

International Symposium: Opportunities and challenges of multiculturalism at the individual level. Implications for future research, education and practice

21st – 23rd July 2025

organized by the Chair of Intercultural Communication (Prof. Dr. Christoph Barmeyer)
in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Luciara Nardon (Carleton University, Canada)

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What does it mean to belong to more than one culture, to speak multiple languages, navigate different systems of norms and values and embody more than one cultural identity? With increasing migration and globalization over the past decades, this experience has become a defining feature of modern life. For many individuals, multiculturalism offers both opportunities and challenges – questions of identity, belonging and social roles are therefore very common among multicultural individuals.



Scholars from more than 8 countries gathered at the University of Passau

To explore these themes, the University of Passau hosted the international symposium “Intercultural Days: Opportunities and challenges of multiculturalism at the individual level. Implications for future research, education, and practice” from July 21st to 24th, 2025. Gathering a group of 30 established and young, emerging scholars with backgrounds in more than 8 countries and 4 continents the symposium created an interdisciplinary platform for examining the topic of multiculturalism at the individual level. The event was organized by Prof. Dr. Christoph Barmeyer from the university’s Chair of Intercultural Communication in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Luciara Nardon (Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada) and received financial support from PICAIS, the Neuburger Gesprächskreis and the International Centre of Economics and Business Studies (ICEBS). Held in the stimulating and historically rich setting of the Nikolakloster, it followed the main aim of developing new, future-oriented ideas and projects on the overall topic by engaging its participants in deep and enriching conversations.

On the first day, host and organizer, Prof. Dr. Christoph Barmeyer, told the group that *“inspiring days of thinking, of dialogue, of growing and collaboration”* lay ahead, especially considering that more than half of the participants themselves can be considered multicultural individuals.

During the following two days, the symposium with its varied and unconventional program provided a *“space to find new ways of thinking about culture”* (Prof. Dr. Luciara Nardon). Among the highlights of the event were presentations by eleven scholars ranging from multi- and polyculturalism, cultural mixing and innate versus acquired multiculturalism to intercultural leadership, multicultural boundary shakers and



Interactive group work to foster collaboration

multicultural creativity, multilingualism and migrant integration outcomes. These keynote speeches were always combined with in-depth and interactive discussions in working groups. It was these group works that enabled – as Vice President for Research, Prof. Dr. Jan Schumann highlighted in his greeting – *“critical interactive dialogue”* in a space where intercultural topics have long played an important role. From these academic discussions, the symposium therefore fostered collaborative spirit and international networking, with many participants identifying potential avenues for future joint research and academic partnerships.



Interdisciplinary research discussions at Nikolakloster

“This event demonstrated how powerful it can be to bring together diverse voices to reflect on identity and cultural complexity in a thoughtful and open way,” noted Professor Christoph Barmeyer. *“Multicultural individuals are no longer marginal — they are shaping our societies, our classrooms, and our organizations. That’s why we as academics have to make them a center of attention in our research and teaching.”*

Beyond the cognitive parts the symposium also offered ample opportunities for informal exchange in the uniquely engaging atmosphere of the city of Passau. The supporting program of the event allowed participants to gain insights into the historical town of Passau through a guided historic tour with university archivist Mario Puhane, enjoy a sunset from Veste

Oberhaus and visit Passau's own intercultural consulting company ICUnet on their roof terrace, where they could enjoy delicious food against the backdrop of a beautiful view and music by singer-songwriter Phiya Helena. Dr. Fritz Audebert, founder and CEO of ICUnet, himself welcomed the guests and emphasized the importance of the symposium not only for academia but also for practice: *"This symposium brings to light what we at ICUnet experience daily – that multiculturals not only navigate complex identities but also drive collaboration and innovation."*

A special thank you goes out to the Passau International Centre for Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies, the Neuburger Gesprächskreis as well as the International Centre of Economics and Business Studies at the University of Passau, who with their generous funding were essential to the success of the event.

This symposium marks the beginning of an ongoing conversation - one that will continue to evolve through collaborative research, teaching innovation, and a deeper understanding of what it means to live between, across, and beyond cultures.



Group photo with all participants

Photo: University of Passau