

Jessica Geraldo Schwengber,
Quratul Aan, Tobias Grünfelder (eds.)



Future Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

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Future Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

Transcultural Management Series

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Tobias Grünfelder (eds.)

Future Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

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Preface

The future is unpredictable. The increasing complexity of global value creation, climate change, pandemics, wars, and many other factors radically challenge our way of living, cooperating and leading. They undermine traditional visions of the future that we rely on in order to plan, feel secure and gain the confidence to invest in tomorrow.

Transcultural leadership and cooperation must take on the challenges of a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world and actively shape the futures by establishing new connections and developing commonalities across different cultures. During our Transcultural Leadership Summit (TLS) in 2022, we discussed: Where does transcultural leadership stand now? What challenges and opportunities do leaders and organizations face in a VUCA world? How can new visions of leadership contribute to a more sustainable and ecological future? How can we create a more equal world and include missing voices for the futures? How can we create resilient business models and governance structures fit for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century? What do we want the future of transcultural leadership to look like? How can we improve current leadership development (in organizations, in education, etc.)?

Regardless of what the answers to these questions may be, one thing is certain: global challenges and opportunities can only be met by transcultural cooperation and dialogue. After the TLS with over 250 participants, students from the Transcultural Caravan Network (TCN) were invited to continue the discussion and, in Transcultural Student Research Groups (TSRGs), explore in greater depth some of the topics discussed at the summit. Seven TSRGs were formed with 17 Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students from 10 different nationalities studying in universities in Germany, Brazil, Vietnam, Poland and South Africa.

The TCN is a project of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, and it is an alliance of universities from different countries around the world that share the goal of facilitating multilateral research projects for students.

The network comprises:

- The Albert Luthuli Leadership Institute (ALLI) at the University of Pretoria from South Africa
- Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) South Africa
- Center for the Future of Work at the University of Pretoria from South Africa
- The faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz from Poland
- The Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC Rio) from Brazil
- The Vietnamese-German University (VGU) from Vietnam
- HFU Business School from Germany
- The Center for Sustainability Studies at the School of Business Administration from Fundao Getulio Vargas (FGVces) from Brazil

It is the goal of the TCN to facilitate research projects with students from all partner universities, to offer transcultural experience and learning for the participating students, to strengthen exchanges between international universities and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

As for the steps of the project that resulted in this publication, the TSRG 2023 officially started on 20 April 2023. The first step of the project was a preparatory phase from May to June 2023, which included team-building activities and workshops (e.g., on qualitative research design, transcultural cooperation, etc.) to prepare them for their research project.

After the preparatory phase, the students and supervisors undertook a field research trip to Berlin (Germany) in July 2023. During the research trip the students visited various places and organizations (e.g., Humboldt Forum, Futurium Museum, Academy for Cultural Diplomacy, Lead Machine Learning, International Psychoanalytic University (IPU), Maecenata Foundation, WWF) where manifold discussions and learning took place. Their learnings in the research trip were also collected in different blog posts that are accessible on our Transcultural

Caravan website (<https://transcultural-caravan.org/>). Furthermore, the students conducted interviews and gathered data for their research projects in Berlin.

Before concluding their research projects and submitting their research results in the form of papers, the participants also attended the transcultural research learning school in November 2023, which included workshops about academic writing, data analysis, transcultural leadership as well as participation in the Transcultural Leadership Summit | TLS 2023.

This book therefore represents the final step in the project, as it collects the research results. The book consists of four parts:

The first part “Imagining Possible Future(s) for Transcultural Leadership” includes a chapter by Grünfelder et al. and provides an overview on the future literacy laboratory on leadership in a global context used as methodology for the second day of the TLS 2022. This methodological foundation is further explored in a second chapter that includes an interview with Jörg Metelmann on Imagineering, Leadership and Literacies.

After laying the foundations, Part II to Part IV collect the chapters of the research projects of the students. Part II is dedicated to business and economic perspectives on transcultural leadership and includes chapters on transcultural leadership and diversity in businesses through a psychological lens (Clerc et al.), a chapter on the combination of global strategies and local realities in business contexts (du Toit & Hügler) and a chapter on the role of AI in shaping the future of transcultural management in businesses (Fioretti & Doan). Part III is dedicated to political perspectives on the future of transcultural leadership and includes a chapter on the transcultural relationship between Germany and Morocco (Cima et al.) as well as a broader chapter about the future of transcultural diplomacy (García García & Rembowski). The book concludes with part IV on social perspectives, which includes a chapter on the relevance of relating different knowledge systems for transcultural leadership (Grünfelder et al.) and sustainable architecture (Laursen & Mello). This mix of perspectives offers a unique insight into transcultural leadership and provides a glimpse into possible futures.

We would like to express our gratitude to our cooperation partners, especially the supervisors Dr Jessica Geraldo Schwengber from Zeppelin University, Quratulaan from Zeppelin University, Tobias Grünfelder from Zeppelin University, Prof. Dr Julika Baumann Montecinos from HFU Business School, Prof. Dr Thomas Kaminski from University of Lodz, Dr Lan Dang Thi Ngoc from the Vietnamese-German University (VGU), Dr Olebogeng Selebi from the University of Pretoria, Dr Yoland Steenkamp from Huguenot College.

Furthermore, our thanks go to Johannes Sonneborn for his support in the editing process of this book, and to all our sponsors and supporters, particularly to the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung (sponsor of the TCN), to Karl-Schlecht Foundation (Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin's initiator and sponsor), Rolls-Royce Power Systems (Transcultural Leadership Summit 2023 main sponsor) and to Christian Fiedler Scholarship for their financial support to ZU students.

Finally, our thanks go to all colleagues, students, and experts for their participation in our transcultural journey and for their insightful contribution to our research agenda.

Friedrichshafen, October 2024

Dr Jessica Geraldo Schwengber
Quratul Aan
Tobias Grünfelder

Contributors

Quratul Aan is a research fellow at the Chair of Institutional Economics and Transcultural Leadership at Zeppelin University in Germany. She also serves as the project manager of the Transcultural Caravan Network, playing a pivotal role in advancing research and projects focused on transcultural dynamics and leadership across different global contexts. In addition to her academic work, Quratul Aan has a strong interest in corporate governance and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where she aims to make significant contributions through her research and management expertise.

Julika Baumann Montecinos is a Professor of Transcultural Management at Hochschule Furtwangen University | HFU Business School and co-initiator of the Transcultural Caravan Network at Zeppelin University. She focuses on research into the success factors of transcultural cooperation as well as on the development of related international and interdisciplinary teaching, training, research and networking projects.

Stefan Bergheim trained as an economist in the USA and in Germany. He worked on forecasting and trend analysis in the financial industry for companies such as J.P. Morgan and Deutsche Bank. As the director of the think tank “Center for Societal Progress” he focuses on normative methods such as visioning and on the inclusion of seldom heard voices in dialogue processes. In this capacity, he advised the German government on its national well-being strategy. His experience with different ways to use the future is captured in his book “Futures – Open to Variety” (German “Zukünfte – Offen für Vielfalt”). Since 2015 he has been deeply involved with UNESCO’s efforts to strengthen the competence of Futures Literacy. This work included roles as editor and contributor to the 2018 book “Transforming the Future – Anticipation in the 21st Century” and as a curatorial coordinator of the 2019 “Futures Literacy Design Forum”, the 2020 “High-Level Futures Literacy Summit”, and the 2021 conference of the World Futures Studies

Federation. He designs and facilitates Futures Literacy Laboratories both online and onsite in English and in German for companies, associations, governments, and universities.

Aljoscha Böhm is a senior student at Zeppelin University, studying on the Bachelor's program "Sociology, Politics & Economics". Throughout his studies he completed a semester abroad at UC Berkeley, supported the Berkeley Center for Globalization and Information Technology as a Research Intern and served as a visiting student researcher at Utrecht University. His research interests include the Sociology of knowledge, technology and organization.

Lorenzo Cima is an Export Manager specialized in the promotion of "Made in Italy" in the Middle Eastern and North African markets on behalf of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA). With a background in cultural diplomacy and the study of Arabic and Persian speaking countries, he is dedicated to fostering international relations and expanding the Italian and European cultural and economic presence abroad.

Talita Clerc gained her Psychology Bachelor's Degree in 2021 and finished her Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology and Neuroscience in 2023, the same year as she joined the Transcultural Caravan to expand her knowledge and share her gained insights. Since 2024 she has been a PhD student in the Neuroscience and Psychology Program at PUC Rio.

Ngoc Minh Doan Vietnamese student majoring in Finance and Accounting at the Vietnamese-German University (VGU). Aspires to be a specialist in the investment field, including private equity analysis, market research, fund sourcing and bridging the gap for investors to enter Vietnam's market. In 2023, she received a full DAAD's Sur-place Scholarship and was the leader of VGU's youngest team to be in the National Top 8 of the local CFA Research Challenge in Vietnam. On campus, she is proud to be the only student representative on the Faculty Council and was in the core team organizing important events such as the Orientation Week 2023, and VGU Career Fair and Industry Exploration Day 2024.

Gys du Toit is an organizational psychologist (registered at the HPCSA and SIOPA) and professional futurist (APF member). He is a PhD candidate in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, with a research focus on leadership. Du Toit's academic background includes an M.Com, a B.Com (Hons), and a B.Com in Human Resources Management and Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Pretoria. Additionally, he has a Post-Graduate Diploma in Futures Studies from Stellenbosch Business School. With a wealth of experience in various capacities within the private sector, Gys has served as both a specialist and a manager in publicly listed companies in various industries. His career has given him the opportunity to live and work in many different countries, including Qatar, Switzerland and the USA. Gys is a founding member of the Inner Development Goals (IDG) Southern Africa Network whose aim is to scale transformational skills for sustainable development in the region.

Luca Fioretti is currently graduating in Economics and Management from the University of Siena, Italy. From an early age, Luca has been passionate about technology and highly innovative techniques, being an avid learner and fascinated by current macroeconomic events, which has led him to pursue a career focused on the global economy. Beyond his academic pursuits, Luca has been actively involved in volunteering with the scouting movement and local ambulance services, demonstrating his commitment to community service and leadership

Irene García García was born in Madrid. She is passionate about international relations, studying and understanding cultures, and the impact of generative intelligence on these fields. She began her academic journey at the Complutense University of Madrid, where she obtained a degree in Political Science. Irene then went on to further her education with a Master's degree in international relations and Cultural Diplomacy at the Furtwangen University, in the international Campus of Berlin. She is currently studying at the International University of La Rioja in Spain for a second Master's in International Security. One of her passions is Generative Intelligence, and as this field is constantly evolving, she is also attending various courses to learn new things

daily and to explore how it is influencing our society as we live it nowadays.

Jessica Geraldo Schwengber is a post-doctoral researcher at the Chair of Institutional Economics at Zeppelin University, project manager and administrator of the Transcultural Caravan Network and managing director of the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin | LEIZ. Her research interest lies in organization theory, relational economics, transcultural management. Jessica Geraldo Schwengber holds a bachelors and a master's in economics from University of Roma Tor Vergata (Italy) and a PhD from Zeppelin University (Germany).

Tobias Grünfelder is a research fellow at the Chair of Institutional Economics and Transcultural Leadership at Zeppelin University in Germany and a project manager of the Transcultural Caravan Network, a platform for student research, global thinking, networking, and dialogue. As a lecturer, transcultural trainer and magician, he develops unique learning experiences for individuals and groups.

Lukas Hügle after completing a stay abroad in New Zealand in the 10th grade, he decided to do his A-levels in International Business. He then completed dual studies in International Business Management Trinational (DHBW Lörrach, FHNW Basel, UHA Colmar) at Franke Home Solutions in Aarburg, Switzerland. In this rotational program, he regularly switched between the three universities and countries as well as different departments within the company. After completing his Bachelor's degree, he spent six months travelling and then started his Master's degree in International Management at Furtwangen University, which he will complete in 2024. He has been working as a Human Resources Project Manager at the Franke Group since May 2024.

Janine Kurz studied Japanese and Social Studies at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen and Business Management and Psychology at the HFU Business School in Schwenningen and graduated from both with a Bachelor's Degree. During their studies they spent one semester abroad in Japan. Ever fond of different cultures they joined the Transcultural Caravan in 2023.

Erika Laursen is an Architect and Urban Planner who graduated from UFRJ; currently works at the Fecomércio Sustainability Institute of Rio de Janeiro, implementing solutions aligned with the SDGs for SESC and SENAC – signatories of the UN GLOBAL PACT and important instruments of technical education and social services in Brazil. With a Master's from PUC-Rio, Erika coordinates the Socio-Environmental Impact Business course and has a FAPERJ scholarship for innovative teaching at the same university. She has an MBA in Project Management from FGV, a postgraduate degree in Strategic Planning from UCAM and is on an ESG post-graduate course at IBMEC. Erika has more than 20 years of experience in projects of varied sizes and types.

Nhi Thi Yen Mai is a Computer Science student at the Vietnamese German University, starting her studies in 2022. While in Japan, she wrote about Vietnamese culture, such as the Ao Dai and local cuisine, for a Japanese media firm. Her real dive into academic research began with the Transcultural Caravan Research Group (2023-2024), where she gained valuable skills and experience in research methodology and academic inquiry.

Itseng Tlamelo Mashadza is a Senior Organizational Development Consultant based in South Africa. She has experience as a trusted advisor in driving organizational transformation and growth across multi-disciplinary institutions including FMCGs, Petroleum, FDIs, Parastatals and government organizations across Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, and Malawi. Ms. Mashadza is currently a PhD candidate and has a Master of Philosophy in Industrial Psychology from the University of Johannesburg, as well as a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) in Organizational Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and International Relations from Wits University. Her research interests include Transformation, Leadership, African leadership, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Jörg Metelmann is an Associate Professor of Culture and Media Studies at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of St. Gallen (HSG). He has (co-)written and (co-)edited more than 20

books on various aspects of the cultural dynamics of modernity, with particular interest in narrativity, visuality, identity and the homo sentimental. His recent research focuses on transformation processes in Western societies in general (as an introduction: *Imagineering. Wie Zukunft gemacht wird*, co-edited with Harald Welzer; Fischer: Frankfurt 2020).

Piotr Rembowski is a student of international relations; Bachelor's degree in international politics and diplomacy; he wrote his thesis about international NGOs fighting for and promoting human rights around the world; currently studying for a Master's degree in American studies, Master's thesis on about human rights as a paradigm in US foreign policy in the 21st century (based on the war in Ukraine) at University of Lodz; interests include USA policy and history, migration, human rights, populism, feminism and international relations, diplomacy, celebrity diplomacy; Piotr works at the Migrations Studies Center at University of Lodz as a researcher into migration from Ukraine to Poland, and also as a producer of the Łódź Many Cultures Festival which is organised by The Marek Edelman Dialogue Center at Łódź, also an activist for human rights in the Coalition Łódź of Diversities (Koalicja Łódź Różnorodności)

Andżelika Serwatka has a Bachelor's degree in Asian Studies and a Master's degree in International Relations from the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Łódź. She completed her Master's degree writing a thesis entitled "Dynamics of power and the construction of narratives: the influence of China and Russia on chosen states in North Africa in the context of neo-colonialism" She actively participates in the work of the Boym Institute, focusing mainly on issues related to Southeast Asia. Additionally, she took part in the project student research project "Vietnam 2022" and the "Europe as an Actor in Asia" project funded by the European Commission, when she presented her findings at the Fulbright University in Ho Chi Minh City and the Vietnamese-German University in Binh Duong.

Ishika Avinash Shirke originally from India, moved to Germany in 2022 to pursue a Master's degree in International Management. In 2023, she became a member of the Transcultural Caravan, appreciating its wide-ranging viewpoints on various cultures.

Ruth Espinola Soriano de Mello has since 2012 been a Professor at the Institute of Administration and Management (IAG) for undergraduate and postgraduate courses at PUC-Rio in disciplines linked to innovation, ESG, entrepreneurial education, creative economy, entrepreneurship with positive socio-environmental impact, local development and planning of business. She also teaches classes at other universities. She has a Post-doctorate in Design from ESDI/UERJ (2024); PhD in Social Sciences from PUC-Rio; Master's in Development, Agriculture and Society from UFRRJ (2006); Specialist in Public Policies and Government from IUPERJ (2003); Graduate in Economic Sciences from UFRJ (2000). Since 2023, graduated in Neurosciences from PUC-Rio. Since 2024, she has been leader of the Magis Social PUC-Rio, promoting social innovation.

Lena Tüinkers is a curator and facilitator of interactions with the future. Fascinated by novel and strange moments that set us in motion, she broadens our perspectives and softens rigid beliefs. Over the years she has led organisations through participatory processes in Europe, Kenya, Australia and Mexico. In these collaborations she has guided teams in the discovery and transition of future(s) and change. Starting from the concept of the future, she works with the human imagination as a prerequisite for change and novelty and applies futures literacy, experience design and innovation methodologies to her work. She is the upcoming president of the Foresight Europe Network, partner of FUON Futures and mentor for start-ups in the EIT community New European Bauhaus.

Part I

Envisioning Potential Future(s) for Transcultural Leadership

Futures Literacy Laboratory on Leadership in a Global Context – New Learning and Futures-Oriented Formats for International Education

*Tobias Grünfelder, Stefan Bergheim, Lena Tüinkers
and Julika Baumann Montecinos*

Abstract

The Transcultural Leadership Summit (TLS) is a platform for exchange and transcultural learning, tackling questions of leadership and cooperation in times of global interconnectedness. In 2022, the TLS hosted a Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) on leadership in a global context. As part of an experiential and cooperative learning journey, 50 participants from Germany, Botswana, Brazil, France, Belarus, Lithuania, Indonesia, South Africa, Italy and the USA developed different ideas on the future of leadership. The results offer a glimpse into leadership in a global context, reflecting a variety of societal changes, technological advances, and the role of leadership across cultures. The discussions and results of the FLL invite further research and underline the need for new leadership approaches that are more relational and context-specific. Finally, transcultural education and FLLs as a learning format with participants from various regional, national, organizational, and professional cultures and with a focus on developing shared understandings out of shared experiences can be seen as a promising concept for higher education.

1. Introduction:

The Transcultural Leadership Summit 2022 as a Starting Point to Exploring the Futures of Transcultural Leadership

We need imagination to imagine better futures that do not exist. Imagination is the beginning of creation.

The Transcultural Leadership Summit (TLS) is a platform for exchange and transcultural learning, tackling questions of leadership and cooperation in times of global interconnectedness. Since 2016, this two-day conference has been developing a growing network of partners and providing a platform for renowned experts from business, politics, and civil society to share their expertise and engage in debates with students, professionals, and academics from all over the world. The TLS wants to design and offer unique learning opportunities for the global context, organized by a group of students and chaired by Professor Josef Wieland, Director of the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin (LEIZ) and Founder of the Transcultural Caravan.

Over the years, the TLS has focused on different countries and regions, and on their approaches to transcultural leadership (2016 China, 2017 Sub-Saharan Africa, 2018 Brazil, 2019 Europe, 2020 New Belt & Road Initiative, 2021 Southeast Asia). In 2022, the TLS started a new chapter and shifted its focus to an overarching topic that was discussed from different cultural and regional perspectives, namely “The futures of transcultural leadership”.

Furthermore, the TLS was organized for the first time as a hybrid and decentralized event in a joint effort by the Transcultural Caravan Network (TCN), an alliance of universities from different countries around the world that share the goal of facilitating multilateral research projects for students. Members of the TCN are the Center for Sustainability Studies at the School of Business Administration from Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGVces) in Brazil, the Albert Luthuli Leadership Institute (ALLI) at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, the faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz in Poland, the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC Rio) in Brazil, the Vietnamese-German University (VGU) in Vietnam, as well as the HFU Business School and Zeppelin University in Germany.

The TLS 2022, which took place on the 10th and 11th of November 2022 at Zeppelin University's ZF Campus (Germany), at the University of Lodz (Poland), at the University of Pretoria (South Africa), at the HFU Business School (Germany), and as an online stream, was attended by more than 350 participants from all over the world. Furthermore, a Portuguese translation was offered by the partners in Brazil for the online audience.

Transcultural leadership, characterized by the willingness and capability to develop commonalities across diverse cultures while respecting and preserving their unique differences (Wieland, 2020; Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022) can play a pivotal role in actively shaping desirable futures and opening up new perspectives. Under the title "Perspectives from the future(s)", keynote addresses, panel discussions, and a Futures Literacy Laboratory on transcultural leadership offered participants different learning opportunities and platforms to engage with the topic.

On the first day of the summit, Dr Thelse Godewerth, Chief People Officer and Labor Director of the main sponsor Rolls-Royce Power Systems opened the conference by stressing that transculturality, inclusion and diversity create resilience and responsiveness and are thus key success factors for a company in a VUCA world. Furthermore, Dr Godewerth emphasized that events like the TLS help to develop the next generation of global leaders and make her more hopeful about the future. Other highlights of the event were the welcome address by Prof. Dr Klaus Mühlhahn (President of Zeppelin University) and the keynote addresses of Dr Njeri Mwagiru (Senior Futurist at the Institute for Futures Research at Stellenbosch University), Prof. Dr Josef Wieland (Director of Zeppelin University's Leadership Excellence Institute) and Dave Snowden (Founder and chief scientific officer of Cognitive Edge). Dave Snowden showed that most people learn leadership from their former leaders. He summarized his speech with a simple piece of advice: Who depends on you and who do you depend on? And then work on those relationships. This reflects a relational understanding of leadership and was also reflected by Prof. Wieland and his call for regio-global networks that can shape the futures of our planet. In addition, two panel discussions on participatory and sustainable futures connected all the sites for a joint discussion. The panel discus-

sion included Dr Bayo Akomolafe, Prof. Dr Tomasz Kamiński, Eva Kwamou Feukeu, Fernanda Carreira, Prof. Dr Tawana Kupe, Julius Palm and Prof. Dr Jörg Metelmann. The discussions highlighted the need for genuine cooperation in a global context, to include missing voices, to listen to each other, to move beyond the category of nation-states, to look for new collective movements, to acknowledge the harms done during the colonization and to acknowledge that we live in colonial legacies and the continuities of European empires. Furthermore, the theme of sustainability was discussed from an economic and social perspective.

On the second day of the TLS, participants were able to join a Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) on transcultural leadership and cooperation. In a uniquely designed setting, the facilitators Dr Stefan Bergheim and Lena Tüinkers invited participants to make their unconscious assumptions about different futures visible. In four phases (Reveal, Reframe, Rethink and Redo), the participants worked together to develop alternative images of the future of transcultural leadership in a global context. In this way, the method and objectives of the FLL reflect the spirit of the transcultural approach to foster mutual learning and to develop new shared meanings across cultures. The design and results of this unique FLL will be presented and discussed in the following.

2. Future Literacy Laboratory on Transcultural Leadership

This part presents the main aspects of the Future Literacy Laboratory on Transcultural Leadership.

2.1 What is Futures Literacy and Why is it Important?

You may be wondering what Futures Literacy means and what it means to be a future literate person. Futures Literacy is the competence to use the future – and even more so its plurality and diversity – with different methods for the present. In other words, people can be literate in using futures, just like writing or reading. At the core of this com-

petence lies the understanding that there is not one future that can be predicted with 100% certainty. Instead, Futures Literacy indicates the presence of multiple probable, desirable but also alternative futures which solely exist in our imagination. Our imagination is therefore the key to unlock the futures we are able to see and which further influence our behaviors, mindsets and thoughts in the present. Everyone uses futures for the present, mostly unconsciously. Did you check the weather forecast this morning and dress accordingly? There we go, this is one way of using futures for the present. There are many other ways of using futures, most of which we have unlearned over the years and only seldom use today.

Roughly four years ago, the global human population was hit by a previously unknown virus which changed our way of being, thinking and acting from one day to the next. Additional turbulences followed, moving us through a time of permanent change. What did the past years teach us? We can never know what lies ahead as everything that we call ‘the future’ will always be uncertain. We heard it many times: The complexity of our world is growing and with that the degree of uncertainty we experience. With that being said, more unforeseen events might happen in the future.

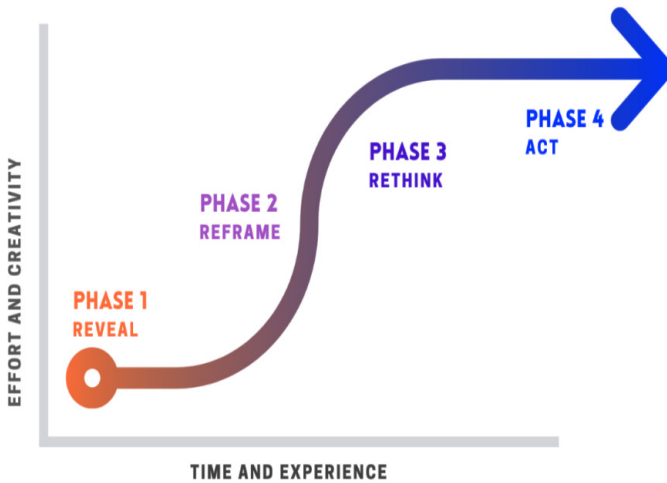
So why is Futures Literacy important? It’s an essential competence for the 21st century to deal with and navigate through uncertain and complex times. It’s not about foreseeing future events, it’s about being capable of acting even though we can’t foresee and know. Thus, we need to use multiple ways of engaging with futures, instead of focusing solely on predictions and trends. We need to strengthen our imagination in order to access multiple futures and illuminate our steps in the present. Then we can act with a wealth of opportunities in our hands.

2.2 What is a Future Literacy Laboratory?

A Futures Literacy Laboratory (FLL) is the method of accessing, training and using the capability of Future Literacy and has been developed by Riel Miller at UNESCO since 2012. The method is a process consisting of four phases: Reveal, Reframe, Rethink and Act (Miller & UNESCO, 2018) as shown in Figure 1. Usually, a group of

participants goes through this process together drawing on their collective intelligence. That means they work in a co-creative manner to make their diverse perspectives visible. It's never about discussing or agreeing on what is right and what is wrong – as nobody of us has been to the future – rather the method tries to open up a multitude of possibilities and enrich people's frame and meanings of the world.

*Figure 1: The Four Phases of a Future Literacy Laboratory.
Results of the Future Literacy Laboratory on
Transcultural Leadership*



Source: Miller 2018, p. 98.

The FFL on transcultural leadership lasted three hours. Participants were connected online via Zoom and worked together on a prepared Miro board. A Miro board is an online whiteboard for group collaboration. The FLL aimed to take participants through the first three phases of a standard FLL to imagine probable, desirable and alternative futures and develop promising research questions for the future.

Around 50 participants joined the FFL. The participants were between 20 and 56 years old and connected to the online FFL from Germany, Botswana, Brazil, France, Belarus, Lithuania, Indonesia, South Africa, Italy and the United States. Around 65% were women and 35% were men. It needs to be acknowledged that most participants were students from Germany.

The first stage was about probable futures, and the participants had to predict what they foresaw transcultural leadership to look like in the year 2043. While the future is difficult and often impossible to predict, we often have in our minds elements that we are very sure about, that we rely on for stability, that frame our overall image of the future. Travelling 21 years forward in time was an invitation to think big and to apply a clear filter that would leave only those elements that participants were most confident in. To allow as wide a spectrum of views as possible, revealing those expectations was done in three steps: First, an invitation to reflect individually and take notes in Miro. Second, a sharing of expectations in small groups without the requirement of finding consensus. And third, an overview of the richness of expectations in plenary.

This overview of some predictions shows a focus on environmental, social, and technological issues.

Table 1: Probable Futures

Concerning leadership:

- There will be more young leaders
- Leadership positions can be shared between people; leadership roles are shared among several people
- Leadership will be more focused on the individual, and it will be more dynamic
- More entrepreneurial leadership
- Leadership: Who will be in charge?
- Leaders as enablers: giving people wings and ‘flying lessons’
- Digital leadership: balance of human and technologies
- Leadership as test of character: leaders as mind shifters and impulse givers/leadership as trampoline/ leaders as thought leaders

- Leadership is characterized by the ability to transcend dualistic views, e.g., by creating third ways between polar opposite views, where one party always loses (except in a compromise, where both parties lose).
- The greatest transformation has been in terms of hierarchical leadership, which has been challenged
- Relational leadership has become more and more important as a reliance on hierarchy dissipates
- Leadership is characterized by, and infused with, collaboration and creativity
- Self-leadership has become much more important, there is less external structured leadership
- More shared leadership – collective decision-making, co-leaderships
- Leadership has become more diffused, there is more leadership as far more people engage in it

Concerning climate change:

- Leaders will deal with climate issues on a daily basis
- More engagement with environmental issues
- More climate awareness and regenerative systems
- From ego to eco

Concerning social change and inequality:

- Indigenous people and other political minorities will be legitimized leaders
- More awareness of historical and social responsibilities and how urgent it is to learn from that
- More system thinking, all systems are valuable and vital, intersectionality
- More political participation
- Supply chains do not exploit others
- More connected and globalized world
- Demographic change; different generations need to work together
- More authoritarian
- More distribution of ideas and sharing of power
- Battle of ideologies will be over
- Endorsement of fair trade
- More negotiating and a diplomatic world order
- Less elitist, more human

- Proudly global identity
- More soft skills, more fairness, less hierarchical
- From military organization to team sport
- From uniformity to individuality
- More inclusive but not fully
- Urgency to deal with upcoming problems will call for quicker and more agile decisions: less bureaucracy – trust-based relationships?

Concerning new technologies:

- New technologies will simplify processes
- Technologies enable
- More complexity, AI, Digital Money, Technologies
- Having the right skills to manage technologies
- Better understanding of human behavior
- A better understanding of neuroscience

Source: Own table from the FLL.

This list is just a snapshot of the group discussion and should be analyzed with care. Participants' predictions seem to be mixed with wishful thinking, but there are some interesting observations. First of all, regarding leadership, the importance of shared and self-leadership was stressed several times. Furthermore, probable futures are seen to include more leadership, and the role of leadership is changing towards an enabling activity (e.g., giving people wings and 'flying lessons', leadership as a trampoline, leaders as mind shifters and impulse givers, etc.). Finally, the aspect of entrepreneurship was highlighted.

Regarding climate change, the participants were sure that there will be more awareness, and that dealing with changing climate will be part and parcel of daily leadership tasks. The slogan from ego to eco summarizes a general shift towards more holistic, relational, and systemic thinking.

Regarding social change and inequality, the participants mentioned several times the impact of demographic change and the need for more young leaders. Interestingly, there were different views on the

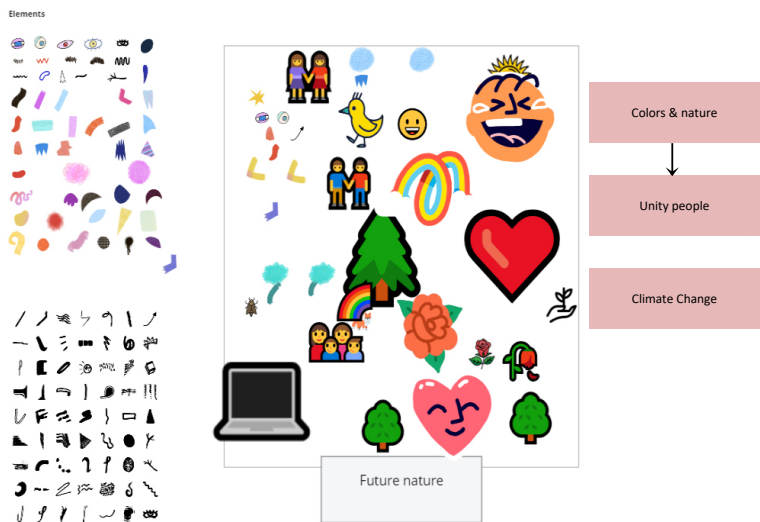
world order. Some expect it to be more authoritarian, others see it as more diplomatic, or more inclusive. In addition, the increasing awareness of historical and social responsibilities was addressed.

Regarding new technologies, the participants were sure that technologies such as artificial intelligence will have a huge impact on business, politics and society. New technologies were predicted to simplify processes while being more complex for leadership to deal with. Lastly, new technologies are believed to help us to better understand human behavior and neuroscience.

Overall, the probable futures seem to capture multiple changes and challenges (environmental change, social inequality, new technologies, etc.) and leadership can be the tool and enabler to address these changes and challenges by developing new forms of self- and shared leadership.

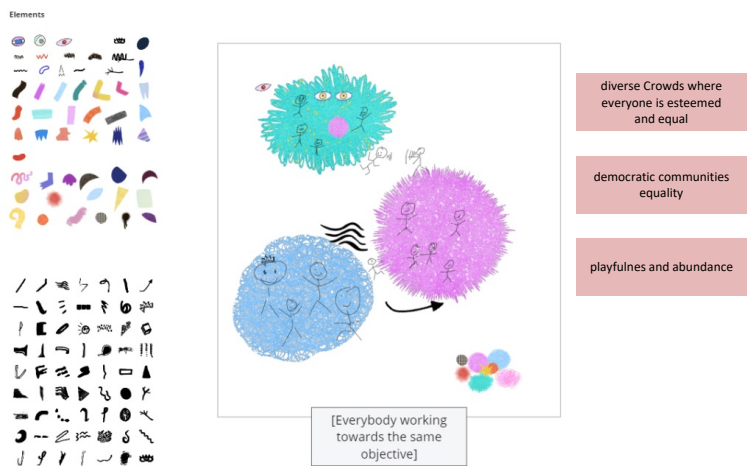
In the second stage of phase 1, the Reveal, the participants were invited into a mind journey to imagine the future of transcultural leadership in 2043 that they desire, where all their dreams about leadership had become reality. To help them in that journey, they were given the opportunity to turn off their cameras, to close their eyes, to relax and slow down. They were given prompts about what leadership looks like in this ideal future, how leadership feels like, about who is leading and for what purpose. After this individual journey, participants went back to their small groups and shared with the others what they had seen. Then they built a visual representation of the desirable futures in Miro and highlighted the characteristics of the visualizations. Following the more rational analysis of probable futures, this was an invitation to be more creative together. Here are a few visualizations of the groups (Source: TLS 2022 Futures Literacy Laboratory on leadership in a global context):

Figure 2: Visualization 1



Source: Own illustration from the FLL.

Figure 3: Visualization 2



Source: Own illustration from the FLL.

*Table 2: Desirable Futures**Characteristics of desirable futures:*

- Supportive (people wise)
- Caring
- High level of communication
- Diverse crowds where everyone is respected and appreciated
- Democratic communities with equality
- Playfulness and abundance
- Equality of technological access
- Sustainable futures where turtles are happy
- Access to transportation and mobility
- Unity of people
- Colours and nature
- Collaborative
- Dream teams
- Enabling
- More empathy
- More optimism
- More get together
- More focus on mental health
- Collective leadership teams

Source: Own table from the FLL.

Overall, the developed characteristics reflect a desire to rethink the relationship between humans as well as between humans and nature. All of the characteristics are very abstract but provide a sense of direction.

After discussing in groups, the probable and desirable futures, the participants were invited to make anticipatory assumptions about the future of leadership in a global context visible. Assumptions are defined as statements that are not proven yet (otherwise they would be

facts) and that might act as devices to simplify reality and build models. They scaffold the images of probable and desirable futures that had been revealed.

Table 3: Anticipatory Assumptions

Overview of some anticipatory assumptions regarding transcultural leadership:

- Working together is essential
- Listening is the key to successful leadership
- Power is unequally distributed
- Big role of new technologies and AI
- Transfer to long-term thinking
- Creative workers are valued more
- Soft skills are valued
- Accepting that we have to share the resources for a better world.
- We need new models of leadership
- Greater communication between innovators
- Humanity is in a state of peaceful harmony with the environment
- Technological advancement continues
- The trend to advocate fair trade will continue
- Climate disasters will make leaders aware of the urgency of climate change
- Leaders are responsible for the environment & wellbeing of employees
- Cultures are essential
- Leaders will continue to focus on humans.
- Technology becoming more “natural”
- Listening is the key to successful leadership
- Younger generation leading the change
- Humans will not be replaced
- Emotions are valuable
- Cultural differences will always exist
- People see value in collaboration
- There is one perfect leadership style

- Wealthy are willing to give more for climate initiatives
- Leadership is one person
- Leadership is a constant exercise
- Mindset over matter
- Global debt is cancelled
- There is equality of chances worldwide
- Humanity is learning from her mistakes
- Youth are leading
- We will all understand each other
- Circular economy are more vibrant

Source: Own table from the FLL.

Not surprisingly, some of the assumptions reflect and deepen the discussions about desirable futures: peaceful harmony, equality, or creativity are mentioned. Several assumptions were about the outside environment and context in which leadership happens: technological advancement, diversity, a growing importance of women and remaining cultural differences were mentioned as well as trends towards fair trade, or a circular economy.

Another focus of these assumptions was on the capabilities, conditions and resources required for leadership: emotions, listening, understanding, and working together were mentioned. Further, there were a number of assumptions on possible actors and solutions: The young were mentioned as crucial actors as well as the wealthy, and communication was highlighted.

An analysis of the above listed assumptions was not performed during the laboratory, but follows the structure proposed by Bergheim (2023) on the basis of 500 assumptions from 11 Future Literacy Laboratories on a wide spectrum of topics. Categories that were not covered in the laboratory on leadership include the rules that shape what kind of leadership is acceptable and who sets those rules. Likewise, assumptions on tradeoffs between different interests or priorities were not mentioned, but could be an interesting issue for further investigation. The same holds for the virtual or real spaces where leadership happens.

2.3 *Alternative Futures*

In the second stage of the FFL (Reframe), participants were invited to design alternative futures. Together, participants had the opportunity to create science fiction stories about the future of leadership in a global context that is different from what had been discussed so far. The assumptions revealed in the previous phase served as a starting point. Participants were invited to abandon or change some of those assumptions or to invent totally new ones.

The purpose of this exercise is to engage with the complexity and openness of the future as mentioned earlier. The future often surprises us, and we then say “I could not have imagined something like this happening!” Futures Literacy is partly about training one’s imagination in order to better deal with future surprises – and to create surprise (innovation) oneself.

The science fiction stories should use the present tense, start with the sentence “in the year 2043, ..., and the participants were asked to be creative. Participants should not discuss whether their alternative future is probable or desirable but were rather encouraged to add actors, institutions, etc. to their stories. In the following, some of the created stories are presented which reflect the different and powerful imagination of individuals and groups. The stories offer insights into alternative futures and might inspire future actions and research.

Table 4: Alternative futures

<p><i>Story 1:</i> In the year 2043, there is a distribution of tasks without considering gender. Leaders use artificial intelligence to make decisions. The mindset of people is changed to accept the diversity. Leaders are chosen based on their expertise, not other factors such as race, nationality, religion, etc. The ideologies of social and cultural norms have been re-defined, which is not beneficial for all people.</p>
<p><i>Story 2:</i> In the year 2043, there are neither countries nor governments, there is no democracy. It all started when the US stopped being a democracy, Elon Musk just went to space and stayed there. His money was used to make the unfiltered internet freely accessible to everyone. This led to global dia-</p>

logue and organizations were created that enabled scientists and researchers to collaborate and find solutions to many diseases. Internet access gave many people the chance to be educated and share knowledge. So the social hierarchy was flattened. Also, people were just cool about dying.

Story 3: In the year 2043, there is a completely diverse crowd of people working online in the Metaverse. People from all over the world can work together this way, without having to be located in the same place. Due to artificial intelligence, the most qualified person is chosen to be the leader. This is different for each task, as each task requires different qualities. Once the group is formed, the leader has to distribute the resources for each project. The roles rotate all the time, which means that people from every culture are put into the leadership position. This enhances group work and acceptance.

Story 4: In the year 2043, there are two competing spaceship companies, Bezos and Musk Spaceships. Humans are able to travel at 1,000 speed of thought – as fast as they can think!!! – and find a planet ruled by turtles. Turtles live in an underwater society, Honu TAW, and they are very very peaceful. As humans cannot live underwater, they are forced to submit to the rulers of Honu TAW. It turns out turtles speak Python so a lot of software engineers make machines to translate them. Human nature, however, is greedy and selfish – so they try to wage wars within Honu TAW. But it doesn't work because turtles are peaceful and don't like wars. They do, however, eat humans that don't recycle trash.

Story 5: In the year 2043, there are human-machine interactions based on good values, and robots help with better governance. A world parliament decides on environmental and social standards. Technology provides a filter for developmental ideas and decision making around consumption, resource distribution and well-being. Technology is omnipresent, everyone is watched by their smartphones and computers and controlled, governments can sanction people.

Story 6: In the year 2043, leadership is like a miro board – technology enabling greater collaboration on a much larger scale, i.e., less about individuals, and more about the collective. Everybody gets upgraded to leaders. Leadership is not just about Earth, humans don't live on Earth, as humanity has interplanetary travel and relations. Will leaders decide who lives on which planet?

Story 7: In the year 2043, there is a half-human, half-robot leader who has endless memory and knows all about everyone. It is the ultimate rational being, not vulnerable to emotions. Because of its almost endless capabilities, it has a tremendous impact on the organisation and its employees. Both positive for its knowledge but also negative for lacking some empathy with its peers. Many in the company don't feel understood by XLeader. Many say this is not true as XLeader is constantly evolving, sourcing the best of its human part and the efficiency of the machines. In its great power, it is questioned for its ethics and morality. Robots have different needs than humans and it is hard to please everyone. The algorithms that are integrated in XLeader have been improved to make sure XLeader doesn't become too narcissistic in order not to endanger the bigger community around them. Narcissism with so much power could have horrible implications: control, disregard for the needs of others. The real question is who controls XLeader? In the early days, it was all heavily discussed and pondered but recently the machine has done things its own way. The fact is, half of the workforce is not working any more, there is no need as machines do most of the work. There is a certain mental health concern as these people are lacking purpose. There is no meaning. So, BotBots has launched a new product that supports unemployed humans to become active and focus on their families and other things.

Source: Own table from the FLL.

Each of these stories offers a glimpse into an alternative future of leadership in a global context, reflecting a variety of societal changes, technological advances and ethical dilemmas. Working from a variety of assumptions, participants imagined seemingly extreme events such as fearless relationships with death, python-speaking turtles and the disappearance of the concept of countries. Technology in the form of AI, the metaverse and space travel devices or vehicles is imagined as a supporting tool for the changing dynamics. Overall, the stories take place in very different settings. Some are more concerned with the very practical mechanics of leadership, while others describe the dynamics of society as a whole. Society is imagined at both extremes: as a global entity highly controlled by technology and as a free, collaborative and accessible system with flat hierarchies. Space and travel are

themes that appear in several of the stories, with Elon Musk going to and staying on Mars and humans inhabiting other or multiple planets. Engagement and communication with nature is another dominant theme. Values, ethics and empathy are mentioned particularly in the description of human versus technological leadership tasks. Questions about decision-making power and control are raised, but no specific answers are given.

It is remarkable that some stories also describe how technologies actually correct or compensate for human weaknesses and the world might become better through new technologies.

Overall, the stories highlight the complex interplay between technological innovation, cultural diversity and ethical considerations in imagining futures. They are invitations to reflect and experiment with values and principles that impact and guide transcultural leadership.

2.4 New Questions for the Present of Transcultural Leadership

As a final part, the participants of the FLL were invited to formulate interesting research questions for transcultural leadership (Rethink) based on the many aspects that had been discussed in their work on probable, desirable and alternative futures.

Table 5: Further Research Questions

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What world do I want to live in? – Who would / should be making decisions for me? – How can we improve the future if people just want to go (back) to the past? – How can we create a better future for everyone if we all have a different vision of the future? – Can I live in a world that is perfect? – How do I want to relate with the people I live with? – How can we exchange with/take along people who think completely differently about the future? (e.g., denying climate change) – Is there the chance to find “one” right leadership approach? |
|--|

- Is it time to revisit our ethics?
- Can we be a role model to the universe?
- How can we make the need for interculturality visible?
- How can we make sure that AI works for humanity and does not conquer us?
- Will privilege or character be the deciding factor that creates a leader?
- Do we have to “stop technology” at some point?
- Can AI be a good leader?
- How do we create a future that won’t just be an iteration of our past and present mistakes?
- How flat can hierarchies become? How is wealth/power distributed in the “new age of leadership”?
- How can we stay optimistic?
- If every individual is powerful, what do we have power over?
- How can we work with leaders that may continue being selfish and greedy?
- How will technology shape leadership in the future?
- What do we need to get from the probable to the desired future?
- Is the leader compassionate and congruent in and with their words and actions?
- How can a leader keep their transcultural transponder open?
- Are we able to diminish the gap between social classes in society?
- How can we change the mindset of human beings to accept diversity?
- What is the best way to share the resources on the globe among human beings?
- Have I done enough as a leader to teach sustainability?
- How can we be best prepared for the future?
- Which skills do future leaders have to develop?
- How can we integrate (thinking about) the future more strongly into university courses?
- What role will humans play in the future of leadership?
- Can the animal world fight back?
- How do we secure a “human” future, if leadership is (partly) assumed by non-human entities like AI?
- What am I currently doing that is impacting my immediate community using leadership?
- What benefits do we get from having leaders?

- What is the largest scale at which leadership by humans still makes sense?
- Can overconsumption be capped?
- When will patriarchy die?

Source: Own table from the FLL.

2.5 Results and Takeaways from a Questionnaire:

After the FFL the participants were invited to answer a questionnaire¹. Here is a brief summary of the main takeaways from some participants:

- We have to learn from the past to make a better future. We cannot eliminate risk, but we can manage it.
- Change the context and you change the meaning.
- Online workshops can be as good fun as face to face.
- We need to think critically and deeply about global leadership issues.
- The future of leadership should be both: technological and very human.
- The young generation will redefine the role of leadership.
- One leader will not be enough, we need collective leadership.
- Leadership depends on the intersection of so many different factors. It also depends on your national culture, age, gender, upbringing, and where you were socialized.

In addition, the participants were able to share their understanding of transcultural leadership with us. These are some of their answers:

- Transcultural leadership unites different cultures, highlights diversity but makes you feel part of one big “thing”.
- A transcultural leader is willing to listen and understands the importance of cultural diversity and what it brings to the table.

¹ This questionnaire was part of a student research project on the Futures Literacy Lab, see Kästle et al. (2023).

- Transcultural leadership means to have a holistic view of cultural diversity
- Transcultural leadership is necessary to find solutions to all the crises.
- It is the skills to develop commonalities and still be optimistic.
- Transcultural leadership is about activities that enable cooperation across cultural boundaries.

These understandings of transcultural leadership highlight the need of relating and connecting people from different cultures (e.g., national, regional, professional, industry and organizational) in a mutual learning process. Therefore, transcultural leadership is a relational process between people and requires the willingness and ability to develop commonalities among individuals, groups, and organizations.

3. Discussion and Conclusion: A Call for New Learning Formats

The aim of the FFL on leadership in a global context was to engage a diverse group of people in an experience-based process and to imagine alternative futures together. The four phases of a FFL can help participants rethink their assumptions, imagine alternative futures, develop new ideas, and cooperate in a participatory way. The FFL showed that new approaches, concepts, and understanding of leadership in a global context are needed. The participants often highlighted the demand for collective and shared leadership. The idea of a single leader was challenged many times. Leadership can be better understood as a relational process between people where the role of leaders and followers changes depending on a specific context. This understanding is reflected in relational leadership concepts. According to Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012), leaders and followers live in a relational world – a world in which leadership occurs in complex webs of relationships and dynamically changing contexts. Many old leadership theories are based on assumptions of individuality and linear causality. If we want to develop an understanding of leadership that is more relevant to practice, we need

to embed questions of relationality into our understanding of leadership. To question old concepts of leadership is also addressed in a current publication in *The Leadership Quarterly* with the title “Zombie leadership: Dead ideas that still walk among us” (Haslam et al., 2024). The authors aim to challenge older assumptions about leadership that have been repeatedly refuted but still refuse to die, for example:

- Leadership is all about leaders: Leadership is the preserve of those who occupy formal leadership roles and can be understood by focusing on leaders alone.
- There are specific qualities that all great leaders ‘have’: Particular qualities (e.g., intelligence, charisma) equip particular people for leadership.
- There are specific things that all great leaders do: Particular behaviours (e.g., being fair, initiating change) are the hallmark of effective leadership.
- All leadership is the same: There is an essential ‘leadershipness’ that can be discerned across all contexts. (Haslam et al., 2024, p. 2)

These claims have been proven wrong and leadership is much more relational, context-specific, and depends on the unique setting of a group. Haslam et al. conclude that first, we need an alternative framework for thinking about and doing leadership and second, we need to develop “new forms of leadership training and development which take a whole group approach, which encourage the active involvement of all parties, and which measure success through the eyes of all members” (2024, p. 10).

The FLL participants also questioned old concepts of leadership and looked for alternatives. The call for shared and collective leadership was expressed several times, with one participant stating: “one leader will not be enough, we need collective leadership”. Overall, the FLL allowed participants to exchange and rethink their understanding of leadership. Furthermore, the FFL also enabled participants to strengthen their skills in working with people from different cultural backgrounds. Transcultural competence as the willingness and ability to develop commonalities while allowing cultural differences to continue to exist (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022) will be an

important enabler and prerequisite for dealing with futures shaped by cultural complexity. The role of leadership in a global context will be crucial to deal with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Against this backdrop, transcultural education in higher education can be defined as a

“pedagogy aiming to engage students from different cultures and disciplines with the purpose of guiding them through ideas and processes of working together in a way that respects differences, acknowledges common ground, and seeks to co-create new knowledge” (Zohar & Newhouse, 2019, p. 136).

Transcultural education and Futures Literacy Laboratories as a learning format with participants from various regional, national, organizational and professional cultures and with a focus on developing shared understandings and shared experiences can be seen as a promising concept for higher education.

“The purpose of transcultural education is to provide spaces for relational learning opportunities for students to engage with people across multiple layers of cultures (national, regional, organizational, professional, discipline-specific, etc.) in concrete, cooperative activities. By taking part in activities that require the identification and development of commonalities, the students experience learning from and with each other, and thus hone their ability to cooperate across cultures, which can in turn create new shared meanings and actions” (Baumann Montecinos et al. 2021, p. 241).

Taking a relational view implies that the world is not composed of things, it is composed of relationships and therefore there is no distance between the ‘observers’ and ‘the observed’. With this in mind, research should not only be concerned with what is but also contribute to what could or should be. This might be called “action research” and encourages researchers to join in “efforts to achieve ends they see as politically and socially valuable” (Gergen, 2009, p. 238). The FFL on transcultural leadership has helped us to explore promising research directions and the students from Germany, Vietnam, Poland, South Africa, and Brazil have covered relevant and forward-looking topics in this book.

Combining the concept of FLL with a transcultural approach was the idea behind the TLS 2022 and the starting point for exploring pos-

sible future perspectives of leadership in a global context. Ultimately, individual and collective imagination can be the starting point for desirable futures and therefore requires carefully designed learning formats.

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Creating the Future: Imagineering, Leadership and Literacies – An interview with Jörg Metelmann

Jörg Metelmann and Tobias Grünfelder

Tobias Grünfelder: Dear Jörg, why is it important that we change the way we imagine our futures? And why is it so difficult to imagine alternative futures?

Jörg Metelmann: Since the 1800s, capitalist industrial modernity has been built on a dynamic tension: With the suppression of the belief in divine providence in the course of enlightenment and secularization, the knowledge of contingency has grown – everything could be different after changing from the “Erfahrungsraum” (space of experience) to an “Erwartungshorizont” (horizon of experience) as the historian Reinhart Koselleck famously stated. This openness of the world is particularly important for the economic process, because an imagined and moldable future opens up the possibility for investment and profit. However, in order not to suffer any losses, this future must in turn be determined with maximum prognosis and made statistically probable, i.e. uncertainty must be converted into risk – this is what the various scenario techniques and design-thinking tools are working on. However, they all work under the ‘guiding star’ of a market logic of efficient allocation and global competitiveness, thus restricting the fundamental openness of (the development of) the world both by allowing only one model to prevail (the economy) and by rigorously playing with it quantitatively and algorithmically. You can see this clearly if you enter “Berlin 2050” into Google: Everything looks roughly the same, only with more greenery and a landing station for drones, be-

cause these are the parameters (ecology, technology) that can be extrapolated from today. But for a society that has to reinvent itself because it has to solve serious social problems (housing, education, migration) in the face of global developments (climate change, digitalization), such a futurism of extrapolating the expected cannot suffice. In my opinion, we ought to think more about openness again, which is a fundamental characteristic of modern life – and resist economic-pragmatic “constraints” for a moment longer. However, this is difficult, precisely because calculating the world worked well for a very long time and was able to create considerable prosperity.

Tobias Grünfelder: What does imagineering mean and how can we approach alternative futures?

Jörg Metelmann: “Imagineering” is a trademarked term used by the Walt Disney Corporation to describe an entrepreneurial creative process. The interplay of creativity, technology and profitability that is meant by this term was used above all in the Disney Theme Parks, true to the motto “If we can dream it, we can do it”. In our anthology “Imagineering”, Harald Welzer and I have suggested that this process should not only be understood as an organizational one, but also as a genuinely social one, precisely because there is a kind of capitalist realism that I mentioned above – and the coming new world needs new approaches that also question the fixed amalgam of our reliance on the market, technology and the functional imagination of design. In my new book, I call this almost blind trust “utopian realities”, because we are emotionally very deeply attached to these imaginary worlds of efficient markets, redeeming technology and inventive design, even though they are utopian at their core. It is therefore a matter of creating other emotional ties to better futures alongside the triumphant advance of Imagineering – the concept congenially combines all three. This is already happening – just think of the debates surrounding the four-day week with full pay or unconditional basic income. This is a return to the egalitarian and ascetic strand that Thomas Morus had already sketched out at the beginning of the 16th century: Although there is a compulsion to work in “Utopia”, people are freed from the fear of having nothing to eat tomorrow, because “Greedy and rapacious

cious all living creatures are always made only by the fear of future want”, as Morus (the humanists gave themselves also a Latin name) writes in the chapter on the “intercourse of Utopians with one another”. However, just how difficult it is to work on this reconfiguration of our collective emotional balance is demonstrated by almost all debates, from the AI Act to the Heating Act and Veggie Day, which are immediately accompanied by resistance, polarization and prohibitionist rhetoric.

Tobias Grünfelder: What will or can be the role of leadership? And what will and can be the role of values?

Jörg Metelmann: At the heart of the current debate on values is the re-orientation of the term “freedom”. In the Coronavirus era, we got a taste of the drastic consequences of these redefinitions – many observers saw the pandemic restrictions as a blueprint for the political regimes of a carbon-neutral society in which not everyone can do what they want when it comes to travelling, eating and owning. The result was social division along the lines of a mutual accusation of fascism: Some criticized a totalitarian state, others a totalitarian individual with a claim to self-realization and singularity.

In my opinion, the revitalization of transformation energies requires two things: contexts and transtemporal management. It is becoming increasingly clear that top-down ideas from politics can be no more than a discursive framework and legal safeguard – practice takes place in very concrete contexts in which there are always deviations, both positive and negative. In these concrete contexts (in the village, in the neighborhood, in the administration, in the corporate department), the figure of the “imagineer” (from Imagineering) or the “transformatician” (who implements transformatics, a new doctrine of change) can help to mediate between the familiar old and the unfamiliar new. It is about a mediator between different layers of time, a journey through time. When transformation research distinguishes between system knowledge, target knowledge and transformation knowledge, then “knowledge” actually means “lifeworld at different points in time”, because it is about change in a desired sense from state A today to state B tomorrow. Transtemporal leadership is above all a process of

visualization in which people, together with their values and desires, arrive at a new image of themselves and gradually try to adapt their actions to this new “we”. Such an adaptation is not a purely passive one, such as when people react to global warming by remodeling old people’s homes to protect vulnerable groups. In an active, organized and innovatively managed process, the focus is on deciding what a community wants to do together.

Tobias Grünfelder: How can we support students to prepare for the future? How do we prepare students for relationality, complexity and fictionality?

Jörg Metelmann: Together with Ulrike Landfester, I conducted empirical research on this a few years ago in the HSG (University of St.Gallen, Switzerland) Rectorate project “Humanities’ Business”. Using a sample of international business universities (including Stockholm, Lancaster, ESADE), we investigated the question of how exactly the humanities and social sciences are integrated into business and technology education – because it is precisely these subjects that are often ascribed the role of teaching relationality, complexity and fictionality. The answer: no one has a precise plan; the informal assumption (hope, presumption) is that this integration will “somehow” be achieved by the students.

Based on this finding, Ulrike and I developed a literacies model in the 2019 book “Transformative Management Education” and accompanying articles that can be methodically applied to almost any subject matter, as it illuminates the topics from four basic perspectives: *Conceptual literacy* reflects the model character of each concept or artefact in terms of its theoretical-strategic steps to establish the highest possible plausibility; *cultural literacy* focuses on the socio-historical contexts of meaning of the emergence and impact of the objects of study; *social literacy* focuses on the social embedding of concepts, objects or actions, i.e., the familial, organizational and institutional framework conditions; *interactional literacy* sheds light on the exchange processes between actors, which in the digitalized modern age are primarily characterized by mediality and technological drift. In our experience, such a perspective makes it possible, after just a few joint

practice steps, to no longer regard the objects of investigation as a transparent glass that expresses the real content or substance unfiltered, but to be able to determine the elementary cultural embedding in a differentiated way.

This literacies analysis can be used as a meta-method, e.g., to understand the wide variety of future-creating tools from design thinking to futures literacy to scenario techniques in terms of their respective epistemic and empirical characteristics. In this way, critical observation of the present and the future can be combined.

Tobias Grünfelder: Thank you, Jörg, for this interview and for sharing your insights with us.

Part II

Business and Economical Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

How does Psychological Safety Foster Transcultural Leadership?

A Cross-Methodical Approach to Psychological Safety and its Implications

Janine Kurz, Talita Clerc and Ishika Avinash Shirke

Abstract

In this paper the topic of psychological safety is set in context to transcultural learning within companies. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews with experts on the topic of transculturality as well as with people in leadership positions in charge of a diverse team have been conducted and analyzed. These leaders are all from one selected company, in which a survey was conducted to identify the level of psychological safety of said company. All data will be cross referenced and the goal is to determine how psychological safety is important for transcultural learning and how people in leadership positions can make or break a diverse team.

1. Introduction

We live in a world of rapid change. The way we communicate, interact and work is constantly changing. As a result, companies must always be in a state of flux if they are not to be left behind and disappear into irrelevance. Globalization is the keyword here. And with globalization comes diversity in companies (Elbe, 2017). The number of employees with a diverse background has been growing for many years, with especially the US having the highest foreign-born labor force worldwide in 2022 with 32.15 million people, followed by Germany with 8.99 million and the UK with 6.05 million.¹ But how do you do justice to these employees? What do employees who may find themselves in a company far away from their home country or cultural background need in order to give the company an advantage in the head-to-head race of the 21st century with precisely their uniqueness? This is where the topics of transculturality, psychological safety and leadership come into play. It is suggested that diverse teams especially need a psychologically safe environment that enables them to learn from possible failures and embraces them as they are with all their individuality. Psychological safety as a concept is seen as a key factor of constant learning in teams, and transcultural learning needs to be undertaken for a team to come together and make the most use of all the existing differences within their inherent diversity. The underlying research question of this paper is:

How can a person in a leadership position (leading a diverse team) establish psychological safety as a foundation for transcultural learning?

What kind of leadership measurements can be made and what leaders do in practice to establish psychological safety will be discussed in theory as well as in practice.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1339018/countries-highest-foreign-born-labor-workforce-worldwide/>

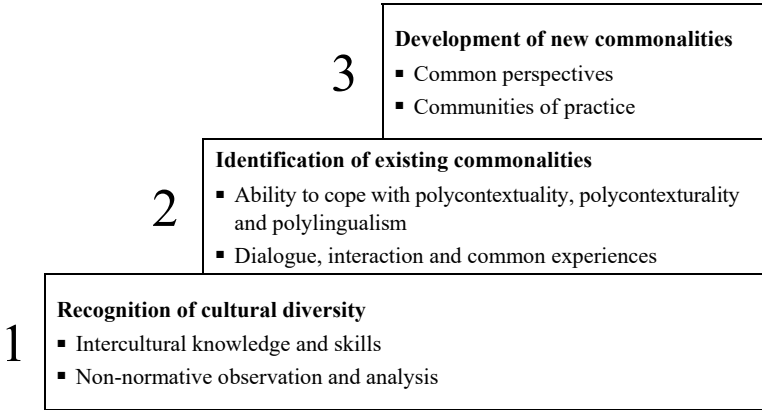
2. Theoretical Concepts

In the following, this chapter will look at three concepts in particular: what transcultural learning is, what psychological safety means and what leadership has to be like to make transcultural learning happen.

2.1 Transcultural Learning

Before we examine the model of transcultural learning, we first need to define what is meant by transculturality. This term can be traced back to the 1930s to sociologist Robert E. Park, who tried to coin an understanding of culture that went beyond what was thought at that time (Wieland, 2016). Transculturality is the idea of cultures as concepts that can penetrate and permeate each other, with the prefix “trans” making clear that this way of thinking goes beyond the old ideas of cultures as well as establishing that there are no clear borders between cultures but many commonalities and ties between them. It is important to understand that Welsch still sees identity as specific to local, regional or national preferences (Welsch, 2014).

Figure 1: 3-Step Model of Transcultural Learning



Source: Baumann Montecinos, 2022, p. 201.

The model of transcultural learning used for this paper is based on the works of Baumann Montecinos and Wieland and includes three steps: Recognition of cultural diversity, identification of existing commonalities and the development of new commonalities (see Figure 1) (Baumann Montecinos et al., 2023; Baumann Montecinos, 2022). The first step is to acknowledge existing diversity, mostly based on the traditional view on culture. It is recommended that this diversity is approached with a non-normative attitude which includes observing, listening and understanding. Therefore, commonalities can be found and conflict potentials can be found at an early stage. One should also be aware of one's own cultural biases and flaws regarding cultural knowledge and awareness (Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

Step two of the transcultural learning model is to identify commonalities that already exist in the context of a group or a team. It depends heavily on dialogue and interaction as well as experiences that are common to the group. These commonalities can be found in different contexts that in the terminology of Relational Economics, can be poly-contextual (different possible backgrounds of stakeholders), polycontextual (multiple decision logics of stakeholders) as well as polylingual (multiple language games of various stakeholders) (Wieland, 2020). Through shared practices and experiences, commonalities can be established on any level and across any cultural boundary. (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022; Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

“Cultural commonalities can be shared, acquired, disseminated, integrated, negotiated or changed, and involve a means of coordinating meaning. They can be shared ways of thinking, feeling and/or acting.” (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022, p. 47)

The third step of transcultural learning is the development of new commonalities, based on the previous steps. Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder state that new cultural commonalities must be based on a willingness to continuously learn from one another (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). Shared time and experience will lead to new perspectives in a group, which will also transform this team into a community of practice (CoP). These communities will have structures that facilitate transcultural learning and will lay the groundwork for the establishment of more commonalities in the sense of customs and

routines that are exemplary for this group or team. The people who belong to this CoP will generate their own meaning and attributions (Baumann Montecinos, 2022). These commonalities, however, are not the same as the homogenization of a community and are not meant to destroy the diversity that is inherent to a group with varying backgrounds (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder 2022). Overall, the transcultural learning process tries to develop relationships in a wide variety of contexts provided by the Relational Economics view (Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

“These considerations make it clear that the relational approach has far-reaching consequences not only for our understanding of culture and cultural commonalities, but also for our understanding of what it takes to cooperate successfully across cultural borders.” (Baumann Montecinos, 2022, p. 204)

Culture or better: differences in culture should be seen by a company as capital to rely on and so do newly established cultural commonalities, which are the result of the third step of transcultural learning. (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022; Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

In this paper it will be shown how the people interviewed assess the status of their team based on the transcultural learning steps.

2.2 *Psychological Safety*

The idea of psychological safety was first introduced by Schein and Bennis in 1965 (Frazier et al., 2017) but has since been developed by Amy C. Edmondson, a professor of leadership and management at Harvard University. In her 1999 paper she characterizes psychological safety as “[...] a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking [...]” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 350) She sees psychological safety as a basis for enabling team learning in a constantly changing and uncertain environment (Edmondson, 1999), whereas Schein and Bennis see it more as part of the organizational change and learning process (Frazier et al. 2017). For a team to overcome hurdles they have to learn from their mistakes by

being able to address them in an open and constructive way (Edmondson, 1999). But not all working environments feel safe enough for people to voice their concerns without fear of losing out on career opportunities or being socially sanctioned (Edmondson, 1999; Baer & Frese 2003). In a psychologically safe environment, team members feel free to seek and take on board feedback and engage in discussions that also include talking about mistakes which, all in all, lead to better job performance as well as possibilities of learning (Edmondson, 1999; Baer & Frese, 2003; Carmeli et al., 2014). Understanding mistakes not as failures but as chances to learn is only possible if people are allowed to admit their failures without fear (Pinnow, 2005; Hirak et al., 2012). Other positive outcomes are more contributions for new ideas as well as searching for information and more openness to alternative solutions. It creates an environment where creativity can grow and experimentation is welcome (Goller & Laufer, 2018). Such an environment is key for any organization to remain competitive in the market as it produces the innovations needed in a rapidly changing world (Carmeli et al., 2010).

“Team psychological safety involves but goes beyond interpersonal trust; it describes a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves.” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354)

Every human needs a feeling of safety as well as the freedom to be able to grow and express themselves, but everyone needs a different mix of these factors to truly fulfil their potential. This balance has to be provided particularly by leaders (Pinnow, 2005). In her 2003 paper, Edmondson also looked at people in leadership positions. The findings of her study indicate a central role of leaders in facilitating psychological safety, something which is also stated by Hirak, Peng, Carmeli and Schaubroeck (Edmondson, 2003; Hirak et al., 2012). With their engagement to get everyone on board for a project, to encourage people to speak up and make room for discussion and also contribute to a change in behavior of team members, leaders are essential for their teams (Edmondson, 2003). Another key word is leader inclusiveness, behavior described by Nemphard and Edmondson as creating psychological safety through direct invitation to freely speak up in discus-

sions that overcome boundaries and status (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

For Edmondson, respect is a foundation of psychological safety. Group members want to feel respected and will therefore feel encouraged to speak up and be taken seriously (Edmondson, 1999). Pinnow goes as far as to say respect is the existential framework of any organization. Without respect, he claims creativity, flexibility, cooperation and the productivity of a whole company is inhibited (Pinnow, 2005).

Trust is also mentioned by Pinnow, who bases the retention of trust on personal characteristics such as “[...] reliability, straightforwardness, fairness, loyalty, authenticity, honesty and credibility [...]” (Pinnow, 2005, p. 125) but who also makes it clear that these are not what instills trust in the first place. Trust in a leader is put in motion through a person making themselves in some way vulnerable (Pinnow, 2005). Edmondson makes a distinction between trust and psychological safety as she sees the focus of psychological safety on the self and trust as a focus on another person (Carmeli et al., 2010).

Openness is another important characteristic that connects psychological safety and that has to be displayed by leaders. Along with accessibility and availability (physically as well as psychologically) for the needs and worries of their co-workers, openness can facilitate psychological safety (Carmeli et al., 2010; Hirak et al., 2012). These three things (openness, accessibility and availability) are also crucial for inclusive leadership (Carmeli et al., 2010).

In companies nowadays, there is a trend to speak of organizational communities of practice (OCoPs), which are used for the global coordination of innovations and the distribution of best practice and which are designed as a diverse team that merges members from different countries and cultures in order to be able to leverage a wide pool of expertise (Kirkman et al., 2013). The knowledge of these communities also includes cultural norms, historical knowledge and the state of research in a country and can be used to adapt new measures in different countries to local needs (Kirkman et al., 2013). Kirkman et al. (2023) assume that psychological safety in an OCoP can lead to improved communication processes and stimulate the exchange of information among the various members and thus reinforce the general positive effects of the existing diversity (Kirkman et al., 2013) In their

2013 study, the OCoPs that performed best were those with either very high or very low heterogeneity at national level. By contrast, OCoPs with moderate diversity performed worse in comparison. The results of the study may indicate that managers who establish psychological safety in their teams with higher heterogeneity perform better, as cooperation is easier here. (Kirkman et al., 2013)

Through the interviews conducted, the paper will try to understand how leaders can and do establish and maintain psychological safety.

2.3 Leadership

“Leadership is generally regarded as a person’s psychological and social ability in dealing with people. In addition to personality traits of the manager, other factors such as professional authority, situational conditions, the use of leadership techniques and social relationships are of decisive importance for successful leadership, which thus becomes a complex social process.” (Bratscher et al., 2023, p. 23-24, translated from German)

In a world that is shaped by globalization and complexity, leadership is one of the most important aspects within a company (Au, 2017). In every situation, a leader will need to balance between a state of stability and instability, between times of change and times of consistency (Au, 2017). Leadership in the 21st century focuses on the human and not only on monetary incentives, goods or data (Pinnow, 2005). Through leadership, framework conditions are created, networks are built and maintained and ideas are created through open and engaging communication (Au, 2017). Primarily a leader has to enable their co-workers to be creative and to minimize obstacles to achieve this creativity. Instead of monetary compensation, motivation and trust is what brings about creativity (Meyer, 2017).

People in leadership positions shape and form corporate culture and are the link between stakeholders in and outside the company; therefore they may also be in charge of how cooperation with other cultures and countries takes place (Pinnow, 2005). They also shape the culture of their team (Zapke-Schauer, 2005). Therefore they have to be a role

model that is based on the pillars of responsibility, reliability, fairness and service (Pinnow, 2005). To lead is not to command and control and nothing else. Leaders need to understand the people they work with, support their wishes and needs (Zapke-Schauer, 2005). Leaders have to give impulses to their coworkers and to set up boundaries in which work can happen freely and people are encouraged to be themselves and do their best. For this, leaders have to state an easy-to-understand mission and a vision that is closely linked to it (Pinnow, 2005). Without a concrete goal to achieve, a team cannot truly come together (Zapke-Schauer, 2005).

Errors occur in all walks of life and so work-related mistakes are an everyday occurrence that should not be punished by a leader but acknowledged through open communication. Leaders have to show solidarity and give a feeling of safety. Leaders should look, listen and learn to establish safety, confidence and trust. Leaders need to create a space where everyone can be themselves and is encouraged to work alongside others. If this is feasible it is directly linked to the values that a leader provides in the work context (Pinnow, 2005).

Leaders are not perfect and they will never be. To be human means to be flawed. But flaws can be seen, addressed and overcome through continuous learning processes. As an organization grows and changes so do the leaders within it. Through this learning, the leader can develop new skills such as better communication, new views on things and new behaviors dealing with problems, people and themselves (Jetter & Rainer, 2017).

There are as many types of leadership styles as there are people. Every leader has their own style, but this paper will mostly focus on transformational, relational and authentic leadership. This leadership style is the opposite of transactional leadership, which is still very common. Instead of exchanging salary for goal fulfilment, transformational leadership goes beyond money as compensation. Leaders want their team to be intellectually challenged by their work and are encouraged to stay in close contact with their peers to develop new ideas. The job of everyone is supposed to have meaning for the employee, and bringing in thoughts and ideas is highly desired (Matheus, 2021). Leaders with this style stress a shared vision and are more likely to act as role models for their team. They encourage thinking outside the box

and therefore promote reflexivity as well as open communication including questioning, reviewing and exploring. Such leaders literally transform their attitudes and behaviors and pave the way for change and growth (Carmeli et al., 2014).

Relational leadership is based on the interpersonal and individual relationships between people, with a focus on personal perceptions, behavior and instincts (Carmeli et al., 2010). It is very important for building trust within a team and the bonds that arise as a result. (Burt, 2015) Relationship-oriented leaders focus on involving everyone, try to establish psychological safety in the team and are very interested in feedback and learning from mistakes. (Hirak et al., 2012) The term “relational leadership” was conceptualized by Mary Uhl-Bien and emphasizes the importance of relationships in leadership dynamics. In her 2006 article, Uhl-Bien describes relational leadership as not just being about the leader’s actions or traits but as about how leaders interact with others and how those interactions shape outcomes. The key aspects of this leadership style for Uhl-Bien (2006) are: Interconnectedness, collaboration, empowerment, adaptability and ethical considerations. Relational leadership acknowledges that individuals within an organization or group are interconnected and interdependent. Leaders therefore have to recognize the significance of these connections and seek to understand and leverage them for the collective good (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Rather than focusing solely on individual authority or control, relational leadership has to emphasize collaboration and mutual influence. Leaders therefore have to work with others in a cooperative manner, valuing diverse perspectives and fostering a sense of shared purpose. They empower others by building trust, fostering open communication, and supporting the development of their team members. For this, relational leaders have to create an environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and capable of contributing to the group’s goals. Relational leadership has to be a style of leadership that is adaptable and responsive to changing circumstances. Leaders understand relationships in which they can evolve over time and are therefore in need of adjustment in their approaches to maintain alignment and effectiveness. Lastly, ethics play a central role in relational leadership. Leaders need to be mindful of the ethical implications of their actions and de-

cisions, striving to uphold principles of fairness, integrity, and accountability in their interactions with others (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Overall, relational leadership emphasizes the importance of building and nurturing positive relationships as a foundation for effective leadership. It recognizes that leadership is not a solitary endeavor but rather a collective process that emerges from the dynamic interplay of relationships within a social context (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Communication processes in particular characterize relational leadership, as communication can create a relational reality. (Baumann Montecinos et al., 2023) Leadership here becomes an iterative, non-hierarchical and dynamic process that involves employees at different levels (Baumann Montecinos et al., 2023). In order to anchor relational leadership in a company, an organization must turn away from a traditional view of leadership and take more account of collective concerns within the company. These include work climate, team climate and team performance (Baumann Montecinos et al., 2023).

Another leadership style to mention is authentic leadership, which is based on acting in accordance with one's true self and beliefs as well as personal experiences (Eid et al., 2012). Leaders that commit to this style

“[...] tend to foster greater self awareness, relational transparency, an internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing in the sense of comprehensive information search and processing, resulting in positive self-development in followers [...]” (Eid et al., 2012, p. 56-57).

The interviews will give a deeper understanding of how leaders see themselves in their position and whether they show signs of being a transformational, relational and/or authentic leader for their individual teams.

3. *Methodology*

To understand the concepts in a more profound and comprehensive manner, a mixed-method analysis was chosen, a technique that provokes ambiguity among some authors, as evidenced by Stokes & Uequart (2013). The authors suggest that this methodological basis is

plural, as it comprises both deductive (quantitative) and inductive (qualitative) reasoning; in other words, the combination of methods occurs through a pragmatic approach. Therefore, the mixed method that was chosen serves the purpose of complementarity and the process of connecting (Palinkas et al., 2011).

The company that collaborated with this paper was established around 70 years ago in Germany and had approximately 10.000 employees at over 340 locations in 26 countries worldwide at the time this paper was written. Most of its facilities are located in Europe. It operates in the industries of trade, engineering and services and has five main business units. All employees interviewed at the time were working in Germany. The company also has a diversity campaign based on the Diversity Charter.²

3.1 Quantitative Method

The chosen instrument for collecting quantitative data was a survey consisting of 38 questions divided into five sections. The quantitative analysis obtained 38 responses from a varied sample group, without any specific criteria. Since the number of responses was only 38, an equation was created for each analyzed section, except for the socio-demographic information. In this sense, the instrument is hybrid, in the form of an anonymous questionnaire that contains closed questions with multiple-choice options, most of which follow the Likert (1932) scale. The survey was not distributed to the whole company but through a contact within the company to a certain pool of people with appropriate expertise in the topic of study.

Equations were created based on the responses. The equations were made in blocks, coming from the sum of the responses. It is worth noting that some questions were given a higher significance, which is shown in Table 1. The higher significance was chosen due to some questions in their respective category holding more value for the research question. The questions with a significance level of 2 were multiplied by this respective degree. In this way, the questions were

² <https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de/>

previously classified according to the significance of the question for that block category, which was taken into account when formulating the final result: the equation used in our data analysis. The following table demonstrates the logic build.

Table 1: The questions of the survey

Cate- gory	Questions	Signifi- cance
Socio Demographic Information	What is your gender?	0
	What is your sexual orientation?	0
	How old are you?	0
	What is your nationality?	0
	What country are you currently working in? Which city?	0
	What is your religion?	0
	Are you currently in a leadership position?	0
	Which department do you currently work in?	0
	How long have you been working for this company?	0
Organisational Environment	Do you feel that you can bring your whole self to work without any fear of negative consequences with regard to your reputation, status or career?	1
	How constructive do you find your work environment?	2
	How do you rate the work environment within your company?	1
	Are you afraid of saying “the wrong thing” or making mistakes at work?	1
	How secure do you feel in your position?	1
	Are mistakes and weaknesses seen as learning opportunities in your company?	1
	Have you ever been socially sanctioned, i.e. exposed, rejected or punished by others at work?	1
	Would you recommend the company you work in to other people?	2

Organisational Culture	Within your company, how important is cultural diversity?	1
	Does your company facilitate conversations where people from different locations talk about different things?	2
	How would you rate equality in your company?	1
	Are there people from different backgrounds in your direct team? (nationality, culture, religion, etc.)	1
	If you answered yes to the last answer, can you give more details about your team's nationality, culture and/or religion?	1
Teamwork	How big is your team?	1
	How easily do you trust your colleagues on a professional level when working in a team?	1
	Do you think your talents and skills are valued and used by your team? How valuable do you feel you are to your team?	1
	How often are you able to openly discuss ideas, new approaches and express your opinions within your team?	2
	How often are you afraid to express your opinion and thereby compromise harmony and co-operation within a team?	2
	Do you see yourself on an equal footing with your colleagues? Are there people from different backgrounds in your direct team? (nationality, culture, religion, etc.)	1
Leadership	Do you see yourself on an equal footing with your supervisor(s)?	1
	Does your supervisor encourage you to think outside the box?	1
	Is/Are your supervisor(s) a source of motivation in your work-place?	1
	Is your manager a person you can look up to?	1
	Has / Have your manager(s) given you the opportunity to learn from past mistakes and deal with them constructively?	2
	How insecure do you feel when dealing with your supervisor(s)?	2
	How often do you think your opinion is recognized by your supervisor(s)?	1
	There are different leadership roles. Which role do you think best suits your current line manager?	1

Source: Own table.

Statistical analysis was performed using non-parametric tests to adequately work with the number of responses. In case of comparisons between two categories, the Mann-Whitney Test was used; and in the case of three or more, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used.

3.2 *Qualitative Method*

The qualitative stage was characterized by semi-structured interviews, whose transcription was done for subsequent coding, using the Burnard method presented by Stokes & Uequehart (2013) and Ligurgo et al. (2018). The interview parameters were in accordance with those proposed in Moriarty's review (2011); that is, the duration was around one hour, anonymity was assured, and the questions could be grouped and their order modified, reflecting the usual flexibility of the semi-structured interview.

There were two qualitative steps. The first was to interview three experts in July 2023, two in the field of transculturality and one from psychology, and the second was with four leaders from the company in December 2023, as indicated by a contact. All leaders questioned had a team of at least 5 or more people of which several had non-German backgrounds in a Germany-based company. The data collection profile is an in-depth investigation with small samples (Leitão & Prates, 2017), as it seeks to look deeply into a condition proposed by quantitative research. Thus, justifying the importance of collecting data with specialists in order to better understand the meanings of each concept in depth.

Data collection was done with a script previously formulated by the researchers themselves but with openness to the spontaneity of conversational flow. It is important to note that the scripted questions for the first and second stages were different; that means the expert and leader interviews respectively. Data analysis was done in two ways: top-down and bottom-up (also known as deductive and inductive coding, respectively). The first is when categories are pre-defined based on theory, and the second involves emerging themes from interviews, understood as inductive reasoning; that is, categories are built from the material (Ligurgo et al., 2018; Dubois & Gadde, 2002). At the end

of the interpretation and categorization of all interviews, it was verified which categories were most present in the reports of all participants or had considerable relevance and impact according to the research objective. The combination is called abductive, as there is an opportunity to capture and combine the systemic profile of the field with the theoretical framework (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Thus, seeking a more comprehensive understanding, top-down analysis was combined with bottom-up analysis (Leitão & Prates 2017).

Table 2: Comparison between Equations vs. Gender

What is your gender?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	Man	30	18.25	22.50	0.183
	Woman	8	24.19	24.00	
Organizational Culture	Man	30	20.33	13.00	0.388
	Woman	8	16.38	12.00	
Teamwork	Man	30	18.72	30.00	0.407
	Woman	8	22.44	30.50	
Leadership	Man	30	18.77	37.50	0.449
	Woman	8	22.25	40.00	

*significant difference for Mann-Whitney Test

Source: Own table.

Categorization encompasses most of the concepts, through data interpretation and redefinition. Others were created as needed. In this sense, open coding (data categorization) and axial coding (enhancement and articulation of new categories, as a result) occurred. Thus, the data was grouped through connections between categories and subcategories.

4. Analysis

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Table 3 present the average ranking used in statistical tests, the median, and the p-value of the respective tests conducted.

Although no significant result was found according to the Mann-Whitney test, it is important to highlight the difference between the medians. The female group presented higher medians, except for the Organizational Culture (OC) variable, which saw a decrease. This indicates that there is no distinction in psychological safety between the two genders, even though there is a tendency for the female group to indicate higher scores. In the case of the decrease in OC, it should be considered that the corporate culture may be negatively affecting this group.

Table 3: Comparison between Equations vs. Age

How old are you?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	27 - 42 Years	13	16.58	21.00	0.394
	43 - 58 Years	17	21.62	24.00	
	Over 59 Years	7	17.14	22.00	
Organizational Culture	27 - 42 Years	13	13.62	11.00	0.075
	43 - 58 Years	17	22.32	13.00	
	Over 59 Years	7	20.93	13.00	
Teamwork	27 - 42 Years	13	16.77	30.00	0.322
	43 - 58 Years	17	21.88	32.00	
	Over 59 Years	7	16.14	29.00	
Leadership	27 - 42 Years	13	16.15	35.00	0.004*
	43 - 58 Years	17	24.97	41.00	
	Over 59 Years	7	9.79	31.00	

*significant difference for Kruskal-Wallis Test

Source: Own table.

A significant result was found in this Kruskal-Wallis test for the leadership variable; that is the 43-58 category (Gen X) showed a high median, followed by the 27-42 category (millennials), and finished by Over 59

(the baby boomer generation). With this, it can be inferred that the intermediate group demonstrates greater psychological safety regarding their leaders than the others. Additionally, OC presents a p-value of less than 0.1, although not significant. In this result, unlike the other two, the youngest group presented a lower median. Following this logic, the youngest group indicates less security regarding organizational culture.

Table 4: Comparison German vs. Non-German

Are they German?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	German	35	20.04	23.00	0.319
	Not German	3	13.17	21.00	
Organizational Culture	German	35	19.60	13.00	0.879
	Not German	3	18.33	12.00	
Teamwork	German	35	20.13	30.00	0.247
	Not German	3	12.17	29.00	
Leadership	German	35	19.54	38.00	0.959
	Not German	3	19.00	38.00	

*significant difference for Mann-Whitney Test

Source: Own Table.

In Table 4, (refers to question 5 “What is your nationality? Which city are you from?” from the survey), no significant result was found, which was already expected due to the discrepancy between the samples. The difference between the medians was minimal, being non-existent for the leadership equation. In this sense, regardless of being German or not, the table indicates that both groups feel secure, highlighting that nationality does not influence this security involving each of the question blocks.

No significant difference was found when comparing equations of each question block and people’s religion. The difference between the medians between atheism and Christianity is null or very close to it, while the “Other” alternative appears to be lower. This indicates that religion does not impact the degree of security that the company conveys.

Table 5: Comparison between Equations vs. Religion

What is your religion?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	I am an Atheist	19	21.13	23.00	0.185
	I am Christian	16	19.63	23.50	
	Other	3	8.50	20.00	
Organizational Culture	I am an Atheist	19	19.87	13.00	0.413
	I am Christian	16	20.56	13.00	
	Other	3	11.50	12.00	
Teamwork	I am an Atheist	19	20.50	30.00	0.850
	I am Christian	16	18.63	30.00	
	Other	3	17.83	30.00	
Leadership	I am an Atheist	19	20.21	38.00	0.370
	I am Christian	16	20.28	38.50	
	Other	3	10.83	30.00	

*significant difference for Kruskal-Wallis Test

Source: Own table.

Table 6: Comparison between Equation vs. Leadership positions

How long have you been in a leadership position?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	Less than 5 years	12	24.29	24.50	0.071
	Over 5 years	26	17.29	21.50	
Organizational Culture	Less than 5 years	12	20.54	13.00	0.699
	Over 5 years	26	19.02	13.00	
Teamwork	Less than 5 years	12	20.25	30.50	0.792
	Over 5 years	26	19.15	30.00	
Leadership	Less than 5 years	12	22.04	38.50	0.343
	Over 5 years	26	18.33	37.50	

*significant difference for Mann-Whitney Test

Source: Own table.

Although there is no significant result, according to the Mann-Whitney test, there is a relevant result in the Organizational Environment block with a sample of leaders, as it is data of less than 0.1. It is observed that people with more than 5 years in this leadership position show less security. An analysis was made between leaders and non-leaders, yet no significant or relevant difference was found.

Table 7: Comparison between Equations vs. Time Working

How long have you been working for this company?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	Less than a year	2	29.50	25.50	0.267
	1-5 years	10	23.25	24.00	
	5-10 years	6	14.33	21.00	
	Over 10 years	20	18.18	22.00	
Organizational Culture	Less than a year	2	35.75	15.50	0.852
	1-5 years	10	17.50	12.50	
	5-10 years	6	17.58	12.00	
	Over 10 years	20	19.45	13.00	
Teamwork	Less than a year	2	29.50	32.50	0.987
	1-5 years	10	18.40	30.00	
	5-10 years	6	19.42	29.50	
	Over 10 years	20	19.08	30.00	
Leadership	Less than a year	2	25.50	-	0.727
	1-5 years	10	21.35	36.50	
	5-10 years	6	18.08	34.50	
	Over 10 years	20	18.40	37.50	

*significant difference for Kruskal-Wallis Test

Source: Own table.

When comparing the equations of the blocks and the length of employment in the company, no significant result was found. The medians vary depending on the block. The greatest difference was in the Organizational Environment category, where the group with less time in the company indicates a higher median, while those who have been in the company between 5-10 years would be lower. This fact demonstrates that newer employees in the company feel more secure than those who have been there longer.

The comparison of the response block and the number of people per team does not show a significant difference. However, the leadership block is the one that presents the greatest discrepancy between the medians, indicating that larger teams have less psychological safety compared to a group of 4-10 members.

Table 8: Comparison between Equations vs. Number of Members

What is your team size?		N	Mean Rank	Median	p-value
Organization Environment	4-10 members	11	20.82	24.00	0.188
	+10 members	23	15.91	22.00	
Organizational Culture	4-10 members	11	17.09	13.00	0.885
	+10 members	23	17.70	13.00	
Teamwork	4-10 members	11	20.23	32.00	0.274
	+10 members	23	16.20	30.00	
Leadership	4-10 members	11	21.27	40.00	0.133
	+10 members	23	15.70	38.00	

*significant difference for Mann-Whitney Test

Source: Own table.

Another important data point to highlight is the evaluation of the corporate environment, with an average of 8.0. In this sense, it indicates a positive result and, consequently, a notable effect on well-being. However, the company's eNPS (employee net promoter score; a measurement tool for satisfaction at work)³ is not compatible with this, as it is 55. So, although the view of the environment is positive, there is no good recommendation from its employees.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The interviews were divided into two different groups. The first group were academic experts in the fields of Transculturality, Psychology, and Psychological Safety. At this stage, the focus was on obtaining a better understanding of the concepts that underline this chapter. For the purpose of evaluation, open and axial coding was conducted, and the insights will be presented subsequently.

The second group were leaders from the same company that participated in the survey. The objective was to have a group of leaders whose interviews would provide more specific insights into the reality and actions of the company.

³ For more information see Yaneva (2018).

4.2.1 Experts

The interviews were conducted with three experts: Prof. Dr. Thomas Kühn from the IPU Berlin who specializes in Psychology and two experts in Transculturality, Prof. Dr. Julika Baumann Montecinos from HFU Business School and Dr. Jessica Geraldo Schwengber from Zeppelin University, the latter also gave further insight into the topic of psychological safety. The following are the categories of the open and axial coding:

Table 9: Codes with Experts

Deductive Categories	Inductive Categories
<i>Transculturality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge (of cultures and people) – Diversity // Inclusivity (in a company) – VUCA and BANI
<i>Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Transculturality and leadership – Attitudes of leaders = positive/negative – Power dynamics / hierarchies
<i>Psychological Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hurdles for fostering PS // How to do it – Feeling of “belonging”
<i>Finding Commonalities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared activities / project – How leaders create a sense of belonging & psychological safety via shared practices
<i>Seeing / Understanding Differences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Difference in background / origins / lifestyle
<i>Establishing new Commonalities (as a group)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementing new values – Transcultural Caravan // Transcultural Student Research Group
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contact Interaction // Allowing people to interact with one another // Openness
<i>Questions from the Interviewer // Fluff // Not of relevance for the topic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – General information on interviewee’s background

Source: Own table.

4.2.2 Leaders

In Table 10 the profile of the leaders is indicated. It is followed by the code categorization used for the analysis.

Table 10: Leader's Profile

	Leader 1	Leader 2	Leader 3	Leader 4
<i>Academic education</i>	Engineer	Engineer	-	Engineer
<i>Gender</i>	Male	Male	Male	Male
<i>Duration of employment</i>	+25 years	~10 years	-	Less than 2 years
<i>Position</i>	Supervisor	Leader	Supervisor	Leader

Source: Own table.

Table 11: Codes with Leaders

Deductive Categories	Inductive Categories
<i>Transculturality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Allegories (for culture) – Knowledge (of cultures and people) – Not using cultural diversity
<i>Leadership</i>	– Feedback (culture) / Learning from mistakes
<i>Psychological Safety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Communication and establishing new commonalities – Enabling leader behaviour
<i>Different Cultures</i>	– Stereotypes
<i>Seeing / Understanding Differences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Difference in background / origins / lifestyle – Difference in activities / workload
<i>Establishing new Commonalities (as a group / company)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unofficial events – Company diversity agenda / campaigns
<i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Language barrier // Misunderstandings – Contact Interaction
<i>Questions from the Interviewer // Fluff</i>	– General information about the team and the colleagues

Source: Own table.

5. Findings

A slight paradigm shift was observed when the concept of BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear and Incomprehensible) arose post-pandemic. BANI, captured a lot of issues that were otherwise easily overlooked in its counterpart VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity). However, a common thread between these concepts was the cultivation of psychological safety. Since its origin back in 1965, the empirical work supporting the concept of psychological safety has only flourished in the past decade. The “interview with experts” presented in this study acts as evidence to support this piece from the literature. Given the rich background in transcultural studies these experts suggested some solutions which were linked with the three-step model mentioned, it was observed that these solutions often coexisted. The three-step model of Transcultural Learning can be used as a framework to understand the findings of this study. They are as follows:

Recognition of Cultural Diversity

When individuals from diverse backgrounds feel seen and heard for who they are it is more likely that they will bring their authentic selves into the workspace and contribute their unique perspectives. Creating an environment of trust can foster a sense of belonging which can, in turn, build a strong pillar which supports psychological safety. In the interviews it could be observed that the leaders from COMPANY 1 were able to mostly create safe spaces for their teams by having an open feedback culture, being comfortable with mistakes being made and also scheduling common touchpoints for checking in with the group. The following is a short excerpt from the conversation with Leader 4 who shared how they try to welcome and celebrate the different cultures within their team.

“Now we will celebrate Chinese New Year’s Eve and it’s the beginning of February and also half of the team there were like “What?!” And I’m like, yeah, you know, guys like. Yeah, the New Years Eve in China because I wanted them to make my little team

building to eat the hot pot. I don't know if you've heard about this plate which is really nice, you know, it's warm, it's cosy and you put everything together, so it's really nice, you know? You can just separate it to make it more spicy and less spicy, you know? And half of my guys were like: "???" And then I ask you, right, because we have these little stand up meetings like I said every Tuesday. Like can you explain them a little bit? Because it's kind of sharing her culture, integration, you know [...]" (Leader 4)

Identification of Existing Commonalities

In the context of transcultural learning it is crucial to recognize existing commonalities that can bridge the possible distance between individuals from diverse backgrounds. While cultures vary in their level of "poly-contextuality," (see 'the model of transcultural learning; step 2'), meaning the degree to which context is embedded in communication, all individuals and cultures navigate multi-layered information and communication nuances to a certain extent. Finding this so-called common ground allows individuals to appreciate the complexity of communication across cultures and develop strategies to decode and navigate diverse communication styles. To simplify this further, if efficient dialogue and shared activities are supported within a company, individuals will feel encouraged to learn from each other's perspectives irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. This interaction and effective communication is important because it creates an inclusive environment based on feelings of empathy as well as appreciation of one another and as a result also neglecting the feeling of isolation.

In the context of communication which often comes up while 'Identifying Existing Commonalities', expert Thomas Kühn spoke about the importance of effective communication especially while dealing with conflicts:

"I think communication is key for all these processes and I'm not sure if I would call it effective communication and this depends on the angle of course where you look at the effectiveness and how you measure effectiveness and how you make effectiveness. So as an example I think communication, for example, going a bit beyond I think

it's very important to have this kind of respectful communication and communication can be also related to conflicts and especially when we talk about conflicts I think it's important to be able to be critical, criticizing someone else. I think what we can observe in many contexts now there's a kind of toxic positivity, where you do not go into conflict, where you avoid the kind of conflict and where you somehow hide between a kind of culture of friendliness and also hide some things. With the kind of objective measures of something like I think it's very important to be able to get into conflicts, but do this in a respectful way and also in a reflected way where you relate to your own business purpose and your position." (Thomas Kühn)

To sum up, apart from identifying commonalities to build stronger workplaces, it also plays a crucial role when dealing with conflicts. As Kühn states, fostering healthy communication, and not "toxic positivity", allows one to address conflicts as chances to discover solutions that benefit everyone involved. When the leaders and their team recognize shared objectives, conflicts can be viewed not as disagreements but as opportunities for achievement. This mindset through communication can promote empathy leading to innovative problem-solving approaches and stronger bonds between the group.

Developing New Commonalities

Lastly, the transcultural learning journey doesn't end at identifying existing commonalities but leads to creating new commonalities within a team. When a group and their leader are able to work in collaboration with one another while navigating the challenges of conducting business together, they can co-create new communication strategies, business ideas and a space unique to the group making each person's experience a lot more enriching and inclusive. One instance supporting this piece of information came up during the interview with Leader 1:

"They have the mothers far away or nearby, so there are a lot of differences but all in all, the colleagues like each other. They bring some little presents with them after a little vacation or holiday. They are polite. They laugh together. They sit in the office for example, or on the TEAMS session. And I said: 'Hey, work is not only

hard. It doesn't always have to be very hard because I'm working. It has to be also a little fun factor and it has to be also something to laugh at or to laugh with.' And what is common? It's difficult to say. So I think, because people are very different and if we come together with different backgrounds, so if we make some creative or some, let's say brainstorming though, it's broader; it's not so one-minded, it's broader, it's open. And everyone can say what comes to their mind. And I'm always happy with the solutions which come out of that. Because it could be something very left, very right and then there is compromise and then we do it that we find in the middle." (Leader 1)

The experts were able to reason why it is important to enable interaction and build commonalities as a group. When in the workplace, an individual is able to engage with the people at work, interact with them formally as well as informally, this creates a sense of belonging. One of the experts, Jessica Schwengber, articulated this quite precisely in the following statement:

"If you want to create this sense of belonging you should also give. So, one of the strategies would also be to foster informal exchange that can be, for example, an offline meeting not just to talk about the project from a professional point of view but also to give the participants, the people involved, the opportunity to talk and know about how their personal lives are, or, to have a coffee break and just talk about the weather to create this connection. Because, I believe that it's possible to create a connection with others if you go beyond, for example, the professional way [...]" (Jessica Schwengber)

To quote another expert, Prof. Dr. Baumann Montecinos on this topic who explains how leaders can play a central role in creating this sense of belonging and, as a result, also create psychological safety.

"The goal for transcultural leaders in general is to create a sense of belonging in your team. So, if I feel that I am part of this, this is us and I belong to this community of practice, then hopefully you can build up this psychological safety as well. This is also an important element of the transcultural approach, it's not about identity, it's about belonging [...]" (Julika Baumann Montecinos)

As the experts helped to get an idea about how psychological safety can be fostered through shared practice and creation of a sense of belonging, the leaders were able to provide real-life examples based on their personal leadership style without being influenced by the company's internal value-system. This is where the last step of transcultural learning, that is, "Development of new commonalities" came into the picture. One leader hosted annual dinners for their teammates, others made it a ritual to meet in person at least once a month or even daily for a cup of coffee before they got on with their day-to-day tasks. Through these conversations it became clear how impactful these simple practices could be.

"And I always try with my colleagues, with my team to get a little more in touch, so not just on the working level just ask 'How was the weekend?' and 'How was your holiday?' and what about that. And no, it's not that I would like to intrude. It's not to do that, it's just to understand them a little better and to know what is on their mind [...]" (Leader 1)

This was the response of Leader 1, who leads a small yet diverse team. This particular method of interaction with the team was followed by almost all the leaders interviewed for this study and it seemed to decrease the power dynamic within the group. While sharing another anecdote, they also mentioned how the group is able to leverage their diverse backgrounds and seek help from one another based on their area of knowledge.

"[...] Everyone can ask the others for some help. Everyone knows different things in the working area. So he or she is an expert in this and they mixed it up a little bit and if you're not sure you can always ask in a team chat "Oh what would you do?" or "Who to ask?" or "What is the case here?" So this is always a possibility [...]" (Leader 1)

Naturally, at the workplace every individual or group has to face uncomfortable situations.

"[...] it happens that something goes wrong and at the end it's not 'one person is guilty'; when something goes wrong we try to learn from it and try to make it better the next time [...]". (Leader 2)

Acting as a team and supporting the group during times of discomfort was observed to be a very effective tool to create that strong sense of belonging. Another powerful insight in this same context was provided by Leader 3, who deals with a large team.

“[...] I would say we do have an open-minded failure culture. Failure happens all day long. And yes, somebody comes up with a mistake; of course, nobody is happy about that, of course we have to see the consequences, but we try to help the people making mistakes to correct them. And sometimes we do see, let's say, there is a mismatch between the expectations. Often we do have this situation that's also a result of the stress level at work [...]” (Leader 3)

The results of the survey can also be used to support the thoughts presented in this chapter. It was observed that there wasn't a significant difference in the level of psychological safety between the employees working in this company. More or less they all stood at the same level irrespective of their gender, nationality and religion. This data is important, as these three factors are often the basis of discrimination, it is even more important to note the following critical discrepancies found in the results that indicate why the company cannot be termed as “diverse”. Only 8 out of 38 respondents were women, which leads us to assume that the number of men in the company is higher than the number of women, suggesting an uneven ratio of females to males. While talking about “transculturality” it is, at least, important that the company being examined comprises people from diverse national backgrounds. The samples collected from the survey suggest otherwise as approximately 92% of the respondents were national residents of the country the company is based in (Germany). Lastly, another important aspect was religion. Approximately, 42-50% of the respondents either identified themselves as atheists or Christians leaving only a handful of people coming from other religions.

To discuss some other findings which leaned towards lower levels of psychological safety, what also stood out in the analysis was the reaction from different generations. The Gen X employees reported a higher psychological safety at work than millennials and baby boomers. Millennials also showed a lack of security in their role at the company. This dissimilarity can be rationalized by assuming that there is

some polarity in the work patterns and expectations of these generations. Moreover, employees with more than five years of leadership experience reported less security in terms of the organizational environment: this can be explained by the turmoil and responsibilities that come with being a leader. In one group another contrast that appeared was that newer employees in the company felt more secure than those who had been there longer. This analysis is a good representation of the excitement that is associated with novelty (new job, new team, new workplace!). Team size also seemed to impact on the level of psychological safety since being a part of a larger team showed lower levels of safety than the teams with 4-10 members. This is good data-based evidence of an experience shared by Leader 2, who mentioned how the variations in stress-levels differed amongst the same group just because different people were handling different projects. This finding can also be explained by the fact that it can be difficult to constantly be close-knit especially when part of a large group.

The leaders interviewed seemed to tend to the categories of relational as well as authentic leadership. Below are some excerpts from the interviews with leaders that hint at their leadership style as – transformational, relational or authentic –

Leader 1:

“At the end of the day, I have to make the decision. How we come to this decision that’s maybe a different thing. And this is an open discussion. And it’s not always the supervisor who “wins”. And I hope that everyone has the trust and comes to me if there is something, what happened you can’t say it to 100% [...]”

“I think first off, the initiative goes from my side, but after a while. So we have a kind of little jour fixe every day if you work in the headquarters. So then we ask “Hey how are you?” and it’s not just on the surface. We ask them a little more what was, what happened tomorrow, what happened there, so that the human is not... It should be in the central point, not just the working. That is the impression I have.”

These excerpts hint how Leader 1, through relational leadership, mitigates the power dynamics within the team. It tells us that even though they are the sole decision-maker everyone's thoughts are invited and heard. Apart from the business aspects, such as decision-making, Leader 1 also takes efforts to truly initiate a conversation, maybe informally, in order to understand their colleague as a "human". Such acts of empathy and relationship building are often indicators of relational leadership (defined in Section 3.3).

Leader 3:

"[...] Let's say, normally we have a very personal communication. We're sitting normally all in the same office area, we're just visiting our desks and doing talks, let's say small talk about the topics we have in an informal way [...]"

"[...] Failure happens all day long. And yes, somebody makes a mistake; of course, nobody is happy about that, of course we have to see the consequences, but we try to help the people making mistakes to correct them. And sometimes we do see, let's say, there is a mismatch between the expectations. Often we do have this situation that's also a result of the stress level, I guess. People are coming to the project manager, to me as a team leader: 'R3, there is a mistake. Sorry for that. I have done this. Please, R3, give me a solution on how to resolve this.' But that's not what I want to do. The person should resolve the problem and work out the resolution by themselves. I just want to help them to do so if they are not able to do so by themselves [...]"

The excerpts above from the conversation with Leader 3 directly lead us to authentic leadership style as they focus on building genuine relationships, having transparency, as well as encouraging awareness about oneself and personal growth within the team. When asked about how the leader enables "communication" within the group they tended to have rather informal communication patterns. By also promoting self-awareness as highlighted in the second quote, the leader embodies the principles of authentic leadership, which prioritise honesty, integrity, and a focus on individual development along with contributions to the team.

Leader 4:

“[...] What else can I say? For my kind of leadership? I’m a team player. This is reality. I mean, I played basketball almost on a professional level when I was a young guy. Yeah. So I really know what a team is, you know, and I really rely on the team. There were days that I was really down or nervous and the other guys made the game. And there were other days the other way around so I really don’t like stealth achievements, you know? I really like to share stuff. Because I think it’s more joyful, it’s more fun when you share something and “We made it!” versus “Yes, I made it.” It’s like travelling, you know, when you travel alone you can see the best thing, but you’re alone, there’s nothing or no one you can share with. You know, like “Hey guys, we made it!” I would say I’m also self-critical, I criticise myself and I do a lot of my internal loops, you know? I talked to others as well. You know this 360 kind of feedback, I learned that from others. And I do it. And at the end it’s to be, I would say, coherent, you know. A lot of leadership is like: WE. YOU. ME. We need to be coherent in the way we think, we say we do. There needs to be an alignment on that. And never also, you know, be unfair or unjust and so I really don’t like... I will never do something to someone that I would not like someone else to do to me. You know? *laughs* This is also a very basic rule and at the end this, this leadership position, it’s a power and a power I think we need to treat it with a lot of respect. [...]”

This extract from Leader 4’s interview sets a very good example of a mixed leadership style – authentic, relational and transformational. As self-explanatory as this piece of conversation is, to elaborate more, by referencing the organizational team to their basketball background, Leader 4 seemed to prioritize the creation of shared values through teamwork.

Some other takeaways from this interview that highlight the mix of leadership styles – 1. The leader identifies that a position of *leadership* comes from a place of power and this power must be utilized carefully and with fairness; 2. While talking about cultivating shared practices they highlighted how they like to celebrate different cultures by hosting small group events during festivals to highlight their significance and relevance to a particular nationality/community; 3. Finally, Leader 4 mentioned how being educated and conscious about different cultures

can go a long way especially in the context of psychological safety amongst transcultural groups. They said –

“When we have different layers of culture, I would say, I1, you know, like we just have different layers of tissue. The thing is, when you are more conscious about, it’s easier for you to go from one layer to another one, like a diver, you know, when you know how to dive you can not only swim on the surface, you can do an apnea⁴ and you can go without a tank of oxygen, 10 meters. But you need to be trained for that. You need to be conscious. You need to know [...]”

“[...] As an example: one of the first things we did in this new team. I bought a few books on ‘Culture Maps’. I don’t know if you read this book. So I took that book and I really liked it because there are good things and bad things, I mean not so things but not terrible, but it was about the context, you know? High context language and low context language and how English is a very low context [language] because you need to use a lot of words, which is also good because there’s not too much between the lines, you know? In Persian, Spanish, you don’t talk that much, but there’s a lot of “between the lines”. When we use English, it’s just way easier because you are very lean. You structure everything. So at the beginning with the team, it happened that there were these barriers of course, let’s say more in the core kind of behaviour, right? Because our culture, our culture from our family, our community or our nation, it’s more in the core. But as we grow and as an onion, you know, you have the layers, right? So the only thing that I try to do with my team is to make them conscious about that [...]”

To conclude this section, leaders have to establish psychological safety in a group, irrespective of whether it is a diverse or homogenous group to effectively learn, especially from mistakes. This helps the process of transcultural learning because psychological safety enables the development of new commonalities and people bringing their whole selves with all their cultural and individual nuances into the workspace. Psychological safety itself enables learning in groups, so it can also foster learning on a transcultural level.

⁴ Diving that relies on holding one’s breath.

6. *Limitations*

The primary limitation of this study is the lack of diversity in the interviewees. Three out of four interview partners (leaders) from the company had the same nationality and more or less shared the same values. Future studies could gather opinions from the people working for these leaders, make some sense of the atmosphere within the team directly from the team members who are led by these leaders. That would provide better insights into the level of psychological safety that these leaders are able to create within their transcultural teams. Another prominent limitation is the small sample size of the data collected through the survey (38). Finally, both the interviews with the leaders and the surveys were conducted with the same company whose headquarters and most operations are conducted in the same country as this study. Further studies could expand the study to other employees in the same organization and/or to repeat the study in other organizations to examine whether the findings are confirmed in other organizational contexts, too.

7. *Overall Conclusion*

This study was designed to determine the importance and impact that transcultural leaders have on the psychological safety of their team as well as on the overall organization. The “Interview with leaders” conveyed more than their style of leadership. By creating a harmonious space and enabling the members to “come as they are” these leaders were able to create something more than good team dynamics, they were able to create a safe space that fosters psychological safety.

Through the study, an important aspect of psychological safety at the workplace was highlighted: if, at an overall level, an organization is able to set a tone for all of their employees, it will be easier to navigate the differences and prejudices that may come when exposed to transculturality at work. According to an article from Harvard Business Review⁵ published in autumn 2023, the average person will

⁵ <https://hbr.org/2023/10/creating-a-happier-workplace-is-possible-and-worth-it>

spend 81,396 hours at work. Imagine all that time without positive social interaction. It would be safe to say that overall levels of happiness would be negatively impacted. Collectively as team members, fellow acquaintances, as leaders or for that matter on any level of the hierarchy, employers and employees are able to instill minor touch-points for interacting with one another and organizations will be able to create a higher sense of belonging. To quote one of the expert interviewees “[...] out of this shared practice, what happens is that you create a community of practice and a sense of belonging [...]” which should be the goal for every leader with or without a transcultural mindset.

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How Leaders Navigate a Global Strategy with Diverse Local Realities

Gys du Toit and Lukas Hügler

Abstract

This chapter is based on an inquiry into the role of transcultural leadership within the strategic approach of global organizations, considering the intricacies inherent in diverse local realities. The investigation is presented under the themes of four probing sub-questions used in the investigation to (1) understand the individual competencies and organizational capabilities required to navigate transcultural dynamics in strategy, (2) the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within strategic decision making, (3) the significance of strategic foresight, and (4) the role of stakeholders in strategy from the transcultural leadership perspective.

Employing a constructive paradigm, this study disseminates insights gathered from five distinct industries, with strategic professionals serving as research participants. The findings explain the common threads in the dynamics of transcultural leadership that influence the development and execution of global strategies. The central role of human elements within strategy formulation and implementation is highlighted, particularly emphasizing the synergy between organizational capabilities and individual competencies. The application of strategic foresight thinking and methods is highlighted as a critical enabler. Insights gleaned from this research offer a rich source of inspiration for business practitioners and future scholars at the intersection of transcultural leadership and strategic management.

1. Introduction and Rationale

The historical roots of multinational organizations can be traced back centuries, exemplified by the Dutch East India Company's establishment in 1602, which, at its zenith, employed a global workforce of 40,000 (Bosma, 2023). Contemporary scrutiny has cast doubt on the role of leaders and the methods employed in international business practices, especially from a decolonizing perspective (Boussebaa, 2023). Responsible global leadership is required to navigate business within the context of global challenges (Reiche, 2023). A pertinent question arises when considering the shifting role of leaders and the strategic foresight required within a transcultural context:

“How can leaders effectively navigate the intricate balance between a shared global strategy and diverse local realities?”

This article embarks on a journey to explore the complexities of transcultural leadership in the realm of strategic management within multinational organizations. We aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how leaders can navigate the challenges posed by diverse cultural contexts while aligning organizational strategies with local nuances. To achieve this, we will dissect the overarching research question into sub-questions and outline our methodological approach, guiding the reader through the structure of our argumentation.

To address the overarching question of combining a shared global strategy with diverse local realities, we will investigate the following sub-questions:

Q1: What specific competencies and capabilities are essential for leaders to effectively navigate transcultural dynamics related to strategy?

Q2: What role does diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) play within transculturality and strategic decision-making processes?

Q3: What role does strategic foresight, and its associated methods play in bridging the gap between global strategies and local realities?

Q4: What is the role of stakeholders in strategy from a transcultural leadership perspective?

These sub-questions will serve as supporting pillars in the structuring of our empirical investigation, allowing us to explore the complexities of transcultural leadership in strategic management systematically.

In structuring our argumentation, we will adopt a multi-dimensional approach that intertwines theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and practical insights. Our narrative will unfold as follows:

Current Academic Debates: Our journey begins by delving into current academic debates surrounding transcultural leadership, strategic management, and cultural sensitivity. Through a thorough examination of the existing literature, we aim to establish a robust theoretical foundation that underpins our research.

Research Design: Following the theoretical exploration, we will elucidate our methodological approach. This section will provide a detailed overview of our research design, including the selection of participants, data collection methods, and analytical techniques employed to ensure rigor and validity in our study.

Empirical Insights: Building upon the theoretical framework and methodological approach, we will transition to presenting empirical insights gleaned from interviews with key stakeholders involved in strategy within multinational organizations. Through a meticulous analysis of interview data, we will shed light on the intricate dynamics of transcultural leadership in real-world contexts.

Future Research and Limitations: While our study offers valuable insights, it is not without its limitations. We acknowledge the scope and boundaries of our research and provide insights into potential areas for future exploration. Additionally, we discuss the limitations inherent in our methodology and data analysis process, offering opportunities for further refinement and improvement in future research endeavors.

In the context of operating within intercultural environments and making decisions involving diverse stakeholders, individual leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of their organizations. Recognizing the significance of this micro-level perspective, we adopt a primary focus on the individual leader within the organization. By

examining the meso-level dynamics of organizational structures and strategies within the broader macro environment, we aim to uncover valuable insights into the intricate interplay between leadership and strategy. This approach allows us to delve deeply into the nuanced dynamics of transcultural leadership and its implications for strategic management within multinational organizations.

In summary, our narrative unfolds logically, transitioning from theoretical foundations to empirical insights and practical implications. Through a structured approach, we aim to provide a cohesive and compelling exploration of transcultural leadership in strategic management within multinational organizations, contributing to the broader understanding of this complex phenomenon.

2. *Current Academic Debates*

Culture involves different disciplines (Baumann Montecinos, 2019), which apply to leadership. Therefore, the literature review section of this article examines selected academic debates surrounding transcultural leadership, and the sub-questions of our study.

Drawing upon selected glimpses into current academic debates, this section offers insights into the multifaceted dimensions of leadership, culture, and their intersectionality within contemporary organizational contexts. By examining key concepts such as individual competencies, organizational capabilities, strategic foresight, and diversity, equity, and inclusion, this review aims to provide an understanding of the current academic landscape surrounding transcultural leadership and its implications for organizational success. Through an exploration of diverse perspectives and debates, this section sets the stage for a nuanced examination of the complexities inherent in navigating global-local integration and fostering inclusive organizational cultures.

2.1 Competencies and Capabilities

Q1: What specific competencies and capabilities are essential for leaders to effectively navigate transcultural dynamics related to strategy?

We first turn to Baumann Montecinos et al. (2023) who emphasize the importance of cooperation and identifying commonalities when navigating culture and diversity to get an academic view on this question. Commonalities create a bond and a strong relationship among people. Although cooperation can create conflicts and challenges when dealing with an environment that operates across borders, it enables learning and creates opportunities for both organizations and individuals. To manage a company successfully when operating across borders, the right measures and actions are crucial in terms of transcultural leadership.

Rather than solely focusing on differences, fostering shared values and common ground fosters growth and success within diverse groups. This notion extends to both organizational and individual competencies (Škrinjarić, 2022). Škrinjarić highlights the pivotal role of competencies, encompassing elements like planning, leadership, and teamwork, in adapting to evolving trends such as digitalization and meeting customer needs.

For our study, we differentiated between individual-level competencies and organizational capabilities for clarity between the micro and meso-level requirements. Competencies encompass individual-level behaviors associated with skills, knowledge, abilities, and motivation (Figueiredo et al., 2023). The underlying premise is that competencies can be learned and manifested in behaviors. Capabilities were conceptualized as organizational-level abilities aimed at gaining a competitive advantage (Harvey et al., 2022). These capabilities were further classified as operational and dynamic, with the study shedding light on the formation and utilization of dynamic capabilities in the micro-foundations of global-local strategy.

In the realm of transcultural leadership, effective leaders must navigate diverse teams and organizational cultures. Helmold (2021) defines leadership as a process that coordinates and controls the management of individuals and groups within organizations, emphasizing structured and systematic approaches to achieving organizational objectives. Lofgren (2020) further emphasizes the necessity for leaders to

transcend cultural boundaries, fostering innovative thinking, empathy, and strategic decision-making within diverse teams.

Mørch (2022) underscores the role of corporate culture in shaping organizational dynamics. Decentralization fosters autonomy and a conducive work culture, while local empowerment spurs idea generation. However, balancing centralized management and local autonomy is pivotal in fostering flexibility and adapting to local realities.

2.2 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within Transculturality

Q2: What role does diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) play within transculturality and strategic decision-making processes?

Diversity, as defined by Schach (2023), encompasses the coexistence of multiple identities and lifestyles within a given context. Gaupp and Pelillo-Hestermeyer (2021) distinguish between diversity as a commonplace phenomenon and diversity as an exception, emphasizing the necessity to dispel the myth of cultural homogeneity. Diverse teams have become a significant part of leadership structures in companies, which can contribute to different perspectives, ways of thinking, and characters within teams (Lofgren, 2020). Diversity can be seen as part of a business strategy (Lofgren, 2020). When looking at what an organization should look like in the future, once again, diversity comes into play.

Emotions play a significant role in diversity discussions, with diversity being perceived both positively and negatively (Gaupp & Pelillo-Hestermeyer, 2021). Successful diversity initiatives require conflicts arising from diversity debates to be addressed through heightened awareness and effective management.

Looking toward the future, fostering diversity entails cultivating flexibility and adaptability (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). Hale (2023) advocates viewing diversity as a catalyst for collaboration, drawing parallels to a garden where diverse flowers thrive, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Criteria for a Diverse Garden

Energizing How is collaboration nourished? Who decides which queries are used? How often?	Balancing Align the group and avoid egoistic thinking or groupthinking.	Participating e.g. making people feel comfortable to being in their own voice.	Multiplicity How diverse perspectives are collected.	Fractioning How disagreements and conflicts are handled, being ready to shift own opinions.
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Source: Hale, 2023.

Embracing diverse perspectives enriches intercultural competencies and promotes mutual growth through enhanced communication and interaction (Hale, 2023). In the realm of multinational corporations, linguistic diversity assumes significance, highlighting the importance of effective communication (Schach, 2023). However, linguistic barriers can impede effective communication, necessitating heightened language awareness and sensitivity (Gaupp & Pelillo-Hestermeyer, 2021). Conducting business across various cultures requires choices across contextual variety while considering countercultural practices on issues like strategic intent and its associated leadership choices to adapt to local norms, minimize the impact of culture, or integrate various norms (Caprar et al., 2022).

In summary, diversity encompasses a multitude of dimensions and complexities that require a nuanced understanding and proactive engagement. Embracing diversity as a catalyst for collaboration and growth demands ongoing efforts to navigate conflicts, promote inclusivity, and foster effective communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

2.3 Strategic Foresight

Q3: What role does strategic foresight, and its associated methods, play in bridging the gap between global strategies and local realities?

Responsible global leadership embodies the ability to navigate complex global challenges while fostering organizational learning and

adaptation (Stahl et al., 2017). Luhn (2016) underscores the pivotal role of organizational learning in enhancing processes, generating value, and maintaining competitiveness amidst evolving landscapes. However, implementing change within the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world poses significant challenges (Mancesti, 2015). Key themes relevant to this study, as identified in recent publications, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Intersectionality of Themes on Leadership, Strategy and Culture

Theme	Overview	Author
<i>Aligning Strategy with VUCA Realities</i>	In the face of VUCA dynamics, businesses must adapt their strategies to remain agile and responsive. Disruptive forces like the COVID-19 pandemic and technological advancements reshape industries and markets, necessitating stress resistance, agile leadership styles, and adaptability from leaders to navigate challenges effectively.	Mancesti (2015)
<i>Integrating Foresight into Global Strategy</i>	In the modern landscape characterized by digitalization and globalization, foresight and innovation are imperative for organizational navigation. Foresight involves gaining insights into possible future issues and setting clear plans to manage and react to future trends. Collaborative foresight methods facilitate global-local relatedness in transcultural leadership and strategy.	Al-Absi et al. (2021), Miles et al. (2016)
<i>Developing Scenarios for Future Planning</i>	Scenarios offer systematic accounts of future possibilities, aiding organizations in developing views of the future and preparing for potential challenges and opportunities. They assist in developing future roadmaps and ensuring readiness for diverse scenarios. Importance of developing detailed, realistic scenarios that lead to a better understanding of future challenges and opportunities. Plausible and relevant scenarios, distinguished by their distinctiveness, consistency, and relevance, form the foundation of a robust foresight strategy.	Miles et al. (2016) Haigh (2019)

<i>Impact of Values on Company Culture and Strategy</i>	Company values profoundly influence leadership, policies, and organizational culture, impacting on employee morale, productivity, and performance. Transparent communication and integrity are central to fostering trust, engagement, and respect among employees, which are vital components of an effective organizational culture.	Astoria (2021)
<i>The Significance of Corporate Headquarters</i>	Corporate headquarters play a pivotal role in regulating communication and information flow within organizations. Serving as operational hubs and entrepreneurial drivers, they provide overarching services and support to the entire company. The size and function of headquarters vary but are increasingly important in driving organizational success and adaptation.	Foss (2019)
<i>Learning Organization</i>	A learning organization continually deploys its capabilities, meets its targets, and fosters new ways of thinking and common aspirations among its members. It embraces change, flexibility, and proactive learning to adapt to evolving circumstances and drive sustainable growth.	Luhn (2016)

Source: Own table.

2.4 Stakeholders

Q4: What is the role of stakeholders in strategy from a transcultural leadership perspective?

Stakeholder Theory is often attributed to Edward Freeman who has written a book entitled “Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach” (Freeman et al., 2021). The role of stakeholders was specifically investigated in the study, considering the prominence of stakeholder theory in strategic management (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). The concept was first used in 1963 related to long-range planning conversations and a report mentioning the involvement of all people related to business relationships (Slinger, 1999). The use of the term stakeholder in management literature can be traced to an English translation of a Swedish scholar, Rheman’s work on industrial democ-

racy (Strand et al., 2014). Understanding the origin of the stakeholder concept is important as it positions its initial intent as a societal construct where organizations are not the center of their universes where stakeholders orbit (having an inside-out view), but rather that organizations are positioned within society (having an outside-in view). The organization as an integration point of formal and informal contracts furthermore fits well into a relational view of transcultural leadership (Biggiero et al., 2022) and the creation of shared value.

Companies should try to find as much evidence as possible to identify trends. At this point, it helps to address various groups of stakeholders and find out about major forecasts and knowledge areas. Stakeholders should be asked about the changing needs and trends they observe (Miles et al., 2016).

2.5 Conclusion

A comprehensive approach to transcultural leadership and organizational learning entails aligning strategies with VUCA realities, fostering values-driven cultures, leveraging the significance of corporate headquarters, and integrating foresight and innovation into future planning. By embracing change, fostering learning, and developing plausible and relevant scenarios, organizations can effectively navigate global challenges while driving sustainable growth and success.

In this comprehensive approach to responsible global leadership and organizational learning, the integration of foresight and innovation into future planning is essential for navigating the complexities of the modern landscape. By aligning strategies with VUCA realities and fostering values-driven cultures, organizations can adapt to evolving circumstances while driving sustainable growth and success. The significance of corporate headquarters in regulating communication and information flow underscores its pivotal role in driving organizational success and adaptation. Through the development of plausible and relevant scenarios, organizations can gain insights into future possibilities and prepare for potential challenges and opportunities, ensuring readiness and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

3. *Research Design*

In alignment with the Transcultural Student Research Group's (TSRG) visit to Berlin in July 2023, our research endeavors were uniquely positioned to engage with research participants in person and comprehend their subjective experiences within social and cultural contexts.

To capture the rich and nuanced insights required for our study, we adopted a qualitative approach, specifically utilizing semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed us to delve deeply into the personal experiences of the participants while maintaining flexibility to explore emerging themes. By using an interview guide, we ensured consistency across interviews while allowing for organic conversation and exploration of diverse perspectives. Additionally, the application of anonymity provided participants with a safe space to share their experiences openly, contributing to the richness and authenticity of the data collected.

3.1 *Research Participants*

Identification of research participants was facilitated through LinkedIn and web searches targeting individuals with expertise in strategy or strategic foresight in Berlin. Participants needed to have specific career experience in strategic foresight, ensuring their ability to contribute meaningfully to the exploration of transcultural leadership in the strategic context.

Invitations were extended to 22 individuals via LinkedIn and seven via email, with no incentives offered other than voluntary participation. Ultimately, five participants volunteered (see Table 2), providing informed consent for their involvement, and pseudonyms were used for participants. Three of the participants had prior personal interactions with one of the researchers. The interviews were conducted collaboratively by both researchers for the first four participants, and the last interview was conducted by one of the researchers.

Table 2: Research Participants

Participant Job	Industry	Interview Duration
Service Designer	Consulting	53 minutes
Business Development Manager	Fashion	65 minutes
CEO	Chemical Manufacturing	64 minutes
Content Manager	Broadcasting Media	45 minutes
Market Analyst	Energy	57 minutes

Source: Own table.

3.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide was structured to encompass five key dimensions, aligning with the overarching themes of our research as outlined in the introduction. These dimensions included perspectives from the global, company, personal, stakeholder, and transcultural contexts, aiming to capture a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in transcultural leadership within multinational organizations.

The main questions posed to the research participants were strategically designed to address the sub-questions raised in the introduction, thereby establishing a clear link between the research objectives and the data collection process. These questions facilitated in-depth exploration of various aspects related to global strategy, local realities, strategic foresight, stakeholder engagement, and the role of culture in shaping organizational strategies.

Question 1: “What does it mean to be a global company in terms of strategy?” This question corresponds to the sub-question Q1 related to capabilities and competencies, shedding light on the overarching theme of global strategy and its implication concerning micro (individuals), meso (organizational), and macro (external environment) considerations in the strategy process.

Question 2: “How does your company combine a shared global strategy with diverse local realities?” This question directly aligns with

the sub-question Q2, exploring how organizations integrate cultural sensitivity and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into their strategic decision-making processes, focusing on the intricate balance between global strategies and local nuances.

Question 3: “Tell us about your experience working on strategic foresight.” This question examines the role of strategic foresight methods in bridging the gap between global strategies and local realities, addressing the sub-question Q3, related to the importance of strategic foresight in navigating transcultural dynamics.

Question 4: “Tell us about the stakeholders you work with and their role in strategy.” This question provides insights into stakeholder engagement, aligning with the sub-question Q4 regarding the significance of stakeholder management in transcultural leadership and strategic management within multinational organizations.

Question 5: “What is the role of culture in strategy?” This question explores the intersectionality of sub-questions Q1 and Q2.

The interview process commenced with an introduction and concluded with a wrap-up, ensuring that the research participants’ positions, experiences, as well as business history, location, and industry were comprehensively understood and contextualized within the broader research framework. This approach facilitated a holistic exploration of transcultural leadership within the specific organizational contexts under investigation.

3.3 Data Analysis

The interview sessions were meticulously recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Word. To ensure accuracy and fidelity to the participants’ accounts, the transcriptions underwent thorough review and editing by one of the researchers, following the guidelines outlined by Reissner and Whittle (2022) to avoid any unintended language biases or distortions.

Following transcription, the five resulting transcripts were subjected to analysis using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software widely recognized for its robust capabilities in handling qualitative data.

In the initial phase of analysis, an open coding approach was used to systematically identify and label significant segments of the interview data. This iterative coding process allowed for the emergence of patterns and themes, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the data's complexities (Eftenaru, 2023). These codes were then organized into themes, creating a hierarchical structure that reflected the intricate interplay of concepts within the dataset.

The data analysis was guided by an emergent perspective, allowing for the exploration of themes and patterns across the complete set of interviews without being constrained by a predetermined framework. This approach ensured flexibility in capturing overarching insights from the diverse perspectives shared by the research participants, fostering a holistic understanding of transcultural leadership within the context of global-local strategic alignment.

To further enrich the interpretation of the data, Atlas.ti's visualization tools were leveraged, with a specific focus on co-occurrence analysis. These tools facilitated a deeper exploration of the relationships between codes and themes, enhancing the researcher's ability to uncover nuanced connections within the data. Particularly, Sankey diagrams were instrumental in providing a comprehensive visual representation of the intricate interrelationships between various codes, offering a holistic perspective on the interconnected nature of transcultural leadership and its implications for global-local strategic alignment.

In the subsequent sections, we present the research results and findings derived from this comprehensive data analysis, offering insights into the interconnected nature of transcultural leadership and its implications for navigating the complexities of global-local strategic alignment.

4. Empirical Insights

Our empirical investigation, based on in-depth interviews with people involved in strategy within multinational organizations, unearthed a plethora of insights shedding light on the intricacies of transcultural leadership in the global-local strategic context. This section presents a detailed analysis of the emergent themes and concepts derived from

We first present the overarching themes of people-centric dynamics and global-local, followed by sections linked to the sub-questions of the research.

A recurring theme across all interviews was the centrality of “People” in driving strategic initiatives and navigating transcultural complexities. With “People” emerging as the most frequently cited concept, mentioned 253 times, our findings underscore the pivotal role of interpersonal relationships, stakeholder engagement, and cultural sensitivity in shaping global-local strategies. This theme resonated throughout diverse codes, highlighting the multifaceted nature of human dynamics within organizational discourse.

[illegible]

Source: Own illustration.

The prevalence of “people” as a concept within diverse codes throughout our research underscores the paramount importance of human factors in transcultural leadership. The concept of “People” was intricately linked to various codes throughout the interviews, with direct associations to “People (internal)” as a stakeholder group and “Get to know people” as a competency. This underscores the significance of interpersonal relationships and stakeholder engagement within the context of global-local strategy.

Among the cited concepts, “thing” was referenced 228 times, serving as a general reference to various topics discussed. Other notable concepts include “strategy” (164 times), “market” (124 times), “time” (102 times), and “team” (96 times). Additionally, South Africa was frequently cited, reflecting the experiences of three participants who had previously worked in the region.

The concept of “thing” was linked to diverse codes, reflecting its widespread usage across all participants. For instance, a research participant referenced “thing” in the context of strategy prioritization, accountability, and resource availability, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this concept within organizational discourse.

“All of these things are great, but we actually only have resources to commit to half of these things so we’ll decide what are the 10 things, and that leadership team is representative of the organization, so they will be someone who is responsible for all the markets. There will be someone who is responsible for all the fashion, and you have all these people and then they finally make the decision.”
(Fashion – Business Development Manager)

The coding process resulted in the identification of 133 codes, with 33 sub-codes allocated under categories such as foresight/futures, location, strategic action, and strategy range. The remaining 100 codes were allocated to nine distinct code groups, including capability, competence, global-local, impact, organizational, personal, stakeholders, strategy, and work.

4.2 *Global-Local*

The term “local” was not pre-defined for research participants, making it important to understand people’s interpretation of it. The code group global-local mainly consists of location references (76), location interpretation (17), and references to differences in cultures or customs (11). Local represented Berlin or the cities with which people collaborated. Cities mostly referred to an inward organizational boundary with offices or manufacturing locations as a reference, while countries were often used to define external boundaries to describe language or client peculiarities. Some participants furthermore emphasized regional organizational and market structures.

An example of a quote of “local interpretation” with strategy is given by a CEO in our research:

“I think a strategy is more global. Local realities are execution. I think there are two different ways of achieving the same outcome, and you’re going to trip yourself up with local realities in execution rather than in strategy. So, I would say. Strategy is Global is probably strategies that are a bit more global, but execution is really local in nature. What’s a more powerful strategy or execution of the strategy? You know, you can have a bad strategy executed really well or the other way around, and which one is more successful? It’s a very close call. The execution needs to be localized. You cannot just have the strategy without localizing the strategy before execution.” (Chemical Manufacturing – CEO)

Positioning people as enablers of strategy aligns with findings that personal similarities and diverse societal characteristics are contributory factors to global collaboration (Taras et al., 2019). Similarities expressed by the research participants related to values and shared interest, captured by a research participant working in consulting in the following words:

“The key learning is there are a lot of like-minded people out there and they are like united, in their nerdiness for a certain topic, and that’s beautiful. And it doesn’t matter if they’re like very close or it doesn’t matter where they sit.” (Research participant)

The code group “work” contains a mix of codes associated with ways of work and practical experiences of collaborating in a global context. This code group includes “time zones” and “time allocation” as codes, considering that time was one of the top five mentioned concepts. Time is in itself a boundary to be overcome for global organizations impacting internal collaboration and engagement with stakeholders. Scaling of global organizations results in regional collaboration as can be seen in the comment from a participant:

“But there is now I see regional groups now forming because of the time zones. Yeah, like very practical” (Consulting – Service Designer)

4.3 Competencies and Capabilities

Q1: “What specific competencies and capabilities are essential for leaders to effectively navigate transcultural dynamics related to strategy?”

Capabilities and competencies can be considered as one of the most important outcomes of this study as it can be linked to the research conducted by Baumann Montecinos and Grünfelder (2022) to understand transcultural competence to identify and develop commonalities. The previous research used the Delphi technique to obtain data, while this research relied on interviews.

Our analysis revealed the critical significance of competencies and capabilities in driving organizational success amidst transcultural challenges. Competencies, representing individual-level behaviors were identified as key drivers shaping organizational dynamics. Notably, competencies such as initiative/drive, relationship building/social bonding, and mindful support emerged as pivotal in fostering effective transcultural leadership (see Figure 3). The top two most frequently coded competencies were cited by all participants.

Capabilities, denoting organizational-level abilities aimed at gaining a competitive advantage, played a crucial role in navigating the complexities of global-local strategies. The identification of operational and dynamic capabilities sheds light on the nuanced interplay between

organizational competencies and strategic imperatives, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and responsiveness in transcultural contexts. Figure 4 represents all capabilities coded. All participants mentioned the top three coded capabilities.

Figure 3: Competencies, Frequency of Codes



Source. Own illustration.

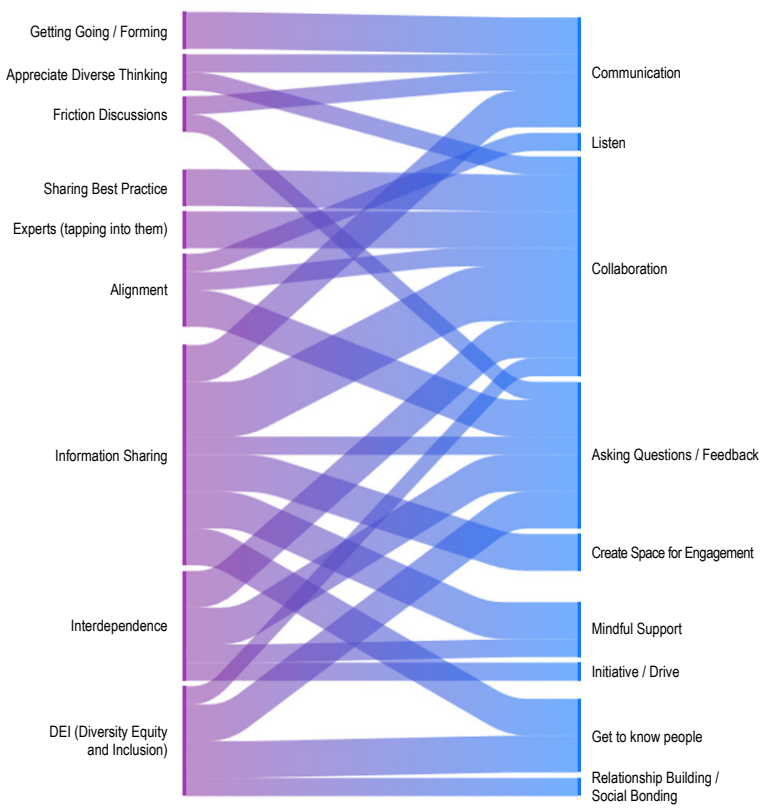
Figure 4: Capabilities, Frequency of Codes



Source. Own illustration.

Potential relationships between individual competencies and organizational capabilities can be seen in the code co-occurrences in Figure 5. This relationship may be beneficial for further research to investigate and for practitioners of organizational development. As an example, building individual competency on “asking questions and providing feedback” can benefit organizations in multiple ways, ensuring that information is shared, but also contribute to diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), interdependence, and alignment.

Figure 5: Capability and Competence Co-Occurrence



Source. Own illustration.

Collaboration as an individual competence may, in turn, be reliant on establishing multiple organizational capabilities through practices and processes focused on implementing the sharing of best practices, tapping into experts in the business, and efforts to ensure alignment, information sharing, interdependence, and DEI.

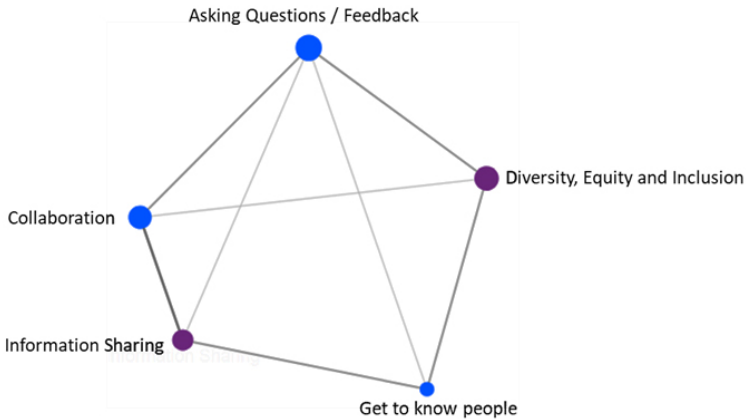
We investigated code co-occurrences of capabilities and competencies with the “impact”, “organizational”, “personal”, “strategy” and “work” code groups. The most significant co-occurrences existed with “strategy”. This may come as no surprise as a “bottom-up /participatory” strategy process requires the capabilities of collaboration, listening, and the creation of space for engagement as well as the competencies of interdependence, friction discussions, agility, alignment, buy-in /commitment building, and DEI.

There are overlaps, yet nuanced differences, between the Delphi study on identifying and developing commonalities (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022) and this global-local strategy study. The prominence of DEI as an organizational capability overlaps with the “Inclusive atmosphere” identified as a top organizational competence to identify and develop commonalities. The individual competence of asking questions and receiving feedback seems to be more prominent in a strategic context. Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder have identified “Cultural self-awareness and self-reflective consciousness” as a more important individual competence to identify commonalities and include “active listening” in their list of competencies. This study highlights the importance of asking questions and getting feedback for global-local strategy requirements. A unique contribution of this study is the establishment of links between individual competencies and organizational capabilities, as evident from the experiences of the research participants.

A three-dimensional view of the links between five selected capabilities and competencies demonstrates the potential interplay of these codes (Figure 6). These relationships are of practical value when considering organization development and further research in the field. The competence of asking questions and listening for feedback is pivotal to enhancing individual and organizational drivers to succeed in strategy. A collaborative culture and business that enable information

sharing can contribute to the way people get to know each other and use DEI as a competitive advantage.

Figure 6: Links between Top Capability and Competence Co-Occurrences



Source. Own illustration.

4.4 DEI within Transculturality

Q2: What role does diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) play within transculturality and strategic decision-making processes?

There was interest from the researchers to examine the personal experience of the research participants working in an international context, while having experience from another country, specifically considering that three research participants had previously lived in South Africa while currently residing in Germany. Participants mentioned the benefit of having exposure from a culturally diverse country to navigate differences across cultures. The benefit and appreciation of diversity were also expressed by participants who have worked their whole life in Germany.

“So, it’s more of, I would say to value the strengths and weaknesses of everyone because we in Germany maybe tend to see things sometimes a little bit more like more negative or also sometimes a little bit more like frank and the people from other different. Other cultures are seeing it maybe a little bit more or they have a little bit more pressure. So, I think we are ... I don’t know how to explain it, but basically, you have to learn to value the strengths and weaknesses of each person, individual, or even culture, and then you have to find your specific way to use this.” (Energy – Markets Analyst)

Development of global strategy with local realities requires alignment of team composition in organizational values, design, and work practices. Diversity in employees who represent local realities can serve as a bridge between contextual impact factors (e.g., language and shared focal areas like a climate / green agenda) and stakeholders.

Two interesting capabilities shared by all participants were the use of “Friction Discussions” and that their organizations “Appreciate Diverse Thinking”. The culmination of these capabilities is well captured in the words of one of the research participants:

“People like a diverse team with the people involved and you should not only have like strategists in the team, you should have the designers, anthropologists and maybe also psychologists to have, like, a diverse team. Not a very homogeneous group of people only do strategy. I think you need the friction there to really get a good scenario of future probabilities.” (Consulting – Service Designer)

Friction can be used constructively through a bottom-up strategy process but can also be the unintended consequence of a top-down strategy approach, as can be seen from the examples provided by one of the research participants.

“I think friction to have like these discussions it’s enabling because then you can reshape it and see. It’s like a reality check for your strategy, the friction.” (Research participant)

“Sometimes there’s also a mismatch here, because sometimes if, if you have a culture of co-creating and Holacracy and stuff like that,

it's very difficult to I think that's the clash that I mentioned in the very beginning when you have like a strategy, then the decision that is top down, it clashes because you are not socialized in that way" (Research participant)

The second quote also highlights the link between strategy and the organizational dimension of values. Four of the research participants highlighted the importance of values in the strategy process.

4.5 Strategic Foresight

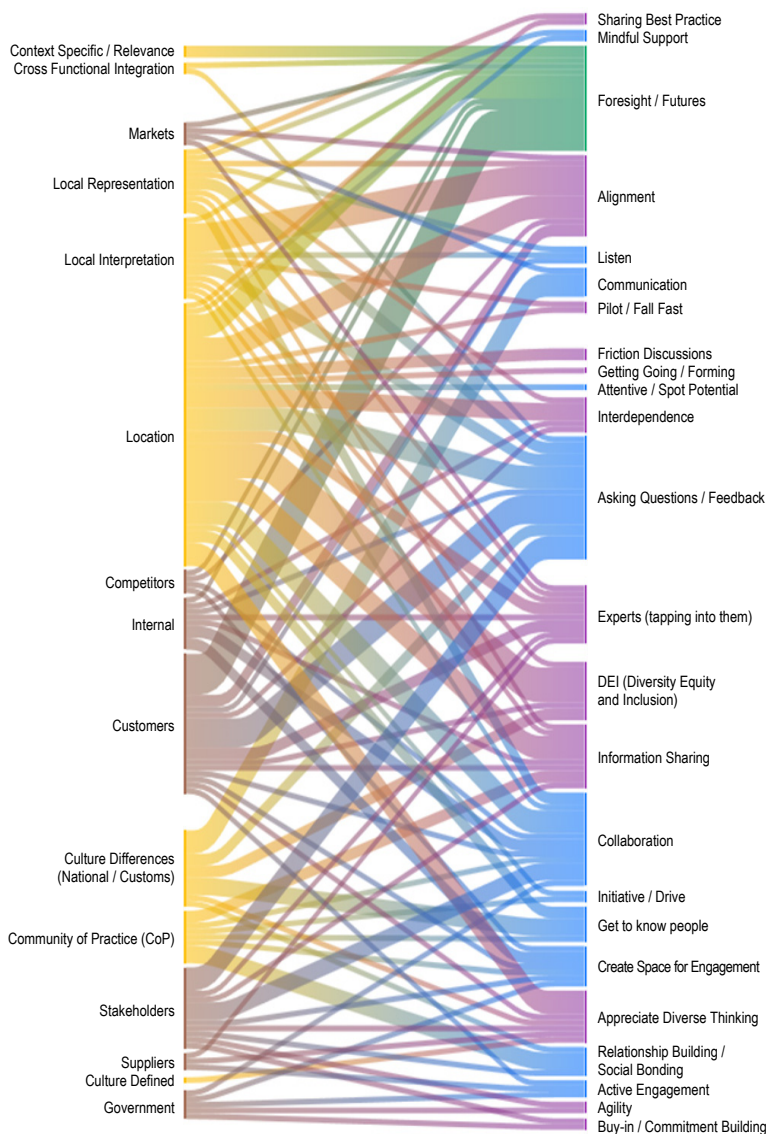
Q3: What role does strategic foresight, and its associated methods play in bridging the gap between global strategies and local realities?

Competencies and capabilities emerge as pivotal constructs, serving as drivers that empower organizations to navigate the multifaceted challenges of transcultural dynamics while adeptly addressing stakeholder requisites associated with strategic imperatives. The nuanced interplay of these concepts is depicted in Figure 7.

Our findings posit that "Foresight / Futures" methods transcend a mere component of strategy; instead, they contribute as organizational capability, serving as a dynamic bridge and enabler within global-local dynamics. The inclusion of the "Foresight / Futures" code in Figure 7 underscores its strong connection with the understanding of customer needs and the contextual realities specific to diverse local realities.

This nuanced perspective not only positions foresight methods as a contributor to organizational strategy but also advances the concept as a broader organizational capability, fostering organizational adaptability and insightful responsiveness. This dual functionality elevates "Foresight / Futures" to a principal component, shaping not only strategic trajectories but also influencing organizational dynamics in the nuanced interplay of global strategies and diverse local contexts. Such insights extend the discourse beyond conventional strategic planning and management, offering a profound understanding of the integral role of foresight methods in shaping organizational resilience and agility within global-local business realities.

Figure 7: Stakeholders and Global-Local with Capability, Competence, and Foresight / Futures Co-Occurrence



Source. Own illustration.

5. *Questions and Feedback*

The strongest co-occurrences in Figure 5 from a stakeholder perspective are with customers and foresight/futures which is often done through surveys, interviews, and scanning / continuous listening. A practical example of this co-occurrence together with “asking questions” comes from one of the research participants:

“I mean we ask a question every week on our videos and then we get people answering the questions that pertain to the video. So, I think that’s quite an insightful thing”. (Broadcasting Media – Content Manager)

People may conclude that this practice is representative of one industry, but this is also evident in other industries:

“So, for instance, our team has to be the one that knows where the customers are. What do they care about? How do we know that they care about what they care about, all these things. We have people who have similar interests, right? So, it would be the people on Instagram following the influencers. It would be the people. Since the fashion show interacts with the people so they know what is happening and can reflect it.” (Fashion – Business Development Manager)

“We actually contract the independent third party with a set of questions and we do it in the form of a customer survey, so it starts as a performance survey. How are we doing? Are we delivering on time in full? What’s the quality of the service and feedback? And then in the back-end, the second half we do, you know, where are you going? Where do you see us playing a part in your future and then you use the same customer satisfaction survey as actually an interview as well for how to align better with their needs for the future.” (Chemical Manufacturing – CEO)

5.1 *Strategy Approach*

Strategy is a collection of codes with the strongest loading of codes on both strategic action and foresight/futures consisting of sub-codes. The most frequently used foresight methods are scanning, surveys, trends analysis, scenarios, and back casting.

The nature of strategy creation resulted in the codes “bottom-up/participatory” and “top-down.” These codes are significant as they relate to leadership styles and organizational dynamic capabilities (Akkaya, 2020). Differentiation of approaches available to the trans-cultural leader is important to understand the implication of global-local considerations. Sentiment analysis has shown that research participants experienced a top-down strategy approach as negative, although it was an approach taken in two of the companies. Participants’ sentiment towards a bottom-up approach has been mostly positive.

Top-down negative sentiment example:

“It’s not going with the time just to have this ... top-down approach, the bottom-up approach is what’s needed and that’s also what we want to achieve right that we lower the hierarchy level a little bit, I would say in general for every company they are looking to know really get to this, especially big companies have high hierarchy levels and if you look in the startup scene and so on, you know that hierarchy just basically doesn’t exist, and that’s what we are trying to achieve, of course.” (Energy – Markets Analyst)

Bottom-up positive sentiment example:

“So, I think we have a pretty rigorous process that it kind of starts from the bottom up right so what we what we’ll have is have individual teams saying what’s important for them that rolls up in those teams being like saying what’s important for the unit right. And you know from there, it’s like what’s important for the market by the time it gets to the leadership team.” (Fashion – Business Development Manager)

Organizational agility was frequently mentioned by research participants, with various ways of expressing it in relation to the strategy codes of goals, bottom-up/participatory, transparency, strategic action, and tactical considerations. One of our research participants explained how internal and external stakeholders need to be involved in the strategy process as an organic and overall approach contributing to strategic foresight:

“that is the meaning of the strategy right to achieve an overall goal, even though it’s needing to be adaptive and flexible in these times, but it still needs to be an overall goal and that’s why you need to involve all the stakeholders because they are part of it basically.”
(Energy – Markets Analyst)

5.2 *Environmental Scanning for Impact*

Impact as a code group is associated with dimensions typically associated with environmental scanning in strategy work (Robinson et al., 2021). Scanning contributes to the alignment of strategy and the environment which has an impact on organizational performance.

This code group includes granularity associated with the participants’ narrative associated with key issues that impacted on their businesses like Covid-19 (mentioned by three participants) and Russia’s war on Ukraine (mentioned by four participants). Codes associated with people include people (internal), language, generations, and social/ values.

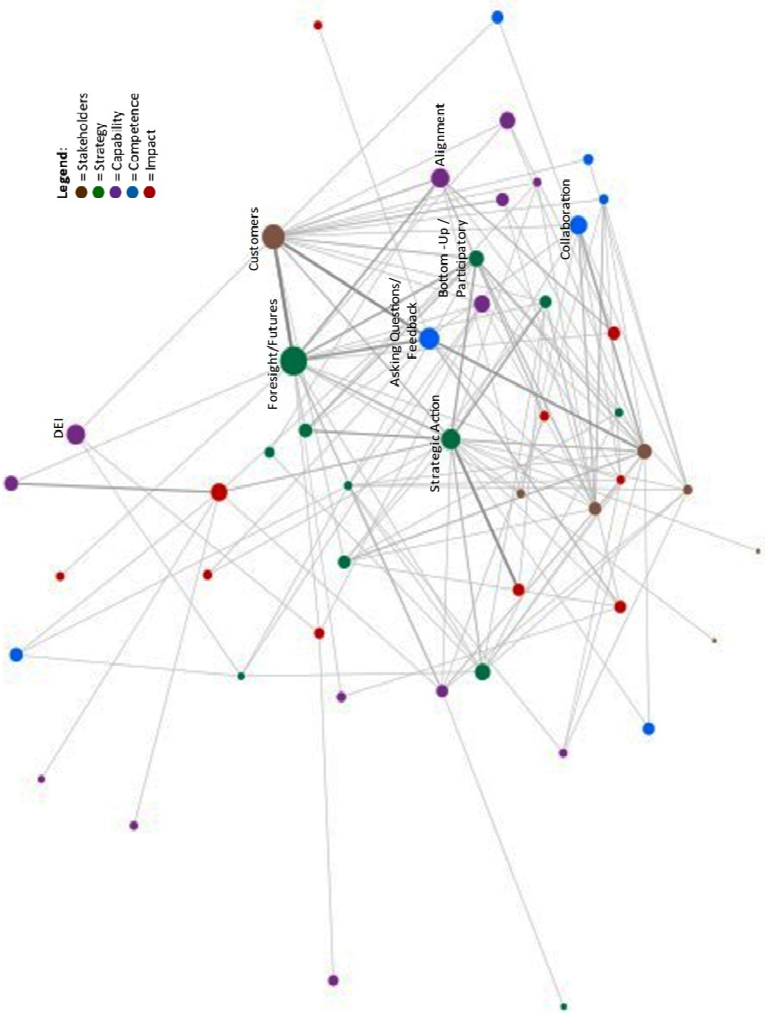
5.3 *Stakeholders*

Q4: What is the role of stakeholders in strategy from a transcultural leadership perspective?

Stakeholders as one code group was created to understand the frequency of various stakeholders in the strategy process. The reference to “customers” was by far the most frequently mentioned stakeholder with 30 codes allocated, which is also associated with “markets” with 16 codes allocated, which were mentioned by four participants. The remainder of stakeholders had fewer than ten codes allocated which included competitors, government, and suppliers.

Global businesses have built their strategy processes around their customers, this is evident when looking at Figure 8, a force-directed graph of the co-occurrence of strategy, stakeholders, and impact with strategy, capability, and competence. This graph is intended to show the connections that different codes have, gaining insights into various relationships and their proximity or distance from each other.

Figure 8: Force-Directed Graph with a Focus on Customers



Source: Own illustration.

Customers connect directly with the use of foresight/futures (in green), as well as “asking questions/feedback” (blue dot in the figure). The use of a question-feedback loop with customers results in obtaining insights into impact areas such as technology, social / values, and generational considerations.

Customers are also linked to the alignment capability (purple in Figure 8) which connects with the way organizations have a value proposition and align to markets and ultimately strategic goals. Businesses juggle global-local integration often through organizational structures that enable integration, this is explained by a business development manager in the following way:

“At the moment we’re prioritizing markets as the leaders in terms of the voice of the customer in that specific region. So, we’ll defer to the experts in that case. So, we’re like we want to do this, but you’re the one that’s on the ground, you know what’s going on. So, you probably have a better idea.”

The use of the term “expert” can have various implications, from the need to incorporate the recognition and use of experts within organizational values to the establishment of ways of work. There are therefore formal and informal ways of building networks with people who represent the voice of people from a specific location. Language and knowledge of the local context and customs were for example mentioned by research participants as important considerations to have local representation when making decisions impacting customers.

6. Future Research and Limitations

The selection of research participants was limited to the geographical-ly and availability of participants. However, the TSRG intended to align the research with the destination and timing of the research trip, providing a unique perspective on transculturality. Our participants included a cross-section of people in terms of organizational seniority and accountability in the strategy process.

The researchers developed this paper in parallel to ensure focus and deliver on the timelines for this project. Alignment between researchers

was maintained through regular conversations, sharing of data, and feedback loops. These practices ensured a cohesive integration between literature and data analysis. Although our collaborative approach allowed for a focused and timely completion of the paper, it contributed to an inherent limitation of omitting inter-rater comparisons. Future research may benefit from a more structured inter-rater reliability assessment to enhance methodological rigor.

Future researchers may find value in narrowing their focus to heads of strategy, a cohort uniquely positioned to offer both personal and professional perspectives. This targeted approach could delve deeper into the intricacies of strategic decision-making and leadership dynamics. A multi-layered analysis could facilitate a nuanced comparison between executive-level managers and staff engaged in strategy and foresight, shedding light on potential disparities and synergies in their perspectives and contributions to the strategic process. The sample size could consequently be extended to improve generalizability. People's perspectives from different organizational tiers can be linked to leadership styles and organizational culture and its associated impact on stakeholders, strategy, and business performance in general.

One of the research participants provided a unique perspective on a potential future research question:

“Maybe asking questions on like how people measure success through strategy. Like what metrics do they use? And how does and how do your long-term or short-term plans and strategy bring in like, yeah, impactful money.”

One of the most notable concepts that emerged in the coding process that warrant further investigation is the frequent and disparate use of “Time” as a construct in the intersectionality of transcultural leadership and strategy, considering the recent integrative framework by Blagoev et al. (2023) as a point of departure to study complex conceptions of time.

7. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, our exploration of the intersection of transcultural leadership with global strategy and local realities has yielded nuanced insights, enriching the broader discourse on transculturality. Through our study, we have uncovered key themes highlighting the pivotal role of individuals, their competencies, and organizational capabilities in orchestrating the delicate balance between global strategies and local contextual nuances.

Central to our findings is the recognition of the paramount role of people, with their multifaceted codes, in shaping the narrative of global strategies within diverse local contexts. Regardless of stakeholder status or organizational hierarchy, individuals play a crucial role in shaping the narrative of global strategies within diverse local contexts.

The symbiotic relationship between competencies and capabilities emerged as essential drivers for navigating transcultural realities. Our research underscores their instrumental role in facilitating effective stakeholder management, strategic foresight, and the nuanced interplay between global strategies and local needs.

A noteworthy addition to the repertoire of capabilities is the incorporation of “foresight/futures.” Beyond its traditional association with strategic planning, our study positions strategic foresight as a dynamic capability that serves as a bridge in the global-local context. This dual functionality positions strategic foresight as a pivotal enabler for organizational adaptability and responsiveness.

While our study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Factors such as participant selection and inter-rater comparisons warrant further exploration. Future research endeavors could focus on a deeper examination of heads of strategy for insights and could conduct multi-layered analyses comparing executive-level managers and staff involved in strategy and foresight, with an expanded sample size to enhance generalizability.

The practical implications of our findings extend beyond academia. Organizations can leverage our insights to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion, focus the development of competencies and capabilities, and align their strategies with the varied expectations and requirements of their stakeholders.

In weaving together, the threads of transcultural leadership, our research not only unravels the complexities inherent in global-local strategy, but also presents a narrative of the requirements of business to be adaptable, resilient, and agile. As organizations navigate the intricate tapestry of global strategies and diverse local contexts, our study offers a valuable compass, guiding them toward a more informed and culturally attuned approach.

As we conclude this chapter of our research journey, we extend an invitation to scholars and practitioners alike to build upon these insights, fostering a deeper understanding of transcultural leadership and its intersectionality with strategy in an ever-evolving global landscape.

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AI Applications and Limitations in Transcultural Recruitment

Luca Fioretti and Ngoc Minh Doan

Abstract

Current recruitment processes in a transcultural and more integrated world have much room for improvement. This article examines how one of the newest technologies, – artificial intelligence (AI) – can leverage data and overcome restrictions of traditional recruitment to achieve an organization’s transcultural goal. The research follows an inductive approach with qualitative interviews with experts from multiple disciplines to explore how AI is positioned in the realm of transcultural recruitment. We found that AI shines in its ability to access and analyze a large amount of data, reducing cost and improving efficiency as well as accuracy over time. However, there appear to be multiple concerns regarding a lack of a common framework in regulation, data transparency, and various biases in the development of AI. The transcultural leader’s role in initiating audits on AI as well as educating HR personnel about AI’s potential is highlighted by interview participants.

1. Introduction

Human Resources are one of the most crucial assets an organization has, as highly-skilled, qualified, and experienced employees incentivize growth, build reputation, increase competitive advantage, and trigger innovative transformation in an organization (Javed & Brishti, 2020).

In a world that is becoming increasingly globalized, having an effective transcultural recruitment process that can overcome conventional challenges and leverage the benefits of transcultural management is a topic of high importance.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a valuable tool if it is used judiciously and considerately by HR professionals. Karaboga & Vardarlier (2021) claim that the advantages of AI could make hiring procedures more economical, time-efficient, and less prone to errors of judgment. AI offers an additional hand that can automate many manual tasks of profile screening and message crafting, and an additional brain that finds a way to shortlist candidates better with the capability of creating matches, and making predictions. However, there are, at the same time, many limitations and concerns that surface in terms of fear and distrust of AI (Ore & Sposato, 2021), including ethical and biased reasoning, as well as transparency and data access regulation. This research offers insight into the topics mentioned above, concerning both the potential and drawbacks when AI is used in transcultural management.

2. *Literature Review*

The transcultural paradigm can be applied to various fields of research. When employed in transcultural management, the paradigm helps stakeholders transcend the cultural barriers that hinder intercultural communication between different professional agents (Rakow & König, 2017). In the particular setting of the HR department, the recruitment process plays a key role in identifying and forming the human components for a transcultural working environment (Kapur, 2022). Thus, leveraging AI to streamline and minimize errors in the process is of growing interest among today's recruitment professionals (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

Results published by Bughin et al. (2018) estimated that around 70 percent of companies will have integrated AI in some form into their work by 2030, and being an AI leader could help countries gain 20 to 25 percent more economic benefits than at present.

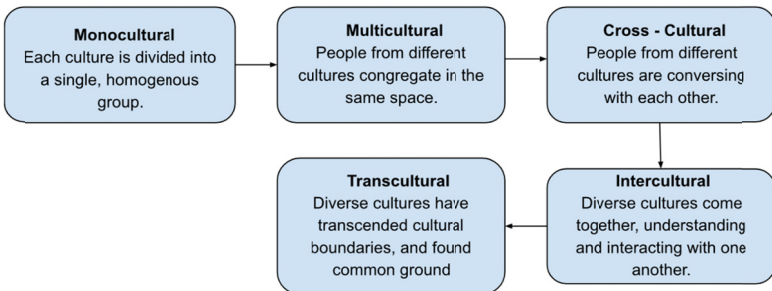
AI in Human Resources Management (HRM) has become a growing field of study with a positive future vision in recent years (Palos-Sánchez et al., 2022). The “Growth Period” with a sudden rise in research regarding AI in HR came in 2018; however, the recent slowdown in academic interest in the topic was due to the lack of disclosure of AI systems developed and customized within large businesses (Jatobá et al., 2019). Other main challenges asserted by Tambe et al. (2019) are the intricacy of HR issues, related data difficulties, equity and legal restrictions, and employee responses.

Despite the growing body of research on the use of AI in recruitment (Ore & Sposato, 2021), we were only able to find little literature concerning the transcultural background, and the promotion of transculturality in particular, within the recruitment process.

2.1 Transcultural Management and the Role of Recruitment

It is of high importance, first and foremost, to be able to differentiate between the levels of cultural communication within an international organization. VanHook (2005) stated that there are five main stages of cultural interaction:

Figure 1: Five Main Stages of Cultural Interaction



Source: VanHook, 2005.

The overarching goal of transculturality, therefore, is to facilitate collaboration among culturally diverse individuals and groups within institutional and organizational frameworks, as highlighted by Wieland (2016, p. 22), who emphasizes the importance of making such cooperation possible. In the area of transcultural management, diversity is recognized as an abundant resource to fuel innovation and facilitate sustainable global value generation (Hunzinger et al., 2018). Sultana et al. (2013) further asserted that cultural diversity can substantially enhance an organization's competitive position. However, the realization of these benefits is contingent upon leaders and relevant stakeholders acknowledging the existence of cultural diversity and cultivating awareness of the dilemmas involved in developing an effective management system for cultural diversity (Sultana et al., 2013). According to Kundu (2001), a diverse workforce promotes creativity and innovation which, allows organizations to transition more smoothly to a global marketplace with greater flexibility.

Mayson & Barrett (2006) defined recruitment as a process of sourcing and sorting out applicants who can generate value for their organizations using their predicted desirable skill sets, abilities and dedication. Against the backdrop of culturally-integrated firms, finding the right talent and fostering cooperation across multiple cultures, beliefs and regions are topics of rising importance (Hunzinger et al., 2018). Santos et al. (2020) found that effective recruitment positively influenced organizational performance by enhancing staff engagement, productivity, and work fulfilment. Recruitment in a multicultural way will pave the way for growth and learning opportunities, as it opens up an interchanging environment with varied talents, perspectives, and creativity, as noted by Tomar (2022). Tomar (2022) also suggested that by making potential markets more accessible, advancing problem-solving and decision-making processes, organizations will be able to popularize their presence in the world market and bring in more profit and revenue.

However, multiple risks have been identified (Berhil et al., 2020) concerning the achievement of HR goals in general. Those risks include (1) little control over ongoing HR costs could lead to a structural increase in management costs and (2) a failure in social dialogue management can result in potential absenteeism, strikes and a lack of trust

between employees and managers. In the particular aspect of recruitment, George & Thomas, (2019) regarded talent acquisition as one of the more monotonous functions in HR. Thus, the integration of technological tools such as AI would help HR to devote attention to more strategic work, rather than repetitive and low-value-added tasks (George & Thomas, 2019).

2.2 *Artificial Intelligence in Leveraging Transcultural Recruitment*

Hunkenschroer and Luetge (2022) have defined AI-based recruitment as any process employing AI to aid organizations in the hiring and selection of potential job candidates; meanwhile, IBM talks about AI as *augmented intelligence*, trying to deviate from the main sense, that will be able to transform the entire global education system. One of many to set formal boundaries for AI definition are Kaplan & Haenlein (2019, p. 17) who define AI as “a system’s ability to interpret external data correctly, to learn from such data, and to use those learnings to achieve specific goals and tasks through flexible adaptation.” AI is an advanced level of technology created to boost economic growth, raise productivity and assist humans in overcoming monotonous tasks; it is built on Big Data and a collection of algorithms that sense, examine, evaluate, and carry out tasks in the same way that humans would (Khatri et al., 2020). The tasks executed by AI that bear similarity to those performed by humans include recognition, prediction, classification, understanding, conversation, adjustment, and learning (Berhil et al., 2020).

Most organizations have implemented digital technologies and AI in HR such as machine learning, chatbots, and robot process automation, to assist in recruiting, screening, onboarding, and interviewing (Yawalkar, 2019). IBM, Unilever, Amazon, and other multinational companies use AI-based software due to the massive number of job applications they receive for a single vacancy (Black & Van Esch, 2020). The same goes for organizations like SAT, Facebook, GE – who leverage digital technologies to help examine and identify new talents with prompt, curated responses to candidates (Yawalkar, 2019). Job-oriented sites such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Indeed, Naukri also employ machine

learning algorithms to deliver job recommendations to people based on their search history, list of connections, resumés, and keywords utilized (George & Thomas, 2019). Meanwhile, Google have developed a platform, *Google for Jobs*, that works in symbiosis with all other job-finding platforms and, with AI tools, it helps jobseekers and employers to find the perfect match (Al-Alawi et al., 2021).

According to research by Berhil et al., (2020), AI algorithms, including machine learning, neural networks, and data mining were chosen 41% of the time to resolve HR issues. One of the most crucial issues to be solved are the time-consuming and labor-intensive recruitment processes, including CV sifting, sorting, and selecting top candidates or employees that need more training (Rykun, 2019). With AI, the automated procedure enables HR managers to concentrate on higher value-added tasks and those that require specialized knowledge and skills (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020). In addition to its potential to provide decision-supporting information by text document analysis, AI's speech processing techniques could be of great use in the scenario of interactive voice-response for employee self-service (Strohmeier & Piazza, 2015).

Furthermore, as the data is processed extremely quickly, compared to humans, a company can go through all the CVs and job candidate profiles, always looking for the best qualities and features that fit the company (Black & Van Esch, 2020). The real benefit for those who are applying for a vacancy comes from the possibility of having a structured and organized interview, meaning that everyone will be assessed using the same questions (Dattner et al., 2019). In this way, during the talent identification process the interviewer will be less likely to be affected by bias when making a decision. This significantly reduces the possibility of discrimination based on race, gender, nationality, or appearance (Black & Van Esch, 2020).

However, the reviewed literature from Palos-Sánchez et al.'s (2022) bibliometric analysis highlighted the negative sentiment among most employees when it comes to the application of AI in Human Resources Management, including recruitment. The first main problem is a lack of crucial skills and competencies in HR professionals to deal with challenges when applying AI in HR processes (Nankervis et al., 2021). Yawalkar (2019) has the same opinion, claiming that finding

the right candidate to handle AI tools is a key challenge in the industry, and can be difficult for the HR department. The second concern would be the dehumanization of the hiring process resulting from the use of AI tools, especially chatbots, which could lead to concern and contrary attitudes from HR professionals (Fritts & Carbera, 2021). Strohmeier & Piazza (2015) emphasized in their research that AI approaches must not only meet the demands of HR tasks but also surpass current methods in performance. As such, the remark that any adaptation of AI techniques to real-life HR practices is a complex challenge that calls for both deep AI and deep HR expertise would serve as fundamental guidance for any further work (Strohmeier & Piazza, 2015).

3. *Methodology*

Our research questions aim to discover the potential application and limitations of AI within transcultural recruitment, which demanded a qualitative investigation instead of a quantitative one. That is why we did not focus on the massive collection and analysis of quantitative data. We intend to provide a holistic, overall view of the current situation of our research topic. After this knowledge acquisition phase, the analysis of the collected data was started.

3.1 *Study Methods*

The qualitative research method is employed for the topic with inductive reasoning to find a potential answer to our research question. Since we were trying to predict and forecast the future of transcultural recruitment with Artificial Intelligence, a relatively new field, we found that there was limited data, and limited research had been conducted previously. Thus, qualitative research dives deeper into ideas and experiences, so that potentiality and limitations can be discovered. In addition, the research follows a semi-structured interview approach. Being the most widely used method to gather data in qualitative research, qualitative interviewing excels at recording as well as chal-

lenging and reinforcing ideas and practices at the same time (Oakley, 1998). More specifically, a semi-structured interview approach was utilised in our research to keep interviews structured while giving researchers space to examine relevant ideas mentioned by interview participants (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

3.2 Data Collection

We set out to collect qualitative data by conducting semi-structured interviews. The aim was to have a basic understanding of relevant stakeholders' perspectives and experiences with AI involvement in transcultural recruitment. Our sample population includes a set of inclusion criteria, which should identify specific attributes of a case to qualify for the study (Robinson, 2014). In particular, all of our participants must have a transcultural background or be involved in a transcultural environment to fit the goals of the publication. Therefore, with an intended sample size of 8-10 interview participants, we employed a purposive sampling strategy, non-random techniques to guarantee that specific case categories within a sampling population are included in the research's final sample (Robinson, 2014). Purpose sampling is built on the assumption that the presence of particular categories of individuals is needed because of their critical and unique insights into the phenomenon (Mason, 2017). Thus, our interview partners were chosen to be, or have been, involved in at least one of these fields: transcultural management, recruitment, and technology/AI development. The sampling is not limited to a single geographical area. Two-thirds of the interviewees were reached via professional LinkedIn connections, and one-third were referenced by prior interview partners, as a result of snowball sampling. Prior to the interviews, we prepared initial questionnaires consisting of six to ten questions, covering the topic of transcultural recruitment and how AI could be or should not be a part of it. However, following the format of semi-structured interviews, we also came up with follow-up questions, diving deeper into our interview partners' expertise.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Average working experience</i>	<i>Industry</i>	<i>Interview format</i>	<i>Duration of interview</i>
1.	15 years	Consultancy	Online	55 minutes
2.	25 years	IT	Online	47 minutes
3.	15 years	Consultancy	Online	45 minutes
4.	15 years	Recruitment	On-site	38 minutes
5.	15 years	Research	Online	45 minutes
6.	15 years	IT	Online	52 minutes
7.	25 years	Pharmaceutical	Online	49 minutes
8.	25 years	IT	Online	32 minutes
9.	15 years	Recruitment	Online	23 minutes
10.	15 years	Recruitment	Online	29 minutes

Source: Own table.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, we made an effort to develop a potential framework for AI's role in transcultural recruitment from the interviews conducted. Accordingly, an initial thematic analysis was conducted to identify and structure the areas of interest, which was found to be a popular method to analyze thick descriptive data by qualitative researchers (Naeem et al., 2023). Braun & Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as a method to find and report patterns throughout a dataset to make inherent interpretations. A systematic thematic analysis is utilized in this research, involving: (1) transcript creation and data familiarization; (2) keyword identification; (3) code selection; (4) theme development; (5) conceptualization through interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes; (6) conceptual model development (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Quotations collected from interview partners are incorporated into an Excel file, from which keywords, codes, and themes are developed to form a conceptual model. This detailed approach ensured a more efficient and precise analysis of the data, allowing us to extract as much information as possible and to understand what was being analyzed.

4. Findings

The findings section is subdivided into two main parts: discussing the core concepts of our research question and then diving deeper into how the emerging technology – AI can be positioned in the field of transcultural recruitment. Through the course of research with interview partners from various industries, three main themes were brought up and discussed: transculturality, recruitment, and artificial intelligence (AI). We have found that these themes are interconnected, from the basic level of concept to observation and application in reality. The topic of automated recruitment comes up clearly in the interviews, calling for greater operational efficiency.

However, our experts emphasize the need to maintain a human-centric approach within the development of advanced technologies that can be customized for each customer.

The two important themes that come up in each discussion are the limits and regulation of AI, which leads us to consider the importance of the ethical dimension inherent in automated decision-making, which is in fact processed by an algorithm and thus recalls problems of bias.

These latter issues fuel in experts the critical need for transparency and the formulation of global regulations in order to harmonize technological advances with an important ethical basis, not only in favor of the candidates but also, on a general level, for everyone.

Linked to these arguments is the need to clarify the dynamics that AI will have within these processes. That is to say, it will be a great tool that workers will be able to use and from which they will derive a lot of dynamism; despite this, according to our experts, it will not cause job losses, as workers' human skills cannot be completely replaced.

The interviewees therefore urge us to imagine a synergetic future: we should imagine a future in which we will be increasingly joined by artificial intelligence in normal work processes.

At the core of automation and the worker is the crucial role of leaders. These leaders are defined by characteristics such as open communication, the ethical audit of AI, and the cultivation of a corporate philosophy based on ethical principles. Leaders are the spotlights of organizations, tracing the path in the difficult and ever-changing ground of AI implementation. Leaders guide companies towards a significant balance, balancing technology and artificial intelligence.

4.1 Key Concepts

4.1.1 Perceptions About Transculturality

Transculturality, at its origin, results from the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures (Welsch, 1999). Despite different backgrounds, our interviewees agree that transculturality involves understanding and going beyond cultural differences. These cultural differences do not limit themselves to geographical distance but also to individual identity and lifestyle. The core pathway in a transcultural environment proposed by our interview partners is prioritizing both the intactness and harmonization of each distinct culture.

“It doesn’t necessarily have to be about the geographical distance between countries; it could be between regions, provinces and personalities. The important thing is to make the employees I manage or advise the leaders to harmonize these cultures to achieve the common goals of the company.” (Interviewee 2)

“From my perspective, transculturality happens because people from different geographies have their own cultures. We need to understand the cultural differences and make sure that, when it comes to operations, the process in place should not impact their culture or other things that they follow.” (Interviewee 6)

The keywords for transcultural co-working are “understanding” and “empathizing,” taking into consideration the roles of both leaders and

employees. Because in the end, all transcultural organizations should aim to foster an environment for diverse groups of people to efficiently operate as an integrated, focused team working towards common goals that are significant in current globalism (Jr, 2003). However, one of the interview partners highlights that terms of transculturality would make more sense for companies in the US or Europe rather than Southeast Asia, where it is not a big topic yet, except in countries like Malaysia or Singapore which already have many cultures mixing.

The leaders have to empathize with the employees who have different personalities. Then the employees also need to understand that they are working in a “transcultural” environment – understand what colleagues want, understand what the company wants, and have a perspective that they have to comply with standards in a multicultural environment. (Interviewee 2)

4.1.2 Transcultural Recruitment

Finding the most qualified applicants for the company is the overall goal of recruiting and selection. Just like capital, the proper recruitment and selection process acts as the lifeblood of every firm (Karim et al., 2021). Yet, one interview partner mentions that many hiring stakeholders conduct recruitment based solely on established contacts and acquaintances, implying a need to promote diversity in hiring. In transcultural organizations, specifically, learning how to integrate the cultural aspect into the existing recruitment process should be one of the cornerstones for hiring new employees. The studies of cross-cultural human resources management would help managers deliberate more on human resources strategies and practices based on cultural components (Guttermann, 2023).

“There’s a tendency of hiring managers to only hire people that they know [...] We would call it more like a culture – add. So, you want someone who’s going to bring something new to the table.” (Interviewee 4)

A study by Hunzinger et al. (2018) found that two of the most important goals to focus on for Global HR and Diversity Management at

an organizational level are “facilitating priority setting and a shared understanding of those priorities” (p. 10) and “enabling diversity in teams to increase productivity”. Forming the recruitment team is therefore the first stepping stone into more conscious and meaningful transcultural management and collaboration. Leaders and managers need to have a clear understanding, and plan for team members’ diversity, which would prioritize the shared common goal of the organization.

“We have people from many different teams to talk to each other to see what the common goal is, not necessarily to look at cultural differences to treat them in the job. That, according to me, is the essence of the recruitment process, we put the focus on the ultimate goal, rather than focusing on the issues around.” (Interviewee 2)

4.1.3 The Concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that deals with the creation of intelligent agents, which are systems that can reason, learn, and act autonomously (Google Gemini, 2024).

“Now how Artificial Intelligence is different from this dogmatic way of solving problems, is that it helps the algorithm find the right answer by itself.” (Interviewee 5)

The revolutionary use of algorithms for the development of these agents was stunning from a scientific point of view, they have the ability to process information and make decisions at volumes and speeds that far exceed human capacity (Black & Esch, 2020). Furthermore, after a scant amount of time, compared to artificial intelligence models, humans need to decompress their minds after working; this comparative advantage was highlighted as well by (Dietzmann & Yangqing, 2022, p. 5923), who stated “the human brain is by far the most efficient computer, but neither processing speed nor storage capacity can be expanded at present”. One of the perceivable human limitations is calculation capacity, whose power is infinitesimal compared to that of AI.

4.1.4 How AI Can Promote Transculturality

An AI-specific innovation mode is the prerequisite to foster dynamic growth of AI systems in the future (Hirsch-Kreinsen, 2024). This mode's central feature involves, first of all, "transdisciplinary and knowledge transfer," in which AI can integrate knowledge domains that would otherwise be kept distinct from each other within various sectors and disciplines (Hirsch-Kreinsen, 2024). The above finding fits with the trend of globalization and transculturality in the 21st century. Our interviewees have recognized multiple applications of how AI would facilitate knowledge and transdisciplinary exchange among cultures around the world: to overcome language barriers, to meet common scheduling between time zones, and to engage in transcultural media for advertisements.

"So basically, any video that you upload to the tool will now be available in different languages, they'll be the same video but it'll be a different audio it'll be dubbed into a different language [...] because the number of people that speak English in this world is actually a minority, it's not as big of a population as we think." (Interviewee 1)

"If you work in many different countries, you encounter time zone differences. They alert you, oh, it's morning for you, but at that time, it's evening for them, so be cautious. And they automatically schedule a suitable time for you to communicate with them." (Interviewee 2)

"I think AI has enabled a transcultural shopping experience or rather transcultural economic experience where in the past we haven't really had the opportunity, without the advent of AI in the advertisement, we haven't really been able to see ads from across the world that do offer the product that we would ideally want and that are relevant to us." (Interviewee 1)

4.2 Artificial Intelligence in Transcultural Recruitment

4.2.1 Application in Transcultural Recruitment

In the modern era, job candidates attribute a lot of their time to digital spaces, as evidenced by the fact that the number of active social media users globally was 3.2 billion in 2018 (Kemp, 2018). However, many recruitment executives are still ignorant or do not make the effort to catch up with advances in AI-enabled recruiting. This is an alarming sign because only through keeping up with digital transformation and AI-fueled recruiting technologies will businesses be able to attract and select the human capital they need to achieve their desired levels of business performance (Becker & Huselid, 2006).

Avoiding Bias

Even with laws prohibiting it, indirect or direct discrimination in recruitment and selection still persists as a problem, especially among immigrants or people with immigrant backgrounds. This discrimination is, however, often the result of unconscious bias, and early recognition would prevent the discrimination from taking place. Unconscious bias can hurt individuals, especially in workplace, by creating social hierarchies based on one's perceived favorable or negative traits (Pandey, 2021). One of the solutions to counter bias in transcultural management is the use of AI, thanks to many of its features and convenience.

“But of course, HR and hiring comes with a huge bias, obviously, right? If the recruiter is coming from a different sort of region, he might have a bias against other regions, he might have had bad experiences with one group or whatever it is.” (Interviewee 3)

“It's very, very difficult to overcome biases and that's where AI kicks in, and helps you select and hire the best candidate in the list.” (Interviewee 8)

A bias-free AI tool in the company is very important for talent acquisition, as it helps to select and hire the best candidate on the list. It

keeps the ultimate objective of finding the best candidate clear and separate from all other personal affections, which in turn could promote diversity and inclusion among the goals of transcultural recruitment.

“First, AI helps me eliminate bias, it means that I only rely on real data to evaluate my performance instead of relying on preconceived notions. Two, AI helps me get a lot of information about candidates that I can’t get from resumé.” (Interviewee 2)

“AI algorithms can be designed to evaluate candidates based solely on their relevant skills and qualifications. This helps promote diversity and inclusion.” (Interviewee 10)

Candidate Profiles Checks and Analysis

Browsing and checking potential candidate profiles is seen as one of the indispensable steps to an effective recruitment process. However, many problems regarding time limits, false and overwhelming data, and differences in privacy regulations emerge and require much consideration from recruitment staff.

“So you have ten thousand applicants, a recruiter will never go through all of these. So even if there might be a very good match in terms of a CV, in terms of background, everything can just get carried under the rug.” (Interviewee 3)

“A lot of background checks are run from the US and every company has their own privacy regulations. This takes a while and you can’t legally do anything at the moment until that’s complete. There’s a lot of manual work.” (Interviewee 4)

In these situations AI stands out in its capacity to cover a large set of data to verify, scan, and analyze profile results. Our interviewees praised the use of AI for the application of profile screening and checking, given the amount of manual and time-consuming work if performed directly by hand.

“This can be helped tremendously by AI because you can feed an AI system all sorts of database and a large chunk, an amount of CVs can be scanned and do the fit right.” (Interviewee 3)

“AI can help in terms of pulling out or processing all those resumés and then, it can help in terms of screening and provide the consolidated list, the appropriate candidates based on the conditions, the information that we would like to extract [...] Again, it’s a database. So it needs to be integrated with any third-party system or third-party tools when it comes to the background check. Because not every company has their own background check process or defined or something like that.” (Interviewee 6)

“AI algorithms can detect anomalies in resumés that indicate potential issues like inconsistencies in dates, job titles, and skills claimed. This can help flag resumés for further manual screening.” (Interviewee 10)

“Imagine how easily you could track connections on LinkedIn. During a recruiting process, or even beforehand, you could see who potential candidates are connected to, what they’re posting, and who they’re interacting with.” (Interviewee 7)

“It usually doesn’t rely on just one source and decide; it often gathers information from various sources, comparing them for discrepancies. If it detects something inconsistent, it raises a warning.” (Interviewee 2)

After verifying the data and getting through the first layer of profile screening, AI can then contribute to providing better candidate-matching systems and making predictions for future possibilities. Google launched “*Google for Jobs*” to assist companies and job seekers and therefore improve candidate matching between the two groups. The platform makes use of artificial intelligence algorithms that can suggest the best candidate for a certain position or the best application for it (Al-Alawi et al., 2021). Aside from a standardized evaluation of basic skills such as engineering or management skills, our interview partners also mentioned how AI can help predict a candidate’s likelihood of job hopping by analyzing their past career path. This feature of AI would be of great help to the HR Department to plan the company’s human resources strategy.

“I can use AI to predict a candidate’s likelihood of job hopping. Every company wants to retain employees, but some companies encourage candidates to switch jobs, albeit rarely. There are tools to view their career path and how frequently they switch jobs. I can predict how many years from now they might switch jobs, enabling me to plan the company’s human resources strategy.” (Interviewee 2)

HR personnel in charge of recruitment can further leverage AI through its matching algorithm. Being accessible to and fed all the necessary information about required skills, education level, or experience, the qualified candidates could be easily found within a matter of minutes. In addition, AI is also capable of detecting sentiments and taking into account the company’s values and own culture. Therefore, the most suitable applicant when it comes to finding a transcultural match for a global-scale recruitment process would be identified.

“So you can train the sentiment detection system to AI to sort of have the cultural match to your company.” (Interviewee 3)

“It relies on a job description that indicates the required skills. It often uses a matching algorithm. For example, a candidate lists certain skills and coincidentally, those skills match the job description, so they go into the shortlist.” (Interviewee 2)

“Anthropic has a similar tool like Chat GPT called Claude, so all of the data that resides within these large language models are data that’s been scraped. So it is highly possible that all of this scraped data can be used to create a holistic picture of who that person is, given that they use the same name, the same identity, like, across all of these platforms.” (Interviewee 1)

Candidate Engagement

Recruitment is a two-sided value exchange process, in which company and recruiter should not be seen as the only focus, but also the candidates who are applying to the organization. To optimize the results of recruitment, strategies to engage with candidates can help an organization attract more talent.

It has been proven by prior research that there is a correlation between high-quality recruitment sources and their ability to attract qualified candidates; therefore, characteristics of recruitment sources including informativeness, specificity and amount of information should be taken into close consideration (Flecke, 2016). AI can be of crucial help regarding leveraging data points and user feedback to choose the most suitable recruitment platforms and post targeted job advertisements. A wider pool of suitable candidates in that specific industry with the required skills would be reached as a consequence.

“You can do sponsored posts on open platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and other job boards where you’re more likely to find these people. So AI can actually help you find out some of these platforms as well.” (Interviewee 5)

“For example, in the IT field, when posting a job, it will post on reliable IT sources in Vietnam, like Top dev, IT Việt, or LinkedIn, for example. And it relies on data analysis and user feedback.” (Interviewee 2)

“If you are enabling the recruitment process for a specific geography. So then, you need to run it with a specific location so that you can send the announcement to this specific location which will help you in terms of sorting or it will be a very minimal number of announcements can go, rather than going across all the candidates.” (Interviewee 6)

An eye-tracking experiment by Pfiffelmann et al. (2020, p. 202) confirmed that personalizing job advertisements with potential candidates’ photos and first names “attracts greater visual attention, such that people fixate on the ad more frequently (fixation count) and visit it longer (dwell duration).” Personalization is another application of AI that can deal with a large number of applications and ensure an effective interactive space. Our interview partners mentioned the use of translation systems that can reach candidates from a more transcultural perspective and personalized messages with candidates’ names for job advertisements.

“Sometimes I receive an email that addresses me by name, and sometimes I feel happier with that than with a generic Hello, Sir/Madam. And it also knows what industry I work in and introduces the right field to me, so it can personalize the email to send me.” (Interviewee 2)

“AI also now has the capability to go from text to audio. We’ve had translation systems where one speaker would speak in another language and the system would translate it through audio. So I think we’re going to see a lot more of that, we’re probably going to even see video calls like Zoom, Teams even have that capability where only I can hear the English version and let’s say if I want to communicate to somebody in Spanish they would hear just the Spanish version.” (Interviewee 1)

However, during recruitment, there is often a dilemma in which the differences in skills and suitability of the chosen and rejected candidates are really close. It poses a question for the HR department how to keep track of these qualified applicants for future job positions. AI would be one of the options that can help rejected candidates engage in the loop for new positions.

“Let’s say we’ve got candidates in the process that maybe were good, but they didn’t get the role. We want to keep them in the process – in the loop. Yeah. And just keep them updated with product updates. So just keep that engagement going. So at least you have them ready when the positions come up.” (Interviewee 4)

“The HR team has data up and below the points, the HR team can provide an email stating that they do not have an opportunity at this time and maybe even provide personalized recommendations based on the points for improvement that were noted during the interview. And all of this the HR person doesn’t need to do manually now that we have these large language models, data can be ingested in the back end and we can have robotic press automation deployed in the front end, and we can have these emails automated with personalized messages in them.” (Interviewee 1)

Automation

The conventional way of recruiting is seen as manual, time-consuming, and usually connected with high costs. Research by Grabara et al. (2016) proved that costs associated with employee replacement range from one-third of annual earnings to up to the value of a high-level manager's two-year remuneration. AI, therefore, can be optimized to save HR's department time, and budget and, more arguably, double the performance of the recruitment process. Among those, to achieve the best efficiency, AI could be used in parallel with other tools to create a more holistic and productive picture of recruitment.

"We do see more of an emerging trend of AI being used with other tools that automate certain features, for example, robotic process automation. These bots, in addition with AI tools, like Chat GPT, can be used to pretty much automate the entire process with just a quick click of a button. So it's fascinating how these technologies combined could really save a lot of time." (Interviewee 1)

"An AI system can work as reliably as you train it to. It can work at 100% if you want to [...] It works normally at 70 to 75% accuracy, right. And to get it to the 95% and to the 100%, it's a really really difficult thing to do because you need to have a very well-trained data set to feed it to." (Interviewee 3)

"AI systems can screen resumés, answer applicants' questions, schedule interviews, and perform other administrative tasks much faster than humans. This improves the speed and output of the recruitment process." (Interviewee 10).

4.2.2 AI Limitations and Regulations

When we think of Artificial Intelligence, the first thing that springs to mind is ChatGPT and its many versions developed in recent years, but in real terms, the aforementioned chatbot is just an application of Advanced Artificial Intelligence to a machine learning model. AI is defined as 'the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making[...]', so we are inter-

facing with a system that is replacing humans in processes that previously no one else was able to do. (Oxford Reference, 2024)

Ethical Argument

When an individual engages in wrongful actions and experiences remorse, the brain triggers an internal consequence. If a human disregards ethical principles, society may punish them through shaming by their peers or a sentence in court (Baker-Brunnbauer, 2021). While global ethical consensus is currently lacking in today's world, there are fundamental principles that are widely accepted. AI often requires large amounts of data to train and operate effectively. This raises concerns about the collection, storage, and use of personal information. There is a risk of unauthorized access, misuse, or abuse of data, compromising individuals' privacy and autonomy without any direct social consequences. Some multinationals (e.g., Google, Microsoft) in the technology sector have already started to increase transparency and try to audit the results of AI tools used by HR departments. This is also happening in an attempt to prevent decisions, developed by the tools, from discriminating against categories of people or those with peculiar characteristics, thus creating a precedence for the company (Chen, 2023).

“When using AI, we have to ensure that candidates know how their profiles are being processed by AI at which stage, and processed by humans at which stage?” (Interviewee 2)

At the same time, many AI algorithms can be seen as black boxes, making it difficult to understand how they arrive at their decisions or predictions. Lack of transparency can undermine trust, accountability, and the ability to detect and rectify errors or biases. Multinational companies, as well as universities during their recruiting process, use structured video-based interviews to assess the psychological features (Dattner et al., 2019) of candidates that will help the company find the best person who perfectly matches their needs.

“The use of AI to analyze candidates’ social media profiles and other personal data without consent could be considered an invasion of privacy.” (Interviewee 10)

This use of AI-based recruitment software by some companies could harm a candidate’s personal information, something that would not be permitted in a human-based recruitment system due to a prompt and distinctive response by the interviewee who would cite employees’ rights. The previously mentioned view of AI software as an abstract model that is not always accountable for what it can assess from the data gathered. Dattner (2019) raised some concerns about the ethics of screening people’s voices, highlighting personal elements that could be used as preferred elements in a non-scientifically validated tool leading to a conceivable discriminatory impact.

Bias and Regulations Argument

The Cambridge Dictionary defines bias as “The action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment.” (Cambridge, 2024)

As we conducted our interviews, one of the first topics that many experts wanted to raise was the problem of bias in artificial intelligence, sometimes even drawing comparisons with human bias.

From the meetings with the interviewees, we were able to catalogue and analyse the following types of bias: dataset bias, algorithm bias and confirmation bias.

“I think it, especially with intercultural recruiting processes, it’s important to make sure that if we are using AI systems, making sure that the AI system is representative of genders, representative of different races, people from different countries, people from different sexual orientations.” (Interviewee 1)

“The training data that we train the AI system on, needs to be a representative sample of data.” (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 1 highlighted how the importance of the data with which artificial intelligence is trained to perform certain tasks, especially that of recruiting, is of paramount importance for the respect of equal opportunities for candidates. The inclination to pre-empt or not pre-empt something or someone in the AI-based selection process simply reflects the lack of representation of plurality within the dataset with which artificial intelligence has been and is being exercised.

“AI algorithms are trained on historical data that can reflect human biases against certain groups. This could result in unfairly screening out qualified candidates from underrepresented groups” (Interviewee 10)

In this respect, interviewee 10 also strongly argued with the problem of non-representation of certain groups in the data used to train the software, most likely resulting from human bias. The systemic repetition of this problem leads, effectively, to confirmation bias within the process.

“We can also have algorithmic bias, meaning the algorithm itself or the logic of how the AI system is built is skewed. Basically, the person who’s building the algorithm can have a different view of how the recommendation system should work. I could favor my logic based on my previous knowledge.” (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 1, again, is not talking about the historical data behind the training process of AI; instead, she ascribes the problem to who developed the algorithm. As Miasato & Silva (2019, p. 198) suggest, AI’s output is influenced by the “*quality of the data*” and “*design of the system*”. The first aspect is driven primarily by the data feed quality, which can help develop further biased decisions by HR if data is not well audited. The system’s design is closely connected to the human aspects that develop the algorithm; it can be shaped by the prioritization of “certain characteristics or certain variables, depending on how they want the machine to behave” (Miasato & Silva, 2019, p. 198). The cultural background of the person behind the writing of the algorithm code has biases and if these are not eliminated, they can lead to the compromise of the best end result. This leads to unfair biases in the selection process. The logic of the code writer, of which our inter-

viewee speaks, is comparable to the dataset with which the AI will be exercised, the greater the lack of representation, the more unfair the result will be.

At present, one of the most considerable obstacles in the application of AI in transcultural management – and in management more broadly – is the absence of regulations, not general, but detailed ones.

It is not our intention to make a detailed and clear analysis of all relevant regulations in the field of artificial intelligence, so we have focused on recognizing particular dynamics and possible future goals for better management.

The regulations governing artificial intelligence (AI), broadly speaking, arise as a patchwork of heterogeneous provisions, with different countries adopting different approaches. The main challenge is to strike a balance between innovation in this field and growing ethical concerns.

A recent study by the Brookings Institution (Wheeler, 2023) predicts a future in which AI regulations will be centered on three key pillars: *Transparency*, meaning people will have the right to know how AI works and understand how decisions made by this technology affect them; *Accountability*, meaning AI systems will have to be designed to ensure traceability; *Responsible use*, meaning AI will have to be used in an ethical and non-discriminatory manner.

In the field of recruitment, the new guidelines, like those outlined in the EU directives on AI transparency (European Commission, 2024), aim to ensure fairness, the absence of bias and the avoidance of discriminatory practices.

Europe is nevertheless showing itself to be leading the field of research regarding better regulation of AI. Some of the experts interviewed stressed the importance of a common future vision in which there is global partisanship in the drafting of some specific regulations.

“It needs to have transcultural regulation. Regulators from all different sorts of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds need to regulate this AI system altogether. It can’t work that we have a European regulation, then the US regulation and the China regulation.” (Interviewee 3)

4.2.3 Labor Force Replacement or a Complementary Approach

Artificial intelligence is being developed on a massive scale in the corporate sector, which is reflected in the optimization and streamlining of production processes that were previously carried out by company-hired personnel. In some sectors, developments in the automation of processes have led to the disappearance of jobs, resulting in an excess of workers.

The implicit question our interviewees answered is about the future relationship between artificial intelligence and human resources, hence workers in general.

“I think 20 years in the future, it’ll be extremely inefficient for humans to do anything human. [...] I think absolutely everything is going to be data-driven 100%.” (Interviewee 9)

Interviewee 9 during the meeting firmly believes that many of the tasks now performed by humans will be implemented in the near future to make artificial intelligence capable of doing them autonomously. This leads, in effect, humans to focus on other tasks, perhaps innovative and not capable of being performed by AI.

“You cannot have AI for all of your processes. AI can help improve your productivity. It does not have very much intelligence, it does not have any common sense, it just runs on data, the scenario and conditions. Based on that, it will help you put it together. But the human involvement is necessarily needed.” (Interviewee 6)

Expert 6 makes a very valuable statement, emphasizing the code dependency of artificial intelligence vis-à-vis humans. This subordination ensures that the processes developed are not generated from the outset, but are simply the result of combining both numerical and non-numerical datasets, which leads to a human-subordinated limitation of AI’s autonomy in progressing.

“In the end, AI is created by humans, and the data is also created by humans, and algorithms are created by humans. And it can make mistakes, so we need to supervise it.” (Interviewee 2)

Interviewee 2 intends to deepen the vision of interaction between us, understood as man, and artificial intelligence, which in his opinion will always be bound by code dependency, updates or absence of punctuality.

Our interviews yielded different thoughts about the relational future between AI and human resources, revealing that most of them, albeit with not entirely overlapping motivations, consider total replacement not feasible.

4.2.4 The Role of Leaders' When Implementing AI for Transcultural Management

As this book discusses multiple aspects of the Future of Transcultural Leadership, the current chapter will examine how a leader can better leverage AI and mitigate its downsides in a transcultural management environment. Research has found that attempts by organization leaders at open communication were a strong indicator of their organization's reputation (Kim, 2017). In the context of AI implemented for transcultural recruitment in particular, and transcultural management in general, an attitude of respect and understanding needs to be promoted by leaders. In consequence, problematic matters can be addressed in a timely manner to avoid misconduct concerning AI and other reputational complications.

“If someone inside the organization alerts you about unethical practices, you have to respect and protect them.” (Interviewee 2)

Another growing solution, as well as a developing field of research and practice, is AI auditing. AI auditing structures the process to assess whether an organization's past or present conduct is consistent with the predefined standards, regulations, or norms (Mökander et al., 2021). The use of AI auditing helps processing methods be more transparent, and not be influenced purely by profit. If the AI system strays from the ethical area as a result, adjustments could be made accordingly.

“If you have the ability to do so, hire a third-party unit to audit your system. In this way, you can make declarations that are transparent and adherent to legal regulations, respecting candidates’ data. You can also establish an ethics council within the company. If possible, use this council to oversee the AI system and ensure it’s compliant with ethical standards. Also, the AI system you design should be flexible to adjust based on legal frameworks.” (Interviewee 2)

5. Discussion

5.1 Limitations

The core limitation was finding experts who could be involved across the three focus areas of our research: AI, transculturality and recruiting.

We detected a systematic lack of knowledge of the term *transculturality*, as it is rarely used, whereas companies prefer to use the terms cross-cultural, multicultural, or diversity and inclusion.

Although the integration of AI in the recruiting process is relatively new, our interviewees were all aware of this phenomenon. However, the need to apply Artificial Intelligence to highlight and analyze what consequences it might have in transcultural management has never been approached.

There were therefore insightful interviews with experts, enabling us to recognize how our research question is groundbreaking and still in unexplored territory.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, our exploration of transcultural recruitment in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) revealed a multi-faceted landscape in which human collaboration, technological innovation and cultural dynamics converge. We have delved into emerging themes, characterized their essence and provided explanations to unravel the intricate tapestry of this evolving field.

At the core of our analysis are three fundamental themes: transculturality, recruitment dynamics and the transformative influence of AI. These themes intersect, reflecting the interconnected nature of the elements that shape contemporary professional landscapes. As in a symphony where different instruments harmonize, our research highlights the importance of the different perspectives facilitated by AI in transcultural recruitment.

Our exploration of the ethical dimensions of AI resonates with broader discussions of AI and human rights. While acknowledging the potential of AI in promoting diversity and inclusion, our analysis remains cautious, recognizing the challenges.

Looking forward, the trajectory of transcultural recruitment with AI integration points towards a future characterized by collaboration and innovation. Collaborative efforts between technology and human intuition promise a recruitment landscape in which biases are minimized, diverse talents are recognized and inclusivity becomes a cornerstone.

In essence, our analysis portrays transcultural recruitment as a pivotal domain where technology and human collaboration intersect. The synthesis of themes points towards a future where transcultural recruitment, empowered by AI, could become a catalyst for positive change. It holds the potential to promote understanding, fairness, and cooperation in the dynamic area of professional interactions.

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Part III

Political Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

Bridging Germany and Morocco: A Practical Approach to the Study of Transculturalism

*Lorenzo Cima, Andželika Natalia Serwatka
and Nhi Thi Yen Mai*

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the imperative of fostering cohesive and harmonious bonds between societies is paramount. The academic conversation on strengthening international bonds has traditionally revolved around the frameworks of political and economic engagement (Roldán & Brauer, 2018). However, this study seeks to contribute to a different narrative. In the context of international relations, this chapter contends that transcultural dialogue is a vital complement to economic and political approaches. It serves as a powerful model for strengthening bonds, deepening understanding, and fostering connections between diverse societies, contributing to a more holistic framework for global interaction. This chapter focuses on the Germany-Morocco relationship, utilizing it as a compelling case study to show the potential of transcultural dialogue as a powerful catalyst for forging impactful connections between societies. By delving deeply into the intricacies of cultural exchange, shared values, and mutual understanding within this specific bilateral context, the study aims to showcase the practical application of transcultural dialogue in diplomatic relations. It starts with a theoretical foundation of transculturalism, then discusses the historical context and modern dynamics of Germany-Morocco relations, examines both institutional and non-institutional

modes of transcultural connection, and finally concludes with future prospects for cooperation and gives some recommendations.

2. *Literature*

2.1 *Transculturalism*

In our contemporary, globalized society, the frequent and inevitable interactions between individuals from diverse societies and cultures have prompted an intensified scholarly exploration of the multifaceted nature of cultural diversity (O'Loughlin et al., 2004). This heightened interest is particularly pronounced in the face of various phenomena that have accentuated cultural interactions, including globalization and global interconnectedness facilitated by the internet, immigration waves and worldwide pandemics (Jokhio, 2023).

The literature, as interpreted by Distefano and Maznevski (2000, p. 46), defines culture as the “assumptions and norms for how people interact with each other and approach what they do” within a society or a defined group. The dynamism of culture in our globalized world lies in its learned nature, something acquired rather than inherited, and in its roots in the social environment rather than in genes. Consequently, the unprecedented cross-cultural interactions witnessed today have the potential to induce behavioral changes within respective cultural groups, thereby influencing shifts in values and beliefs (Fang, 2006).

In the contemporary landscape, the dynamic forces of globalization, technological advancements, and increased human mobility have propelled transculturalism to the forefront of discussions surrounding cultural dynamics. As societies become increasingly intertwined, traditional notions of cultural boundaries and homogeneity give way to a more fluid and interconnected understanding. The metaphorical “ocean”, as suggested by Tony Fang (2006), serves as a symbol for the vast expanse of shared experiences, ideas, and influences that intricately shape the ever-changing tapestry of our global society.

At its core, transculturalism represents a departure from static and isolated cultural identities, encouraging an open-minded exploration of the intersections and hybridizations that occur when diverse cul-

tures converge. This paradigm emphasizes the interconnectedness of human experiences, fostering a sense of shared humanity that transcends geographical, linguistic, and historical divides, therefore becoming a powerful tool for fostering empathy, mutual understanding, and cooperation in an era marked by cultural diversity. Transculturalism challenges the rigidity of categorizations that often accompany discussions of cultural identity and, rather than viewing cultures as discrete entities with defined boundaries, encourages a more fluid and dynamic perspective and recognizes that cultures are not static or homogeneous but are shaped by constant interactions, exchanges, and adaptations (Fischer & Wieland, 2018).

Recognizing and appreciating the intricate interplay of cultures is crucial in understanding the complex dynamics that unfold in our interconnected world. This acknowledgment goes beyond a mere awareness of diverse cultural manifestations, delving indeed into the active engagement and influence that individuals exert in shaping their own cultural identities. Individuals emerge as active agents in this intricate cultural interplay, navigating the multifaceted tapestry of global interactions. Far from being passive recipients of cultural influences, they actively contribute to the ongoing dialogue between different traditions, belief systems, and ways of life. As active agents, individuals draw from their lived experiences, personal histories, and social environments to construct and redefine their cultural identities; they engage in a continuous process of cultural negotiation, selecting elements from various cultural contexts and integrating them into their own unique identity. This process is not static: it evolves over time, reflecting personal growth, changing circumstances, and evolving societal norms, and it emphasizes the autonomy and creativity inherent in the human experience, challenging deterministic views of culture as a fixed and predetermined entity and therefore paving the way for a transcultural approach in cultural diversity (Patel et al., 2011).

To thoroughly explore the intricacies of cultural diversity, the “Four Layers of Diversity” model, developed by Gardenswartz and Rowe (1994), provides a comprehensive and nuanced framework, proving instrumental in understanding and appreciating the multifaceted dimensions of diversity within various contexts, whether it be a workforce or a broader social setting. According to the model, indi-

viduals exhibit multiple layers of diversity that collectively contribute to shaping their identity and experiences. These layers, encompassing various aspects such as age, gender, ethnicity, and more, are not isolated but rather interact and intersect. This interaction plays a crucial role in influencing how people perceive themselves and others, as well as in shaping their interactions within a diverse social environment (Gardenswartz & Rowe 1994). The significance of adopting the “Four Layers of Diversity” model lies in recognizing that individuals cannot be neatly categorized or defined by a single dimension of diversity. Instead, their identities are intricate and molded by the dynamic interplay of various dimensions. This understanding aligns with an “intersectional approach to culture”, as highlighted by Mahadevan et al. (2020). Embracing this intersectional approach involves acknowledging the interconnected nature of diverse identities and the complex ways in which different dimensions overlap, rejecting simplistic categorizations and appreciating the complexity inherent in diversity.

In this sense, understanding diversity as a multi-layered and interactive phenomenon is essential for navigating the global landscape of cultural interactions. This perspective goes beyond a mere acknowledgment of differences; it recognizes diversity as a transformative force. In an interconnected world, where cultural interactions are inevitable, the “Four Layers of Diversity” model encourages a mindset that promotes understanding, respect, and inclusivity. It underscores the idea that embracing the richness of diverse identities can lead to a more harmonious and collaborative global community.

Transculturality presents a profound paradigm that illuminates the interconnected and interwoven nature of cultures in our contemporary global landscape. It introduces a dynamic concept that transcends the confines of individual cultural boundaries, giving birth to a distinctive third culture. This conceptual framework advocates a departure from traditional cross-cultural studies, championing a “positive cross-cultural scholarship” that directs attention to collaborative opportunities rather than fixating on the challenges and conflicts often associated with cultural interactions (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022).

At its essence, transculturality places strong emphasis on the identification and fortification of commonalities between cultures. These shared elements are not just recognized but actively strengthened

through collaborative experiences and learning processes. They function as dynamic resources that not only facilitate productive interactions across cultural divides but also contribute to the richness of global innovation. From this perspective, diversity is not merely tolerated, it is celebrated as a valuable asset that fosters creativity, insight, and the creation of global value. This approach reframes cultural commonalities and differences not as conflicting forces but as complementary resources for cooperation. Grounded in a constructionist epistemology, the relational approach underscores that meaning is not stagnant but is continuously generated and sustained within the dynamic context of ongoing relationships (Welsch, 1999).

When delving into perceptions and evaluations of cultural diversity, this approach takes a comprehensive view, considering experiences, power relations, and the evolving role of human nature, shaped through socialization and repeated social interactions. Cultural commonalities, spanning affective, cognitive, and behavioral components, emerge as pivotal in forging connections among individuals from diverse cultures. These commonalities encompass shared values, assumptions, beliefs, rituals, habits, and norms, creating a fertile ground for meaningful intercultural connections (Baumann Montecinos, 2022).

The cultivation of new cultural commonalities is portrayed as a dynamic process of co-creation, unfolding through collaborative learning, dialogue, and emotionally rich shared experiences. Importantly, this process actively avoids the pitfalls of homogenization, emphasizing diverse and enriching growth through social interactions. The emphasis on shared experiences and the creation of new commonalities underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural interactions within the context of transculturality (Wieland, 2016).

Going beyond mere identification of similarities, transculturality aspires to establish deep connections and build relationships among diverse entities. The prefix “trans” introduces an additional layer beyond traditional cross-cultural concepts, emphasizing the inherent interconnectedness and permeation of different cultures. This holistic perspective invites continuous and enriching dialogue, fostering an environment where shared understanding and collaboration flourish, contributing to the ever-evolving tapestry of our interconnected global society (Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022).

2.2 *Postcolonial Theories*

To comprehensively grasp the implications of transculturalism, it is imperative to incorporate postcolonial perspectives into the discourse. They offer a critical lens through which we can examine the power dynamics, historical legacies, and imbalances that persist in transcultural interactions. By scrutinizing the impact of colonial histories on contemporary cultural landscapes, we gain a deeper understanding of how transculturalism can either perpetuate existing inequalities or serve as a platform for dismantling colonial legacies. In the subsequent sections, this exploration will examine specific case studies, theoretical frameworks, and real-world manifestations of transculturalism, shedding light on its transformative potential and the challenges it poses, trying to understand its role in shaping the cultural dynamics of our interconnected world.

Inside the intricate web of transcultural interactions, the “West”, often unwittingly, propagated a stereotypical image of the “East” through various mediums such as art, text, and literature. This Western view constructed a stereotypical perception of the Orient. As Edward Said lamented, Orientalism, far from being a mere rationalization of colonial rule, played a crucial role in justifying colonial endeavors in advance, shaping an absolute demarcation between East and West (Said, 1978, p. 39).

Since the eighteenth century, the relationship between East and West has been characterized by two fundamental elements. First, there was a burgeoning systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, fuelled by colonial encounters and the curiosity surrounding the alien and unusual. This knowledge drew on the sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history, as well as on a significant body of literature from novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. Second, Europe consistently maintained a position of intellectual and, at times, outright domination, giving rise to what is termed Orientalism. This notion of Orientalism not only influenced those labeled as Orientals but also shaped the worldview of those considered Occidental. It is better understood as a set of constraints upon thought, establishing an ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority (Said, 1978, p. 41).

Kharshedji Bhabha argues for the relocation of Western modernity from a postcolonial perspective which, emerging from the colonial testimony of “third world” countries, intervenes in ideological discourses of modernity. This challenges the attempt to impose a hegemonic “normality” on the uneven development and differential histories of nations, races, communities, and peoples. Bhabha emphasizes that reconstituting the discourse of cultural difference necessitates more than a change in cultural contents and symbols; it requires a radical revision of the social temporality in which emergent histories are written. This rearticulation of the “sign” involves acknowledging culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often shaped by incommensurable demands and practices within the context of social survival (Bhabha, 1994, p. 171-173).

Spivak’s (2023) seminal work brings forth ethical challenges in Western investigations of other cultures, contending that Western academic thinking, rooted in “universal” concepts and frameworks, serves the economic interests of the West. Knowledge, she argues, is a commodity exported from the West to the “third world” for financial gain, therefore raising ethical questions about how the “third world” subject can be studied without reinforcing colonial projects. Spivak (2023, p. 82) highlights that research tends to be inherently colonial, where the “other” is studied, extracted from, and brought back “here”, mainly by white men discussing colored men/women. The concept of the “subaltern”, someone without a sense of self or autonomy, comes to the fore, engaging in mimicry and hybridity in an attempt to navigate the colonial environment. Despite the departure of colonials, the subaltern may continue to internalize colonial mentality, perpetuating the colonial situation even in the absence of the settlers, sanctioning versions of a country’s cultural past, shaped by political and diplomatic intentions, and contributing to the ongoing complexities of identity construction, often driven by ideological or pragmatic reasons (Spivak, 2023).

Within this discourse, the concept of transculturalism emerges as a dynamic lens through which to understand the complexities of cultural interactions. Transculturalism denotes a fluid exchange and hybridization of cultural elements beyond traditional boundaries. It goes beyond the unidirectional dissemination of cultural practices, emphasizing

mutual influence and reciprocal transformation. In the context of the East-West dynamics and postcolonial perspectives, transculturalism becomes a nuanced framework to analyze how cultural identities are negotiated, contested, and redefined over time (Welsch, 2001).

Postcolonial theories play a pivotal role in understanding the complexities of cultural interactions, identity construction, and power dynamics in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region, which, with its rich history and diverse cultures, has often been subjected to Eurocentric perspectives, perpetuating stereotypes, and reinforcing power imbalances. By employing postcolonial frameworks, scholars and researchers can dig deeper into the multifaceted layers of Middle Eastern and North African societies. Postcolonial perspectives compel us to confront the historical and structural forces that have molded the very landscapes in which transcultural interactions occur. They prompt a critical examination of our assumptions, urging us to recognize the implicit power dynamics and imbalances that persist within these interactions. By acknowledging the historical context embedded in transcultural engagements, we become more attuned to the complexities inherent in cultural exchanges. Furthermore, postcolonial theories challenge us to unravel the layers of cultural hegemony that may permeate transcultural dynamics; they encourage a discerning analysis of how dominant cultures may assert influence, perpetuating certain narratives and marginalizing others. This heightened awareness allows us to approach transculturalism with a nuanced sensitivity to the power structures at play, fostering a more equitable and inclusive engagement with diverse cultural narratives (Kerner, 2018).

3. *Research Questions*

From what can be analyzed in the introduction and the state of the current literature on the subject of transculturalism, it is possible to remark how the literature deals with the topic in great depth on a theoretical level, without mentioning or specifying any particular cases in which it would be possible to observe the practical and concrete implications of such studies. The absence of pragmatic examples or case

studies within the literature on transculturalism (Dagnino, 2015) represents a critical gap that impedes our understanding of how theoretical frameworks translate into real-world applications. While theoretical discussions provide foundational insights into the principles and dynamics of transcultural dialogue, empirical evidence is necessary to validate these theories and understand their practical implications (Grillo, 2017).

Addressing this gap requires a concerted effort to explore and document concrete examples of transcultural dialogue initiatives across different contexts and settings. We believe it is possible to undertake empirical studies to identify successful transcultural dialogue projects, examine their methodologies, and evaluate their outcomes in terms of promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation. Furthermore, empirical research could enable scholars to analyze the challenges and limitations inherent in transcultural dialogue efforts. By documenting instances of practical case studies, researchers can identify barriers to effective transcultural dialogue and develop strategies to overcome them. Understanding the practical challenges associated with transcultural dialogue is essential for refining existing approaches and designing more effective interventions that address the complex realities of intercultural interaction.

In this regard, our research will therefore attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How can transcultural dialogues foster relations between different societies?
2. Can transculturalism be a successful model to connect two different societies? And what could be its limitations?

4. Methodology

The research employed a qualitative approach, coupled with investigating a chosen case study, to comprehensively investigate the Germany-Morocco relationship. The primary focus was on the practical application of transcultural dialogue. The inclusion of a case study was essential, as it provides a nuanced understanding of the actual

processes unfolding within this relationship. This method was chosen because, in discussions surrounding transculturalism, there is a need to explore more practical examples over theoretical frameworks. Observing that, we decided to focus on practical examples of transculturality with regard to German-Morocco relations. It was also observed that, despite the importance of German-Moroccan cooperation, not much research was found regarding transcultural relations between those two nations. The case study, therefore, served as a valuable tool to bridge this gap and shed light on the intricacies of the transcultural dynamics at play in this unique international collaboration.

Various approaches were utilized to collect comprehensive data for the research:

- Literature review: we conducted a thorough literature review to identify gaps in existing research related to the Germany-Morocco relationship. This step was essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of transcultural dialogue and its practical implications in this specific context. Our literature review encompassed peer-reviewed papers, academic journals, and books, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent phases of our research, although those were secondary sources to our research.
- Interviews: in the course of our research, we conducted comprehensive interviews with esteemed authorities within international relations and cultural studies and we used them as primary sources. Among these experts were figures such as Professor Udo Steinbach, Dr Thomas Aulig, Ms. Eagle Kryzanauskaite, Finn Büttner and M.O. (anonymized name of organization). It is worth highlighting that our investigative efforts extended beyond academia, as we intricately interwove dialogues with representatives from prominent non-governmental organizations, including but not limited to the Maecenata Foundation and M.O. Additionally, we had the privilege of delving into the intricate details of an insightful conversation with Ms. Egle Kryzanauskaite (who was working on the project “All Around Culture”). During the interview she expounded upon the enriching nuances of the art project “Contes Imbriqués”. Such insights were especially valuable as they gave us a unique perspective on personal experiences and perspectives on transcultural

tural dialogue. Among the expert interviews conducted, we possess recording permission for only two of them – specifically, the interviews with Professor Udo Steinbach and Dr Thomas Aulig. For the expert interviews where recording permission was not granted, we will rely on indirect quotations.

- Media analysis: information from various media sources was included in the data collection process. Those were also analyzed as primary sources. They were notably from the German media, such as Tagesschau or Deutsche Welle, but also Moroccan written media sources in English were included (such as Morocco World News). The media content helped with capturing public perceptions, sentiments, and representations of the Germany-Morocco relationship and transcultural dialogue.

By adopting this diverse approach of data collection, including interviews, literature review, media analysis, the study aimed to triangulate data from multiple sources. This comprehensive approach contributes to a nuanced understanding of the Germany-Morocco relationship and the practical applications of transcultural dialogue, enriching the depth and reliability of the research findings.

5. Findings

In conducting this scholarly work, we employed thematic content analysis, a qualitative research method that allows for the identification, analysis, and reporting of patterns or themes within data. This approach was applied to synthesize insights from both existing literature and interview notes and transcripts, enabling us to identify underlying ideas and conceptual threads. Through the iterative process of analyzing the existing corpus of academic works, we extracted key themes that were pertinent to our field of inquiry. One of the key themes that emerged is the dynamic nature of transculturality. Transculturality is not solely about recognizing and strengthening shared commonalities among cultures. It also encompasses an ongoing process of co-creation of new cultural commonalities through collaborative learning, dialogue, and the exchange of emotionally-engaging

shared experiences. The second key theme is the crucial role that transculturality plays in strengthening international relations by fostering understanding and cooperation between diverse societies. The inclusive nature of transculturality, focusing on empathy, diversity, and collaboration, contributes to bridging gaps even when other modes of connection face obstacles. Concurrently, we conducted interviews with subject matter experts and stakeholders, from which we distilled additional themes. One important theme discovered through such interviews is the importance of examining the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region with caution and sensitivity due to the diverse historical trajectories, socio-economic structures, political priorities, and cultural complexities within the Arab world. By recognizing the diverse realities and perspectives present in the MENA region, researchers can promote a deeper understanding of the complexities and intricacies inherent in the cultural, political, and social fabric of the Arab world. Another theme is how Germany's unique historical position as a non-colonial power in Morocco has significantly influenced the intricate and diverse relationship between the two countries. This historical background continues to influence their collaboration today, shaping not only conventional diplomatic endeavors such as economic partnerships and conflict resolution but also playing a crucial role in transcultural diplomacy. This strategy facilitated a nuanced understanding of the research topic, as it combined theoretical underpinnings from literature with practical insights from the interviews.

A comprehensive understanding of the contemporary transcultural connection between societies necessitates a thorough investigation of their historical contexts. In the case of Germany and Morocco, it is crucial to acknowledge how historical legacies have left imprints that continue to shape current diplomacy dynamics. This session first delves into the colonial past of Morocco and then transitions to cover contemporary dynamics of Germany-Morocco relations, with a reference to Germany's stance on the Western Sahara dispute as well as the two countries' diplomatic, economic, academic, and cultural ties. By examining the intricate threads that bind past and present, we gain a nuanced understanding of this multifaceted relationship, fostering a more informed discussion of its future trajectories.

5.1 *Germany and Morocco*

5.1.1 *Germany and Morocco: The Colonial Past*

The colonial era in Morocco, primarily under French and Spanish rule, left a lasting imprint on the nation's cultural and societal landscape. This period was defined by a constant struggle for sovereignty and the preservation of an independent Moroccan identity in the face of foreign influence. It is important to clarify that Germany did not have direct colonial control over Morocco as France and Spain did. However, Germany did have a presence in Morocco's colonial narrative through diplomatic engagements, notably during the Algeciras Conference in 1906, which settled a dispute between France and Germany about the situation in Morocco.

Morocco's turbulent journey through the 19th and early 20th century was marred by political upheaval and economic hardship. Moroccan socio-political dynamics in the pre-colonial era were marked by the Makhzen system, whereby centralized authority was vested in the sultan but often contested by various tribal and regional powers. The authority of the sultan, while symbolically and religiously potent, was often limited in scope, especially in the face of resilient tribal leaders and autonomous rural areas resistant to centralized control. Morocco's traditional government systems were deteriorating, with frequent leadership changes eroding central authority. This fractured internal governance created a vulnerability that external powers could, and did, exploit to establish spheres of influence (Britannica, 2024a).

Furthermore, economic factors played a significant role in the colonization process. By the late 19th century, Morocco was facing an economic crisis, exacerbated by a fiscal deficit and an increasing European demand for repayment of loans. The burdensome debts and economic imbalances resulting from the Hispano-Moroccan War (1859-1860) left Morocco susceptible to foreign intervention and manipulation. This economic dependency provided a pretext for greater control over Moroccan financial systems and, ultimately, political affairs (Barbe, 2016).

It can be observed that Morocco's colonization was not a unilateral imposition by an external force but rather a complex convergence of the internal fragmentation of Moroccan society and the external pres-

tures resulting from Europe's aggressive imperialist policies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The strategic interests of European powers, Morocco's own political and economic challenges, and international geopolitical rivalries collectively forged the path that led to the country's colonization. Thus, both structural domestic issues within Morocco and the strategic imperatives of European imperialism were instrumental in the eventual subjugation of Moroccan sovereignty.

As the new century dawned, France's involvement in Moroccan affairs intensified, reaching its peak with the Treaty of Fez on March 30, 1912, which solidified its control over the region (Britannica, 2024b). This treaty effectively subjugated Morocco to French dominion, relegating the sultan to a figurehead with nominal authority. The French Protectorate brought about sweeping changes to Moroccan society. French colonial administrators implemented their own system of governance, education, and law, which inevitably clashed with, and yet also blended with, the indigenous Moroccan ways. Spanish control, although smaller in scope, similarly affected the northern and southern regions it administered. The cultural impacts were multifaceted. European architecture sprang up alongside traditional Moroccan designs, French and Spanish became languages of administration and elite communication, and European social norms began to permeate Moroccan life. Yet, despite these influences, Morocco's deep-rooted Islamic and Berber heritage remained vibrant, creating a unique cultural mosaic. During the French protectorate era, Morocco underwent significant transformations to cater to the colonial power's economic interests, particularly in the sectors of agriculture and natural resource extraction. The development of infrastructure such as railways primarily served the interests of the colonizers, while the Moroccan populace grappled with economic disparities and social injustice. The extractive nature of colonial economic exploitation was observed by Abdallah Laroui, a prominent Moroccan historian, who noted that

"The economy became more and more vulnerable, hence dependent on French government support. Geared to the French market, prices were determined without reference either to production costs or to the local market; costs were kept down by tax exemptions and forcibly imposed low wages. The colonial economy, so often described

as modern and efficient, was increasingly subsidized by the French and Maghribi governments; it came to be an artificial, 'political' economy." (Laroui, 1977, p. 335).

5.1.2 *Germany as a Non-Colonial Power*

Morocco and Germany have a complex and multifaceted relationship in the field of transcultural diplomacy. This relationship is underscored by the importance of Germany being a non-colonial power in Morocco's history and development. Morocco's historical experience with colonialism has significantly shaped its perspective on international relations, particularly with former colonial powers such as France and Spain. However, Germany's status as a non-colonial power sets it apart from other European countries and has played a crucial role in fostering positive relations with Morocco. Germany's non-colonial status allows for a more equal and mutually respectful partnership with Morocco, free from the historical baggage and power dynamics associated with colonial rule. Germany's colonial presence in Morocco during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was limited. Germany, as a relatively latecomer to the colonial race (the German nation was only established in the 19th century) did not have a significant colonial presence in Morocco. It is worth noting that, in 1872, a diplomatic representative from the German Empire under Otto von Bismarck was sent to Morocco. Subsequently, in 1890, a trade agreement between Germany and Morocco was signed in Fez. Morocco was of interest to several European powers due to its strategic location, resources, and geopolitical importance. The major colonial players in Morocco were France and Spain. In 1912, France and Spain signed the Treaty of Fez, effectively dividing Morocco into French and Spanish protectorates (Pennell, 1982). This treaty granted each country significant control over its respective zone, with a degree of influence over Moroccan affairs. Germany, however, did not have a substantial colonial presence in Morocco. Having said that, it is important to note that Germany was seeking to establish some influence in Morocco due to its general rivalry with other European powers. In the years 1905-1906, due to changing conditions in the Maghreb and

escalating colonial rivalry among European powers, the Moroccan Crisis erupted. A pivotal event leading up to the crisis was the secret Franco-British agreement in 1904, when Great Britain and France delineated their colonial influences, including in the region of Morocco. Germany, worried about its own presence in Africa and potential loss of its interests in the continent, opposed the Franco-British arrangements. In 1905, German Emperor Wilhelm II undertook a controversial visit to Tangiers, during which he declared support for Moroccan sovereignty and simultaneously opposed the influence of France and Britain. The final resolution of the crisis occurred in 1906 during the Algeiras Conference, where European powers and the United States negotiated the future of Morocco. The decisions of the conference confirmed the French position.

In 1911, the second Moroccan Crisis took place, which was a continuation of previous tensions and was once again linked to the ongoing colonial rivalry between European powers. In 1911, a German merchant ship called *Panther* arrived at the port of Agadir in Morocco. That raised concerns about German intentions in the region. Germany argued that the ship's arrival aimed to safeguard the interests of German citizens in Morocco, but colonial powers, especially France (but also Spain, which had also a small parcel of land in Morocco), perceived it as a threat to their influence. The resolution of the crisis came through subsequent international negotiations, this time during the Madrid Conference in 1912. The Madrid Agreement confirmed French control over Morocco, and in return, Germany obtained territory in Central Africa.

Both Moroccan crises were significant moments in the history of diplomacy and geopolitics, reflecting the intense competition among European powers for colonial influences in Africa. What was significant is the role which Germany played in the process of colonizing Morocco. Germany was seen as an opposing power to colonizers, a power allied with Moroccans. Despite Germany not being a colonizer in Morocco, it is crucial to acknowledge that its involvement in supporting Moroccan sovereignty stemmed from its own interests. The German stance was driven by a multifaceted agenda, including the safeguarding of other colonial possessions and participating in broader rivalry with European powers. While Germany did not possess direct

colonial holdings in Morocco, its actions were strategic and aligned with its geopolitical objectives during the Moroccan crises. The German Empire primarily focused on other areas of Africa for its colonial ambitions, such as German Southwest Africa (modern-day Namibia), German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi), and Cameroon. Germany did not play a prominent role in the events leading to the establishment of the French and Spanish protectorates in Morocco. Also it is worth noting that Germany's colonial aspirations were curtailed after its defeat in World War I, leading to the loss of its overseas colonies as a result of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. As a result, Germany's involvement in Morocco was limited, and it did not have the same colonial impact as some other European powers in the region. At this point it is also worth noting that the sultan of Morocco, during the first Moroccan crisis was considering seeking support from Germany (Munholland, 1968). That suggests that, from Morocco's perspective, Germany was not perceived as a threatening power.

Morocco's experience as a former French protectorate and its struggles against colonialism have shaped its approach to international relations. In this context, Germany's role as a non-colonial power has significant importance. Morocco views Germany as a partner that has not been involved in its history of colonization and imperialism. Germany's non-colonial status and its willingness to engage with Morocco on equal terms can help foster a more balanced and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. Therefore, Morocco recognizes the importance of Germany as a non-colonial power, as it signifies a fresh approach to international relations and a departure from the oppressive legacy of colonialism. It also opens up possibilities for transcultural diplomacy and cooperation based on mutual respect and understanding. In conclusion, the complexity and importance of the relationship between Morocco and Germany in the field of transcultural diplomacy is underscored by Germany's status as a non-colonial power. This unique position has been instrumental in fostering a mutually respectful partnership free from the historical baggage and power dynamics associated with colonial rule. Germany and Morocco have cultivated diplomatic ties since the 16th century, but it was not until after Morocco's independence, when bilateral diplomatic rela-

tions were re-established, which happened in 1957 (Moroccan Consulate in Germany, 2023).

In August 2022, the two nations solidified their collaboration through a joint declaration, outlining an enhanced partnership with a forward-looking focus (German Federal Foreign Office). Morocco, over the past decade, has embarked on comprehensive reforms, playing a pivotal role in fostering regional stability and sustainable development, notably contributing to the Libyan peace process (Kasraoui, 2023). Moreover, Morocco and Germany cooperate (or at least try to) with each other when it comes to solving international conflicts. The United Nations, led by its Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura (who is in the post since 2021), is working to find a solution to the Western Sahara issue (United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2021). Germany strongly supports this effort, maintaining a consistent stance over the years. The German government aligns itself with the goal of achieving a fair and enduring political solution, following the guidelines of the pertinent UN Security Council Resolutions. Morocco's introduction of an autonomy plan in 2007 was a noteworthy contribution to these diplomatic endeavors (European Parliament, 2007).

The economic and trade relations between Germany and Morocco are substantial, with Germany ranking sixth among Morocco's trading partners in 2021. The economic landscape includes imports from Morocco amounting to 2.1 billion euros and exports totaling 2.8 billion euros in 2022. There is a significant German presence with nearly 300 companies having equity participation in Morocco, concentrated mainly in Casablanca and Tangiers. Additionally, Morocco's appeal as a tourist destination is evident, with approximately 5% of all foreign tourists in 2019 hailing from Germany (German Federal Foreign Office, 2023).

Germany actively supports Morocco's modernization efforts and is one of its prominent bilateral development partners. The intergovernmental negotiations in October 2022 resulted in Germany committing 243 million euros in assistance. The focus of German-Moroccan development cooperation spans sustainable economic development, job creation, climate-related initiatives, including adaptation in the water sector, and renewable energy projects. The collaborative efforts ex-

tend to the G20 Compact with Africa initiative, aiming to enhance conditions for private investment. A notable milestone is the German-Moroccan reform partnership launched in late November 2019, emphasizing mutual developmental objectives (German Federal Foreign Office, 2023).

One of the tools of institutional ways of connecting is Germany's contribution to development aid. It not only fosters official relations between governments but can also boost mutual understanding between two different societies which are cooperating in the framework of development aid. One may argue that development aid practices are just a new form of neocolonialism and that they are actually just cementing the old, international system, but nevertheless providing aid can also help with establishing a platform for dialogue. Germany is a prominent figure among the world's leading bilateral donors, with a distinctive emphasis on integrating climate change into its development cooperation initiatives. That transformative shift in Germany's development aid strategy, and the pivot towards renewable energy projects in collaboration with Arab countries, is especially important (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023). In 2012, Germany and Morocco signed an agreement to create the German-Moroccan Energy Partnership (PAREMA). Morocco has a lot of potential for using renewable energy, such as solar and wind power. Since Morocco is close to Europe and already has power lines in place, it could become part of the European electricity market. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH gives advice and help to PAREMA, aiming to help the world shift towards cleaner energy and support Morocco's changes in its energy market (GIZ, 2022).

While considering a shift in Germany's development aid attitude, it is important to take into account changes from 2011 when the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) spearheaded a significant reform. This marked a transition towards a cooperative approach, with a pronounced focus on private-sector involvement. Notably, Germany's development projects have now undergone a meticulous "climate check" since mid-2009, showcasing the country's commitment to mainstreaming climate change issues into its development cooperation (Nabiyeva, 2011). That shift towards renew-

able energy transition and general focus on environmental issues can also establish a new format of transcultural understanding. Transculturality can also contribute to developing multicultural projects connected with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In other worlds environmental issues and sustainable development seem to be an emerging new value, through which cultures can ally – using both cultural diplomacy or cultural relations.

Although the shift in German's aid policy is visible, traditional components of Germany's aid, such as ODA (Official Development Assistance), have remained. For example, following the earthquake in Morocco in September 2023, Germany extended disaster relief to that country. The initial aid package amounted to ten million euros (Deutschland.de, 2023). Although this approach is institutional, it can lead to fostering interpersonal boundaries and can benefit cultural dialogue. On the other hand, it is also important to remember that at first Morocco rejected German earthquake aid in 2023, which prompted a lot of questions about their diplomatic relations. Moreover, the German Red Cross (DRK) had to postpone a relief flight to Morocco due to "new rules and regulations" imposed by the Moroccan government. Morocco restricted aid providers to four countries, excluding Germany, the US, and France (Taha, 2023). Morocco's aid restrictions were explained by the government as an effort to prevent poorly coordinated aid. However, critics argue that the decision may have had political motivations, particularly in excluding certain countries such as the US and France from sending aid. The devastating earthquake in Morocco claimed nearly 3,000 lives and left over 5,600 people injured (Taha, 2023). That also shows that institutional ways of connecting have their limits.

That example can indicate that institutional relations between Germany and Morocco are still rather complicated, with underlying tensions or disagreement. This makes sense, if we reconsider official relations between the two. Recent relations between Morocco and Germany have been strained primarily because of three key issues. Firstly, the dispute over the Western Sahara territory has led to intense diplomatic tensions, marked by the recall of the Moroccan ambassador. Secondly, Morocco's exclusion from the Berlin conference on Libya in 2021 and thirdly Germany's lenient stance towards Moroccan social

media activist Mohammed Hajib contributed to the friction (Holleis & Driouich, 2021). This example serves as evidence that the institutional pathways between Morocco and Germany are not always easily reconciled, and the underlying tensions manifest themselves in various geopolitical disputes. Looking beyond the official channels, it can be observed that, whereas the institutional way of communication between those two does not always work, the non-institutional way seems not to be bothered by political changes. For example, although during the crisis after the earthquake in 2023 and rejection of official aid provided by Germany, the flows of non-official aid were still observed. For instance, German society was asked to support Morocco through donations to Caritas International, as the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior did not officially request assistance from Germany (CARE, 2023). Another example is CARE Deutschland, which is a non-governmental organization that provides development cooperation and emergency aid. It is part of the CARE International network in Geneva. According to its own statements, the organization is a politically, religiously and ethnically independent aid organization. CARE, which has been active in Morocco for 15 years, was also engaged in aid after the 2023 earthquake (CARE 2023). Other forms of non official collaboration were also present while engaging in joint projects. For instance in 2021, in a collaborative effort, the Moroccan organization “Women for Diversity and Peace” (based in Rabat), teamed up with the German foundation “IIK – Initiative for International Cultural Exchange” to introduce a digital exhibition named “Women and Coexistence”. The initiative’s aim was to highlight the significance of women in the development of society. Moreover, the program aimed to extend support to civil society organizations in both Morocco and Germany (Allen, 2021).

To sum up, while Germany maintains traditional and official components of aid, such as ODA, the example of aid extended to Morocco after the 2023 earthquake highlights potential complexities in institutional relations. Diplomatic tensions and disagreements, such as the Western Sahara dispute, can influence official aid dynamics. Despite official challenges, non-institutional channels, such as donations to organizations like Caritas International and CARE Deutschland, showcase the resilience of people-to-people aid. Non-governmental organi-

zations and societal support can play a crucial role in providing assistance, even when official channels face obstacles. That also indicates that non-governmental collaborations can transcend political challenges and focus on shared goals (such as promoting women's roles in society as in the "Women and Coexistence" initiative).

The engagement extends beyond governmental bodies, with various German organizations, including GIZ, KfW, PTB, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, maintaining offices in Morocco. The promotion of the German language and academic cooperation is actively pursued, exemplified by the presence of the Goethe-Institut in Casablanca and Rabat, German Points of Dialogue in Tangiers and Oujda, partner schools, and over 60 cooperation projects in higher education. Furthermore, the German Academic Exchange Service contributes by sending lecturers to Rabat and Meknes, with the Federal Foreign Office supporting cultural preservation initiatives in Morocco. This multifaceted engagement reflects the depth and diversity of Germany-Morocco relations across diplomatic, economic, academic, and cultural spheres. This cooperation is particularly interesting considering that the political systems of both countries are not compatible, as Morocco is a constitutional monarchy. Prof. Udo Steinbach points out that:

"The king is over everything, and in many other parts of the Middle East, we encounter a similar thing. But I think moving towards the future, and moving towards close political and economic relationship, civil society has to play a tremendous role. (...) The system is going to change, becoming more liberal and this will be brought about by civil society. (...) So, that's why I say that it's important in terms of cultural relationship and of dialogue, to work together with civil society in all its aspects."

In conclusion, Germany's historical role as a non-colonial power in Morocco has shaped a nuanced and multifaceted relationship between the two nations. While Germany's distinct approach during the Moroccan Crises and subsequent diplomatic engagements underscore its role as a unique player in the region, today this historical context continues to influence their partnership. It fosters not only traditional di-

plomacy, such as economic flows and cooperation while resolving political conflicts, but it is also important for transcultural diplomacy.

5.1.3 German State Taking Action in the MENA Region

In the examination of Morocco-Germany relations, it is essential to contextualize this bilateral dynamic within the broader framework of Germany's engagements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the overarching relations between Europe and MENA. By placing the Morocco-Germany relationship within this wider context, we gain insights into the interconnected web of diplomatic, cultural, and economic ties that influence and shape the trajectories of these engagements. In that context transcultural diplomacy is very important. It recognizes the diverse cultural landscapes that both Morocco and Germany bring to the table. Keeping in mind that the MENA is a diverse phenomenon is essential while understanding transcultural realities of each country located in MENA. Embracing this perspective is crucial in our research on Morocco-Germany relations, as it prompts a departure from generalized assumptions and fosters an appreciation for the complex realities in which MENA nations, including Morocco, politically and culturally exist.

The Arab world stands as a complex mosaic, where nations exhibit unique historical trajectories, socio-economic structures, and political priorities. This complexity shines through recent events in the region during the 21st century. One of the most important such events was the so-called "Arab Spring". The profound impact of the series of socio-political upheavals that unfolded across the Arab world in the early 2010s, vastly reshaped the reality of the region. It had a transformative effect on civil society, sparking mass movements and calls for political reform. These events reshaped the sociopolitical landscape, challenging established norms and governance structures. Importantly, the protests of the 2010s in different countries of the region shaped Arabian civil societies differently. In response to these transformative events, Germany crafted strategic approaches to address the consequences, particularly focusing on the plight of MENA refugees. The Arab Spring and its aftermath created a substantial influx of refugees, compelling

Germany to reassess its policies, contribute to humanitarian efforts, and navigate the complexities of refugee integration.

That is not the only challenge which Germany faces while conducting policy in the MENA region. Another challenge is positioning itself towards the Palestinian issue, especially after October 2023. Interestingly, although the government stance is clear and it claims that “Germany stands by Israel” (German Federal Government, 2023), the German government is also sending humanitarian aid to Gaza (German Federal Foreign Office, 2024). That also raises the question as to whether humanitarian aid in that case is a tool of political influence (as generally humanitarian aid and ODA is often criticized of being) or if the sending of aid by the German government is a response to the demands of civil society in Germany (rbb, 2024). In both cases, humanitarian aid seems to be a tool of the German government conducting its foreign or domestic.

In addition to those issues, German-MENA relations also face challenges from ongoing security issues, energy dependency, the Iran nuclear deal, human rights concerns, the refugee crisis, economic interests, cultural and religious differences, environmental issues, regional alliances and rivalries, and cybersecurity threats. Moreover, as Prof. Udo Steinbach points out, there is resentment of how Europe is conducting its policies, as it may be accused of having double standards (certain issues are deemed to violate human rights, while others, such as the Palestinian issue, are deliberately overlooked). Prof. Steinbach emphasizes, “Credibility is a very important thing. I think at the moment German policy and European policy is really lacking in credibility.” Further he mentioned that “We have a tendency to sweep human rights under the carpet, and sacrifice human rights on the table of political and economic interests.” Therefore, navigating these complexities requires a nuanced approach to balance not only diplomatic relations or economic interests, but also to address transcultural diplomacy.

5.1.4 *Overview of the German Migration Policy*

Over the years, Germany's approach to migration has undergone significant transformations. Post-World War II, Germany sought labor for its economic reconstruction, initiating the recruitment of so-called "Gastarbeiter" (guest workers). In the 1990s, in particular, Germany experienced a huge wave of immigrants. Although originally intended to return home after their contracts expired, many guest workers, including Moroccans, chose to stay, marking the emergence of a substantial long-term migrant population (OECD, 2017). And as the immigrants stayed in the country, the integration challenge also remained. Mainly due to the previous expectation of the German government that those workers do not need integration as they are about to leave the country.

Analyzing from a contemporary perspective, it is clear that Germany has been receiving immigrants for around forty years, but the government only started actively addressing the long-term effects of immigration ten years ago. This delay is partly because Germany long viewed immigration as a temporary phenomenon. Since the 1990s, Germany has shifted from controlling immigration to acknowledging itself as a country of immigration, focusing on managing the societal impact. The change in approach is partly influenced by a consistent decrease in immigration to Germany. More significantly, it reflects the German government's understanding that policies should promote integration among long-term residents, including those born in Germany. Immigrants and their descendants make up nearly one-fifth of Germany's population, and this proportion is expected to grow. Consequently, integration is a crucial policy concern that will strongly shape Germany's future (Abali, 2009).

In terms of asylum and refugees, Germany's policies have been shaped by constitutional provisions and international agreements. Waves of refugees, notably from the Balkans in the 1990s and from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq in the 2015 migrant crisis, have influenced the nation's asylum landscape (OECD, 2017). In response to the 2015 refugee crisis, Germany initially pursued an open-door policy, resulting in the arrival of over one million migrants and refugees. This influx strained integration capacity, sparking political debates and

anti-immigrant sentiments. Subsequently, Germany adjusted its stance, tightening asylum laws and increasing deportations for rejected applicants.

Presently, Germany's migration policy seeks a balance between humanitarian responsibilities and effective management and integration of newcomers. It maintains its status as a prominent destination for migrants within the European Union, implementing structured approaches like the EU Blue Card system for skilled labor migration and other legal pathways. It is also worth mentioning that, on the 25th of January, 2024, Development Minister Svenja Schulze, in tandem with the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees, and Integration, Minister of State Reem Alabali-Radovan, launched two new projects to support the successful migration of skilled workers from Morocco to Germany through migration advice, language and orientation courses, and pre-integration measures.

Having said that, integration remains a persistent challenge, with varying degrees of success among migrants in adapting to German society. Language barriers, issues of having qualifications recognized, cultural disparities, and xenophobia and discrimination pose obstacles (Abali, 2009). Germany, like other EU countries, rather focuses on maintaining security and financial support to immigrants than on cultural components. That is to say German policy still needs to understand the potential of transcultural diplomacy. This applied particularly in the context of globalization. Although at the end of the Cold War there were some attempts at rethinking cultural diplomacy in Germany, which resulted in a shift towards a more service-oriented network for international policies (American-German Institute, 2015), there is still much to be done in this area. Germany is trying to use soft power with an emphasis on science and education programs and a service network (American-German Institute, 2015).

5.2 *German and Moroccan Transcultural Dialogue*

5.2.1 *Institutional and Non-Institutional Approaches of Transcultural Dialogue*

In analyzing transcultural dialogue initiatives between Germany and Morocco in more accurate and practical terms, it is appropriate to begin by understanding how these initiatives can be distinguished from each other by examining the ways and channels through which transcultural dialogue efforts are promoted and developed. In this sense, it is possible to distinguish between two typologies concerning institutional and non-institutional approaches.

The scholar Richard Arndt has reported an interesting distinction between cultural relations that

“grow naturally and organically, without government intervention” and cultural diplomacy that “can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests” (Arndt, 2005, p. XVIII).

In this sense, cultural diplomacy,

“often denotes a national policy designed to support the export of representative samples of that nation’s culture in order to further the objectives of foreign policy” (Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010, p. 13).

Consequently, the agents and actors of cultural diplomacy are governmental agents, since “cultural diplomacy is a governmental practice that operates in the name of a clearly defined ethos of national or local representation” (Ang et al., 2015, p. 367) and “as a national endeavor, conducted in the national interest [...] it involves the instrumental use of national culture with a view to enhancing national security and the nation’s international standing” (Ang et al., 2015, p. 368).

Cultural diplomacy also goes beyond the national interest and one of its main objectives is characterized by the

“foundation of trust between peoples, providing a positive agenda of cooperation in spite of policy differences, creating a neutral platform for people-to-people contact and serving as a flexible, univer-

sally acceptable vehicle for rapprochement with countries where diplomatic relations have been strained or absent” (Ang et al., 2015, p. 369).

However, it is important to report how

“cultural diplomacy is not only soliciting admiration or sympathy through the showcasing of national cultural achievements. It is above all about building trust. Its purpose is to establish mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership. It is about establishing mutual benefit as the basis for mutual trust” (Jora, 2013, p. 50).

We can therefore observe how, at its essence, cultural diplomacy functions as a strategic tool within the realm of public diplomacy and soft power as nations and governments deploy cultural diplomacy to enhance their global reputation, bolster relationships with other countries, and advance their interests on the international stage. Through cultural exchanges, artistic collaborations, educational programs, and cultural exhibitions, countries seek to showcase their cultural heritage, values, and achievements, thereby influencing perceptions, shaping opinions, and fostering goodwill among global audiences.

On the other hand, the non-institutional approach of transcultural dialogue represents a broader and more inclusive approach to intercultural interaction and exchange. Unlike cultural diplomacy, which is often driven by national interests and agendas, this level transcends the boundaries of specific nations and aims to facilitate meaningful exchanges between diverse cultures and civilizations, emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding, empathy, and cooperation in navigating the complexities of cultural diversity on a global scale. Transcultural dialogue recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of human societies, underscoring the shared experiences, values, and aspirations that unite people across different cultural contexts. Rather than focusing solely on promoting national reputation or advancing diplomatic goals, transcultural dialogue prioritizes the cultivation of genuine connections and relationships between individuals, communities, and societies worldwide.

Non-institutional initiatives thrive at grassroots level, often emerging from initiatives of individuals, community organizations, and civil society groups. They prioritize direct engagement and personal con-

nections, leveraging the power of interpersonal relationships to bridge cultural divides and promote empathy and mutual respect. One of the key strengths of non-institutional initiatives lies in their flexibility and adaptability to local contexts and needs through bottom-up approaches. Unlike formal institutional structures, which may be constrained by bureaucratic processes and national interests, non-institutional initiatives can respond swiftly to emerging issues, address specific community concerns, and tailor interventions to meet the diverse needs of individuals and groups. Moreover, non-institutional initiatives often operate on principles of inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment, creating spaces for marginalized voices to be heard, amplifying under-represented narratives, and challenging dominant cultural norms and stereotypes.

In essence, while cultural diplomacy serves as a specialized form of diplomacy aimed at managing international relations through cultural exchange and collaboration, transcultural dialogue operates on a broader spectrum, emphasizing the promotion of global cooperation, understanding, and solidarity. While cultural diplomacy predominantly involves interactions between governments and official institutions, transcultural dialogue encompasses grassroots initiatives, civil society efforts, and informal networks that foster cross-cultural understanding and bridge divides in an increasingly interconnected world. Cultural diplomacy and transcultural dialogue share common objectives of promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation; they operate within distinct frameworks and approaches, each contributing to the broader goal of fostering a more inclusive, harmonious, and interconnected global community.

5.2.2 Institutional and Non-Institutional Transculturalism

Germany and Morocco use both institutional and non-institutional ways of connecting while conducting diplomacy. While institutional means of connecting, as well as cultural diplomacy, is relatively easy to track, non-institutional means of connecting and cultural relations are much more difficult to measure. Having said that, the impact of the latter should not be overlooked.

Germany has a long history of engaging in cultural diplomacy as a means to foster mutual understanding and promote its values and interests abroad. We have already mentioned some examples of institutional links, such as the German-Moroccan Energy Partnership (PAREMA) or, more generally, Germany's ODA. Other examples of Germany's cultural diplomacy efforts include the Goethe Institute, which is a worldwide network promoting the study of German language and culture. Germany's cultural exchange programmes are also a key aspect of its cultural diplomacy efforts. One prominent example of Germany's cultural exchange programme is the DAAD, which promotes academic exchanges and collaborative research projects between Germany and other countries. This programme not only enhances academic cooperation but also promotes intercultural dialogue and networking. Furthermore, Germany's cultural exchange programmes extend beyond academia to encompass various fields such as music, performing arts, and literature. Germany also promotes such exchanges as International Parliamentary Scholarships.

Transculturalism refers to the exchange and interaction of cultures in a manner that fosters understanding, respect, and cooperation. In Germany, numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or think-tanks engage in transcultural collaboration with not only the Middle East and North Africa societies locally there, but also with newcomers to Germany from those regions. Those organizations concentrate on non-institutional ways of connecting. One such organization is the Maecenata Foundation, which, among other things, actively works to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue between Germany and the MENA region through various projects and initiatives (Maecenata Stiftung, 2023a). Additionally, we had the pleasure of conducting an interview with representatives from the Maecenata Foundation, which contributed to our research findings.

Established in 2010 by Rupert Graf Strachwitz, the Maecenata Foundation operates as an independent think-tank with a primary focus on civil society, civic engagement, philanthropy, and foundation work. It functions as a nonprofit organization under civil law, with its headquarters in Munich. Positioned as an ideal service provider for civil society, the foundation advocates transnational empowerment and the fostering of an open society in Europe and beyond. Through its pro-

grams and initiatives, the Maecenata Foundation actively promotes a transnational format of civil society engagement. For instance, the foundation conducted a project called “Muslimische Philanthropie in Deutschland” aiming to explore Muslim philanthropy in Germany within the context of the global trend of people living outside their countries of origin. With 27% of Germany’s residents having a migrant background, diverse multicultural societies have emerged. The project focuses on diaspora philanthropy within the Muslim context, examining the compatibility of Islamic philanthropic concepts with German foundation law. The goal is to develop practical guidelines to encourage philanthropic actions by individuals with a migration history, fostering support for migrants by migrants (Maecenata Stiftung, 2023b). Another important project undertaken by the Maecenata Foundation is “Diversität in zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen”. This project aims to address the increasing calls for fairer participation across all societal groups, recognizing the persistent systemic reproduction of discrimination and injustices. While diversity management in companies is extensively studied, the Maecenata Foundation notes a noticeable absence of similar research and recommendations for civil society. The foundation aims to fill this gap by exploring and promoting diversity within civil society organizations (Maecenata Stiftung, 2023c). In essence, the Maecenata Foundation supports transculturalism through its initiatives within civil society, addressing not only issues related to specific groups but also considering the need to embrace the diversity of German society. The foundation contributes significantly to fostering understanding and cooperation between cultures in the country.

Another organization, which works for transculturalism and where we also had the pleasure of conducting interviews is M.O. M.O facilitates initiatives and programs that support cultural exchange, active citizenship, social cohesion, and sustainable urban and rural development – transcending cultural, sectoral, or linguistic boundaries (M.O., 2023). M.O actively promotes transculturalism through a variety of projects, one noteworthy initiative is the “All Around Culture” program. This program is designed to cultivate a dynamic cultural ecosystem, serving as a conducive environment for the social and economic integration of young individuals in seven Arab countries, namely in

Palestine, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and the Libyan and Syrian communities within these nations. It is co-founded by the European Union. The project aims to support youth-led cultural and civic initiatives. It allocates 32 research and 24 production grants. It establishes partnerships and facilitates knowledge exchange among 30 cultural entities from both the Arab Region and Europe. And, importantly, it establishes a platform which advocates open access to culture and takes action to enhance the working conditions for cultural and artistic activities in the targeted countries (All Around Culture, 2023).

Another way of non-institutional connection and which is linked to the M.O organization was the project “Contes Imbriqués”, about which we conducted an interview with Egle Kryzanauskaite. “Contes Imbriqués” is a mobile performance initiative delving into local and lesser-known narratives about mythological water spirits from Thuringia (East Germany) and intertwining them with tales from the desert oasis M’hamid in Southern Morocco and Bamako-Kati in Mali. This project involves the Centre Culturel Tuareg Tumast Bamako, Festival Nomades du Monde, and Other Music Academy (OMA) Weimar. The aim of the project is to foster community connections in these regions by engaging international artists to collaborate with local communities to develop a dance and musical performance. The performance explores water currents, particularly along the Niger and Elbe rivers, addressing themes such as migration, pollution, and social connectivity along their shores. The project aims to unite diverse communities and interconnect their stories in the final performance (Schmehl, 2023). After premiering in Morocco in 2023, the project plans to expand through artistic residencies into a comprehensive show connecting rivers and communities. The initial research phase occurred in Bamako in 2021, supported by the Complex Scolaire Moderne Adiara. The second phase is part of an artistic research and international networking exchange within Thoulathy in “All around Culture,” co-funded by the European Union (Schmehl, 2023).

Non-institutional ways of connecting in transculturality are evident in various social and professional settings. They can be facilitated by civil society organizations, by indicating the role of technology (Kim, 2016) and by exploring connections between local ecologies and global

events. Transculturality at some level involves both institutional and non-institutional ways of connecting. While educational institutions and formal curriculums play a significant role in promoting transcultural competence, non-formal ways of connecting, individual interactions, digital literacies, and societal mobility also vastly contribute to transcultural connections. Importantly, those nonofficial ways of connecting cannot be limited by political shifts in diplomacy. The involvement of civil society organizations highlights the importance of broader societal engagement in addressing humanitarian crises and fostering mutual understanding. In summary, the case of Germany's aid to Morocco illustrates the nuanced interplay between official institutional relations, geopolitical tensions, and the resilience of non-institutional channels and civil society in promoting cooperation and addressing humanitarian challenges.

It is worth highlighting the fact that the potency of non-institutional initiatives becomes particularly pronounced in instances where governmental interest may be lacking. The organic and spontaneous nature of these grassroots efforts not only reflects the agility and responsiveness of civil society but also showcases the potential for impactful change emanating from the bottom up. In the absence of explicit support or engagement from official government channels, these non-institutional endeavors not only thrive but also garner a heightened prominence, revealing the resilience and efficacy of community-driven approaches in addressing humanitarian challenges. This dynamic interplay between formal institutions and grassroots initiatives further emphasizes the intricate tapestry of influences shaping collaborative efforts in the face of complex geopolitical landscapes.

5.2.3 Prospects for Future Cooperation and Recommendations

The cooperation between Germany and Morocco is a multifaceted and dynamic one that has evolved over the years, with both nations benefiting from their strategic partnership. This cooperation has mainly focused on sectors such as renewable energy, economic development, and cultural exchanges. The future of Germany-Morocco cooperation may benefit significantly from further embedding transcultural dia-

logue within its framework because when economic and political interests are woven together with a deep cultural understanding, a more robust cooperation can be achieved (Jalali-Rabbani, 2020). This conviction is also supported by UNESCO in a 2022 article (UNESCO, 2022):

“When grounded in genuine commitment to promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, cultural diplomacy can renew multilateralism, fostering more inclusive, mutually beneficial international cooperation patterns.”

This part outlines some important recent developments in Germany-Morocco relation, identifies the key cooperation areas, and suggests ways to foster cooperation from a transcultural perspective.

In recent years, there have been notable developments in Germany-Morocco cooperation. An exemplary field of joint efforts has been renewable energy, where Morocco’s solar, wind, and green hydrogen power initiatives have garnered German investment and technical expertise. The impact of these developments has extended beyond energy security, fostering sustainable economic growth and technological transfer between the two countries. In terms of migration, Germany and Morocco have been working together to promote regular migration and integration, which is a testament to their shared interests in managing migration effectively – for instance the aforementioned initiative of Minister Svenja Schulze and Commissioner Reem Alabali-Radovan (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023). Economic and trade relations remain significant, with Germany ranking as one of Morocco’s top trading partners and focusing on sustainable economic development and job creation. In 2021, Germany ranked as the sixth-largest trading partner for Morocco, indicating the depth of their economic connections.

For future cooperation, several prospects seem particularly promising. Collaborative ventures in environmental preservation and water conservation could offer significant gains, especially given Germany’s experience in environmental technologies and Morocco’s vulnerability to climate change (World Bank, 2021). The focus on these cooperation opportunities can be seen in the German development strategy

‘Marshall Plan with Africa’, which emphasizes the goals of reform, investment, and employment for sustainable development. Additionally, investment in educational sectors could target skills deficits and foster a generation better equipped for the modern labor market. Leveraging Germany’s prominence in vocational training could serve Morocco’s youth demographic and expand its skilled workforce.

“The benefits of transcultural dialogue for Germany-Morocco co-operation can be illustrated within sectors where their interests converge, such as renewable energy and migration, and when it comes to embracing renewable energy, certain cultural influences play a significant role”

as mentioned by Finn Büttner during our interview at the Maecenata Foundation. These include the subject community’s leadership and trust, environmental awareness, technological acceptance, social values, and religious and spiritual beliefs. Taking the partner community’s cultural values into consideration would facilitate policy formation that enhances social acceptance, participation, and fast track adoption. Moreover, prioritizing leadership and fostering trust is crucial, since a deep level of trust in those advocating for sustainable energy initiatives significantly impacts participation levels. Cultivating trust by means of established social networks, appreciation of indigenous culture, informal sharing of insights, shared responsibilities, and joint involvement can markedly improve the effectiveness of these initiatives (Goggins et al., 2022). Ms. Eagle Kryzanauskaite, an expert and project manager we interviewed, shared the important insight that in intercultural projects, it is crucial to exercise patience, adapt to the situation, and encourage active participation in shared activities to foster solidarity and mutual understanding between people from different cultural backgrounds.

In the context of migration, transcultural initiatives play a pivotal role in fostering intercultural understanding, attracting potential migrants, and facilitating socio-cultural integration. Language is an essential component of cultural integration. This significance is evident in the remarks made by Dr Thomas Aulig: “Learning the language of the host country is an essential tool. In European countries, take Italy, take France, take Germany, if you don’t speak the host language well,

you are constantly at a disadvantage.” Programs focusing on language acquisition, such as the Goethe-Institut’s language courses, can improve communication, a fundamental aspect of fostering mutual understanding and collaboration, thus significantly easing newcomers’ immersion into German society. Film festivals can also play a role (Labisch, 2018). Films as cultural artifacts embody and communicate social values, challenges, and narratives. In the words of the Academy for Cultural Diplomacy:

“[...] Film has served as one of the most influential and accessible mediums of cultural diplomacy and it has had a unique ability to affect ‘the masses’ all around the world. In particular, certain films have succeeded in not only entertaining audiences, but have served as examples of films that have truly helped to educate, enhance and sustain relationships, to break stereotypes and transcend borders at a number of levels.” (Academy for Cultural Diplomacy, 2024)

Art exhibitions and musical performances also offer similar opportunities for cultural immersion and dialogue.

The multifaceted partnership between Germany and Morocco holds great potential for further growth. When economic and political endeavors are interwoven with genuine cultural understanding, the foundations for a more robust and mutually beneficial cooperation are laid. By investing in initiatives such as language programs, cultural exchange activities, and collaborative environmental projects, Germany and Morocco can build a future where cultural bridges complement economic and political partnerships, fostering a truly dynamic and resilient relationship.

6. Conclusion

The importance of transcultural dialogue in strengthening bonds between diverse societies, as illustrated by the case study of Germany and Morocco, has the potential to foster cooperation and understanding in a diverse and globalized world. The role of non-institutional actors, such as community organizations and civil society groups, in promoting cultural exchange and understanding is pivotal. Although

both institutional and non-institutional methods of connecting can work for fostering economic and governmental relations, it is the non-institutional way which can be a game changer in developing a more inclusive and harmonious global community. By engaging community organizations and civil society groups, transcultural dialogue transcends bureaucratic barriers and allows for a more authentic and bottom-up approach to relationship-building.

Prospects for future transcultural cooperation can be used in environmental preservation, water conservation, education, remaking democracy, or as a drive for achieving the SDG goals. The implications drawn from this discussion are significant. They can impact policy-makers, civil society organizations, and individuals interested in promoting transcultural dialogue. The need to integrate cultural understanding into economic and political partnerships is vastly important as well as advocating a more holistic approach to international relations.

Addressing the question of how transcultural dialogue can foster relations between different societies, the research outlines several ways. Mutual understanding, conflict resolution, cultural exchange, social cohesion, and diplomatic relations are all identified as outcomes of transcultural dialogue. When considering whether transculturalism can serve as a successful model to connect two different societies, the example of Moroccan-German cooperation makes it evident that this approach has significant potential for success. Transcultural dialogue can be a powerful model for strengthening the bonds between diverse societies even if the official governmental diplomatic relations are complicated.

While Morocco-Germany cooperation showcases promising outcomes, we also need to acknowledge the limitations of such an approach, such as power imbalances (when dominant cultures assert influence over marginalized cultures and can potentially perpetuate certain narratives), cultural appropriation (when elements of a minority culture are adopted by a dominant culture without proper understanding and respect), balancing preservation of culture and the exchange of culture. To sum up, transcultural dialogue can effectively strengthen ties between diverse societies, even in the presence of challenging official diplomatic relations. The inclusive approach, focusing

on understanding, cooperation, and grassroots efforts, shows promise in bridging gaps and encouraging mutual respect globally.

7. *Limitations*

The examination of transcultural dialogue, particularly within the case study of Germany-Morocco relations, is a subject of great importance due to the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural implications inherent in the relations between these distinct societies. In reviewing the limitations of the study, one must take into consideration various methodological and scope-related considerations that can constrain the findings and the applicability.

One notable limitation of the study at hand is the absence of direct interviews with Moroccan stakeholders, which could skew the analytical findings and limit the depth of understanding, given the bilateral nature of dialogue. During the research interview process, a constraint pertaining to the inclusion of Moroccan participants was encountered. The primary challenge was associated with the identification and accessibility of an appropriate cohort. This limitation in the study's demographic scope is acknowledged. It restricts the analysis to a unilateral perspective, potentially omitting key Moroccan viewpoints, concerns, or cultural nuances that may influence the Germany-Morocco transcultural dialogue. In the field of international relations and discourse analysis, the absence of primary data from one side of an intercultural exchange is considered a significant gap, potentially undermining the balance and comprehensiveness of the study.

Secondly, organizations engaged in the research interviews were primarily concerned with the broader MENA (Middle East and North Africa) – Germany dialogue, rather than specifically focusing on Morocco – Germany interactions. This broader scope can diffuse the specific subtleties and particularities of the bilateral Morocco-Germany relationship, an issue compounded by the comparative geopolitical, cultural, and historical heterogeneity within the MENA region.

In conclusion, the limitations identified in the study of Germany-Morocco relations – namely, the absence of Moroccan voices and the broad MENA-region focus of the organizations interviewed – result in

a diminishing of the depth and contextual specificity required for an academically rigorous transcultural analysis. Academic discourse surrounding this area of study must strive to incorporate these considerations to enrich understanding and contribute to the scholarly dialogue on international relations, communication, and cultural exchange.

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Beyond Borders: The Future of Transcultural Diplomacy in the Age of AI and Human Rights

Irene García García and Piotr Rembowski

Abstract

This article explores the interconnection of transcultural diplomacy, artificial intelligence (AI), and human rights, emphasizing their potential collaborative dynamics. We argue that AI can serve as a tool for promoting human rights within the context of transcultural diplomacy, highlighting the necessity of collaboration among transcultural diplomacy, AI, and human rights to ensure the ethical development of AI technologies. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks and practical examples, we examine the ethical challenges posed by AI, such as bias and transparency issues, as well as its potential to foster transcultural communication and understanding. By analyzing initiatives such as AI for Global Good (ITU, 2023), the European Alliance, alongside organizations like the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), we illustrate how transcultural diplomatic practices can promote ethical human rights standards and facilitate cultural exchange. Through expert interviews and academic insights, we envision a future that prioritizes collaboration and inclusivity at the intersection of transcultural diplomacy, human rights, and AI, advocating for policies that promote equality and mutual understanding in an interconnected world.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global landscape, the interplay between cultural interaction, the protection of human rights and advances in artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly important (Roche et al., 2023). This article explores the fields of transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights, highlighting their potential collaborative dynamics. Our central argument focuses on the potential of AI as a tool for promoting human rights in the context of transcultural diplomacy. We argue that collaboration between these fields is crucial to ensure the ethical development of AI technologies, which should respect cultural diversity and human rights while minimizing biases. Therefore, our research aims to highlight the role of AI in promoting human rights in the context of transcultural diplomacy.

Transcultural diplomacy – which we define as a “diplomatic approach that promotes transcultural understanding and cooperation among different actors in international relations, aiming to foster mutual respect and cooperation across cultural boundaries to address global challenges and promote peace and development” – plays an important role in this context. It serves as a framework to emphasize the importance of going beyond traditional state-led initiatives, especially as individuals, organizations and communities increasingly engage in AI-driven cultural exchange (UNESCO, 2023).

The potential cooperation between transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights is of the utmost importance for several reasons. First, transcultural diplomacy strives to promote understanding and cooperation between different cultural groups. Integrating AI technologies ethically and in line with human rights principles ensures that digital platforms are inclusive and respectful of cultural diversity, thus promoting global inclusion (Gumenyuk et al., 2021a). Secondly, human rights serve as a framework to ensure that AI technologies are developed and implemented in a way that upholds basic ethical principles of human rights such as privacy, equality and freedom of expression (Khelif, 2023). Collaboration with transcultural diplomacy ensures that these ethical considerations take into account cultural sensitivities and diverse perspectives, leading to more comprehensive protection of human rights on a global scale (Shams et al., 2023). Third, AI can

facilitate transcultural communication and understanding, but it should be developed and utilized with sensitivity to cultural differences. Collaborative efforts also promote understanding between cultures and strengthen relationships between people from different backgrounds, which fosters effective communication and mutual trust (Fielding, 2005). This potential collaboration is important to ensure that AI technologies are developed in a way that respects cultural diversity and human rights, and to prevent the potential biases that AI may have. Enhancing the role of AI in facilitating communication beyond cultures could strengthen global relationships by increasing mutual trust and understanding.

A major problem with AI is that it learns from large data sets, which can reinforce bias (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). This can lead to human rights violations, such as unequal treatment of individuals. Furthermore, AI algorithms sometimes make critical decisions that impact individuals' lives, which raises questions about fairness and transparency (Goodman & Flaxman, 2017). However, the article also looks at the positive aspects of AI and ethics, and moves from theory to practice by focusing on practical examples that illustrate the importance of transcultural diplomacy to ensure that AI technologies promote dialogue and understanding between different cultures. Cooperation programs such as the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, and the Nansen Initiative are examples of how different actors are coming together to promote mutual understanding, respect cultural diversity, and uphold human rights principles in transcultural contexts.

This article is the result of the collaboration between the student researchers Irene Garcia Garcia (Furtwangen College, Germany) and Piotr Rembowski (University of Łódź, Poland) with the Transcultural Caravan Network at Zeppelin College. The Transcultural Student Research Group 2023 brings together different perspectives to explore the transformative potential of transcultural exchange and collaboration. Together, we had the opportunity to enrich the content of this

article with contributions from professionals¹ working in the field of diplomacy.

By addressing this multidimensional issue, this article aims to contribute to the academic and policy debate on how the possibilities of artificial intelligence can be harnessed to promote more inclusive and effective transcultural diplomacy while ensuring full respect for human rights in an increasingly interconnected and diverse world.

Considering the intersection between transcultural diplomacy, human rights and Artificial Intelligence, several factors influence the collaboration and challenges between these three fields of study. These include A) ethical challenges in AI and human rights, B) inclusivity and representation in the collaboration between AI and transcultural diplomacy, and C) the potential future directions for integrating AI with transcultural diplomacy and human rights.

This article focuses on how to enhance transcultural diplomatic practices and promote the protection and promotion of ethical human rights in an interconnected and technologically driven world in order to support communication and understanding between different cultures. This approach motivates us to explore the possible transcultural interactions by focusing on three real-world examples that illustrate the collaboration between diplomacy, AI and human rights. From an AI perspective, we look at initiatives such as AI for Global Good, the European Alliance and the Global Partnership for AI. From a human rights perspective, we focus on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence and the Nansen Initiative.

The selection of these specific cases is based on their relevance and significance in the context of improving transcultural diplomatic practices and promoting the protection and promotion of ethical human rights in an interconnected and technologically driven world.

¹ Dr. Didem Aydurmus (Ph.D. in Political Science; Executive Member of the Left political Party; Faculty Member, ICD Academy for Cultural Diplomacy). Prof. Dr. Ulrich Brückner (Academic Director – Center for Cultural Diplomacy Studies). Mark C. Donfried (Executive Director and Founder of the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy). Dr Heidrun Maurer (University for Continuing Education Krems Center for E-Governance) & Dr. Zane Sime (Norwegian University of Science and Technology).

AI for Global Good, the European Alliance, and the Global Partnership for AI represent collaborations between different countries and organizations to harness the potential of artificial intelligence for global good. They demonstrate efforts to use AI technologies ethically and inclusively, promoting values such as transparency, fairness, and accountability in AI development and deployment. Exploring these initiatives provides insights into how technology can be leveraged for positive cross-cultural interactions while addressing ethical considerations (GPAI, 2023).

GANHRI brings together national human rights institutions from around the world to promote and protect human rights at national and international level. By focusing on GANHRI, the article aims to highlight the importance of cooperation and coordination between different cultural contexts in advancing human rights agendas globally. This illustrates how transcultural diplomatic practices can be instrumental in promoting ethical human rights standards in different regions.

UNESCO's platform emphasizes the importance of intercultural dialogue, education, and cooperation in promoting peace and non violence worldwide. By examining this initiative, the article will highlight the role of cultural understanding and mutual respect in transcultural diplomacy. Finally, the Nansen Initiative focuses on addressing the challenges of displacement and migration, particularly in the context of climate change and natural disasters. This case was chosen to highlight the intersectionality of human rights issues with other global challenges and the importance of transcultural cooperation in finding sustainable solutions to humanitarian crises.

Looking to the future, the article explores the prospects for transcultural diplomacy, innovative insights into academia and "going beyond". The importance of active listening, collaboration and valuing diverse voices is highlighted through insights from expert interviews. The future, particularly at the intersection of transcultural diplomacy, human rights and artificial intelligence, prioritizes people and collaboration and advocates for policies that benefit all and promote equality and inclusivity.

1.1 *Research Objectives and Questions*

The common thread that runs throughout the text is the desire to foster collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, human rights and artificial intelligence to promote understanding, inclusion and cooperation in our technologically driven world. Furthermore, we explore the multifaceted future of transcultural diplomacy that can be used to explore upcoming research and findings on human rights and artificial intelligence. The specific aims and research questions of this study are therefore:

The *first objective* is to explore the ethical dimensions of AI in human rights while also providing real-world applications of transcultural diplomacy, particularly focusing on its role in the intersection of AI and human rights. This leads us to the *research question*: What are the ethical implications of AI in human rights, and what real-world scenarios can we find that demonstrate collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, AI, and human rights?

The *second objective* aims to facilitate forward-looking discussions by speculating on the future prospects of transcultural diplomacy within our world. This prompts the *research question*: What are the future prospects of transcultural diplomacy, particularly at the intersection of human rights and AI?

By linking theoretical understanding and practical applications, this article enriches our understanding of transcultural dynamics in the field of diplomacy, not only in the present but also in the future, where transcultural diplomacy, human rights and AI are shaping our global landscape.

1.2 *Background and Need*

The intersection of artificial intelligence and human rights has come to the forefront of global discourse thanks to constantly evolving technology. The impact of AI on human rights ethics requires attention as AI becomes an integral part of the societal framework (Kriebitz, 2023). The field of transcultural diplomacy is emerging as a new and promising approach as it promotes transcultural understanding and cooperation between different actors in international relations and

aims to foster mutual respect and cooperation across cultural boundaries to address global challenges and promote peace and development. This approach offers a unique perspective to address the complex interaction between AI and human rights on a global scale.

Transcultural diplomacy emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with different cultural perspectives to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between nations. Human rights, based on universal principles, serve as a guiding framework for promoting justice and protecting the inherent rights of all people worldwide. At the same time, AI technologies, with their ability to analyze data, automate and make decisions, offer new opportunities to tackle global challenges and improve communication and cooperation across cultural boundaries.

With the increasing integration of AI into diplomatic practices and human rights advocacy, questions arise about its ethical implications and opportunities for collaboration. It is important to understand the dynamics at this intersection in order to recognize the opportunities and challenges posed by AI-driven approaches to transcultural diplomacy and human rights. Several factors underscore the importance of such research:

- The rapid advancement of AI technologies is changing the landscape of international relations, offering both unprecedented opportunities and challenges for diplomacy and human rights advocacy.
- The ethical dimensions of the use of AI in diplomacy and the protection of human rights need to be carefully considered. Addressing issues such as privacy, “algorithmic bias”, and “accountability” is necessary to ensure that AI-driven initiatives uphold fundamental ethical principles and respect human rights standards.
- The inclusion and representation of diverse cultural perspectives in AI-driven diplomatic initiatives are crucial to enhance their legitimacy and effectiveness.
- Anticipating the future development of AI in diplomacy and human rights advocacy could be beneficial to develop informed policy and strategy.

1.3 Research Interest and Significance of the Study

The article focuses on the increasing interconnectedness of our world and emphasizes the need to understand the dynamics of transcultural diplomacy. In the age of artificial intelligence, characterized by the ethical challenges of technological advancement, transcultural diplomacy provides a framework. The research focuses on practical applications, particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence and human rights, and examines real-life scenarios in which transcultural diplomacy has proven its worth. These cases not only offer lessons for policy makers and academics but also contribute to the ongoing debate on ethical considerations related to new technologies. Looking ahead, the study explores the future prospects for transcultural diplomacy in our globalized world. By anticipating the role of transcultural diplomacy at the intersection of human rights, it aims to open up discussions in a context where diplomacy, technology and ethics meet.

2. Methodology

The use of qualitative research methods is crucial to exploring and understanding the future of transcultural diplomacy. In this approach, the meanings that individuals or groups associate with social or human issues are explored in depth (Creswell, 2016). Data is collected in the context of the participant, allowing for a more authentic and contextualized understanding. The analysis is inductive, moving from specific details to general themes, and we, the researchers, have the opportunity to interpret the meaning of the data. We believe that this approach is best suited to explore the future of cross-cultural diplomacy as it allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the different perspectives, personal meanings and dynamics associated with cross-cultural interactions (Creswell, 2016).

2.1 *Data Collection Methods*

The following three research models were used for this study. First, we used the exploratory research method, which is useful for investigating and exploring a topic or problem in depth without knowing the theoretical and academic background in detail (Dudovskiy, 2022). Second, we used the explanatory research method, which is useful for understanding the “why” and “wherefore” of the concepts (Dudovskiy, 2022). Third, our research method consisted of a combination of literature reviews and interviews. This allowed us to gain valuable insights into transcultural diplomacy. Through the interviews, which are more personal in nature, we were able to explore the nuances of individual experiences and expert opinions. Through open-ended questions, the interviews added a qualitative depth to our understanding that allowed us to gain nuanced insights and explore transcultural diplomatic practices in greater depth.

2.2 *Setting*

The interviews took place between July 2023 and January 2024 and were conducted in two formats: two participants were interviewed online via the Google Meet application, while the other three were interviewed on-site at the ICD Academy. The interviewees all had either a diplomatic profile or worked in the academic field of international relations. The age and origin of the participants remain anonymous as they are not relevant to this study.

Secondly, we had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion that took place at the ICD Academy in Berlin. This panel discussion lasted about 90 minutes. In this case, the panel discussion was primarily facilitated by Prof. Dr. Julika Baumann Montecinos, who introduced the Transcultural Caravan and gave us the opportunity to interview Dr. Didem Aydurmus, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Brückner and Mark C. Donfried.

These interviews took place in a classroom where several people from the audience were able to participate. After the question-and-answer session between the interviewers and the interviewees, the audience was given the floor to share their insights and perspectives.

While the online interviews focused more on AI and human rights, the interviews conducted in Berlin revolved around various topics such as transcultural diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, human rights, environmental and institutional issues, as well as personal perspectives on the future of transcultural diplomacy and international relations.

The sampling procedure used by the researcher was purposive sampling, i.e., each participant was interviewed because they matched a profile that corresponded to certain characteristics according to the article and the third research question of this thesis. The selection criteria² were not too strict. Since the focus of the question is on the future, our primary interest was that the participants have sufficiently solid knowledge and judgment to be able to express their opinions openly without feeling insecure.

Interviews were conducted with a small number of people. Once the interviews had been conducted, they were transcribed into Word using audio tools. This involved some complications as not all participants had the same level of English, so the computer tools had to be adjusted accordingly to their English language skills. After transcribing the interviews, the audio material was deleted, and the most relevant content was selected, focusing on keywords related to AI, human rights, culture, future, dialogue, cooperation and collaboration. Conversely, less relevant information was categorized as informative or extra. In this way, we broke down the interviews from general to specific and extracted the necessary and relevant information to improve the answer to the third research question.

² For this purpose, the most important qualities of each respondent were: They should be actively engaged in the field of international relations, with no specific job title being required. Regardless of whether they work in the public or private sector, they should have prior knowledge of diplomacy in general. They need to have published their own work or have a specialized academic background in international relations, political science, foreign relations, diplomatic relations, etc. Age and background do not matter as long as they do not appear to be racist. All participants must demonstrate an interest in transcultural diplomacy.

3. *Literature Review*

Modern diplomacy is currently undergoing a rapid transformation as our international relations, understood as the connections between nations (Iriye, 1979) and once rooted primarily in politics and economics, are now confronted with a transnational dimension that includes culture and new technologies (Reiterer, 2014; Zhao et al., 2019).

3.1 *Definitions and Clarifications: Transcultural vs. Cultural Diplomacy*

Cultural diplomacy and transcultural diplomacy have different meanings; although they have a common theme, namely “culture”, they are often misunderstood or confused. Cultural diplomacy is traditionally defined as the cross-cultural “exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (Cummings, 2003, p. 1). Historically, cultural diplomacy has been associated with activities initiated by governments, often as part of a nation’s foreign policy agenda. It involves the deliberate promotion of a country’s cultural values, arts and heritage in order to enhance its image and influence abroad (Clarke, 2020). Although it has evolved over time, cultural diplomacy is generally considered a government-driven initiative (Nye, 2004).

On the other hand, transcultural diplomacy is a broader concept that encompasses exchanges and interactions between people, organizations and communities beyond the direct control or involvement of national governments (Grincheva, 2020; Kelley, 2014). It goes beyond the traditional, state-centered approach of cultural diplomacy. Transcultural diplomacy recognizes that different actors are involved in cultural exchange and understanding (Niglio & Lee, 2023) and it acknowledges the dynamic and diverse nature of cultural interactions (Bernhard, 2012).

Table 1 highlights the key differences between cultural diplomacy and transcultural diplomacy, focusing on their approach, aim and perspective on cultural diversity.

Table 1: Differences between Cultural Diplomacy and Transcultural Diplomacy

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Cultural Diplomacy</i>	<i>Transcultural Diplomacy</i>
Approach	Promoting the culture and values of a country abroad.	Promoting dialog and cooperation between different cultures without favoring any particular culture
Main Objective	Promoting language, art, music and other forms of cultural expression that are unique to a country.	Understanding and co-operation between different cultures, recognizing diversity as enrichment and promoting integration and mutual respect
Perspective towards Cultural Diversity	The focus is on the promotion of a specific national culture.	Promotes interaction and understanding between different cultures celebrating positive change and embracing new ideas.

Source: Own table based on readings.

The concept of transcultural diplomacy differs from that of cultural diplomacy in that cultural diplomacy focuses primarily on promoting a country’s culture and values abroad (Cummings, 2003), while transcultural diplomacy recognizes and promotes dialog and cooperation between different cultures without privileging any particular culture (Niglio & Lee, 2023). Transcultural diplomacy seeks understanding and cooperation between different cultures, recognizing diversity as enrichment and promoting inclusion and mutual respect (Bernhard, 2012). It also aims to highlight individuals and their relationships by celebrating positive change and embracing new ideas. It suggests that we have the ability and willingness to work together creatively while respecting our differences, as it encourages us to see our own understanding as something that grows through our connections with others (Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos, 2023), while cultural diplomacy

supports the promotion of a country's own language, art, music and other cultural expressions (Nye, 2004).

To summarize, *cultural diplomacy* is defined as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture between nations and their peoples in order to promote mutual understanding” (Cumings, 2003, p. 1). Based on various bibliographic sources, mainly referring to Niglio & Lee (2023), we define *transcultural diplomacy* as “a diplomatic approach that promotes transcultural understanding and cooperation between different actors in international relations and aims to foster mutual respect and cooperation across cultural boundaries to address global challenges and promote peace and development”.

3.2 *What Do We Understand by Human Rights?*

According to the United Nations, human rights are “rights to which all human beings are entitled, irrespective of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status” (United Nations, 2024). This has been the universal definition since the end of the Second World War, when the United Nations General Assembly declared the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be the universal standard for respecting the fundamental rights of every individual (United Nations, 2024). The fundamental idea behind the 1948 Declaration is based on the equality of all people, across all borders (Lauren, 2003).

The modern view of people's rights was shaped in the “Era of Revolutions” by John Locke and his concept of the laws of nature, which promoted the modern view of human rights in which individuals had a rational mindset and were able to act on their thoughts in any situation. Individuals were free from political authorities and could decide what they wanted to do (Freeman, 2004). Since then, the understanding and perspectives of the Declaration of Human Rights have passed through different generations (Table 2), all defined by the motto of the French Revolution – *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*.

Table 2: The Generation of Human Rights

	<i>1st Generation</i>	<i>2nd Generation</i>	<i>3rd Generation</i>	<i>4th Generation</i>	<i>Future</i>
<i>History Background</i>	“The generation of civil and political rights”; shaping due to Magna Charta (1215), the American Declaration of Independence (1776) or The French Declaration of Human Rights (1789). It focused on individual rights – far from the country’s power.	Also called socio-economic rights. Those rights are combined between individual rights and the power of the state.	Also called solidarity rights. Those rights could be exerted only collectively.	Rights related to genetic engineering. Also called the rights of the future generations.	The future of the generations of human rights could be connected to the development of Artificial Intelligence.
<i>Rights</i>	Civil rights (freedom of opinion, equality before the law, etc.); political rights; the right to live.	The right to work; freedom of association; right to education	The rights to peace; right to development; right to environmental law	The right to protect the human genome; the obligation of states to defend the person.	

Source: Cornescu, 2009

As we can see from Table 2, human rights have evolved historically through different generations, each reflecting social progress and changing norms. The first generation, *Liberté* (liberty), emerged during revolutionary periods such as the American and French revolutions and emphasized civil liberties. These rights included freedom of expression and protection from state interference. The second generation, *Égalité* (equality), emerged in the 19th century with the socialist and economic movements and focused on socio-economic rights such as the right to work and education. *Fraternité* (fraternity), the third generation, developed in the 20th century and focused on collective rights and solidarity, such as the right to peace and a clean environment (Osiatyński, 2011).

In addition to the traditional three generations, contemporary discussion has extended to the fourth and future generations of human rights. The fourth generation focuses on the defense of the human ge-

nome and reflects advances in genetics and biotechnology (Stępnia, 2019). The future generation is closely linked to artificial intelligence and reflects the increasing integration of AI technologies into various aspects of society. These emerging generations present new challenges and opportunities for human rights work and require a nuanced understanding of their implications. AI has the potential to improve decision-making processes, assist in negotiations and increase efficiency. However, concerns about the bias of algorithms, data privacy and the potential for discrimination highlight the need for a solid ethical framework for the use of AI. Furthermore, AI's reliance on data from the internet leads to uncertainties regarding data quality and privacy, posing a challenge to fundamental human rights principles such as data protection and non-discrimination. Our article is situated in this future generation.

3.3 *What is AI?*

In recent years, there has been considerable progress in the field of artificial intelligence, which is increasingly becoming part of our everyday lives and is not just the stuff of futuristic science fiction (DiploFoundation, 2019).

Artificial intelligence is the science of creating intelligent systems that make optimum decisions without human intervention. It involves the development of programs and systems that can learn, acquire intelligence and solve complex problems (Yongjun Xu et al., 2021). As Sidney Dobrin (2020) stated:

“AI began with the idea of building computers that could perform tasks in the same way as the human brain ... The AI machine would “learn” from its experience with these tasks, just like a human, making it more skilful and efficient in the future” (Dobrin, 2020, p. 4).

The birthplace of AI as we know it today was the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence of 1956. Since then, the field of AI as a scientific study has become much more diverse and has branched out into more and more subfields (Höne, 2019, p. 11). It is therefore necessary to distinguish between two aspects of AI: Conceptual AI and Applied AI.

- Conceptual AI deals with the big picture: How AI will affect societies, economies and cultures. It also deals with the ethical issues and theories related to the development of artificial intelligence technologies (Dobrin, 2020, p. 4).
- Applied AI, on the other hand, focuses on practical applications, for example, by teaching students to use AI to build things, such as facial recognition or writing (Dobrin, 2020, p. 4).

This article is positioned in two ways. On the one hand, we position ourselves in the conceptual realm, as we focus on the ethical part and the possible future and what this means for the interaction between the three fields of study, and on the other hand, we focus on the observation of three real cases of collaboration and cooperation between them. However, having defined what AI is and in which areas our work is situated, *we ask ourselves how AI could be a tool for diplomacy and what is the ethical position behind AI in relation to human rights?*

To answer the first question, we should first define quite simply what it is that diplomats do. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations describes the functions of diplomacy as information gathering, communication, representation, negotiation and promotion of friendly relations (United Nations, 1965).

Viewing AI as an instrument of diplomacy is in line with the goal of developing and promoting the use of AI to better serve people (Government of Sweden, 2018). From this perspective, AI is not an end in itself. Rather, it is useful because it can meaningfully support human efforts (Höne, 2019).

Based on this idea of AI as an instrument of diplomacy, we ask ourselves about the ethical and human rights implications of AI. In particular, we focus on issues of justice, prejudice, privacy, discrimination, automation, inequality, predictive policing and social scoring (Khelif, 2023). The first thing to note is that there is no single ethical principle that is common to all ethical AI documents (Jobin, 2020). In other words, while human rights are formulated in internationally binding treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), ethical standards and guidelines for AI remain diverse and voluntary (Khelif, 2023). However, despite ongoing efforts, there are

certain measures that are in line with basic ethical standards. For example, in April 2021, the European Commission proposed a regulation aimed at stopping or restricting the use of applications based on the level of risk assigned to them (European Commission, 2021). Recently, the Chinese Cyberspace Administration issued a draft regulation on content recommendation systems. This draft includes proposals on transparency and privacy protection (Singh, 2021). Ultimately, it is up to individuals to create the tools, build the institutions and develop the skills needed to manage future AI technologies safely, ethically and responsibly, and ensure the protection of human rights and welfare (Khelif, 2023).

So far, we have defined what transcultural diplomacy is and what cultural diplomacy is, we have defined the time and space in which we move around human rights, and we have explained in a simple way what AI is and how it is a tool for diplomacy, which has finally led us to focus on the ethical role of AI. But all of this leads us to the question: *what is the role of transcultural diplomacy in the context of human rights and artificial intelligence?*

3.4 *The Role of Transcultural Diplomacy*

In the context of human rights and artificial intelligence, transcultural diplomacy assumes the role of a framework for addressing the ethical challenges posed by technological advances, especially in the age of AI (Niglio & Lee, 2023). It serves as a bridge to facilitate dialogs, promote diversity, and cultivate a more inclusive global community (Hannerz, 1992). Despite challenges in practical application and limited theoretical understanding (Khan et al., 2020), transcultural diplomacy offers the potential to integrate harmoniously global and local cultural aspects and create identities rooted in different cultural forms. This underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing local culture in policy-making processes to enable effective global interaction and cooperation (Khan et al., 2020).

One of the key areas where transcultural diplomacy is important is in addressing the complexities of migration processes and their impact on human rights (Ramírez & García-Segura, 2017). Migration is not

only about the movement of people but also about the exchange of culture and ideas, which often leads to different perspectives on human rights, such as the different interpretations of women's rights in different cultures and religions (Ramírez & García-Segura, 2017).

Cultural relativism is important in understanding and evaluating people's beliefs, identities, roles, and actions in the context of their culture (Abadeer, 2015). It emphasizes the recognition of women's rights as part of human rights worldwide but stresses the need to distinguish between "Western feminism", "global feminism", and feminism specific to other cultures. Factors such as the importance of the family, the role of religion in people's lives and the political history of a country contribute to the fact that women's rights are perceived differently in different cultures and countries. However, transcultural diplomacy offers explanations and builds a bridge of understanding between the different perspectives (Okin, 1998).

Furthermore, the joint efforts of civil society organizations in the countries of the former Soviet Union illustrate the practical application of transcultural diplomacy in promoting higher levels of human rights (UNESCO, 2023). By fostering connections, shared understanding, and joint initiatives across national borders (Niglio & Lee, 2023), transcultural diplomacy enables individuals and organizations to engage in diplomatic efforts aimed at advancing human rights globally (Bernhard, 2012).

The role of transcultural diplomacy is becoming even more challenging with the increasing importance of artificial intelligence. This trend is not limited to industrialized countries but is also taking place on a global scale (Gumenyuk et al., 2021b). AI is actively being used to automate transcultural communication. In particular, chatbots designed to replicate human dialog are increasingly taking over the tasks of humans in online cultural interactions (Gilboa, 2023). For example, the Culture Chatbot Generic Services project initiated by Europeana has deployed chatbots to support various online activities, such as conducting conversations, answering questions, guiding visitors and providing information about cultural heritage (Gilboa, 2023). The integration of algorithms and artificial intelligence is thus transforming transcultural encounters in virtual realities, replacing direct human interaction and fundamentally changing the overall experience. Online

spaces have, therefore, become an important channel for projecting cultural and political discourse across national borders, which also highlights the potential for fostering international understanding and collaboration through online interaction (Grincheva, 2020).

Therefore, transcultural diplomacy is becoming increasingly important in the age of artificial intelligence, as it is necessary to manage the complexity of cultural exchange as AI spreads globally and requires effective transcultural dialog and collaboration. Moreover, the transformation of transcultural encounters in virtual realities beyond borders underscores the importance of transcultural diplomacy in promoting international cooperation and understanding.

4. Findings

As mentioned in the literature review, the collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights is important for several reasons. First, transcultural diplomacy aims to promote understanding and cooperation between different cultural groups. Integrating AI technologies ethically and in line with human rights principles ensures that digital platforms are inclusive and respect cultural diversity, thereby promoting global inclusivity (Gumenyuk et al., 2021a). Secondly, human rights provide a framework to ensure that AI technologies are developed and implemented in a way that respects fundamental ethical principles of human rights such as privacy, equality and freedom of expression (Khelif, 2023). Collaboration with transcultural diplomacy ensures that these ethical considerations take into account cultural sensitivities and diverse perspectives (Grincheva, 2020), leading to more comprehensive protection of human rights on a global scale (Shams et al., 2023). Third, AI-powered tools can facilitate transcultural communication and understanding, but they should be developed and used with sensitivity to cultural differences. Collaborative efforts also promote understanding between cultures and strengthen relationships between people from different backgrounds, which fosters effective communication and mutual trust (Fielding, 2005).

4.1 The Intersection of Transcultural Diplomacy, AI, and Human Rights

This leads us to the following research question: What are the ethical implications of AI in the field of human rights, and what real-life scenarios can we find that demonstrate the collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, AI, and human rights?

As AI advances, we need to consider its ethical and legal implications. AI can improve human rights and facilitate decision-making, but it also brings with it concerns about privacy, injustice and responsibility. Therefore, we should address these concerns in order to use AI fairly and ensure that it does not violate human rights (El-Taj et al., 2023).

A major concern related to AI is how it can perpetuate existing stereotypes and unfair treatment. AI often learns from big data, which can reinforce these biases (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018). This can lead to human rights violations, such as not treating everyone equally and fairly. In addition, AI algorithms sometimes make important decisions that affect people's lives. However, these decisions are not always clear or fair, causing people to worry about whether they are being treated correctly (Goodman & Flaxman, 2017). Another concern is the use of autonomous weapons and drones that can hurt innocent people and violate the right to life. People are still arguing about whether these technologies should be used and how they should be regulated to ensure they are used ethically (Asaro, 2020).

Nevertheless, let us consider the other side of the coin by focusing on the positive aspects of AI and ethics, move from theory to practice and focus on practical examples that illustrate the importance of transcultural diplomacy's role in ensuring that AI technologies promote dialogue and understanding among diverse cultures, by fostering empathy and respect beyond borders. For this purpose, we will take different collaborative programs, namely:

A) The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions is a platform for cooperation between national human rights institutions from different cultures. By sharing practices, conducting joint research and advocating for human rights at the international level, GANHRI is an example of transcultural diplomacy in the promotion of human

rights (GANHRI, 2023). Through transcultural cooperation, these institutions advocate for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and demonstrate the potential of transcultural cooperation in addressing global challenges (GANHRI, 2023).

B) UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence: this program facilitates the coming together of individuals, organizations and governments from different cultures to promote a culture of peace and non-violence and strengthen human rights. Through joint projects and cultural exchange initiatives, participants work together to promote mutual understanding and respect, contributing to peace-building activities on a transcultural level (UNESCO, 2023).

C) The Nansen Initiative: Perhaps less well-known but no less important, the Nansen Initiative advocates for the rights of people displaced across borders due to natural disasters and climate change. Through transcultural diplomacy, this initiative seeks solutions that respect cultural differences and protect the human rights of displaced populations (IOM, 2024).

So far, we have moved from theory to practice. However, we will go one step further and try to illustrate this by considering the research question in Table 3.

As we can see in the table, these three joint initiatives are important in illustrating how the ethical implications of AI in the field of human rights can be used to ensure fairness, privacy protection and the prevention of bias or discrimination. In addition, the collaboration provides us with examples of how different actors, including governments, organizations and individuals from different cultural backgrounds, come together to promote mutual understanding, respect cultural diversity and uphold human rights principles in different cultural contexts.

Table 3: Collaborative Initiatives at the Intersection of Transcultural Diplomacy, AI, and Human Rights: Objectives, Relationships, and Ethical Implications

<i>Collaborative efforts</i>	<i>Relation with Transcultural Diplomacy</i>	<i>Relation with Human Rights</i>	<i>Relation with AI</i>	<i>Ethical Implications of AI in Human Rights</i>
<i>Initiative: Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions</i>				
A platform for cooperation between national human rights institutions from different cultures	Promotes co-operation between different cultural groups in advocating for human rights around the world	Focuses on the promotion and protection of human rights at the international level	Potential use of AI in research and lobbying, e.g., in data analysis for human rights violations	Ensures that AI algorithms do not perpetuate biases or violate privacy rights.
<i>Initiative: UNESCO Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence</i>				
Facilitates cooperation between individuals, organizations and governments from different cultures	Brings together individuals, organizations, and governments from different cultures to promote mutual understanding and respect	Focuses on promoting a culture of peace that is closely linked to human rights principles	Promoting online platforms for peace-building activities and cultural exchange	Ensures that AI is used to promote diverse perspectives and not propagate hate speech or violence.
<i>Initiative: Nansen Initiative</i>				
Engages governments and non-governmental organizations in upholding the rights of people displaced across borders	Engages in transcultural diplomacy to find solutions that respect cultural differences	Focuses on safeguarding the rights of displaced persons, which are closely linked to human rights.	Analyzes migration patterns, predicting displacement and improving response measures	Ensures that AI is used responsibly in the management of refugee data and the protection of the rights of displaced persons.
<i>Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions:</i> https://ganhri.org/ <i>UNESCO Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence:</i> https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217786 <i>Nansen Initiative:</i> https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/nansen-initiative				

Source: Own table.

4.2 *The Future Prospects for Transcultural Diplomacy*

So far, we have dealt with the theoretical and practical aspects of transcultural diplomacy. In this article, however, we have taken the initiative to present a forward-looking perspective in line with the overarching theme of “going beyond” that reflects the ethos of transcultural diplomacy. By looking to the future, we contribute to the discussions on the dynamic landscape of diplomatic practices in the context of new technologies and, therefore, ask: *what are the future prospects of transcultural diplomacy, especially at the intersection of human rights and AI?*

In order to best answer the question “*What will the future of transcultural diplomacy look like?*” especially in the context of the development of artificial intelligence and emphasizing the importance of the idea of human rights, we invited experts from different backgrounds to participate in an interview on this topic. The theme we consider most important is the statement that “culture (here referring to the broader framework of culture as whole human communities) is not something in a museum, culture is something that breathes, lives”: This statement perfectly defines the present and future of transcultural diplomacy. Its significance is challenging to quantify, yet scholars and researchers acknowledge its increasing importance for the future. Transcultural diplomacy shares similarities with cultural diplomacy, a concept with multiple definitions. While cultural diplomacy is well-defined, transcultural diplomacy is less clearly defined. Diplomacy encompasses various forms, such as cultural diplomacy, transcultural diplomacy, and public diplomacy. Transcultural Diplomacy closely aligns with the definition and practice of cultural diplomacy and holds far-reaching implications for interpersonal relations, especially in the age of globalization and digitalization of all areas of life. It delves into diplomatic practices to explore the relationships between different cultural and institutional identities, perspectives and multi-layered senses of belonging.

We can discuss several directions or perspectives for the development of transcultural diplomacy:

1. *Transcendence*: “Transculturalism, for me, goes beyond mere interculturalism to encompass a shift from a monocultural understanding of the world, emphasizing the message of going beyond singular cultures” – Prof. Dr Ulrich Brückner (2023)

Transcultural diplomacy does not lend itself to a single definition; rather, it embodies the notion of “across borders” and encompasses a wide variety of terms and processes (Brückner, 2023). It is a comprehensive concept that serves as a fundamental tool for promoting engaging relationships in an interconnected world, being able to connect, especially among diverse nations and groups (Brückner, 2023). With the expansion of our global network, we are increasingly unfamiliar with our own complexities. Therefore, the acquisition of “general” knowledge becomes imperative (Brückner, 2023).

Transcendence – transcultural diplomacy is not a process that can be captured in a single definition (although there are attempts to define it, e.g., the definition we have given in this article), but is based on “beyond borders”, its meaning encompasses many terms and processes; it is a much broader concept of basic tools for a fascinating relationship. The ability to connect is increasingly important – between countries and different groups of people, they are different, and transcultural diplomacy is required. We are becoming more and more networked, but we are more and more “strange” to ourselves. This is why “general” knowledge is so important.

2. *Facilitation*: “the idea is not that we all agree, nor that we all have the same opinion, but really to achieve a mutual understanding and benefit from each other in other ways” – Mark C. Donfried (2023).

Transcultural diplomacy will play an essential role in promoting social cohesion in the future (Donfried, 2023). In today’s society, in order to communicate effectively with others and foster understanding, we observe that soft skills such as making connections and engaging in small talk are necessary (Donfried, 2023). The cornerstone of transcultural diplomacy is the ability to make connections and foster understanding (Maurer, 2024).

3. *Development of Artificial Intelligence*: “I am a cautious observer of artificial intelligence” – Dr Zane Sime (2024)

One of the most discussed challenges of today’s world is the advancement of artificial intelligence. Much like nuclear power, it is important to think of AI as a tool that can be used for a wide variety of purposes, similar to nuclear power which can be used to make bombs or generate electricity. The impact of AI depends on its regulation and application. Transcultural diplomacy equips us with skills to navigate the realm of artificial intelligence, since in the next decade AI may eliminate the need for language learning by generating languages for us (Sime, 2024). However, effective communication will remain essential, as AI cannot make interpersonal connections. Soft skills essential for communication are taught through transcultural diplomacy (Maurer, 2024). Moreover, challenges remain with the language models used in AI development, including the perpetuation of stereotypes and cultural biases. Additionally, improving the contextual understanding of the results of AI analysis continues to be a significant challenge (Sime, 2024). This is important when dealing with transcultural diplomacy and publishing diverse works. In the light of the challenges of data processing and the occasional erroneous results of AI services, it is crucial to await the development of AI tools capable of providing services with robust quality, sensitivity, and respect for cultural diversity (Sime, 2024).

4. *World Problems*: “Migration brings people to Europe, where they find new opportunities. But it also raises questions about keeping our European culture the same”. Prof. Dr Ulrich Brückner (2023).

In addressing global challenges such as migration, which has long been a challenge for Europe, transcultural diplomacy plays an important role. The question is: *What kind of society do we want for the future?* There is a growing trend in the modern world, particularly in Europe, for people to turn to conservative ideologies. This trend is fuelled by fear of the unknown about those who are perceived as different (Maurer, 2024). These fears include uncertainties about future social developments, as well as concerns about the identity and intentions of newcomers. In this context, transcultural diplomacy has an important

role to play in the promotion of understanding and the breaking down of barriers between different groups (Maurer, 2024).

5. *Cultural Diverse Perspectives on Human Rights*: We must confront the paradox of tolerating intolerance if we want to safeguard the future of human rights” – Dr Didem Aydurmus (2023).

Human rights, and the importance of transcultural diplomacy in their protection in our increasingly globalized world, are very much a function of an individual’s background and the perspectives of their culture, political affiliation, and so on (Brückner, 2023). Sometimes, similar to the law (Brückner, 2023), individuals may not prioritize aspects that are crucial for refugees and migrants (Maurer, 2024). Transcultural diplomacy is an important tool in the understanding of the importance of thinking about national borders (Maurer, 2024).

6. *The World’s Political Polarization*: I think we all understood in the last few years that we will have to work on our democracies – Dr Heidrun Maurer (2024)

In the twenty-first century, we are witnessing an increase in the division of the world into democracies and authoritarian regimes (Sime, 2024). In this context while preserving democracy remains key, transcultural diplomacy underscores the importance of preserving relationships between people. This leads us to consider the importance of future civil cooperation, which is important for citizens to understand the meaning of democracy (Maurer, 2024). In Europe, for example, the potential dissent among ordinary Russian citizens is overlooked if the events in Ukraine are attributed only to Putin. Transcultural diplomacy could help to understand such nuances. It may not be sufficient to rely only on institutional interactions, such as with Russian academics. Rather, fostering civil dialogue is imperative. *But does that also mean that we have broken off contact with each other through talks?* Cross-border cooperation between political regimes could be fostered by prioritizing civil engagement over governmental interactions (Maurer, 2024).

7. *The Realm of Politics and Political Processes*: “Young Russians can go abroad to see the world and then go back and try to change the system from inside” Dr Heidrun Maurer (2024)

Transcultural diplomacy goes beyond mere governance and politics in the realm of politics and political processes (Maurer, 2024). How can these aspects of diplomacy develop together? Political discussions often revolve around state-to-state and government-to-government interactions. However, the importance of people-to-people connections cannot be overlooked. Equally important are cultural exchanges and economic cooperation. There is a need for comprehensive engagement that includes people-to-people interaction. When it comes to helping Ukraine, there is more to it than treaties between nations or high-level government meetings. Engaging with ordinary citizens is just as important. We have to ask ourselves why we are in the business of helping Ukraine, and what the implications are for both sides. People must speak for themselves; these answers cannot be provided by policy alone (Maurer, 2024). Transcultural diplomacy acts as a connecting thread, transcending borders and facilitating understanding. The need for transcultural diplomacy is underscored by the fact that, in today’s interconnected world, every global issue affects everyone. For example, it could help educate Austrian citizens about the importance of acting collectively and serve as a powerful civic education tool (Maurer, 2024).

5. *Discussions and Conclusions*

5.1 *Discussion*

The importance of transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights frameworks working together is emphasized by the following reasons. First, transcultural diplomacy aims to promote understanding and cooperation between different cultural groups while ethically integrating AI technologies to ensure inclusion and respect for cultural diversity, thus promoting global inclusion. The human rights principles provide a framework to ensure that AI technologies are developed and implemented in a way that respects fundamental ethical principles, with

collaboration ensuring that ethical considerations take into account cultural sensitivities and diverse perspectives, leading to broader protection of human rights on a global scale. AI-powered tools can facilitate transcultural communication and understanding, but they need to be developed and deployed with sensitivity to cultural differences. However, there are concerns that AI could perpetuate biases, violate privacy, and potentially violate human rights, e.g., through the use of autonomous weapons and drones. Despite these challenges, the collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights offers practical examples of initiatives such as the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, UNESCO's Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence and the Nansen Initiative. These initiatives show how collaborative efforts promote mutual understanding, respect cultural diversity and uphold human rights principles while addressing the ethical implications of AI in the field of human rights. Through this collaboration, we can ensure fairness, protection of privacy and the prevention of bias or discrimination while promoting mutual understanding and respect across different cultural contexts (Ferrer et al., 2021).

To answer the question of what the future holds for transcultural diplomacy, especially in the light of the development of artificial intelligence and the paramount importance of human rights, we conducted interviews with experts from various fields. The consensus among these experts emphasizes the importance of cultural dynamics and their central role in shaping the present and future of transcultural diplomacy. As one expert said, culture is not static but a living, breathing entity (Donfried, 2023) a sentiment that sums up the essence of transcultural diplomacy. Several important directions for the development of transcultural diplomacy emerged from our discussions. First, transcultural diplomacy transcends boundaries and encompasses a wide range of concepts and processes that emphasize the importance of connection and understanding in an increasingly interconnected world. Second, it plays a critical role in fostering the social bonds and soft skills that are essential for effective communication and relationship building. Third, amidst the rise of artificial intelligence, transcultural diplomacy provides us with the ability to manage its ethical implications and harness its potential for positive change. However,

challenges such as algorithmic bias and the contextualization of AI analysis results remain a concern.

Furthermore, transcultural diplomacy has the potential to contribute to solving global problems such as migration and political polarization by promoting mutual understanding and breaking down barriers between cultures. It also highlights the importance of protecting human rights in an increasingly globalized world and underlines the need for civil cooperation in the face of political polarization.

In essence, transcultural diplomacy goes beyond politics and policy, emphasizing the importance of highlighting individuals and their relationships by celebrating positive change and embracing new ideas, having the ability and willingness to work together creatively while respecting differences. As borders become less important in an interconnected world, transcultural diplomacy becomes an important tool for addressing global challenges and promoting a more inclusive and interconnected future. There is a need to develop new commonalities, shared understandings and actions with regard to AI.

5.2 *Limitations*

The most notable limitation was the search for suitable experts in the field of transcultural diplomacy. Transcultural diplomacy is a new phenomenon that lies at the intersection of international relations, political science and diplomatic studies. While it was relatively easy to define the concept itself, it has been more difficult to distinguish the phenomenon of transculturality from cultural diplomacy. Political science is very advanced when it comes to cultural diplomacy, but that is a different phenomenon. In searching for material for this article on the future of transcultural diplomacy, we were faced with a lack of information, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, we consulted textbooks from college courses on international politics, international relations and the general concept of diplomacy to clarify the definition.

During the interviews, we faced a recurring problem, since our interviewees expressed that they were unfamiliar with the concept of transcultural diplomacy and needed an introduction to the term. Each of the authors of the article understood transcultural diplomacy differ-

ently, depending on the academic discipline presented. International relations focuses on the “state” dimension of diplomacy, so a person studying it will naturally try to describe the phenomenon in terms of states. Someone dealing with cultural diplomacy will be more aware of the need to differentiate between terms and pay more attention to transcultural diplomacy.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers in the field of AI, human rights, and transcultural diplomacy should consider conducting in-depth studies on specific cultural contexts to gain a deeper understanding of how AI affects human rights in these contexts. By focusing on individual cultures or regions, researchers can gain nuanced insights that may not be apparent in broader analyses. Furthermore, examining the intersections between AI, human rights, and other disciplines such as gender studies, environmental studies, or indigenous peoples’ rights can provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities for advancing human rights in different contexts.

In addition, future research should explore the role of AI in specific human rights issues such as the right to privacy, freedom of expression or access to healthcare. By focusing on specific issues, researchers can develop targeted interventions and policy recommendations to effectively address emerging challenges. Longitudinal studies that track the development of AI technologies and their impact on human rights over time can also provide valuable insights. By examining trends and patterns, researchers can identify emerging risks and opportunities and develop pro-active strategies to promote ethical AI practices and protect human rights in the future.

5.4 Conclusion

To summarize, our examination of the intersections between transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights has yielded several important insights. First, it is evident that transcultural diplomacy plays a crucial

role in promoting understanding and cooperation between different cultural groups by ensuring that AI technologies are integrated ethically and in accordance with human rights principles. Second, human rights provide a necessary framework that works as a compass for the development and implementation of AI technologies, with collaboration in transcultural diplomacy ensuring that ethical considerations take into account cultural sensitivities and different perspectives. Third, AI-powered tools have the potential to facilitate transcultural communication and understanding. For instance, imagine you are on a video call with people from different countries who speak different languages. Thanks to AI-powered translation tools, everyone can understand each other instantly. These tools translate what's being said in real time, making communication easier. This helps people from different cultures connect and understand each other better, making transcultural conversations much easier. However, we should bear in mind that these AI tools must be developed and deployed with sensitivity to cultural differences to avoid perpetuating biases or violating privacy rights.

In the future, it will be essential to address the ethical implications of AI in the field of human rights, especially in real-life scenarios that demonstrate the collaboration between transcultural diplomacy, AI and human rights. Our analysis has shown that AI advances bring both opportunities and challenges, such as algorithmic bias, data privacy and the potential for discrimination. However, initiatives such as the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, UNESCO's Cross-Sectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence and the Nansen Initiative show how transcultural diplomacy can promote dialog and understanding between different cultures while upholding human rights principles.

Furthermore, the interviews conducted with the experts underlined the importance of cultural dynamics in shaping the course of transcultural diplomacy and emphasized that culture is a dynamic and evolving entity. In addition, we gained insights into the various dimensions of transcultural diplomacy, including its role in fostering social ties, addressing the ethical implications of AI, and tackling global challenges such as migration and political polarization. The importance of protecting human rights and promoting civil cooperation in an increas-

ingly globalized world became clear. To summarize the future prospects of transcultural diplomacy, it is necessary to incorporate the findings from the expert interviews. Transcultural diplomacy in the near future could have the main role in politics in the field of globalization and a more polarized world. Transcultural diplomacy based on transcendency (being beyond borders and inclusive of all the diversities of cultures in the world) could facilitate social processes. Moreover, the fast development of Artificial Intelligence could be used as a tool to strengthen social cooperation and break down barriers. Transcultural diplomacy teaches us how AI would be very helpful in this process.

In summary, our research highlights the importance of ethical considerations in the development and use of AI technologies, particularly in the field of human rights. By fostering collaboration and understanding between different cultural groups, we can navigate the complexities of AI in a way that promotes ethical considerations and the avoidance of bias or discrimination, ensuring that AI contributes positively to the promotion of human rights on a global scale. Looking forward, the future of transcultural diplomacy involves really listening to others, supporting local cultures, and tackling challenges such as xenophobia to build new connections and find common ground. This suggests that we're capable of working together creatively while still respecting our differences. It encourages us to see our identities as evolving through our interactions with others. It is also about changing the global system to put more focus on people and cooperation, promoting a shared understanding of human rights and solving big problems together.

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Part IV

Social Perspectives on Transcultural Leadership

Relating Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems – A Mission for Transcultural Leadership

*Tobias Grünfelder, Itseng Tlamelo Mashadza
and Aljoscha Böhm*

Abstract

This article explores the necessity of connecting different knowledge systems, particularly indigenous and Western knowledge systems, to address global challenges such as climate change. Based on a brief literature review, semi-structured expert interviews and observations at the Humboldt Museum in Berlin, the findings highlight the complexity of communication between different knowledge systems and emphasize the need for ethical spaces, mutual understanding, the co-existence of different perspectives and patience to foster partnerships. Against this background, transcultural leadership as the willingness and ability to develop commonalities across different cultures while respecting and preserving their unique differences could play a central role in relating different knowledge systems. Finally, a framework for connecting different knowledge systems based on a transcultural approach is presented, which provides a starting point for further research and practice.

1. Introduction

“When I stare too long at the world with science eyes, I see an after-image of traditional knowledge. Might science and traditional knowledge be purple and yellow to one another, might they be goldenrod and asters? We see the world more fully when we use both.” (Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 67)

What knowledge informs our decisions? Whose knowledge counts? What knowledge is seen and valued? How can we tap into and relate different knowledge systems? Given the current global challenges and crises, the relating of different knowledge systems seems promising and necessary to tackle pressing global and local problems, especially the critical issue of climate change. Indigenous knowledge systems, enriched with unique insights, skills and philosophies, offer solutions that go beyond the limits of conventional approaches. In addressing the complexity of our current reality, it is becoming increasingly important to bridge the gap between different knowledge systems.

Bestselling books by Tyson Yunkaporta (2020) and Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) have played a pivotal role in raising global awareness regarding the profound insights embedded in indigenous wisdom. Both have shown that indigenous knowledge systems can teach us principles such as reciprocity, caretaking, and environmental responsibility to rethink our relationships with each other and nature. This article aims to shed light on the interaction with indigenous people, the value of indigenous knowledge, and explain how it can be related to Western knowledge systems for the advancement of our collective future.

It is against this backdrop that transcultural leadership might play a crucial role in relating and connecting different knowledge systems. Transcultural leadership, characterized by the willingness and capability to develop commonalities across diverse cultures while respecting and preserving their unique differences (Wieland, 2023; Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos, 2023), can play a pivotal role in connecting indigenous and Western knowledge systems. This article advocates for a collaborative, respectful, and inclusive approach, emphasizing the need for harmonious coexistence and partnerships between diverse knowledge systems. Now, more than ever, it is imperative for trans-

cultural leaders to step forward, fostering an environment where different knowledge can complement each other. The synthesis of these knowledge systems promises innovative solutions that can steer humanity toward a more sustainable and harmonious future. The realization that no single actor, organization or nation can solve global challenges alone shifts the focus to partnerships and the need to connect different knowledge systems.

In this first part, a short literature review sets the stage and introduces current approaches to connecting indigenous and Western knowledge systems. In the second part, the methodology of our research is presented, and the third part summarizes the main findings of our data analysis of expert interviews and observations during our visit to the Humboldt Museum in Berlin. The final part connects our findings to the transcultural approach and introduces a framework for connecting indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge systems.

2. *Literature Review*

This brief literature review provides an overview of existing approaches that deal with the bridging, connecting and relating of indigenous and Western knowledge systems.

Colonization and globalization have often undermined indigenous economies and knowledge systems; however, over time there has been a move which acknowledges the value that indigenous knowledge systems provide (Senanayake, 2006). Senanayake (2006) states that indigenous knowledge systems contribute to various fields such as agriculture, medicine, and environment and biodiversity. Latulippe and Klenk (2020) posit that indigenous research and knowledge are not new and that there are voices in indigenous communities to assist with the appropriate engagement approaches. However, in some spaces indigenous knowledge is used to fill gaps in existing theories, sets of data and methodologies which, at times, results in theft, misappropriation, and miscommunication (Latulippe & Klenk, 2020). This highlights the importance of bridging indigenous knowledge systems and western knowledge carefully, appropriately and correctly.

2.1 Understanding Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Their Value

There are various definitions of indigenous knowledge systems. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme (LINKS) defines local and indigenous knowledge as the "the practices, understandings, skills and competencies, as well as the philosophies and cosmovisions developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings and a continuing dependence on natural resources. Though Indigenous and local knowledge can apply to vast territories, they are by definition site specific, where meaning is created from the sustained interface of human usage and governance of natural resources, the available resources in the landscape (e.g. the density of biodiversity), and the social and cultural systems of the different peoples reliant on the territory" (LINKS, 2024). In addition, Zohar and Newhouse (2019, p. 136) define indigenous knowledge as "ancient knowledges that have been transmitted from one generation to the next through millennia; spiritual knowledges that are practiced through ceremony and everyday living; land-based knowledges and empirical observations that are grounded in particular ecologies, both rural and urban; and the ontologies and epistemologies encoded in indigenous languages that shape perceptions, ideas, and knowledge creation practices." According to Zidny et al. (2020) when analyzing terms there are differences in utilization of Indigenous with capital I and indigenous with a lowercase i. The term with a capital I refers to the original inhabitants who have experienced European colonialism and imperialism. The term indigenous with a lower case refers to the items that have developed in specific areas (Zidny et al. 2020).

Latulippe and Klenk (2020) state that indigenous knowledge is more than epistemology. In addition, indigenous communities have a worldview where being, knowing and acting are interconnected, and this is manifested in how they operate. Chikaire et al. (2012) states that understanding of indigenous knowledge can be fruitful since gaining insights from indigenous communities provides valuable input about local environments and how resources in those environments can be managed. In addition, understanding indigenous knowledge

systems and completing research projects within the communities provides an opportunity to increase self-determination and self-sufficiency. In essence, credibility is given to indigenous communities.

Indigenous knowledge systems contribute to various fields. Magni (2017) states that indigenous knowledge systems play a key role in land resource management, climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies, and sustainable practices. Magni (2017) posits that, from a sustainability practices perspective, indigenous knowledge systems have allowed indigenous communities to adapt to their lands, which has ensured food security while conserving wild and domestic plants. Indigenous knowledge systems have allowed and continue to allow indigenous societies to continue living in harmony with social mechanisms and customary governance structures to allow good relationships and land management (Magni, 2017). In addition, indigenous knowledge systems have allowed indigenous communities to be able to survive in harsh climate change. According to Magni (2017) this can partly be attributed to their relationship with their territories. Chikaire et al. (2012) also point out that indigenous knowledge systems have contributed to engineering and technology, medicine, and ecological knowledge.

Furthermore, Danladi et al. (2018) conducted a study that reviewed existing literature on flood risk reduction. The study concludes that the use of indigenous knowledge for flood forecasting is being utilized in various communities across the world. In addition, their study concludes that indigenous communities developed early flood warning, flood adaption and coping strategies (Danladi et al. 2018). In addition, Makondo and Thomas (2018) conducted a study that aimed to enhance understanding of indigenous communities' strategies of coping with climate change and contributing to policy conversations on appropriate approaches by identifying areas within indigenous knowledge that can be integrated with other forms of knowledge. Their study concludes that knowledge transfer takes place from one generation to another and the techniques and strategies that are used to cope with climate change have been around for many years. In addition, their study concludes that indigenous knowledge is not singular or universal but rather diverse and context specific. Interestingly, Makondo and Thomas (2018) posit that integration of indigenous knowledge with other bases

of knowledge could be of great value as it may result in more effective and sustainable implementation of climate change strategies.

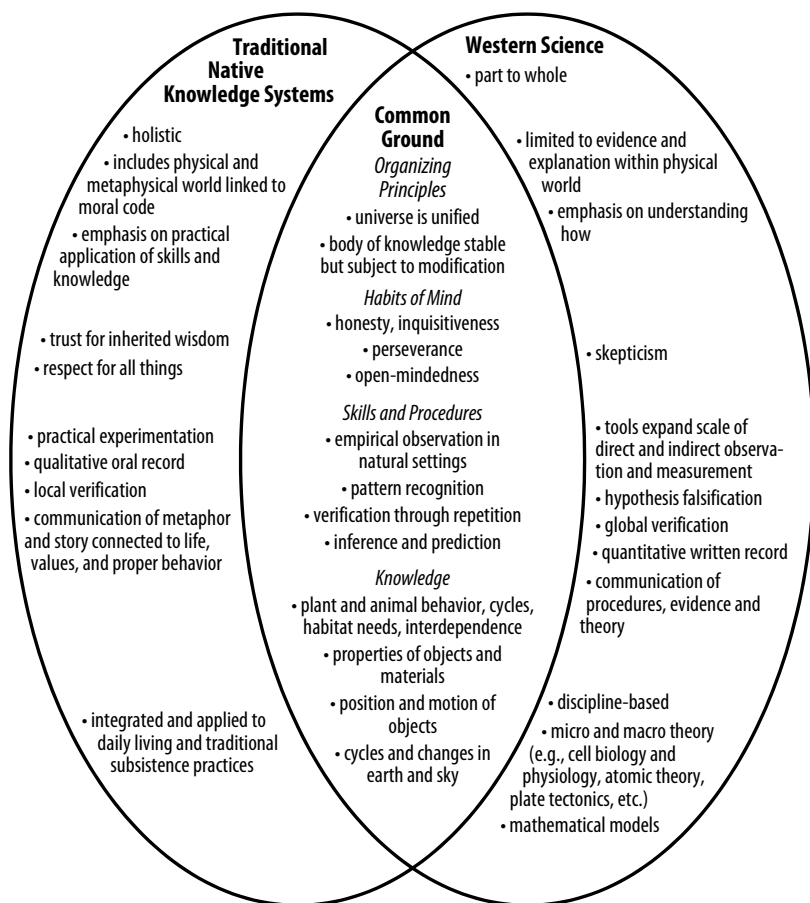
Overall, indigenous knowledge systems are diverse, context-specific and offer unique, sustainable and proven approaches, solutions and practice for complex issues.

2.2 Indigenous Knowledge and Western Knowledge Systems

Orlove et al. (2023) states that knowledge systems are more than facts, hypotheses, and observational techniques. Orlove et al. (2023) further posits that knowledge systems are interacting agents, practices, and institutions that organize, produce and transfer knowledge. Mazzocchi (2006) states that there are differences between indigenous knowledge and Western science. Western science places an emphasis on analytical and reductionist methods as opposed to indigenous knowledge which focuses on an intuitive and holistic view. Orlove et al. provide an excellent overview of how the terms “knowledge systems”, “local knowledge” and “Indigenous knowledge” have been interpreted, evolved and used (2023, p. 1432-1435).

Indigenous knowledge and Western science share similar and complementary conceptual themes yet generate knowledge via different approaches. Figure 1 from Stephens (2000) is an illustration of traditional native knowledge systems compared to Western science. The figure distinguishes traditional native knowledge and Western science through different organizing principles, habits of mind, skills and procedures as well as knowledge, but also shows the common ground. At this point, it is important to mention that the differences are presented in their extremes.

Figure 1: Traditional Native Knowledge Systems Compared to Western Science



Source: Stephens, 2000.

2.3 Approaches of Bridging Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems

Over the last few decades, international organizations such as the United Nations, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) program, and many more have produced a rich body of knowledge, documents, guidelines, principles and case studies to strengthen the rights of indigenous people and facilitate the inclusion of diverse knowledge systems and interactions between them.

Langer (2011) states that conflict between indigenous methods of knowledge production and western science has been expressed through traumatic destructive hybridity. Langer (2011) further states that both these paradigms have the goal of making sense of the world. While these two paradigms attempt to make sense of the world, what matters is how knowledge can be produced together. Against this background, approaches to how indigenous knowledge production and Western science are connected are important. Three different approaches and concepts are presented in the following to relate different knowledge systems.

2.3.1 Braiding or Weaving Ways of Knowing

Braiding ways of knowing is a communication framework that Kimmerer (2013) articulated in her book "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants". The terms braiding, bridging, or weaving knowledge systems are commonly used metaphors for how to bring multiple ways of knowing together in a respectful way that does not interfere with the qualities and processes of each knowledge system. Central to each metaphor is the representation of each knowledge system maintaining its integrity, with opportunities to bring their unique ways of knowing together on common ground to address issues of mutual interest. If you imagine a braid of hair, all three strands are separate entities, but a certain amount of ten-

sion is required, as the three come together to form a whole. For the sake of the metaphor, one strand represents indigenous knowledge, one represents Western science, and the third represents the respect and understanding that holds the braid together. If the third strand did not exist, the braid would fall apart (Kimmerer, 2013).

In short, braiding or weaving ways of knowing maintains the uniqueness or wholeness of each knowledge system. This is quite different from “integrating” knowledge systems, or attempting to meld them into one, which often subsumes indigenous knowledge or forces it to fit within Western knowledge systems. This aspect is also highlighted by the transcultural approach and the definition of transcultural competence as the willingness and capability to develop commonalities across diverse cultures while respecting and preserving their unique differences (Wieland, 2023; Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos, 2023).

2.3.2 *Etuptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing)*

Another framework for bringing knowledge systems is Etuptmumk (Mi'kmaw for Two-Eyed Seeing). Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall describes Etuptmumk as a process through which the strengths of indigenous knowledge are seen through one eye, and the strengths of Western knowledges through the other, so that both distinct eyes may be used together for the benefit of all (Bartlett et al., 2012). When you see through both eyes together, you benefit from the gift of multiple perspectives. This understanding and approach highlights the value and gift of using multiple perspectives. It also encourages us to adopt different perspectives to see the world through multiple eyes.

2.3.3 *Ethical Spaces*

The fundamental challenge of educating tomorrow's leaders for a sustainable world begins by questioning the core assumptions of traditional Western approaches to organizing in general, and sustainability in particular. A promising concept for connecting different knowledge systems is called “Ethical Space” and was initially introduced by Willie

Ermine. According to Ermine (2007), ethical space is a theoretical space of engagement between two disparate societies with distinct cultures and worldviews. These societies initially interact as “two solitudes” whose existing “rules of engagement” drive them towards an ‘either-or’, mutually exclusive state of polarization and ongoing conflict. In contrast to this status quo, the ethical space of engagement offers a context that both acknowledges and respects these differences, while recognizing the potential for these distinct and often divergent worldviews to inform and enrich each society: “...diverse human communities do not share a common moral vocabulary, nor do they share a common vision of the nature of human beings as actors within the universe” (Ermine, 2007, p. 198). Ermine proposes that this ethical space of engagement, driven by multiple complementary processes, represents a context for developing, “a framework for dialogue between human communities” (Ermine, 2007, p. 193) that enables them to redirect their current patterns of engagement. In this revitalized context of engagement, Ermine sees the potential to replace the norms of knowledge domination, cultural oppression, and assimilation of indigenous societies into Western society with an ethic of equality and transculturally grounded coexistence. He notes that while indigenous peoples and Western societies are typically “divided by the void and flux of their cultural distance” (Ermine, 2007, p. 194), there is an opportunity to reframe their historically embedded approaches to “encounter each other” and bring about a qualitative difference in the nature of their intercultural engagement.

Ethical Space enables people with different worldviews, values and knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect and curiosity. The focus of ethical space is on creating a place for knowledge systems to interact with mutual respect, kindness, generosity and other basic values and principles. All collaborating parties must agree to the principles in order for an ethical space to be cultivated. As a minimum, Ethical Space involves acting with a shared understanding that all knowledge, legal, and governance systems are legitimate and contain gifts, and that no single system has more weight or legitimacy than another.

Overall, this brief literature review has shown that indigenous knowledge systems contribute to understanding and dealing with vari-

ous topics and that frameworks such as Ethical Spaces show us how different systems of knowledge can be connected and nurtured.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study aimed to understand how indigenous knowledge can be utilized to save our world by conducting expert interviews with individuals who work with indigenous people or contexts. The study used a qualitative research design. The use of this design was appropriate for this research study as it allowed the researchers to engage with the interviewees and the relevant literature to gain a deeper understanding of their world and context. Overall, our research was driven by the questions: How can indigenous knowledge help us to create better futures, how can we connect different knowledge systems and what can be the role of transcultural leadership?

3.2 Data Collection

This study utilized two data collection methods i.e., semi-structured expert interviews and observations. McIntosh and Morse (2015) state the use of semi-structured interviews allows a researcher to probe participants, which provides a deeper understanding. The use of semi-structured interviews was appropriate for this research study as it provided the researchers with the opportunity to attain thick data from the participants.

According to Smit and Onwuegbuzie (2018) observations as a data collection method involves the use of senses such as listening and vision in a meaningful manner. The researchers visited the Humboldt Forum, a museum located in Berlin, Germany. The museum has a unique exhibition about indigenous cultures from around the world. The use of observations during the visit was an appropriate data collection method and allowed the researchers to immerse themselves in the various topics.

3.3 Sample of the Interviews

Three qualitative interviews were conducted, Table 1 presents information regarding the interviewees.

Table 1: Background Information from the Experts

Expert	Demographic Information
Inter-viewee 1	Over 10-years of experience working with indigenous people in the Congo Basin Project management experience of the Congo Basin Fieldwork experience in the Congo Basin
Inter-viewee 2	Experience working with indigenous people in the Amazon region Currently working as project manager in the Amazon region
Inter-viewee 3	Experience with working with indigenous people from East Africa Currently working as a curator Experience working with exhibitions on indigenous culture

Source: Own table.

The sample was obtained using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling suggests that one considers examining to be a progression of key decisions about whom will take part in the study, where the research will be completed, and how one conducts the research (Palys, 2008). The use of this technique was appropriate for this study as the sample met the criteria set for the study.

3.4 Procedure

Two of the interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams while one interview was conducted face to face. Before the interview began the interviewee’s consent was sought. They were told how the information would be utilized. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. After the interviews, the data was transcribed and analyzed.

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the data the researchers transcribed the audio-taped interviews. The transcribing of the interviews provided the researchers with an opportunity to remove any information that could have been used to identify the interviewees. The interviews were analyzed utilizing a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allows researchers to analyze and report on themes that have been identified in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The use of thematic analysis allows important factors in the data collected to be captured by organizing and describing them in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It consists of six steps i.e., familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, revision of themes, definition and naming of themes and production of a report. In addition, pictures were taken during the visit to the Humboldt Forum. The pictures from the museum were analyzed separately.

3.6 Limitations

Limitations within a study cannot be avoided, therefore, the interpretation of the results must be done with caution. The size of the sample was relatively small, and this may have resulted in the researchers not attaining a holistic picture. Furthermore, the selected experts were primarily from one organization and therefore the results cannot be generalized. The data obtained in the museum was subjective to the researchers; therefore, there may be a degree of bias.

4. Results

This section presents the results of our interview data analysis. The results are summarized and concentrate on our overarching question of how indigenous and Western knowledge systems can be connected.

4.1 The Risk of Defining Indigenous People and Knowledge

Our literature review has already defined indigenous people and indigenous knowledge systems. In this part, our expert interviews reveal several nuances that are important in this discussion.

Table 2: Defining Indigenous People and Knowledge

Interviewee 1	Indigenous peoples are people who have <i>inhabited an area for a long time</i> , usually the first people that occupied an area.
Interviewee 1	I look at it more as all the <i>skills acquired over time to be able to adapt to the environment</i> , like in my case, the rainforest. And they have succeeded in living in this place for so long. So it means that they know what is important for the environment.
Interviewee 2	There’s a direct link and a bond that cannot be separated between the natural and the cultural world for when we are talking about indigenous people. For me precisely indigenous groups are and or what characterizes indigenous groups is that they are socio-cultural groups that have this <i>bond to the territory</i> where they live. They have ancestral and traditional connections.
Interviewee 3	Actually, <i>I tried to not use the term</i> (indigenous people). (...) since especially in German, the use could be linked to a very problematic understanding. (...) You have to label it but often we repeat with the labels some centre and periphery again, having a Eurocentric approach towards knowledge systems and so-called communities of origin.
Interviewee 3	I hardly use the word indigenous, and we do not use it in the exhibition that we have on show at the moment.

Source: Own table.

Interviewee 1 emphasized that indigenous people acquired unique skills in relation to the environment they inhabit and that “if we want these places (e.g., the rainforest) to stay the way they are, we need to encourage them (indigenous people) to maintain the same practices they

have had up to now.” Interviewee 2 highlights that indigenous people have a special bond with the land. This bond with the environment is the centre of many definitions.

Interviewee 3, however, raises concerns about the use of the term “indigenous people,” particularly in German, suggesting that it may have problematic connotations. This interviewer advocates caution in labelling and highlights the risk of perpetuating Eurocentric perspectives by using certain terms. The avoidance of the term “indigenous” in their exhibition is indicative of a deliberate effort to be mindful of language use and its potential implications. Finally, Interviewer 3 also points out that using the term indigenous people might reproduce hierarchies and indirectly reflect the existing power structure. By being more conscious of our use of language we can break existing power structures, and it is important to realize the power of language in reconstructing existing worldviews.

Furthermore, an overarching term such as indigenous people might not account for any distinctiveness between various groups of people. If you are referencing a specific group, it is generally considered more respectful to use another term that more specifically denotes which people you are referring to. There is increasing debate about the appropriate use of terms, especially in the development sector. Singh (2023) concludes in his article for the New Yorker: “Indigeneity is a project of hope. It was crafted by enterprising activists over years of strategizing, absorbing ideas from Red Power, Third Worldism, African and Asian anti-colonialism, and the environmental movement. With it, people sought a politics of the oppressed, aiming to protect land and sovereignty, to turn “backward” natives into respected stewards. When indigeneity promised to deliver on these goals, by attracting the support of international organizations, the natural temptation was to stretch the concept until it covered as many disempowered peoples as possible, even at the cost of coherence.”

Overall, careful use of the term “indigenous people” and “indigenous knowledge systems” is required, as the conflation of indigeneity and primitiveness can be dangerous and could reproduce existing power structures that reflect our colonial past. This discussion and the opening of a dialogue around language use is an important step towards greater awareness of existing power structures.

4.2 Epistemic Divergences Between Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems

Based on our conversations, several epistemic divergences between indigenous and Western knowledge systems became evident. Different understandings of the health systems, the education sector or food system serve as starting points to illustrate the distinguishable ecologies in which both forms of epistemic practices are situated.

Table 3: Epistemic Divergences

Interviewee 1	As someone in need of medical help, it's always a question if they have some sort of commitment to go to the hospital that we provide. Usually <i>skepticism of 'western' medicine</i> seems to be quite prevalent, so they tend to keep their traditional healing processes.
Interviewee 1	One example is the mobile clinic, which moves from village to village and provides medical care to local and indigenous people. But we also get criticism from the main hospital because they want us to send people to the existing hospital. <i>Adapting the hospital system to people's schedules is proving somewhat difficult.</i>
Interviewee 1	The indigenous community I work with does not really believe in the educational system because it is <i>not adapted to their way of life</i> . So, to get them to go to school first, you have to make it free, because no one will pay for college. That's why we're going to give scholarships because we really need them to at least attend school to empower them to make their voices heard.
Interviewee 1	Only a few of the indigenous people managed to study at university. We currently have two students studying law, and the reason <i>they are studying law is because they understand that they are marginalized in an overarching, pre-existing system around them, and they are happy to challenge that restrictive system.</i>

<i>Interviewee 1</i>	I mean, they can find food in the forest, but when you have such a large group of people, it's harder. (...), but then you have to be able to hunt to get meat. Therefore, <i>young children who have never hunted because they went to school are less able to develop these skills.</i>
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Source: Own table.

The skepticism concerning Western approaches leads indigenous communities to uphold their traditional healing methods, posing a challenge to initiatives like the mobile clinic attempting to provide direct healthcare. The clash with established hospital systems unveils a broader struggle against prevailing paradigms. The discussion extends to education, revealing a disconnect between mainstream educational systems and indigenous lifestyles. The imperative of providing scholarships to make education accessible emerges as a strategy to empower indigenous voices. Despite hurdles, a few individuals have succeeded in higher education, choosing fields like law to navigate and comprehend the constraining systems marginalizing them. The tracking program the Interviewee told us about is introduced as a commendable effort to preserve traditional knowledge, emphasizing the crucial role of indigenous expertise in areas such as forest tracking. The narrative also highlights a dilemma – the diminishing hunting skills in younger generations due to prioritizing formal education. This analysis underscores the intricate dynamics involved in reconciling divergent epistemologies across healthcare, education, and the preservation of traditional skills.

4.3 Representing Indigenous Knowledge

Besides flows of communication, a central aspect that came up in the interviews was about the role of ignorance and adequate representation, which was not felt to be at the right level. The interviewees highlighted especially the slow transition towards recognition and the role of standpoints in order to empower IKS.

Table 4: Representation and Ignorance

<i>Interviewee 2</i>	So, I think <i>indigenous knowledge systems and their relevance is gaining a lot of attention lately, but probably not at the pace that it should.</i>
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	Well, I'm quite sure they (indigenous people) <i>have been neglected for about the last 150 years</i> , at least from the white German point of view that reproduces the colonial archive and draws information about indigenous people only based on colonial practices.
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	It's all a matter of the position: from where and who is actually neglecting whom; who's the active and <i>who's the passive actor in the question of ignorance.</i>
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	I mean this is what a part of our exhibition touches on as well. It's about highlighting the <i>gaps and omissions and also stressing the reproduction of racial stereotypes</i> in the archives and therefore the ignorance towards 'other' [othering] positions. But I actually hope and support the idea that it's just the point of Eurocentric knowledge-producing institutions, like a museum or European universities, that keep reproducing this, hoping that there are other institutions outside of this.

Source: Own table.

The interviewees highlight the slow recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, with Interviewee 2 noting their insufficient pace. Interviewee 3 gives a historical perspective, emphasizing a neglect of indigenous knowledge for at least 150 years, particularly from a white German viewpoint ingrained in colonial practices. The discussion centers on the power dynamics of ignorance and the question of who neglects whom. Interviewee 3 cautiously refers to Eurocentric knowledge-producing institutions and gives hope for alternative perspectives outside these structures. The discourse emphasizes the need to question and diversify sources of knowledge in order to overcome historical ignorance and misrepresentations of indigenous knowledge systems.

4.4 *Communicating with Indigenous People and Knowledge Systems*

In the dynamic interplay between Western and indigenous knowledge systems, a complex and nuanced dialogue unfolds, bringing forth both challenges and opportunities for transcultural understanding. The co-existence of these distinct frameworks of knowledge is marked by a continual negotiation of perspectives, values, and epistemologies. As we examine the analysis of this intricate interaction, it becomes imperative to explore the ways in which communication channels are established, sustained, or hindered between these two systems.

Distinguishing between organizational aspects of communication and communication in fieldwork is crucial for a nuanced analysis. The organizational dimension explores institutional structures, policies, and decision-making processes that shape the broader context of interaction between Western and indigenous knowledge systems. On the other hand, examining communication at the ground or fieldwork level delves into the lived experiences, interpersonal dynamics, and local practices, offering insights into how these knowledge systems manifest and interact on an intimate and practical level. By distinguishing between these two dimensions, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the multilayered communication dynamics that influence the coexistence of Western and indigenous knowledge.

Table 5: Communicating as an International Organization

<i>Interviewee 1</i>	And I have to take part in courses where I've been trained in how to engage with people. We have like a <i>set of principles</i> that operate on the higher level, which we all on the ground need now to understand these principles.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>The first principle is always first about accepting, like respecting and promoting the rights of indigenous people no matter where in the world you are.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	And then the second principle is also based more on the local reality. So, accepting that they have a right to align their territory, their resources, their cultural beliefs and their routines.

<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>Grievance systems:</i> We acknowledge the fact that local indigenous people will not take it to court because usually they don't even have the power to be able to do that. So, these systems have been known as a party that is very close to the indigenous people and <i>I'm like a mediator. So, when indigenous people have complaints about anything that happens during the conservation work, they can approach these human rights centers and report what happened.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	Yeah. So, we need to do the free, uh, the <i>free informed consent</i> before we implement an act which has to be consented to by people.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>You should be able to say no</i> , it should not be because you've had the funding from the European Union or you've had funding from them, that we've had funding from a private donor <i>that you have to implement it.</i> So the design stage is actually the most important now in all our activities, it's a side stage, but they have to be involved in the design. And if in the end they say, okay, if it doesn't work, then you stop.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	You know how to define <i>mitigation measures. Together, you have to find a win-win situation and then they have to approve it before you can even go ahead.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	The discussions can be as complex as possible. Then you really have to make sure that you <i>involve everyone that needs to be involved.</i> (...) for example, if you just pick one relationship and talk to them, the first chief doesn't represent anyone because they've adopted this fresh system that they make for chiefs, for people and the voting system, all of those things are what the people believe in.

Source: Own table.

Within an international organization, Interviewer 1 discusses the multi-faceted aspects of communication, specifically focusing on guiding principles. The guiding principles underscore the organization's commitment to engaging with people through training courses and adhering

to overarching principles. Notably, the importance of grievance systems as a channel for indigenous people to report issues is emphasized, recognizing their limited access to legal avenues. The significance of obtaining free, informed consent before implementing actions is stressed, along with the impact of new laws protecting indigenous communities.

The guiding principles prioritize the global promotion and respect of indigenous people's rights, acknowledging local realities such as control over territory, resources, and cultural beliefs. The participatory design stage emerges as critical, ensuring indigenous community involvement and approval before project implementation. The complexity of discussions necessitates the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, acknowledging diverse opinions within the community structure.

In essence, the international organization grapples with funding intricacies, human rights considerations, and adherence to principles centered on respecting indigenous rights and ensuring their active participation in project planning and execution.

Table 6: Communicating with Indigenous People on the Ground

<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>First of all, meet the people and explain to them what you're trying to do and ask them, like, do you agree? And then they can also say, we think it's good or no, we don't want it. And then you try to understand why they don't want it if they don't want it.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>At the top of every organisation have policies, like principles, how to engage with indigenous people, safeguards, and everything. You have all these principles existing everywhere. But when you go right right down into the different field offices like county offices and field offices, again, there's a lot going on, which for me, that is the reality of what is happening. And at times you have people walking there who don't even know what is happening at the top and you can get completely lost in your own smart world. You can do very good things that you never communicate to someone at the top.</i>

<i>Interviewee 1</i>	So, we have to create that atmosphere where they (indigenous people) feel like they are being recognized and they are being given the opportunity to say what they want. <i>And it's always a very tricky one. Because it's always been just imposing these things on them.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>I think they (different knowledge systems) can coexist in peace, but I think this should be short, but it should really be based on acceptance that none of the systems is secure today either, because the tendency has been that the Western knowledge is superior. And it's the principle in which we've been existing. We've always been that we, no matter which part we had to produce, we have certain things, and we go there to enforce what we want. We need to stop communicating in ways that reproduce that principle.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	And at times also, I mean, the majority might want something, but there's always people who don't want it. And so, it's a lot of communication with people, a lot of convincing people that this one guy's doing good or it'll be good in the end, beneficial in the long run and all those kinds of things. And it's always quite challenging.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	If I find myself in the middle of both (indigenous and western knowledge systems). <i>I try to find a balance that I can fit in order to fit all the different scenarios.</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>We really need to stop thinking what system is superior to the other and just be patient enough to know that it functions in some way.</i> They have a system which is a really good system, like they have a system for them which works best.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>None of the knowledge systems is superior to the other.</i> The tendency has been that Western knowledge is superior. And it's the principle in which we've been existing.
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	<i>I think different knowledge systems can coexist, but I think this should be based on acceptance.</i>
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	To sustain the natural world for both the benefit of the natural world and peoples, <i>we must collaborate with the people that are actually in those places.</i>

Interviewee 3	I've lived in a part of Tanzania where it wouldn't be enough to talk English. You would have to talk Swahili and so I learned Swahili. (...) We differed from our neighbours in a way, but I think <i>intercultural competence has been helpful</i> . I still think that it's very important to know who you are in a way and who's talking here. (...) But it's more of a way of <i>being aware of modes of communication</i> that adds up to my intercultural competence in a way.
Interviewee 3	When I think of what is important as a trait, I think of <i>patience with myself, with my colleagues in the institutions here, with my colleagues in the institution and the whole town</i> is very, very important. And also, <i>to differentiate between the professional and the personal position is quite important</i> .

Source: Own table.

The interviewees discuss the intricacies of effective communication during fieldwork with indigenous communities. Interviewer 1 emphasizes the importance of initiating dialogue, seeking agreement, and understanding community concerns to move away from historical impositions. They advocate recognizing the value of different knowledge systems and avoiding the perception of superiority. Collaboration is highlighted by Interviewer 2 as being essential for sustaining both the natural world and human communities. Interviewer 3 reflects on her experience, acknowledging the privilege and emphasizing the need for intercultural competence and patience. The collective insights underscore the complexities of engaging with indigenous communities, emphasizing respect, collaboration, and self-awareness as crucial elements for successful communication during fieldwork.

Overall, the importance of guiding principles of international organizations that create both guidance and accountability, as well as the individual competences (patience, intercultural competence, active listening, effective communication, perspective taking, etc.) to connect different knowledge systems was emphasized.

4.5 Observations From the Visit to the Humboldt Forum in Berlin

In addition to our interview analysis, the Humboldt Forum in Berlin was visited and the observations offer further insights. The museum, in this context, functions as a dynamic laboratory where the convergence of various knowledge systems becomes apparent. As mentioned earlier, there are diverse approaches to connection such as braiding, two-eyed seeing, or the concept of ethical space. A museum with different exhibitions might be a space to connect different knowledge systems and to invite visitors to explore, question and rethink their own assumptions.

4.5.1 Context of the Museum – Short Introduction to the Humboldt Forum

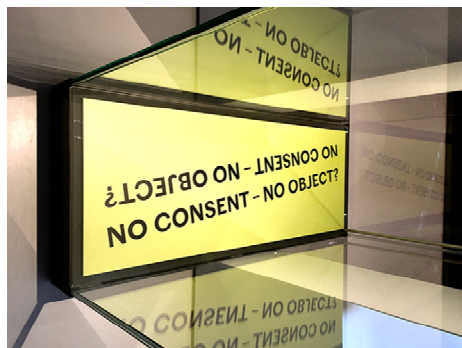
The Humboldt Forum in Berlin has been a place of post-colonial debate for more than two decades, since the once imperial building, that represented the heart of German colonialism, was planned to be rebuilt. Now, reconstructed building is the new home of the ethnological museum of Berlin; this has also fostered debate regarding them displaying stolen art that was acquired by the colonial German empire in the 19th century. Inside this museum, one exhibition was held fostering a place for reflection not only on these controversies, but first and foremost on the ethics of displaying objects at all.

4.5.2 Picture 1: “No Object – No Consent”:

As visitors navigate through the exhibition, encountering both empty showcases and those featuring objects accompanied by extensive text or replicas, the fundamental question arises: Who has the authority to exhibit objects, and how should they be presented? The informative plaques accompanying the artefacts delve into their heritage, usage by their original builders, and the circumstances of their acquisition – whether through consent or theft. Notably, all objects showcased have received official consent from their original owners; any absence of consent precludes the inclusion of the object in the exhibition. Furthermore, the curators were advised by indigenous people in order to

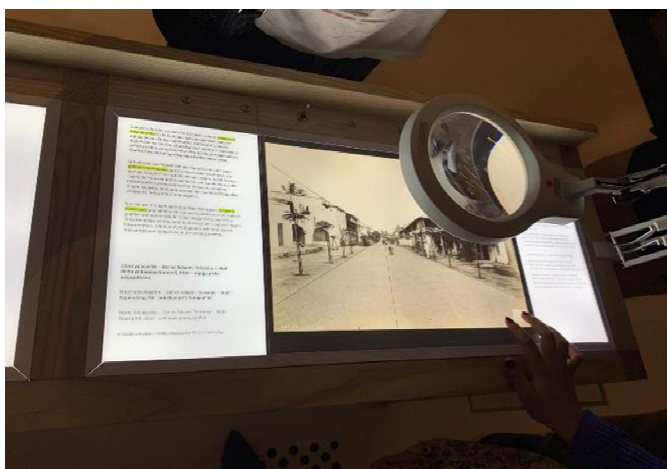
help contextualize the objects and find the original stories belonging to them.

Figure 2: Picture 1: “No Object – No Consent”



Source: picture by the authors.

Figure 3: Picture 2: “Examining the examined”



Source: picture by the authors.

The empty display case symbolizes the principle that communication between different knowledge systems must begin with mutual understanding, respect, acceptance, and consent. We noticed during our visit that this empty display case had a tremendous impact on visitors and is an excellent starting point for reflection and discussion. It also reminds us that, in the past, many museum exhibitions were organized without consent and it is a reminder of imperial and outdated practices. It also reminds us that colonialism is our history, and that colonial legacies and continuities are still visible and active today. The colonial dynamics are continuously reproducing themselves and a promising step might be to acknowledge the harm and focus on genuine cooperation (Narayanaswamy, 2023). This spirit is reflected in the empty display case and invites visitors to hold each other responsible for how we choose to respond to harmful legacies of empires that we still live with.

4.5.3 *Picture 2: "Examining the Examined"*

Here an installation is presented that offers a lens to investigate a colonial photograph further. During the exhibition we were told that it has been used to report back to funders how "progress had been installed". The straight lines that were drawn into the photograph should showcase the order brought to the space. Text plates next to the photograph, just like the lens, provided the visitor with an opportunity to cut through the colonizer's sight, and remove a certain perspective that hindered indigenous voices being raised about how the site was viewed. The overall setting invited one to engage critically with the material that was acquired through colonial practices. The image is reminiscent of prevailing Western knowledge systems and offers visitors the opportunity to examine the context more closely.

4.5.4 *Picture 3 – "A Pipe and an Omission"*

The third picture depicts a pipe and an omission, contrasting what can be shown and exhibited when enough contextualization using indigenous knowledge takes place. The violet text posters tell the story of

what the pipe meant to the community to whom it originally belonged. Below that, one is reminded that there could have been an object displayed, but which isn't shown in order to avoid asymmetrical representation due to the lack of indigenous knowledge. The vacant spaces throughout the entire exhibition appeared to create a space for previously disregarded perspectives. The absence of an object not only indicated that indigenous knowledge systems had not been overlooked but also suggested that these omissions awaited the infusion of these perspectives, should they choose to manifest. In this regard, the exhibition metamorphosed into a symbol representing a connection between indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Nestled in a locale steeped in the history of German colonialism, this bridging seemed to find facilitation.

Figure 4: Picture 3: "A Pipe and an Omission"



Source: picture by the authors.

While visiting the exhibition, the curator told us about the process of creating the exhibition together with the voices of indigenous communities that knew about the origins of certain objects and their true owners. Additionally, most of these artefacts were part of daily practices that needed certain epistemic proximity to the communities, to which the objects belonged. Therefore, the theft and alienation of the objects of their original context needed to be discussed in such an exhibition, which is why the curators decided to work with different layers of text plates, shown in Picture 3. In order to connect different knowledge systems and create understanding for the “other”, power hierarchies needed to be addressed, which seemed to be a crucial part of enabling fruitful equal exchange.

As a symbolic meeting place between Western and indigenous knowledge systems, the exhibition uniquely tackled these power dynamics. Through deliberate curation and presentation choices, it sought to dismantle hierarchies by providing equal visibility and importance to both knowledge traditions. By showcasing the interconnectedness of these systems and highlighting shared aspects, the exhibition aimed to level the playing field, fostering a more inclusive dialogue that transcended traditional power imbalances. In doing so, the exhibition not only became a physical space of convergence but also a dynamic platform actively working towards bridging the gap between Western and indigenous knowledge, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious coexistence.

5. *Discussion*

During our discussions and analysis, it became evident that education and the establishment of ethical spaces will play a crucial part in connecting Western and indigenous knowledge systems. Following Ogawa (1997), a Japanese educator and researcher, we believe that it is important to distinguish between “understanding science” and “believing in science.” A belief in science, scientific attitudes, and scientific ways of thinking is deeply rooted in the Western value system. As Ogawa explains, “My position is that whether one can believe in science and a scientific worldview or not should be determined, not by the value

within Western modern science, but by the value within the daily life world of the people concerned” (1997, p. 9). A first step could be to give students, especially in higher education, the opportunity to come into contact with different knowledge systems and to learn from them.

Drawing on Collins’ concept of emotional energy (2004), which emphasizes the role of collective emotional experiences in shaping social interactions, we can explore how these meeting places for diverse knowledge systems are not only repositories of information but also centers of emotional and collective significance for indigenous communities. By fostering dialogue and mutual understanding within this ethical space, there is an opportunity not only to meet the other epistemologically, but first of all through successful social interactions that reward the participants with emotional energy or moral solidarity. Once established, seeing through the other eye will be more easily facilitated. Ethical spaces as meeting places for different knowledge systems need to be carefully designed. Finally, offering ethical spaces and continuing to work together in ethical spaces is an important task that requires the commitment of people and organizations.

Against this backdrop, a transcultural approach (Wieland, 2020; Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder, 2022). can be promising. Transcultural competence can be defined as the “general competence of individuals or organizations to intentionally develop new commonalities in contexts of cultural complexity. It refers to the ability and willingness to engage in context-specific processes of constructing new shared meaning and action beyond existing practices by shared experience and mutual learning as a means and result of being in relation. The new commonalities are based on a sense of belonging to a heterogeneous community of experience rather than on overcoming one’s own identity in a process of homogenization. New forms of cooperation and the expansion of existing cooperation corridors may be the goals and results of applying transcultural competence” (Grünfelder & Baumann Montecinos 2023, p. 25). A transcultural approach with an emphasis on developing commonalities to ensure the continuous development of shared meanings while preserving diversity between cultures and knowledge systems can pave the way for connecting different knowledge systems. In addition, transculturality as a leadership style is described by Josef Wieland (2019, p. 34) “as the competence

to develop social interactions that are significantly characterized by cultural diversity in such a way that they produce mutual advantage for stakeholders: values, motivations or objectives accepted by all.” A “beneficial” collaboration may be impossible in some cases, but the continuity of the collaboration should still be guaranteed so that, in the future, possible benefits from the cooperation can be generated. A relationship between different knowledge holders has value in itself and the benefits can take different time horizons and forms (e.g., economic, social, inspirational, strategic values, etc.). This is why the continuity of ethical spaces is so important to promote the co-production of knowledge and why transcultural leadership must be aware of restoring ethical spaces and must eliminate the dominance of one knowledge system over another. Future transcultural leaders must establish connections and relationships between different knowledge holders so that new solutions to local, regional, and global problems can emerge. Therefore, the education of future leaders becomes crucial. Zohar and Newhouse define transcultural education as “a pedagogy aiming to engage learners from different cultures and knowledge traditions with the purpose of guiding them through ideas and processes of working together in a way that respects differences, acknowledges common ground, and seeks to co-create new knowledges” (2019, p. 136).

This is the spirit of learning from and with each other and might well be described by the metaphor of a dancing and married couple. In this metaphor each dancer might present a different knowledge system. Dancing together requires us to ask each other to dance, to get to know each other while dancing together and to not step on each other’s toes. This is reflected in mutual respect, acceptance, agreement and consent. Furthermore, the metaphor of marriage indicates that, after committing to a partner, cooperation begins, and we may start to notice differences in our habits, behaviors, and preferences. If we want to stay with the partner despite the differences, we will need to comply with daily adaptation and a long-term perspective (Karsaklian, 2017). The result of such a process (dancing) might be a strong partnership and the development of shared meanings, practices, and knowledge.

6. Conclusion

The world in which we live is shaped by cultural diversity, and embracing it helps us to solve various challenges in the world. As previously mentioned, there are various challenges facing us, e.g., climate change. In order to solve problems such as climate change it is crucial that we draw knowledge from various sources. Considering the literature review, the data analysis, and the discussion, we want to conclude by providing a framework for connecting indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge systems. This framework is inspired by the metaphor of a dancing and married couple and is an invitation to take the discussion further. The proposed framework is based on the transcultural learning model (Baumann Montecinos, 2022) as a tool that invites scholars and practitioners to further develop ways in which knowledge from diverse backgrounds can be generated, shared, and appreciated.

Table 7: Framework for Connecting Different Knowledge Systems

1. Recognition, identification, and empowerment of diverse knowledge systems

The first step is about making the diversity of knowledge systems visible. In a specific situation, there might be more knowledge systems involved than expected. Allowing, accepting, and empowering this diversity requires a change in attitude, and the realization that knowledge is a communal construction. To empower overlooked or even suppressed knowledge systems requires dominant knowledge systems to step back and make space. Guiding principles can provide a starting point but should be mutually adaptable to specific contexts.

2. Inviting and reaching out to diverse knowledge systems

Inviting and reaching out to people from different knowledge systems is a very important step and requires careful planning. Simply assuming that knowledge holders will participate and share their knowledge is a mistake. To encourage agency by diverse knowledge holders requires safe spaces of sharing and learning. Overall, it is about involving knowledge holders who are willing to share and are committed to a mutual learning process. It can take some time to identify the right knowledge holders, and it is even more important to take this time.

3. Opening ethical spaces for knowledge systems to meet

Opening or starting a conversation between different knowledge systems and holders requires careful design of ethical spaces. Ethical spaces should be characterized by the following features:

- Mutual acceptance, respect, trust, kindness, generosity, openness, and consent
- Right to say no
- No imposition
- Meaningful and shared experiences by doing something together
- Active listening and mindful speaking
- Spirit of mutual learning
- Allowing different systems of validation
- No pressure to melt or merge different knowledge systems together
- Protection of co-existence
- Professional facilitation by knowledge holders with experience of diverse knowledge systems might be helpful
- The continuity of ethical spaces must be established so that a process of mutual learning can emerge

4. Finding commonalities and allowing differences to exist

During the engagement and discussions about ethical spaces, commonalities (e.g., common issues, challenges, dreams, desirable futures, etc.) can be identified. Finding and identifying commonalities can start a process of mutual learning. It is important that the different knowledge systems have the right to co-exist and that differences are continuously respected. Out of the continuity of ethical spaces new commonalities can emerge. New commonalities can be shared understandings, meanings, actions, practices and knowledge of diverse knowledge holders.

5. Fostering partnerships and enabling knowledge co-production

The final stage is about fostering partnerships across different knowledge systems that allow the co-production of knowledge. Partnerships are about commitment, investment, keeping promises and trust in each other. A long-lasting partnership needs to be cultivated and requires give-and-take. The purpose is to create a never-ending partnership where all knowledge holders respect and depend on each other. The diverse knowledge holders

are aware that knowledge they produce is co-created, and they cannot do it alone. Out of this partnership a sense of belonging to a community of practice might emerge. This is the feeling of security, support, acceptance and inclusion.

Source: Own table.

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Sustainable Architecture for Adverse Environmental and Labor Contexts

*Erika Laursen and
Ruth Espinola Soriano de Mello*

Abstract

Architecture is being challenged to respond to increasingly complex questions, especially given the transformations in the world of work following the impact of the pandemic and the effects of climate change. Sustainable architecture is a *locus* for innovative solutions, based on natural and traditional aspects of territories. The construction industry is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases and is growing rapidly. It is urgent to think about changes that positively impact on the way we design and build our cities. The socio-environmental and financial risks caused by global warming are entering the agenda of companies thanks to the ESG targets. Diversity and trans-cultural cooperation to create more sustainable working environments expand the discourse beyond the environmental sphere.

This article seeks to shed light on these problems, especially in the Brazilian context, by surveying relevant articles on the topic and searching for innovative global illustrative cases. It does not intend to be exhaustive regarding the possibilities of sustainable solutions observed worldwide, but rather seeks to emphasize the contributions to innovative practices and technologies in favor of progress and the well-being of society.

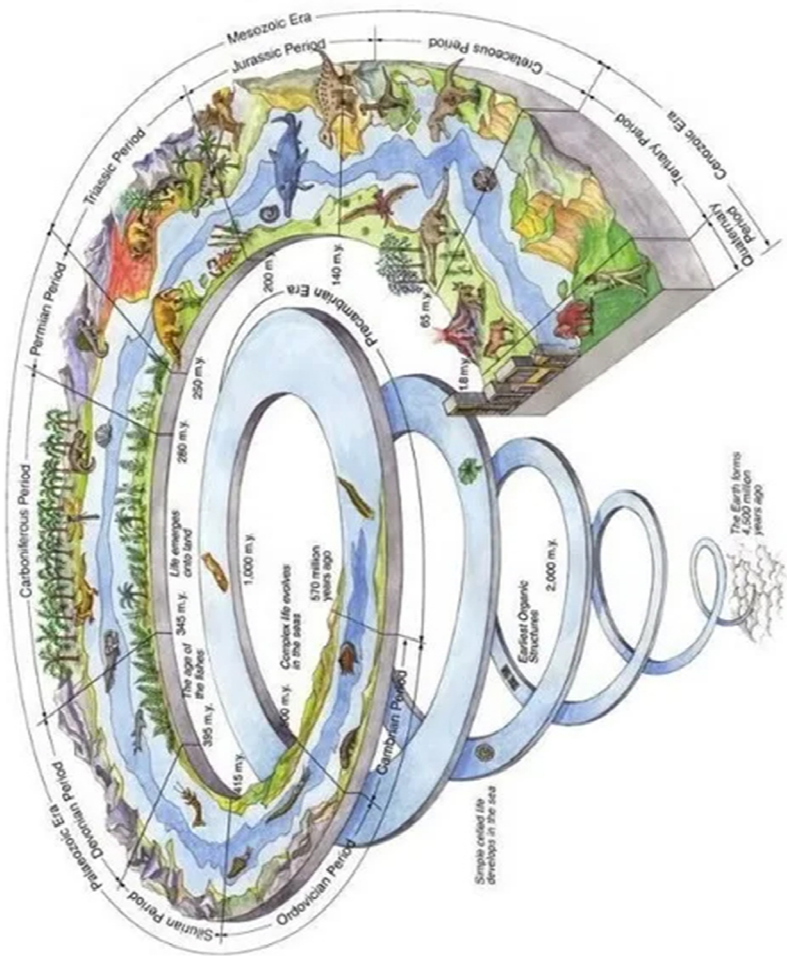
1. *How Did We Get Here?*

In response to the problems caused by the growth of urbanization across the globe, the development of sustainable solutions in architecture has been expanding and consolidating itself as a new way of living and working. Mostly implemented in urban spaces, sustainable architecture is a design premise, both in new constructions and in adaptations or retrofits ranging from buildings to entire neighborhoods, promoting dynamism in the production of space and actions with a positive socio-environmental impact that contribute to the environmental resilience and economy of cities. New forms of construction and work minimize the negative impacts of extreme weather events and are a key part of achieving the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda, including, notably, goals 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 16.

The appropriation of natural space was decisive for the evolution of *Homo Sapiens* with transformation based on the settlement of small communities in regions with a greater abundance of natural resources in order to guarantee survival of said communities. The battle for territories more abundant in those resources was a reason for wars and struggles inside and outside human settlements. The consumption of natural resources or manufactured goods to meet the needs of growing populations and social demand brought us the concept of the Anthropocene – developed by Nobel Prize winner Paulo J. Crutzen, characterizing the recent geological age of the Earth, marked by drastic changes on the planet.

According to the UN (United Nations) report on the *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging The Urban Divide* (UN-Habitat, 2008), by 2030 humanity will become *Homo Sapiens Urbanus*, as there will be more people living in cities than in rural areas around the world. Another more recent report, *World Cities Report 2022* (UN-Habitat, 2022), points out that the world population will be 68% urban by 2050. The phenomenon of urbanization is seen by the first report as a “positive force for transformation” (UN-Habitat, 2008, p. 4) and cities will be “vehicles for social change: places where new values, beliefs and ideas can forge a different growth paradigm that promotes rights and opportunities for all members of society. (UN-Habitat, 2008, p. 3). However, urban growth also generates distortions, especially in

Figure 1: Spiraling Timescale Chart of Life on Earth



Source: Martini, 2013.

developing countries, such as, for example, informality, illegality and unplanned occupation, strongly associated with poverty. Five catalysts are also identified for the integration of the poor and marginalized population (the result of disorderly growth) into conventional urban life: improvement in the quality of life, investment in the formation of human capital, continued economic opportunities, strengthening political participation and cultural inclusion.

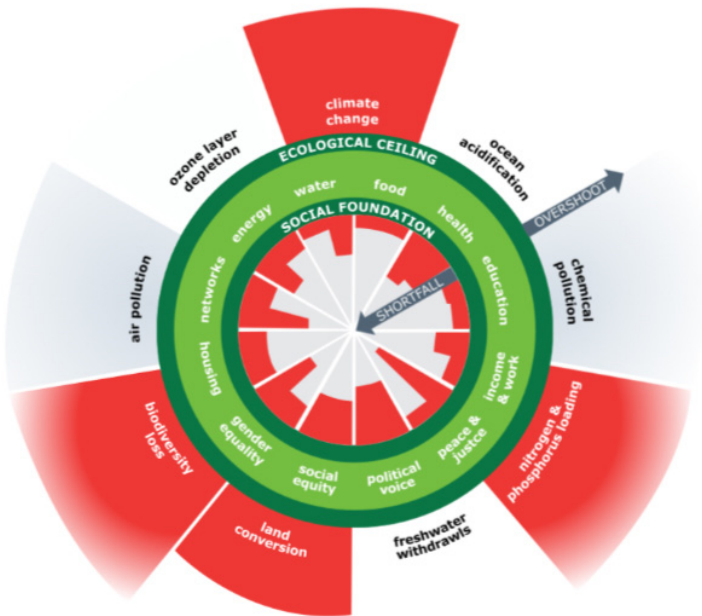
Some of the adverse effects of rapid urban growth in the last fifty years have been increased levels of pollution, environmental degradation and slum development (FAO et al., 2023). Problems related to waste (production, lack of adequate collection and treatment) and water (whether drinking or sewage) are more evident in favelas and informal settlements in countries in the southern hemisphere. But other problems, such as the consequences of global warming, the scarcity and contamination of natural resources, spatial segregation and other socio-environmental issues affect developed and non-developed countries alike. In order to mitigate the adverse effects of human occupation and propose solutions to primarily urban problems, sustainable development was introduced into the ecological debate. (Laursen, 2023)

Human occupation has always been a factor in generating pollution, but today the impacts are catastrophic. Not only are the quantitative aspects taken into consideration, but mainly the qualitative aspects of the “waste” of human life. Added to this is the socio-economic distortion caused by the concentration of income and exclusion of the majority of the world’s population from decent forms of work, food, housing, health, education, and other basic needs. The race for survival leaves a large part of the world’s population out of the discussions about the future of humanity. On the other hand, in the richest regions, the race for unrestrained consumption makes the most urgent problems regarding the future of humanity invisible. At one extreme or another, population habits do not reflect the real urgency we are facing regarding our extinction.

“Ours is the first generation to properly understand the damage we have been doing to our planetary household, and probably the last generation with the chance to do something transformative about it.” (Raworth, 2017, p. 233)

In this statement by Kate Raworth, author of *Doughnut Economics*, published in 2017, the issue of urgency in actions to combat climate change is highlighted. The economist's concept is comprehensive and related to human life on the planet and how we can live within social limits and environments.

Figure 2: The Doughnut of Social and Planetary Boundaries



Dynamic and updated graphics with interactions and explanations on the website.

Source: Raworth, 2024

In this context, the perpetuated premises of the *Homo Sapiens* appropriation, occupation and production of space need to be quickly adjusted in order to avoid socio-environmental collapse. Two social forces that drive environmental problems are “work” and “construction”.

The construction industry is one of the most polluting in the world. “In 2022, buildings were responsible for 34 per cent of global energy demand and 37 percent of energy and process-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions”, according to the Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction (United Nations Environment Programme, 2024). In addition to all the greenhouse gas emissions and other polluting waste, construction has other aspects that are very harmful to the environment, especially in urban areas: soil sealing, reduction of biodiversity, useful life of materials, the increased obsolescence of equipment, decentralized production chains far from urban centers without the use of local or recycled materials, highly polluting materials such as asbestos, paints, cleaning materials and other chemical products, high degrees of waste, lack of treatment of waste from construction or use of buildings, inadequate disposal of debris generated by demolition, landfills and silting that alter the surroundings, architectural defects that generate excessive construction and maintenance costs (Akan et al., 2017), not to mention social and economic aspects such as gentrification, slums, logistics dependent on fossil fuels, standardization of construction models without taking into account local historical, cultural and environmental aspects, buildings that do not consider the health of their users. (Sev, 2011) An example is the sinking of Chinese cities due to the excess weight of skyscrapers. (Ao et al., 2024) This shows that it is not enough for a building to be sustainable in isolation with seals and certifications. When we think about sustainability, all aspects must be considered.

Cities and architecture have already undergone major transformations caused by the needs of society, where environmental aspects were adopted in conjunction with the adoption of new construction systems. Since the beginning of the Anthropocene (Steffen et al., 2007), which occurred around 1800 with the use of hydrocarbons on a large scale – primarily petroleum for energy production and the source of raw materials – the history of urbanism is full of examples and theories of attempts to integrate or include natural spaces in cities (Choay, 1979) and constructions: hygienist practices by Haussmann (Paris-1852), garden cities by Ebenezer Howard (England-1898), the naturalist model by Frank Lloyd Wright (United States-1932), the Charter of Athens of 1941 (Le Corbusier, 1993) and the country-city conflicts

raised by Henri Lefebvre in 1968 (Lefebvre, 2012), to name but a few. Over time, urban design gained bioclimatic characteristics (Ritchie & Thomas, 2013), both as an adaptation of cities and for the production of new settlements. It is noted that several of these major technological and socio-environmental innovations were fostered by public health problems or problems in work and production relations.

Problems related to the production chain, health and work became very evident again during the Covid-19 pandemic, starting in 2020. There was a lack of resilience in the construction sector, in cities, their inhabitants and modes of housing, work, production and consumption. And the great need and urgency in reviewing socio-environmental and economic relations. The “world stopped” and ESG¹ and sustainability practices gained momentum. But before that, a climatic event was decisive in preparing society for the recent pandemic years.

2. *Superstorm Sandy and the Consolidation of a New City Model*

Financial markets had already been feeling the problems related to extreme weather events since the hurricanes that hit the west coast of the United States in 2011 and 2012: Hurricane Irene (North Carolina) and Superstorm Sandy (New York and New Jersey). Big global banks suffered major losses when lower Manhattan was seriously hit. Not to mention the extent of the damage and the lives lost. From then on, insurance companies, scientists and other entities began to adapt and integrate risk analysis models with data from the affected ecosystems. Studies have shown that Nature-Based Solutions – NBS (IUCN, 2020a) “green structures², blue³ and alive⁴”, implemented in a hybrid way, are

¹ ESG – Environmental, social, and corporate governance. “ESG metrics are increasingly important in the global investment management industry. (...) the adoption of the ESG programme offers a means of rewriting the terms of risk management and value creation (...) also serve to address challenges to the legitimacy of the global asset management industry”. (Clark & Dixon, 2024, p. 1).

² Green structures – “The interconnected set of natural and constructed ecological systems, green spaces and other landscape features. It includes planted and indigenous trees, wetlands, parks, green open spaces and original grassland and woodlands, as well as possible building and street-level design interventions that

cheaper, more efficient, longer-lasting and easier to restore post-disaster than “gray physical barriers”⁵ (of concrete and steel). Insurance companies began to demand certifications and sustainable practices (Jacobsen, 2019) for their big clients.

Figure 3: Nature-Based Solutions Definition Scheme (©IUCN)



Source: IUCN, 2020b, pp. 3-4.

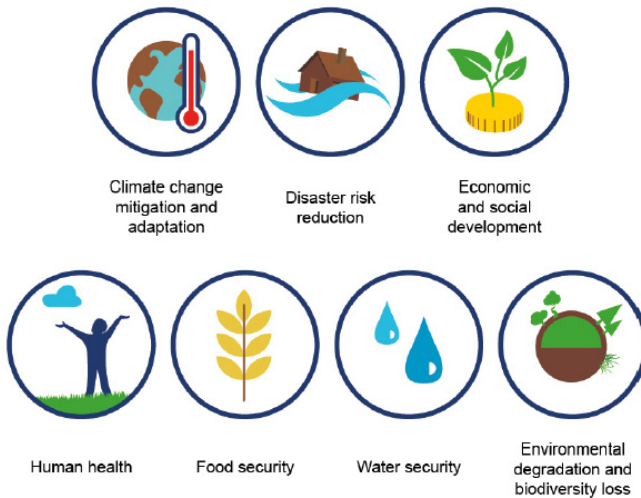
incorporate vegetation. Green infrastructure provides services and functions in the same way as conventional infrastructure. This definition builds from Culwik and Bobbins (2016).” (IPCC, 2018, p. 550)

³ Blue structures – Urban water infrastructure, generally combined with green infrastructure: “green-blue infrastructure”.

⁴ Living structures – Creation or restoration of coral and oyster reefs in coastal areas and other mechanisms and solutions using rapidly regenerating living organisms post-disaster.

⁵ Gray structures – hard, structural solutions, built to face the effects of climate change.

Figure 4: Society's Biggest Challenges Addressed by SBN (© IUCN)



Source: IUCN, 2020b, pp. 3-4.

Environmental risk modeling studies translate urban planning concepts into the values and percentages for city resilience. The tendency is for governments and local entities to work to reduce the vulnerability of systems, primarily urban, since these concentrate greater levels of exposure and sensitivity, but also of adaptive capacity. However, vulnerability advances along with the unplanned expansion of cities, which has occurred due to rapid global population growth, mostly urban. To avoid harmful consequences in the most populated areas, it is necessary to think of the city as an object of study, intervention and transformation. Constant learning in different areas of knowledge must be used in a systemic and inclusive way to ensure the best adaptation of human occupations to climate change. (Lemos, 2010b) In this context, entire cities began a major process of reconstruction, adaptation and resilience to prepare for the impacts of future extreme climate events – ONENYC (<https://climate.cityofnewyork.us/>).

Urban planning is capable of developing mitigation and adaptation strategies for cities by changing the focus from planning to respond to

climate change (and disasters) to preventative planning to increase the effectiveness of solutions. According to Lemos, the principles and priorities of planning for urban resilience involve several types of actions, initiated by diagnosis and the construction of scenarios. Planning must prioritize sustainable urban development, as well as human development, considering actions that contribute to inclusion, equity and poverty reduction. Emergency response action must occur, but anticipatory measures are a priority, forming part of a measurement and monitoring system to adjust planning. Thinking about and acting on reducing the vulnerability of the system in an integrated, or local, way (as long as it is within the context of planning on a larger scale), is more important than acting directly on environmental impacts or autonomous events, prioritizing actions that promote coping with a threat or reducing multiple vulnerability factors. Adaptation actions must increase the sustainability of the entire system and must be integrated into political, resource management and planning processes to be effective, generating commitment and results at different levels of society. (Lemos, 2010b)

Good resilient planning is more than building barriers (Malueg & Sorge, 2018). Instead of creating large and costly “gray” physical infrastructures for isolated and temporary coping, the most important thing is to build human, environmental and knowledge connections to enable the lasting sustainability and resilience of the system. The future of cities as habitable spaces brings challenges and new paradigms for sustainable development. The role of cities, architecture and modes of production in the current scenario is fundamental to achieving the goals of the main climate and sustainable development treaties. According to the UN-Habitat Planning Sustainable Cities report, the main challenges are related to demographic, environmental, economic and socio-spatial transformations, problems in the institutional structure of cities and the configuration of large multinucleated city-regions. The document also provides that the new urban areas will be built in an articulated manner, adjacent to or overlapping current cities. These will represent, if left untouched, more than 50% of the entire built environment. Based on this, it is important to adapt them to new purposes, making this a huge challenge. Urban design, planning and manage-

ment of new or existing areas must incorporate principles of sustainability and resilience as a mandatory goal. (UN-Habitat, 2009)

In isolation, sustainable architectural projects do not always contribute positively to the resilience of the system. It is necessary to analyze the various aspects of sustainability involved in a specific action, in a local context, to evaluate its impacts in accordance with resilience goals, considering the scope of results (mitigation, anticipation) and the components of vulnerability (exposure, sensitivity, capacity adaptive). Lemos (2010a), finds that the factors that most contribute to resilience are: combating poverty and physical security, followed by the elimination of physical segregation, an integrated approach between city and nature, diversity of life (biodiversity), recognition of territorial limits, accessibility and sustainable mobility, access to housing and psychological safety. The items combating poverty and physical security are extremely important as they are capable of individually acting on the capacity for anticipation (reducing the impact of negative results), reducing exposure and sensitivity as components of vulnerability, as well as increasing the adaptive capacity of the entire system. Therefore, although these items do not act directly on the mitigation of greenhouse gases, which cause climate change, they are capable of acting preventatively in disasters and changes to the biosphere.

A promising urban action or policy must take into account maximum levels of vulnerability reduction by reducing the system's exposure and sensitivity, as well as increasing its adaptive capacity. Anticipating results is essential, as it is not always possible to act directly on the source of problems – mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Resilience-oriented urban design faces several other challenges, including demographic, environmental, economic, socio-spatial, institutional challenges (UN-Habitat, 2009) and we can also mention the great challenge of time, since there is urgency in decision-making aiming to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and reduce their impact.

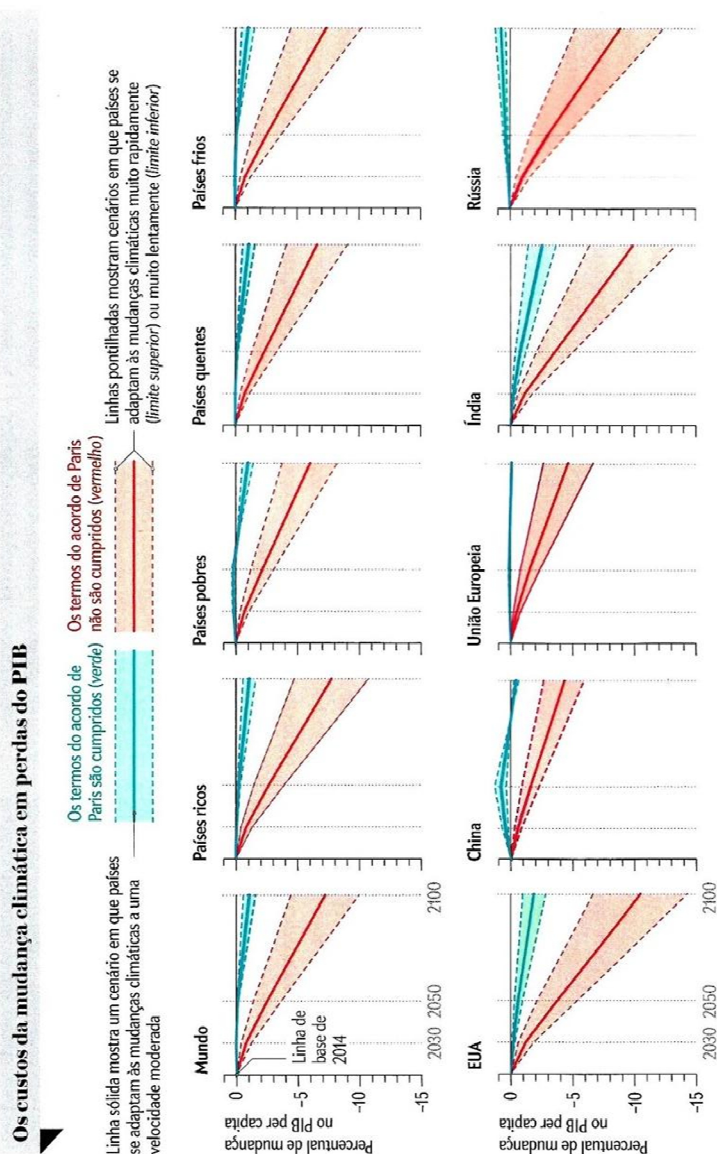
In the context of demographic challenges, it is important to promote diversity (social but also biological), and more inclusive communities, using activities on urban design to create a healthy environment. Urban design contributes to life quality reducing stress, improving perception of safety and comfort, creating interaction of inhabitants with the neighborhood, notion of belonging and community, and recognition of

symbolism through urban form. It is equally important to define and respect the spatial and ecological limits of the territory, possible population densities, and viable economic development, through the sustainable exploration of resources and energy potential, for the implementation or adaptation of human settlements with more balanced densities, including considering the cultural characteristics of each place.

To overcome environmental challenges, a model for sustainable cities was developed based on the tripod: (1) Buildings/energy – uses and production; (2) Movement/transport; (3) Shape/density (Thompson, 2019, p. 14). The “promotion of biodiversity” is capable of mitigating the emission of greenhouse gases, in addition to reducing the sensitivity of the system and functioning as an anticipatory measure. The “integrated approach between city and nature” also works to reduce exposure to vulnerability (Lemos, 2010b).

A study by the *NBER – National Bureau of Economic Research (USA)*, published in the magazine *Scientific American Brazil* December 2019 (Kahn et al., 2019), shows that “if greenhouse gas emissions increase following the current trajectory, global GDP will fall by around 7% by 2100” (Thompson, 2019, p. 14). This research, unlike previous research, also examined adaptation deviations depending on the current conditions of each society, considering the future costs of mitigation with technology and infrastructure. Still, the research authors project even greater drops in global GDP, as the climate extremes expected in the future were not considered (Thompson, 2019).

Figure 5: The Costs of Climate Change in GDP losses



Source: Scientific American Brazil, 2019, p. 14.

In view of this, preventative actions for systems resilience become increasingly necessary, including from an economic point of view. And it is precisely due to pressure from investors, and not from governments, that large polluting companies are aligning themselves with the goals of the 2015 Paris agreement⁶ to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and keep global temperature rises below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

“Ceres and Vigeo Eiris research found that nearly half of the 600 largest companies in the U.S. (43%) have extended board oversight to formally include sustainability, up from just 32% in 2018. However, integration of sustainability oversight into a board committee charter is only a starting point.” (Ceres, 2020, p. 24)

Organized society is capable not only of putting pressure on industry but also on governments to prepare to face and anticipate the direct impacts of global warming, educating more exposed or sensitive communities, as has been done in regions that have suffered major disasters, such as, for example, New York City. In places that have already experienced extreme events, it is easier to adopt a precautionary principle, as society understands the need for anticipatory measures. However, there is always a political cost of preventive actions (often due to the need to remove people or reallocate funds from sectors with greater visibility or immediate results) without predictability of the phenomena. The maturity of the community and its involvement with

⁶ Paris 2015 – “Paris Agreement: The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted on December 2015 in Paris, France, at the 21st session of the Conference on the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC. The agreement, adopted by 196 Parties to the UNFCCC, entered into force on 4 November 2016 and as of May 2018 had 195 Signatories and was ratified by 177 Parties. One of the goals of the Paris agreement is ‘Holding the increase of the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels’, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risk and impacts of climate change. Additionally, the Agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. The Paris agreement is intended to become fully effective in 2020.” (IPCC, 2018)

relevant issues is also important for the actions of public authorities. This participation by various sectors of civil society in management and decision-making, where previously only governments acted, highlights the emergence of a new model of collaborative and multi-scale governance oriented to the globalized context, but focused on local actions. However, due to the segmentation of society, socio-spatial segregation and other barriers, few participatory governance actions are observed in countries and places with higher poverty rates, mainly in the Global South. Hence the need for education and dissemination and exchange of information between universities, companies, governments and communities, applying the Quadruple Helix concept. The concept of innovation, initially conceived by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff in the 1990s, with the publication of “The Triple Helix, University-Industry-Government Relations: A laboratory for Knowledge-Based Economic Development” was updated and community was included as the fourth element.

3. *UN Global Compact*

Seeking to reduce social barriers, align sustainable development goals and to try to stabilize the effects of climate change on the planet, on September 25, 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations – UN formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development composed of the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs, aiming to eradicate hunger and poverty, promote sustainable agriculture, health, education and gender equality, in addition to guaranteeing access to water, sanitation and sustainable energy for all, the economic growth, employment, industrialization, sustainable cities and the reduction of inequality. The 2030 Agenda, whose document is called “Transforming our world”, is made up of seventeen objectives and 169 targets for developed and developing countries. SDG11 (2030 Agenda Platform) on “Sustainable Cities and Communities” has ten specific goals and aims to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and is directly related to architectural projects, urban planning and its management, interacting with all other SDGs due to

the high degree of urbanization on the planet.⁷ (UN General Assembly, 2015)

Urban design and architecture (mainly institutional), which until the 1970s, under modernist influence, was rigid, sectoral and standardized, without taking into account local specificities, usually called a *masterplan*, needed to adapt to climate change and new demands from society, becoming strategic planning focused on local actions, but aligned with regional or global guidelines, such as the 2030 Agenda.

Architectural and urban planning for resilience must foresee hybrid solutions with gray, green, blue and lively structures, promoting diversity of use and activities, with options for adaptation depending on the expected scenarios and local autonomy, allowing each urban nucleus to have complete resource management, creating a circular metabolism (Rogers & Gumuchdjan, 2001). Due to uncertainties, buildings for a resilient future must include redundant solutions so that the metabolic cycle of cities with their populations, structures and non-measurable knowledge such as culture and heritage suffer as little as possible from the effects of climate change. To reduce long-term vulnerability, it is necessary to adapt economic, cultural, social and environmental systems to possible and unexpected climate impacts (Smit et al., 2001).

Climate change can become a source of opportunities to redirect production and consumption patterns for society and its individuals. The Covid-19 pandemic was a great test for humanity.

⁷ “Significantly transforming the construction and management of urban spaces is essential for sustainable development to be achieved. Topics intrinsically related to urbanization, such as mobility, solid waste management and sanitation, are included in the SDG 11 goals, as well as planning and increasing the resilience of human settlements, taking into account the different needs of rural, peri-urban and urban areas. Objective 11 is aligned with the New Urban Agenda, agreed in October 2016, during the III United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.” (Agenda 2030 Platform)

4. *Changes in the Work Environment Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic*

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the world and the population had a greater awareness of the integration of ambivalent issues in our lives. Health, food, production, transport, energy, etc. were impacted, but mostly the context of work, accelerating the adoption of new technologies and practices that have permanently transformed the workplace. The need for social distancing has driven large-scale remote working, drastically altering traditional work dynamics. Teleworking or working from home has become a reality for millions of people, with companies adapting their infrastructures and policies to accommodate this new form of working.

The advantages of remote working, such as flexible working hours and saving time and money on travel, have been widely recognized (Soga et al., 2024). However, they also highlighted challenges such as social isolation, difficulty maintaining focus and productivity, and ergonomics problems.

With the gradual return of employees to work environments, the hybrid model, which combines remote and in-person or on-site work, emerged as a solution to reconcile the benefits of remote working with the need for social interaction and in-person collaboration. This model offers greater flexibility to employees and allows companies to optimize the use of their physical spaces. However, hybrid work requires adaptation on the part of companies and employees, as well as investments in technology and infrastructure to ensure effective communication between remote and in-person teams (Hilberath et al., 2020).

These needs drove changes in aspects linked to organizational culture, demanding from institutions greater adaptability, flexibility, and focus on the mental health and well-being of their employees. Transparent and effective communication has become crucial to maintaining team engagement and productivity (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021). The central role of organizational culture has been seen in supporting the appreciation of autonomy, virtual collaboration, and the ability to deal with change, promoting training and education to adapt to new certifications, legislation, socio-environmental requirements, and market innovations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations implemented measures to ensure occupational health and safety in the face-to-face environment, such as social distancing, use of masks and constant washing of hands and cleaning of common spaces. Employee mental health has also attracted more attention, with companies offering psychological support programs and promoting a healthier work environment. This context favored the improvement and expansion of practices that value health in a broader context than occupational safety (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic varied according to the economic segment. Sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology, as a rule, have quickly adapted to remote working and digitalization (Chandra et al., 2022; Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021; Horgan, 2020). Other sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and events were hit hard by social restriction measures. As for the civil construction sector per se, there were profound and complex impacts, with effects that extended throughout the pandemic and are still being felt in the post-pandemic scenario. During COVID-19, Brazil and the world, in general, these sectors were severely affected by the drop in demand as a direct consequence of social isolation and the respective health restriction measures, which reduced the pace of new projects and investments in the sector.

Economic uncertainty and the decline in consumption influenced the purchase of properties and works and renovations, while works in progress were halted to ensure the safety of workers and prevent the spread of the virus. An increase in costs in the sector was observed, due to difficulties in logistics and the supply chain, a fact that ended up making materials and inputs linked to civil construction more expensive. Added to this is the consequent effect of global economic dynamism, which resulted in exchange rate devaluation and inflation, also reflecting access to credit and increased interest rates. World governments, in general, acted with heterodox countercyclical mechanisms, in support of the sector, aiming to mitigate the negative impacts observed (Khambule, 2022; Roco et al., 2021; Costa et al., 2021).

However, countries around the world experienced the impact of COVID-19 in different ways. In the case of civil construction in Brazil, despite having proven to be extremely relevant given the shortage and

urgency in the construction of field hospitals, the adaptation of existing hospitals, and the delivery of hospital beds (Pereira & De Azevedo, 2020), the sector as a whole was affected during Covid-19. Pereira and De Azevedo point out that the civil construction sector is fundamental for the country, which in addition to meeting these needs, is one of the sectors that employs the most people and has historically boosted the economy. They argue that, despite being a sector that still operates in an archaic way in Brazil, the sector saw the need to seek management mechanisms to overcome the crisis and guarantee greater stability. Thus, because civil construction supported the adaptation and renovation of hospitals, infrastructure, and other emergency works of collective interest during the pandemic, the federal government ended up declaring the sector's activities essential, minimizing losses. (Colares et al., 2021).

Furthermore, in Brazil and around the world, it was seen that, after the harshest phase of social isolation, credit lines were launched with subsidized interest rates supporting incentive programs for the construction of popular housing, and measures to support job maintenance under new formats. Since 2021, when coexistence, in general, could be re-established with the reopening of the economy, the beginning of the recovery of the sector was observed, which started to register a gradual increase in demand for new projects and renovations. Governments such as Brazil's began to stimulate real estate financing and renovations to meet repressed demand and boost the sector as an important vector for resuming economic growth. The fall in the Brazilian interest rate (Selic rate) facilitated access to credit and boosted the construction sector (Perussi, 2021). However, authors such as Refkalefsky (2021) attribute other factors that, in addition, contributed to the growth of the construction sector, citing the fact that the pandemic and remote working reconfigured the concept of home, increasing the demand for comfort, convenience, and home office spaces, not only in Brazil but all over the world.

The post-pandemic global scenario was initially greatly affected by the increase in the cost of construction materials in general, by the continued uncertainty of the global economic scenario, even aggravated by global geopolitical armed conflicts, and by a shortage of qualified labor. Research carried out by the company Manpower Group indicated

that the global average shortage of qualified labor is 75%, while the Brazilian average is 80% (Manpower Group, 2024).

We can point out that, in general, the pandemic made adaptations in the physical context of work environments necessary, both to accommodate the different phases of social isolation and to respond to the boost of trends that were already being observed (Bailey & Kurland, 1999). Open spaces with natural ventilation and lighting were prioritized, favoring passive technologies that reduce costs and increase energy efficiency. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the transformation of workspaces. The future of work will be characterized by flexibility, the use of technologies, and the appreciation of the health and well-being of employees. However, other phenomena that afflict humanity impose themselves on the ways of living and coexisting with people and nature and affect residential, work, and urban spaces, among which climate change, discussed in the next session, deserves attention.

5. Climate Change and its Effects on Sustainable Architecture

In August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the main UN body for climate science, released a worrying report. Written by hundreds of scientists, the 3,500-page document warns of global warming of 1.2°C and the likelihood of exceeding 1.5°C in the next two decades. (IPCC, 2021) The consequences range from rising sea levels, water shortages, droughts, fires, storms, and other extreme weather events; These themes affect the way we build our homes, workspaces, urban environments, etc. Engels (1979), in the 19th century, already predicted “nature’s revenge” as a result of our predatory relationship with the environment. The IPCC report confirms this prediction. The Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), António Guterres, called the document “a code red for humanity”. It is a warning about the fate of the planet if we continue with “business as usual”, without profound changes to the status quo and the hegemonic mode of production. The conclusions of the IPCC report are devastating, especially when considering the existence of planetary boundaries that should not be exceeded.

In 2009, a study by the Stockholm Resilience Center led by Johan Rockstrom (2009) defined nine planetary boundaries: (1) climate change, (2) ocean acidification, (3) chemical pollution, (4) change in land use, (5) changes in water use, (6) biogeochemical fluxes (nitrogen and phosphorus), (7) loss of biodiversity, (8) aerosols in the atmosphere and (9) degradation of the ozone layer. These borders represent the resilience of planet Earth. For humanity to continue operating safely, they must not be exceeded. However, the study already warned that, in 2009, three of them had already been crossed: climate change, loss of biodiversity, and biogeochemical flows. In 2015, an update to the study proved the breaching of a fourth one: land use change. And, in 2022, the Stockholm School identified that two more frontiers had been crossed: i.e. Chemical pollution by “new entities”; ii. Green water, as a sub-frontier within changes in water use.

Furthermore, the effects of climate change place the Amazon region, which has its largest extension in the territory of Brazil, as one of the most relevant biomes whose biodiversity is considered the largest on the planet, even though only 15% have been cataloged so far. The central concern is that the Amazon, together with phytoplankton in the oceans, is responsible for releasing most of the free oxygen into the atmosphere. The Amazon Forest contains between 100 and 120 billion tons of carbon in its biomass. If forest devastation reaches 20% of its extent (currently around 15%), there is no possibility of achieving the objectives defined in the Paris Agreement (Lapola et al., 2023; Icaza-Alvarez et al., 2023). The situation is worrying and indicates that humanity is putting pressure on the planet beyond its ability to adapt. The consequences can be serious and long-lasting, including extreme weather events, scarcity of resources, and a loss of biodiversity.

Therefore, measures must be taken to avoid worsening the impacts of climate change and to protect the planet’s resilience, in which context innovation has a special role, taking due care regarding the limitations of its effects, especially when there is a lack of diversity in the processes of design, implementation and evaluation of ongoing solutions.

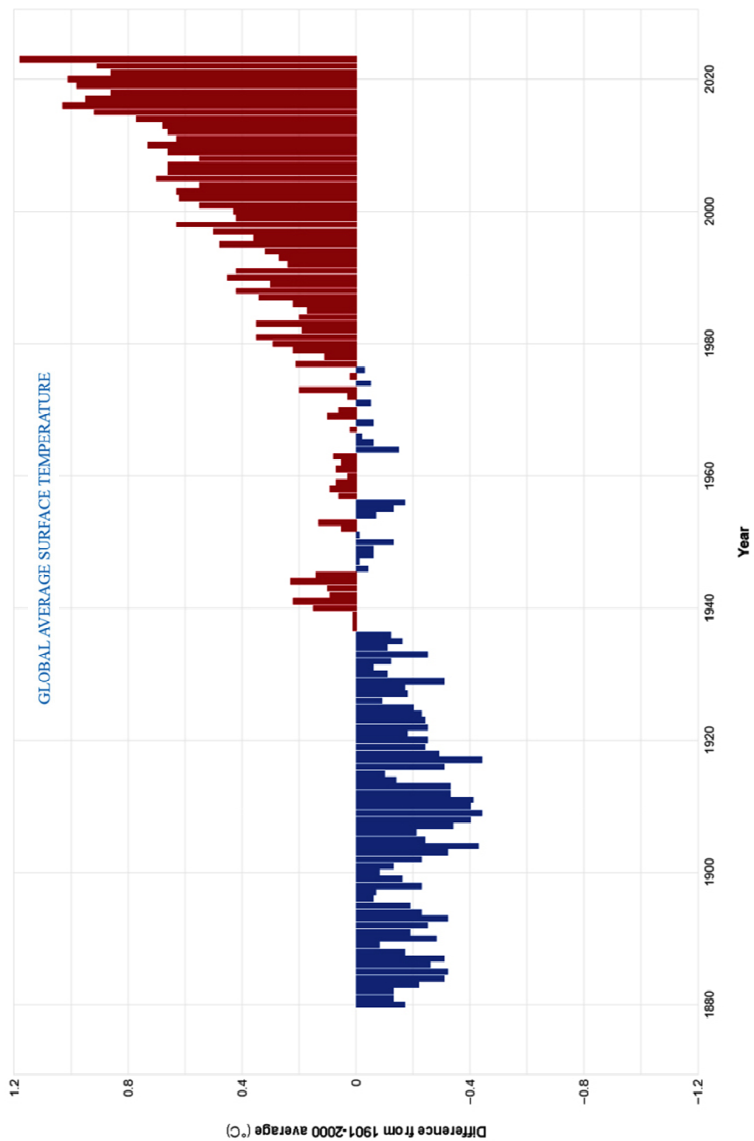
The construction industry plays a significant role in the global economy, its impact on the environment is also massive. According to the 2024 “Construction Global Market Report”, the worldwide con-

struction market achieved a valuation of \$14,390.8 billion in 2022, representing 14.4% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). And the perspective isn't good: according to the latest construction industry forecast, the market is anticipated to have a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 5.8% from 2022 to 2032. Several factors are projected to propel construction industry demand, including public infrastructure and escalation of industrialization pressured by population growth and consumption, mainly in developing nations. (The Business Research Company, 2024)

The segment of building construction constituted the largest share of the construction industry, accounting for 48.1% of the entire construction market in 2022. Together, building operations and construction now account for nearly 40% of global energy-related CO₂ emissions (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). The use of coal, oil, and natural gas for heating, lighting, and cooking fueled a rise in emissions from the operation of buildings to about 10 gigatons in 2019, including direct emissions and indirect emissions from power generation, according to the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, Global ABC from the UNEP report: Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction: Towards a Zero-emission, Efficient and Resilient Buildings and Construction Sector. The growth of the construction industry amplifies the causes of global warming, which reached its highest temperature in 2023: 1.18 °C above the 20th-century average of 13.9 °C, based on data provided by NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, as seen in Figure 6.

That's why it's extremely urgent to have sustainable architecture not only for new constructions but also as adaptation for existing buildings. Humanity is living in a critical period on earth (Anthropocene) and it will only survive if we make big innovations to transform the way we live and work.

Figure 6: Climate Change – Global Temperature



Source: Lindsey & Dahlman, 2024.

6. *The Role of Innovation in Sustainable Architecture*

From adverse contexts, innovation emerges incrementally or radically, modifying products, processes, and organizations in relation to previous contexts. Innovation is not just about having a creative idea or inventing something new. It comes to fruition when this idea is materialized and disseminated in society, impacting the market and the economy. The diffusion of innovation is essential for it to be successful, and this requires a well-defined strategy that considers factors such as quality, price, accessibility and benefits for consumers and suppliers (Mello, 2021). Thus, without dissemination, innovation has no impact on society. The minimum requirement for a change in the company's products or functions to be considered an innovation is that it be new (or significantly improved) for the company (OECD, 2005, p. 24). This theme is illustrated in the film "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" (Ejiofor, 2019). Based on real events from the life of the author of the book by William Kamkwamba the film offers a rich illustration of how innovation and entrepreneurship can emerge in adverse and challenging contexts. The young man from Malawi builds a windmill to save his community from hunger, highlighting the human capacity to find creative solutions, through the appropriation of innovations already disseminated throughout society, to urgent problems.

Innovation manifests itself to different degrees and can be disruptive or incremental. Disruption completely changes a pre-existing paradigm, introducing something new to the market. Incremental improvements improve an existing product or service (Mello, 2021). Another relevant perspective linked to studies on innovation concerns the profiles of creators, inventors and entrepreneurs who lead innovation processes in their fields. In this context, we highlight social entrepreneurs who, as a rule, welcome people whose profiles are notably altruistic (which does not mean that they give up remuneration for entrepreneurial activity), focused on results that aim to improve the quality of life of populations, territories and disadvantaged economic segments. This definition includes professionals and different fields of knowledge such as architects, engineers, designers and builders. The story of Pritzker, an international award equivalent to the Oscar for architecture, created in 1979, illustrates how innovation is relevant to

the process of constant improvement. In 2022, the first black person to win it was a 57-year-old African. Born in a small village in Burkina Faso, Diébédó Francis Kéré studied at the Technical University of Berlin, Germany, and has lived in the city since 1985, where he established the Kéré Foundation and his own office. He is recognized for creating innovative works that are often sustainable and collaborative in nature, notably housing, schools and health centers in contexts of extreme scarcity of resources in Africa.

As observed in the creations of Diébédó Francis Kéré, it is very common for innovation to arise from the resolution of complex problems, which is why the theme integrates academic curricula from different areas of knowledge, such as engineering, design, architecture, economics, etc. This is the renowned case that brought together architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart, expressed in the 2002 work, entitled “Cradle to cradle: remaking the way we make things”, which expresses the integration between design and science that provides lasting benefits to society from safe materials, water and energy in circular economies and eliminating the concept of waste in a paradigmatic way for researchers who followed them. They innovated by presenting society with the idea that everything is a resource for something else, that what is “waste” in one system can be understood as food for another system. Thus, everything can be designed to be dismantled and returned safely to the soil as biological nutrients or reused as high-quality materials for new products. It’s not only about a new way of production but also a new way of consumption attempting to meet societal and environmental needs.

Edward Freeman’s theoretical framework and his stakeholder theory emerged in the 1980s. The idea began to gain strength that, in addition to shareholders and executives, companies should also be concerned about other interested parties/stakeholders, such as workers and the local communities in which they operate. From this thesis, the practice of corporate social responsibility emerged in the 1990s, and, at the turn of the 21st century, especially with the issue of climate change becoming more acute, the environmental agenda was incorporated, and, in 2004, the acronym ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) consolidated this triad as a model for the sustainable management of profit-making companies.

Innovative solutions also require resources (money and people) to be implemented. As being confronted with global warming needs urgent action, the connection between universities, industry/companies, governments/public sector and civil society/communities is needed to dynamize solutions. This is the concept of the Quadruple Helix model of innovation. First adopted as a Triple Helix without the society element, it now has an environmental extrapolation as Quintuple Helix. (Carayannis et al., 2012) This integration makes possible an ecosystem for “shared value creation”, a business concept first introduced in a 2006 Harvard Business Review article, *Strategy & Society: The Link between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility*. (Kramer & Porter, 2006). Relational Economics, a 2020 book by Prof. Wieland emphasizes the need for shared value creation such as environmental, governance, social, economic, cultural and innovative values, focusing on the “question of how relational norms – like moral values; integrity; conformity with legal regulations, human rights and social standards; and the sustainable use of natural resources – can be reintegrated into the economic theory of governance.” (Wieland, 2020, V)

The theme addressed in this article cannot fail to recognize the non-neutrality of science, technology and innovation per se, making it necessary to incorporate diversity in all stages of innovation development to combat biased processes (Spatti et al., 2021) since it is understood that it does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a specific social and political context whose investigative choices, decisions on investments and priorities are influenced by values, ideologies and relations of power and oppression existing in society.

The addition of creating shared value to the building ecosystem (laws, projects, construction, and maintenance) is as urgent as the growth sector impact seen before. Societal pressure to include environmental needs in the composition of shared value is the great challenge to quickly improve innovation so as to make the building supply chain for sustainable architecture profitable, cheaper, and accessible for all. This turning point will change the way we live and work on the planet.

Figure 7: Shared Value

Source: Shared Value Initiative Hong Kong, 2024.

7. Architectural Adaptations to Accompany the Future of Work: Ongoing Trends and Innovations

The future of work is intrinsically linked to sustainability. Architecture, as a fundamental element in creating work environments, plays a crucial role in building a greener, more resilient, and prosperous future. It needs to adapt to create spaces and buildings that not only benefit the environment but also boost employee productivity, creativity, and well-being.

Addressing the theme of sustainability linked to architecture requires acting under the logic of complexity that involves a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and holistic vision, encompassing several

interconnected variables to compose a sustainable and efficient architecture within local socio-environmental parameters. This means that the same organization will have different implantations depending on the region in which it is located.

Sustainable architecture is not just a trend, but a necessity imposed by the market itself through the search for certifications and differentiation to attract investment. The costs of implementing sustainable solutions can be offset by long-term benefits, such as resource savings and increased productivity. For a sustainable building to function and generate results, a collaboration between architects, engineers, sustainability specialists and the employees themselves, who will be the end users, is necessary. New project technologies stand out and guarantee greater assertiveness in all phases of the project, from design to maintenance (Tortorella et al., 2021).

To integrate all information, the BIM (Building Information Modeling) methodology is increasingly being used, as part of a digital transformation process that places information management throughout the entire life cycle of an asset.

BIM involves various software, tools, technologies and contracts for generating and managing digital representations of the physical and functional characteristics of buildings. It is different from the traditional 2D drawing, which is a planned representation of what will be built. BIM modeling works with 3D models that are easier to match between project specialties and more faithful to the final product. BIM digital files can be extracted, exchanged or networked to support decision-making in relation to a built asset, allowing greater collaboration and productivity between teams, from design to maintenance, as it also contains information on costs, schedule, useful life etc. Thus, it is possible to estimate the value that the construction will have at any stage during the project and, in the future, evaluate the efficiency of the equipment, annual expenses for replacing parts, services and maintenance in general (Corseuil, 2023).

Along the same lines, we have seen smart territories embrace BIM and automation innovations linked to the concept of “digital twin” in which the digital model assumes the function of design specification for construction processes, “incorporating data on the behavior of assembled physical artifacts and built for better monitoring and analysis

focused on the operation and maintenance cycle” (Corseuil, 2023, p. 18).

This new look at the building enables the use of intelligent technologies for greater efficiency, such as sensors and automated systems that optimize the use of lighting, water and energy resources, adjusting to needs in real time. As an example, we have the use of natural ventilation and bio climatization strategies that optimize thermal comfort, reducing dependence on air conditioning. All these practices reduce carbon emissions. With a sustainable architectural project, linked to new technologies, it is possible to adapt and prioritize air quality, acoustics and natural lighting to guarantee a healthy and comfortable environment for employees, increasing energy efficiency (Arif et al., 2016).

The presence of natural elements such as plants, vertical gardens and natural light contributes to the well-being of employees, reducing stress and increasing productivity. Relaxation areas integrated into nature contribute to the mental and physical well-being of workers. There are companies that promote the cultivation of organic gardens and vegetable gardens as a means of relaxing employees, environmental education, encouraging healthy eating and living outdoors (Sadick & Kamardeen, 2020).

In the working areas, modular and multifunctional environments that adjust to the dynamic needs of work allow for different configurations: offices, collaboration areas, rest and socialization spaces. The use of versatile and flexible furniture makes it easier to adapt the space for different activities, from formal to more creative. In construction and furniture, recycled, renewable and low environmental impact materials are increasingly used. The implementation of practices that minimize the waste of materials and resources during the construction and operation of the space favors the circular economy with reuse and recycling of materials (Ghisellini, 2018).

In addition to the direct environmental and economic benefits generated by sustainable practices, companies today also need to show responsibility and commitment to the market they operate in, their consumers, suppliers, employees and investors. This concerns the integration of the generation of economic value combined with a concern for environmental, social and corporate governance issues. To summa-

rize, the acronym ESG – Environmental, Social and Governance – is used: a trend today and a necessary response from companies to society's challenges (Taliento & Netti, 2020).

To meet this demand, companies are seeking greater connection with the surrounding community, favoring local engagement in ESG practices that seek to interact with all stakeholders, creating a positive socio-environmental impact.

Therefore, workspaces that integrate with the city are increasingly common, offering public access to green areas, cafes or events. This creates an interaction between the company and the local community, generating a more socially vibrant and sustainable environment, motivating greater circulation and diversification of people at various times and days of the week, bringing greater security and vitality to the region (Schmidt & Brinks, 2017).

These characteristics are in line with the results of “benchmarking” studies (Munroe & Westwind, 2008; Munroe, 2012) and, in Munroe's works on the ecology of innovation in territories that have become a reference in economic dynamism based on science and technology and attractors of creative professionals in a virtuous logic of sectoral and territorial development.

In this way, the building or work environment is no longer seen in isolation as a single construction. For the architecture of a building, be it a factory, a building that houses offices, a university, commerce or mixed use with residences, to be considered sustainable, it must be integrated with its surroundings. The entire life cycle of the building, from construction to use and subsequent renovations or demolitions must be considered from the project design stage, considering that the space and the community around it are dynamic and need to be constantly evaluated (Francis & Thomas, 2022).

An iconic example is the CopenHill power plant in Copenhagen⁸, Denmark. The plant is in an industrial area, which is being revitalized with green, cultural and sports areas, very close to the port. The project occupies an area of 41 thousand square meters (between the plant and the maneuvering area for trucks that bring the city's garbage to

⁸ This installation was visited by Erika Laursen as part of the Zeppelin University research trip in 2023.

supply the system). This is one of the actions that contributes to Copenhagen achieving the objective of becoming the first carbon neutral city in the world by 2025. In 2023, the city hosted the International Architecture Congress (UIA), as it is a reference in sustainability (Damsø et al., 2017).

Officially called Amager Bakke⁹, the plant has the latest technologies in waste treatment and energy production, converting 440 thousand tons of waste into electricity and heating for 150 thousand homes annually, without polluting the environment. The project focuses attention on sustainability and its great “showcase” is the mixed use of the same space that provides leisure with a ski slope and climbing wall for adults and children on the facade and, on the roof, a restaurant and an incredible view of the entire city – which does not have mountains that provide the same panorama. For all these reasons, the construction has become a sight in its own right for residents and tourists. When you take the elevator up to the roof, you can see the inside of the plant and hear an explanation of how it works. On the ground floor, there is a reception with access to the plant’s offices and industrial facilities. The project is criticized because of its size, creating the demand of importing garbage from other countries to keep the plant working. Some say that it would be better to recycle or landfill than to burn, although there are no trade-offs like residual polluted smoke, only steam. The country needs to generate heating for homes and the plant meets the needs of 5 municipalities in greater Copenhagen. The country’s population is very small and, certainly, if it were in another more populous country, it would not have idle capacity. There is another older plant of the same type, which will be replaced. Certainly, the project previews future demand. In any case, it is an iconic construction and draws attention to the issue of sustainability. The project is from the controversial architectural Danish office BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group¹⁰, synonymous with sustainable and futuristic projects around the world.

The Danish concept of architecture, urbanism and sustainability, since Jan Gehl (Gehl, 2013), conveys the idea that a sustainable city

⁹ <https://www.copenhill.dk/en/>

¹⁰ <https://big.dk/projects/copenhill-2391>

should not only be good for the environment, but also for its residents, humanizing spaces with areas for leisure and social activity. Although new sustainable constructions and infrastructure are in progress all over the country, society is very concerned to keep historical areas and traditional ways of construction, maintaining the country's cultural identity. The high educational and economic level of citizens improves the demand for high-quality design and materials for the buildings, integrated to landscape and environmental leisure and use. Denmark's sustainable agenda is a great example of Quintuple Innovation Helix, created by a shared value demand. Innovative environmental and social technologies, like wind power and cycling culture spread all over the world, is huge capital for the new millennium.

Even though there are mistakes, successes and constant monitoring of results from investments in sustainability all over the world, like a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) method¹¹ from Edwards Deming, it is important to highlight that investment in expanding adaptive capacity is the most consistent form of preventive adaptation of urban systems in the face of natural risks and climate change. As, considering the scenario of climate uncertainty that city planning and management needs to deal with, the only investment in reducing vulnerability that has a certain return – not only for the resilience of systems, but also for sustainability and human development in general – is what is done on the adaptive capacity of the system, that is, in expanding the conditions of groups of organization and appropriation of instruments and resources for reaction and recovery from incident impacts. This investment in expanding adaptive capacity means universalization of education and access to information, reinforcement of community ties and dialogue with management institutions, social participation in the decision-making processes of urban planning and management, social inclusion and justice in access to the city, reinforcement of the capacity

¹¹ PDCA Methodology – “PDCA is a quality management system that is used as a continuous improvement tool that is widely used in the service and manufacturing sectors. PDCA activities consist of four steps namely Plan, Do, Check, and Act with repeated stages forming like a circle. PDCA is a continuous improvement tool that is widely used in the services and manufacturing sector.” (Isniah et al., 2020, p. 1)

for self-organization, self-management and autonomy of communities to deal with unforeseen local situations, among others. (Lemos, 2010a)

8. *Architectural Dilemma Linked to the Construction of New Buildings to the Detriment of Adapting Existing Buildings*

The construction industry is one of the biggest polluters in the world. The entire production chain, from the manufacture of inputs to the disposal of waste and demolition of buildings, is highly polluting. Some of the main problems caused by the construction industry include consumption of natural resources, generation of waste, emission of greenhouse gases, water pollution, among others.

Construction is responsible for massive consumption of natural resources, such as water, sand, wood and minerals. The extraction of these resources can lead to the depletion of natural reserves, soil degradation and water pollution.

Civil construction generates a large amount of waste, such as debris, leftover materials and packaging. If this waste is not managed properly, it can pollute soil and waterways. Factories, construction works and demolition can generate air pollution through the emission of dust, gases and fine particles. This pollution can cause respiratory problems and other illnesses. Water pollution occurs through the release of effluents and sediments into waterways. This pollution can harm aquatic life and make the water unfit for human consumption.

In any case, it is important to remember that the production of cement, one of the most used materials in civil construction, is responsible for the emission of large quantities of greenhouse gases, such as CO₂. These gases contribute to global warming and climate change. Furthermore, the transport of materials, from the areas where they are produced to the construction site, generates a huge carbon footprint. Often, raw materials are extracted on one continent, taken for processing on another and then transported to a third continent for use in construction. In an attempt to reduce this footprint, the use of local materials tries to reduce the final cost of the work and generate income for the surrounding community.

The industry has been seeking to minimize the problem through the development of new materials or the use of new construction technologies to improve the performance of materials used, such as wood, bamboo and plastic recycling, etc. In constant evolution, civil construction is seeking more efficient, sustainable and innovative solutions. New technologies and materials emerge as a response to this need, transforming not only the way we design, build and manage buildings, but also the way we work and live. Examples of this are:

Table 1

Eco-friendly and sustainable materials	Ecological bricks made with local materials such as earth, construction waste, plastics, clothing and other recycled materials, in addition to organic ones, reduce CO2 emissions and water consumption. For the mortar, green concrete replaces part of the cement with recycled materials, such as blast furnace slag and coal ash, reducing the environmental footprint. Wood is also notable for storing a large amount of carbon. But now it is modified and processed to resist moisture, termites and insects, offering greater durability. Reforestation wood is a good option for using timber in civil construction. Paints in general are very polluting, but there is a new generation seeking to reduce the problem. These are photocatalytic paints that purify the air and reduce pollution, using sunlight to degrade volatile organic compounds. (Petrović et al., 2017)
3D printing in construction	The process also allows the creation of complex and personalized structures, reducing material waste and construction time. It enables the construction of houses and buildings with innovative and optimized shapes, using materials such as concrete, plastic and even biomaterials. In places with difficult access to materials and specialized labor, constructions with 3D printing using local materials, reduce the carbon footprint in preserved areas, for example, which involve and are associated with the BIM and “digital twin” processes already mentioned. (Dixit, 2019)

Virtual, mixed and augmented reality	Tools that allow immersive visualization of the project in 3D, facilitating the identification of problems and decision making. They assist in planning and monitoring the work, training professionals and communicating with clients. (Delgado et al., 2020)
Artificial intelligence and automation	Autonomous robots perform repetitive and dangerous tasks, increasing construction safety and efficiency. Intelligent algorithms optimize project planning and execution, predicting costs and deadlines with greater accuracy. (Debrah et al., 2022)
Internet of Things (IoT)	They integrate automation systems and other information from the BIM methodology, optimizing energy and resource consumption. Sensors monitor the conditions of the structure and other systems in real time, allowing early detection of problems and carrying out predictive maintenance. (Oke & Arowoiya, 2021)
Modular construction	It allows the production of prefabricated modules in large scale, reducing construction time and the final cost of construction. Facilitates the customization of buildings and the reuse of materials, promoting sustainability. (Lawson & Ogden, 2010)
Biomaterials	Materials of natural origin, such as wood, bamboo and mycelium, offer sustainable solutions with unique properties. They have high resistance, insulating properties and low environmental impact, contributing to the well-being of users. (Campisi et al., 2020).
Nanotechnology	Applied in the construction of materials with advanced properties, such as greater resistance, impermeability and self-cleaning. It allows the development of intelligent materials that adapt to climatic conditions and user needs. (Sev & Ezel, 2014).

Source: Own table.

In any case, new technologies and materials for civil construction represent an opportunity to transform the sector into a more sustainable, efficient and safe model. The adoption of these innovations will contribute to the construction of a greener and smarter future, with buildings that provide greater comfort, quality of life and well-being for society (Patil et al., 2022) However, on many occasions, retrofitting existing buildings is more interesting than building a new unit. This is because the pre-existing urban infrastructure weighs heavily on the cost of the work and integration of the company with the community,

favoring transportation for employees and other benefits such as energy, telecommunications, water and sewage networks, etc. Creating a different use or new occupation for an abandoned building or region of the city can revitalize the entire surrounding area, bringing much greater urban benefits than the simple construction of a new building. In addition to the reuse of all existing material that would otherwise be demolished or discarded, there is a reduction in the production of new inputs, drastically reducing the building's carbon footprint.

It is important to carry out a thorough analysis of the costs and benefits of both options before deciding whether to construct a new building or adapt an existing one. The analysis must consider the factors mentioned above, as well as the specific needs of each project, region and company. The answer to the question depends on several factors, such as the age and condition of the existing building, the most efficient technologies to be implemented and the specific sustainability goals of the project. One of the good cases of urban revitalization around the world are port areas in the center of cities (Giovinazzi & Moretti, 2009). It brings socio-environmental benefits to the entire city beyond the specific issue of constructed or renovated buildings, as it generates a new economic flow for the region, including government incentives for these investments (Monteiro & de Lázaro d'Ávila Garcia, 2023).

Renovations of existing buildings, with or without changes in use, are used for 50% of projects in Europe (Baek & Park, 2012). There are many examples that were visited during the authors' research trip to Berlin. Having been the scene of successive political disputes and wars, the city is a great laboratory where old, new and various historical moments often become confused (Goebel, 2003). Perhaps the most emblematic of these "retrofit" examples is the striking German Parliament building, the Reichstag, whose dome is a constant presence on the Berlin landscape. A historical and tourist landmark, the palace was the scene of tragedies and successive reconstructions. The construction, which began in 1884, had its current version designed by the English architect Norman Foster, with the main attraction being the new dome, open to free public visits. The idea of past and future are integrated into the project, which was commissioned to house the Parliament of a unified Germany. (Barnstone, 2004). Often, the symbol-

ism of a construction imposes itself on the complexities of the project and its maintenance is affirmative in the socio-cultural context of the urban fabric.

9. Aim for Positive Socio-Environmental Impact – Organizations and Other Initiatives

Alternative economic models, such as *The Impact Revolution* (2020), by Sir Ronald Cohen, the *Donut Economy* (2017) by Kate Raworth, *Regenerative Economy* by Herman Daly, *Stakeholder Economy* by Edward Freeman, *Shared Value Economy* by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer (2011), *Francesco Economy* (2019) and the encyclical letter *LAUDATO SI'* (On care of our common home, 2015) by Pope Francis and others, propose solutions to reconcile economic development with socio-environmental responsibility.

This focus is also supported by innovation, not only scientific-technological innovation, but especially its social facet, social innovation, which often has the community as the protagonist and whose social actors are central to the process. Knowledge originates in the community environment and information is shared and actions are collaborative. The strategies seek to replace competition with collaboration. When global to local exchanges are built in contexts of diversity, those practices generate powerful transcultural value creation (Bauermann Montecinos, 2022)

The “impact economy”, for example, seeks to direct investments to organizations and projects that generate a positive impact on society. It is in this context that hybrid organizations focused on socio-environmental impact are located. They can be defined by imperatives that suggest an alternative productive rationality. This alternative differentiates itself by considering the environmental and social dimensions not as costs to be managed or restrictions to growth, but as essential elements for its success. To understand this new rationality, we can analyze the evolution of previous practices, such as the “triple bottom line”, as conceived by Elkington (2001, 2018), when proposing that companies adopt practices that consider, in addition to profit, social and environmental responsibility.

Since its creation, the sustainability tripod has been adopted by hundreds of companies, including publicly listed companies. However, “impact-driven” organizations go beyond the sustainability tripod, as they not only consider the environmental and social dimensions but place them at the center of their business model. In Brazil and around the world, such organizations are associated with a rich polysemy of definitions, such as social businesses (Yunus, 2021), social companies, B companies, 2.5 companies, base of the pyramid companies, inclusive businesses, impact businesses positive socio-environmental (Mello, 2018; Mello, 2023; Barki et al., 2019), companies that generate social value, among others.

In this context, it is argued that there would be an expansion of the third sector towards a Second (of companies), whether it be called Sector 2.5 or a Fourth Sector. In any case, it reveals “the maturation of important sectors and actors in society in search of more assertive definitions in relation to new and higher aspirations of their citizens” (Mello, 2018, p. 32).

The “Doughnut Economics” (Raworth, 2017) proposes a development model that operates within planetary limits, ensuring the well-being of people and the preservation of the environment.

In any case, quality public education is always required and plays a central role in preparing new generations for the challenges and opportunities of our constantly changing world. Through critical, innovative education focused on developing socio-emotional skills, young people can be equipped to navigate the uncertainties of the future and build a more sustainable world.

Furthermore, the issue of universal basic income¹² must return to the agenda of policymakers. It appears as a potential instrument to mitigate the impacts of automation on the labor market, guaranteeing a minimum level of income for all citizens, regardless of their professional status. The development of new technologies and production models must, in turn, be guided by ethical principles and the search for a fairer and more inclusive future, where artificial intelligence is used for the well-being of humanity.

¹² <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/basic-income.asp>

Both the educational theme and the universal basic income are justified and intertwined with the theme of ethics regarding artificial intelligence (AI), which must guide technological development, ensuring that technology is used responsibly and does not generate new types of exclusion.

In this regard, as for AI, it is supporting the process of replacing human beings as performers of work (factors of production), which can be dangerous, since consumption is linked to the world of work (Ribeiro, 2023), imputing that society must be aware of the risks and challenges associated with AI, seeking feasible and controlled solutions to ensure that it is used for the well-being of society.

In fact, digitalization and connectivity require freedom of action, of performance, of positions, so that they play their role fully in what is conventionally called the Age of Information and Knowledge, in which industry reinvents itself, changing the physical environment dense factory floor for the environment of intense industrial automation and integration between different technologies such as AI robotics, internet, which marks industry 4.0 and has strong expressions in the context of the field of knowledge of architecture.

With a paradoxical facet, the new economy of the digital era carries with it new economic interactions and new ways of managing production models, based on a holistic, socio-environmentally responsible vision which gives rise to broad, publicized responsibilities regarding decision-making, ethical issues linked to principles, values and socio-emotional skills such as empathy and assertive and non-violent communication. Furthermore, aspects linked to diversity add value to actions based on the new economy, as well as in the context of sustainable architecture, where both must promote local aspects and values, multiplying and disseminating successful practices. In this sense, transcultural leadership is an important attribute to be identified and developed. The concept of cross-cultural leadership is gaining increasing attention among academics and in practice. In the context of the complex economic and social developments we face in today's world, managing relationships from different perspectives and enabling the necessary learning processes requires skills that go beyond traditional leadership concepts. Effective cross-cultural leadership consists of responding to the challenges that globalization and global value crea-

tion bring – and accessing the potentials of intercultural cooperation (Wieland, 2019). Therefore, applying the transcultural approach to sustainable architecture is an interesting endeavor as it potentially instigates the promotion of dialogue between different cultures and their ancestral knowledge, creating an environment conducive to the co-creation of innovative solutions. Through the exchange of experiences and knowledge, it is possible to develop more resilient projects adapted to the specific needs of each region (Wieland & Baumann Montecinos, 2019).

In short, the future of humanity depends on our ability to overcome challenges and seize the opportunities that present themselves. Therefore, a new way of thinking and acting is needed, based on cooperation, social responsibility and environmental sustainability. Through dialogue and collaboration that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion in the search for innovative solutions, we can build a more prosperous and fair future for all, navigating the currents of the present towards a more sustainable horizon for humanity and the planet.

10. Final Considerations

Sustainable architecture is an essential component for the future of work and well-being of the planet's population in the face of the effects of climate change. By integrating green principles and innovative solutions, we can create workspaces that are productive, healthy and environmentally responsible. It is very important to approach sustainability holistically, considering that valuing life is the central theme to be addressed. Human activities are intertwined with nature, and we need inputs, food and climate conditions suitable for survival. Sustainability practices in corporations are not just limited to environmental benefits, but also positively impact employee health and the working environment. The implementation of sustainable measures can generate a healthier, more productive and engaged workplace, in addition to enhancing the company's image and contributing to a more sustainable future. Growing environmental awareness and climate challenges require us to rethink workspaces, prioritizing environmentally friendly solutions that promote employee well-being.

Most of the world's population is urban and spends a large part of their time at work, whether in corporate environments or using transport to travel between home and work. Even people who work from home need to adapt their workspace in some way. Many people end up not eating or sleeping properly because the working day is stressful and it is accompanied by parallel activities: academic studies, caring for elderly relatives, children etc. (Pot, 2018).

Socio-environmental education in companies is a great opportunity to publicize sustainability practices and reinforce the need for urgent action to reduce the problems caused by climate change. Due to the high exposure of the economically active population to work environments, the ability to replicate sustainability practices in the routines of employees' families is very high. This generates a large positive socio-environmental impact.

The global market and international entities pressure companies and their production chains to adopt ESG practices. Sustainable architecture in workspaces is just part of a larger shift across all business environments. Stakeholder policies bring visibility to surrounding communities and landscapes, emphasizing the need for integration, diversity and mutual respect in socio-environmental, cultural and economic aspects.

The application of sustainable practices in work environments is more viable due to the economic power of the productive sectors of society. This promotes environmental education and transmission of knowledge, relevant factors for combating global warming and extreme events. The use of sustainable architecture in accordance with local needs and traditions increases the resilience of the entire system, resulting in a reduction in financial costs for companies and social costs for impacted communities, not to mention environmental gains. Due to the size of the construction industry and the high levels of pollutants currently used, it is extremely important that innovative solutions be quickly applied to projects and construction methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Between mistakes and successes, it is necessary to maintain the process of constant learning and improvement of construction technologies through monitoring from design to maintenance (digital twins) in order to avoid and reverse failures that generate socio-environmental and financial risks. Transcultural coop-

eration not only generates economic value but is also fundamental to socio-environmental justice.

This article seeks to contribute to companies, professionals and architects who want to shape the future of work in a sustainable way. Adopting sustainable practices in the construction and management of workspaces is a crucial step towards a greener and more prosperous future for everyone.

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The future is unpredictable. The increasing complexity of global value creation, climate change, pandemics, wars, conflicts and many other factors radically challenge our way of living, cooperating and leading.

Transcultural leadership – the willingness and ability to develop commonalities (e.g., shared meanings and actions) while maintaining cultural diversity – will be an important factor in addressing these challenges. By developing new connections and commonalities across different cultures, transcultural leadership contributes to successful cooperation and thus forms the basis for shaping possible futures.

This book is the result of a learning journey of the Transcultural Student Research Group 2023 of the Transcultural Caravan Network (TCN). The TCN is a project of the Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, and it is an alliance of universities from different countries around the world that share the goal of facilitating multilateral research projects for students. The project involved 17 Bachelor, Masters and PhD students from Germany, Brazil, Vietnam, Poland and South Africa.

The book examines transcultural leadership in four parts from a future, social, political and economic perspective, offering unique insights into transcultural leadership and an outlook on possible futures.

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