which ethnic belonging becomes less salient across generations, while civic and local forms of identification gain prominence.

Drawing on the concept of social memory (Assmann 2013) and identity theory (Eriksen 2010), the paper shows that third-generation individuals (born after 1990) tend to distance themselves from explicit ethnic identification as “Belarusians” and instead emphasise belonging through Lithuanian citizenship or attachment to their immediate locality. This shift is not merely a matter of assimilation, but reflects changing regimes of memory, everyday practices, and the social meanings attached to territory and belonging.

The paper further demonstrates that territorial identification has undergone a parallel transformation. The first generation articulated a regional identity centred on the Vilnius region, whereas the third generation more often expresses a local identity tied to specific towns or villages. I suggest that this shift from regional to local identification is linked to post-Soviet socio-political changes, the re-scaling of belonging, and the declining relevance of Soviet-era spatial imaginaries.

By tracing these intergenerational transformations, the paper contributes to broader debates on post-Soviet migration, social memory, and the changing relationship between ethnicity, territory, and citizenship.

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