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**Call for Papers for a Special Issue (May 2025)** / Aufruf zur Einreichung von Beiträgen für eine Themenausgabe (Mai 2025) / Appel à contributions pour un numéro spécial (Mai 2025) / Convocatoria de artículos para el número especial (mayo de 2025) / Chamada para envio de artigos para uma edição especial (maio de 2025):

## **Embracing a Relational Paradigm to Navigate Cultural Complexity**

In a world shaped by cultural complexity, the mere recognition and tolerance of cultural differences often seems to be insufficient to foster successful cooperation and value creation across borders (Mahadevan & Primecz 2024, Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder 2022). Apparently, many static and entity-focused approaches reach their limits when it comes to understanding and shaping the real-life determinants of intercultural communication, multicultural teamwork and transcultural cooperation. Against this backdrop, a relational view on cultural complexity might offer a promising avenue for advancing scholarly discourse and research, and for providing relevant practical implications. By taking the relational quality of human beings and interactions as its unit of analysis, the relational paradigm focuses on the development of commonalities out of shared experience and practice, without implying homogenization. This includes considering differences and commonalities as complementary resources of cooperation and analyzing their coexistence and interplay. Accordingly, the relational paradigm considers individuals and organizations as both enablers and dependents of dynamic and complex processes of creating shared meaning and action.

### **Scholarly Foundations and Evolving Discourses**

Over decades, scholars from various disciplines including communication studies, social psychology, organizational theory, and anthropology, alongside practitioners, have contributed a remarkable kaleidoscope of insights aiding our comprehension of cultural differences and their

relevance across diverse fields such as business, management, and communication. Notably, scholars like Geert Hofstede (1991), Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (2012), Richard Lewis (1996), and the authors of the Globe study (2012), have elaborated on seminal comparative concepts for understanding national cultures. However, there's a growing impetus to transcend such frameworks and embrace the complexity and fuzziness of cultural affiliations and co-creation (Bennett 2020, 2023; Bolten 2020; Philipps & Sackmann 2015). This shift entails a call for "more positive cross-cultural scholarship" (Stahl & Tung 2015; Barmeyer & Franklin 2016) and the reconciliation of cultural dilemmas (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 2012), aimed at leveraging the productive potentials of cultural complexity and deriving corresponding concepts of competence and learning (Bennett 2020; Bolten 2020; Deardorff 2020; Henze 2020; Nazarkiewicz 2020). An international and interdisciplinary Delphi study, conducted from 2020-2022 (Baumann Montecinos et al. 2023; Baumann Montecinos & Grünfelder 2022), has mapped these debates and offers starting points for further explorations of the theoretical and practical implications of a relational view on cultural complexity.

### The Offer of Relational Perspectives

Rooted in a constructionist epistemology, the relational view challenges the conventional individualist paradigm as well as the on large abstract collective oriented paradigm by emphasizing the role of ongoing processes of shaping meaning, action and identity. Drawing from the insights of Kenneth J. Gergen (1994), relational theory posits individuals not as static and autonomous entities but as relational constructs shaped and reshaped through unfolding relational processes (Crevani & Endrissat 2016). This approach rejects the notion of individuals as detached from context and possessing fixed competences, aligning with ongoing discussions in the social sciences at large (for examples in the field of intercultural relations see Bolten 2014, Martin 2015, Szkudlarek et al. 2020, Chi & Suthers 2015; in relational sociology see Emirbayer 1997; Donati 2011; Donati & Archer 2015; Stegbauer 2002, 2008; in relational psychology see Gergen 2009; in linguistics see Spencer-Oatey 2011; in relational leadership see Uhl-Bien & Ospina 2012; in relational economics see Biggiero et al. 2022; Wieland 2020; in sustainability studies see West et al. 2020).

### Cultural Complexity as a Relational Process

A relational approach describes culture itself as a complex relational process that mirrors a network of reciprocal dynamics between poly-relational collectives and multi-relational individual actors (Bolten 2014). Sonja Sackmann (2023) encapsulates this complexity, highlighting the simultaneous existence of multiple cultures contributing to heterogeneous, differentiated, or fragmented cultural contexts. The term "cultural complexity" serves as a call to transcend static categorizations and boundaries, urging a reconsideration of contextuality, the role of practical experience, and dynamic processes of relating and belonging. Accordingly, this paradigm, by highlighting the coexistence and interdependence of differences and commonalities, aims to address the potentials for the emergence of new shared meaning and action beyond existing realities.

## What if the unit of analysis is not the individual, team or organization, but their relations?

We invite scholars from diverse disciplines, including but not limited to cultural studies, communication studies, organizational theory, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, to contribute conceptual contributions, empirical studies, interviews and reviews that explore a relational view on cultural complexity and its conceptual and practical implications.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Mapping the current developments and trends in intercultural communication under the lens of a relational paradigm
- Overview of relational concepts in the field of intercultural communication (e.g. Bolten 2020, etc.)
- Theoretical frameworks for understanding the creation of shared meaning and action
- The role of relational processes in shaping culturally complex events and practices
- Strategies for navigating cultural complexity in organizational contexts
- Innovative approaches to cross-cultural communication, management and cooperation
- Implications of cultural complexity for inter- and transcultural competence and training
- The impact of globalization and digitalization on inter-, cross- and transcultural practices
- Methodological approaches for studying relational aspects of cultural complexity
- Teaching and learning concepts building on a relational view on cultural complexity

Submissions should engage with contemporary debates and offer insights into the potentials of a relational paradigm for the fields of intercultural communication, multicultural teamwork or transcultural cooperation.

## About the journal

Building on interdisciplinarity, *Interculture Journal* is designed to foster and advance theoretical and practical findings in the area of intercultural research. *Intercultural Journal* publishes papers by researchers and practitioners addressing questions and issues arising from different cultures living and working together. The journal's definition of culture is geared to an open perception as life-world [Lebenswelt]. Intercultural research topics are hence not limited to the encounter of different nationalities or ethnic groups but include general phenomena of intercollectivity.

*Interculture Journal* offers authors a peer review process, as well as open access publication with DOI. In line with its online format, *Interculture Journal* is devoted to the idea of open information exchange. All journal editions are hence provided for free and can be downloaded at [www.interculture-journal.com](http://www.interculture-journal.com).

## Time schedule

2024-05-01 Call for abstracts

2024-08-30 Deadline for submission of abstracts

2024-09-30 Invitation to submit full papers

2024-12-31 Submission of papers  
2025-03-31 Feedback based on peer-reviews  
2025-05-31 Submission of revised papers  
2025-09-30 Publication of the special issue

### Submission information

In the scheduled issue, articles may be published in English, German, French, Spanish or Portuguese as well as in more than one of these languages. The editorial team is therefore accepting abstracts in these languages.

Please e-mail abstracts no longer than 300 words to the co-editor Julika Baumann Montecinos, and reach out to her for inquiries or further information, too: [julika.montecinos@hs-furtwangen.de](mailto:julika.montecinos@hs-furtwangen.de)

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