

# Rethinking Interculturality Will Require Moral Confessions: Analysing the Debate Among Convivialists, Interculturalists, Cosmopolitanists and Intercultural Communication Scholars

*Interkulturalität neu denken erfordert moralische Bekenntnisse. Die Analyse einer Debatte zwischen Vertreter\*innen von Konvivialismus, Interkulturalismus, Kosmopolitismus sowie Autor\*innen zur interkulturellen Kommunikation*

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## Abstract (English)

*Intercultural communication is a well-established interdisciplinary field of research on an in-ternational level. For many scholars, however, intercultural communication represents a paradigm that is hopelessly stuck in essentialist and culturalist worldviews – a model that transforms its object for the worse, rather than for the better. At the same time, the discipline is frequently criticized for its lack of innovation: Some new ideas may appear on the horizon, but communication scholars often refuse to consider them as potential future paradigms.*

*Why isn't the discipline making a more serious attempt to overcome its old conceptual challenges? This article will discuss some potential answers to this question by examining the potential contributions of convivialism, interculturalism, and cosmopolitanism, three recently developed approaches in social theory. This paper argues that researchers of intercultural communication have long faced the challenge of earning respect and acceptance for their work in the eyes of more traditional academic disciplines. Innovative concepts such as cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, display clear ideological commitments and promote a vision of how cultural policy should be designed. This article will discuss the potential of overcoming this dichotomy.*

*Keywords: convivialism, interculturalism, cosmopolitanism, intercultural communication, positive research*

## Abstract (Deutsch)

*Noch nie haben sich so viele Konzepte zu einer Neu-Orientierung interkultureller Forschung angeboten wie heute: Konvivialismus, Interkulturalismus, Kosmopolitismus und zahlreiche weitere Konzepte wollen versprechen, über theoretische und methodische Dilemmata einer bisherigen Auseinandersetzung mit Interkulturalität spielend hinweghelfen zu können. Warum aber verlassen viele dieser Konzepte dennoch nie die Nische des kokettierenden Alternativvorschlags? Warum werden sie nicht einfach umgesetzt?*

*Dieser Beitrag analysiert die Grundannahmen einiger dieser Vorschläge und vergleicht sie mit dem gegenwärtigen Selbstverständnis einer interdisziplinären Erforschung von Interkulturalität. Dabei wird argumentiert, dass viele der neuen Konzepte ausschließlich moralischer und (kultur-) politischer Natur sind. Ihnen fällt es vergleichsweise leicht, moralische Politiken zu formulieren, in denen Interkulturalität oft überhaupt*

erstmal berücksichtigt wird. Zweifel an der globalen Implementierbarkeit dieser Konzepte können an ihnen gar nicht erst einhaken. Demgegenüber hat sich die interdisziplinäre Erforschung von Interkulturalität in Europa in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten hauptsächlich an Prinzipien der Sozialforschung orientiert. Zugunsten von ausschließlicher Deskription wurde hier versucht, moralische Orientierungen und Forschungsmotivationen möglichst zu leugnen. Wenn es nun darum gehen soll, Interkulturalität neu zu denken, dann kann dies nur gelingen, wenn sich auch die bisherige Forschung stärker zu einem moralischen Bekenntnis durchbringt und dieses (kontrovers) reflektiert. Spätestens dann werden zahlreiche Perspektiven konkreter zugänglich.

*Schlagwörter: Konvivialismus, Interkulturalismus, Kosmopolitismus, interkulturelle Kommunikation, positivistische Forschungsmethoden*

*“L’humanisme athée, sur lequel repose le ‘vivre ensemble’ laïc, est donc condamné à brève échéance, le pourcentage de la population monothéiste est appelé à augmenter rapidement [...]” (Houellebecq 2015:70)*

*“When we blindly allow cultural constructs, such as nationality (or race, or religion, and so on), to naturalize differences, we also allow for the naturalizing of hierarchies that can be used to justify the oppression of fellow human beings. We begin to see Otherness as a threat and forget that we can learn much from cultural Others.” (Sobré-Denton / Bardhan 2013:12)*

## 1. Traditional intercultural research is facing new competitors: A debate

Intercultural communication research, as a term, has been in currency in academia for more than 60 years now. Although the long history of research under this designation can be seen as a success story, it may not come as a real surprise that innovation in intercultural research can be a delicate issue. While some scholars have tried to renew the discipline of intercultural communication research from within, others reject the old labels in favor of establishing a new paradigm. At the same time, even newer approaches do not start out of the blue either, but they use criticism of existing intercultural communication as a point of departure for further theorizing.

This article focuses on the debates between the traditional discipline of intercultural communication research and its

recent challengers. As an example, it will focus on the recent contributions from convivialism, interculturalism, and cosmopolitanism, whose approaches stand in contrast to traditional intercultural research. Leaving disagreements aside, the approaches in this article do have one thing in common: Their central concern is to ensure the possibility of coexistence in a world of globalization as well as boundary-making at the same time. This article’s analysis will support this common goal, assuming that it can best be reached if academic debates play a constructive role and avoid excessive internal quarrels.

Recently, this positive cooperation seems to have come under an increasing serious threat. Simply put, the more recent paradigms tend to reject the traditional basis of intercultural communication. At the same time, authors who take a more traditional stance are not ready to acknowledge more recent developments. As a consequence, intercultural communication research has less and less to contribute to contemporary debates. At the same time, the more recent paradigms will need to start from scratch instead of profiting from intercultural research’s groundwork.

## 2. Criticisms towards traditional intercultural research

As a first step, this article will focus on traditional intercultural researchers’ self-concepts, and it will then trace the concerns and objections of the innovative approaches.

## 2.1. Traditional interculturalists about themselves

Relatively recently, the National Communication Association (NCA)'s *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* published an email discussion among seminal scholars from the field of intercultural communication research in which they discussed their understandings of their discipline's core assumptions (Alexander et al. 2014). The majority of the contributors agreed that the discipline's main focus is on the influences of culture on social interaction at the micro-levels of interpersonal conversation. As John Oetzel puts it:

*"I tend to focus on the interpersonal features of interculturality; however, I think being reflexive means considering larger sociopolitical structures and privileges as it impacts our interpersonal/intercultural interactions. Intercultural communication in general is what happens when people from different cultural backgrounds interact [...]" (Alexander et al. 2014:15)*

In addition to this micro-level focus, most authors claim their research as neutral and free from evaluations. To quote Oetzel again: "[...] – it includes the good, the bad, and the ugly" (Alexander et al. 2014:15).

Occasionally, more forward-thinking scholars criticize traditional intercultural research for not remaining abreast of more current developments and changes in academia and in society, and for not integrating more recent approaches. To avoid these criticisms, authors who ascribe to more traditional intercultural theories may face a number of options. Three of them will be mentioned here as an example.

First, since contemporary approaches simply seem inadequate to the recent challenges, one potential strategy would be to look to another academic discipline for inspiration in developing new approaches and insights into communication. Recently, neuroscience appears to be one discipline that may offer promising potential for intercultural research (as an example of different approaches c. f. Warnick / Landis 2015). Switching to another discipline like

neuroscience, however, implies that the huge stock of knowledge from intercultural research will be lost and no longer used for further development.

Alternatively, traditional intercultural research may modify its path by adopting or integrating non-Western approaches to the subject. This may help scholars to avoid the objection of being too Eurocentric. Although adopting non-Western perspectives to a Western topic may contain some pitfalls (Busch 2014), dedicating some space in our handbooks to non-Western approaches has recently become a standard element of state-of-the-art surveys of the field, as for example can be seen in Asante, Miike and Yin's (2014) second edition of *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*. Similar to the first option, switching to non-Western approaches may produce only a very loose connection to given research.

A third option for innovating intercultural research may be to emphasize ethical reflections and approaches to intercultural communication and intercultural relations. Again, however, the connection to traditional or earlier works of intercultural communication is rather weak – for example, if one takes Asante et al.'s (2014) volume as creating a representative impression of the field of intercultural research. Still, the approaches presented here have the potential to enrich and to advance the existing research tradition. Considering ethical aspects may be an option to truly advance and innovate intercultural research, and the article at hand will try to contribute to its further exploration.

## 2.2. Convivialists towards traditional interculturalists

Convivialism denotes a movement, initiated primarily by French-speaking sociologists, that criticizes the predominantly utilitarian perspective on all areas of life – a view that is prominent both in current society as well as among academics. The hegemony of economics and business studies is seen as having introduced scalable efficiency as the cen-

tral and only criterion for the description of the social world.

To create a strong counterbalance to this economic primacy, convivialists return to the concept of reciprocity, centering on the gift paradigm, that had been first highlighted by Marcel Mauss. Accordingly, convivialists assume that reciprocal relations will necessarily need to rely on the quality of interpersonal relations instead of on utilitarian considerations (Les Convivialistes 2013, Centre for Global Cooperation Research 2014).

To avoid essentialism and the effects of boundary-construction in research, convivialists argue for a radical openness in terms of social categorizations. Convivialists argue for equally perspectivising relations that had been previously identified as power imbalances. Instead of a purely postcolonial perspective, even if this perspective may be a benevolent one, convivialists argue a need for radical reciprocity.

For the case of sociology relating to issues of interculturality, Caillé and Vandenberghe (2015:7) argue for what they call neo-classical sociology. They argue that social research was previously much more deeply engaged with reflections from moral philosophy; more recently, however, sociologists decided to adopt a strictly positivist approach and confine moral evaluations to the rejection of boundary-construction in society – a field that had then been covered by sub-disciplines like gender studies or postcolonial studies.

### 2.3. Authors on interculturalism towards traditional interculturalists

Authors on interculturalism criticize the approach of multiculturalism as being incapable of managing the dynamics of diversity in contemporary societies. They offer another perspective on co-existence to the current debates on the integration of diversity, particularly in the U.K. and Quebec, but also in other diverse societies and cities in the West. Their approaches emphasize respecting

democratic principles as well as individual rights.

By considering social developments such as the riots in England in 2001, authors on interculturalism argue that multiculturalism and its practices have, in the age of diversity and globalization, led to social segregation and instability.

The approach of interculturalism not only focuses on the opportunities and the challenges which diversity brings to everyday life of people and communities, such as the concern of living alongside each other in separate spheres; it also aims to intervene through bridge-building policies and joint activities, mainly at the local community level, by focusing on commonalities instead of differences. As Ted Cantle states:

*“Interculturalism is about changing mindsets by creating new opportunities across cultures to support intercultural activity and it’s about thinking, planning and acting interculturally. Perhaps, more importantly still, it is about envisioning the world as we want it to be, rather than be determined by our and separate past histories.” (Cantle 2012)*

Accordingly, for Cantle interculturalism is “[...] about the creation of a culture of openness, a dynamic process of social change due to diversity” (Cantle 2012:142-143).

Thus, the concepts of interculturalism and interculturality, in Cantle’s view, lean towards an understanding of dynamic culture(s) and the need to share a common desire to grow together in a globalized world. In contrast to traditional descriptive intercultural research, his work clearly pursues normative and political-philosophical concerns that are common to the current concepts of interculturalism. Concerns and concepts based on sociological theories, such as Robert Putnam’s concepts of bridging and bonding as well as social capital, will be further introduced in the sections below.

### 2.3.1. Focusing on interactive coexistence among individuals

Interculturalism is promoted as an alternative approach to multiculturalism by, for example, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Cattle defines interculturalism as “sharing a context in order to promote interpersonal contact” (Cattle 2012:152); or, as Ricard Zapata-Barrero points out:

*“Roughly put, the aim of intercultural policies (interculturalism) is to promote dialogue and exchange between people of different cultures using what we will call the “technique of positive interaction.” (Zapata-Barrero 2013:6)*

Advocates for interculturalism (e.g. Cattle 2012, Levey 2012, Zapata-Barrero 2013) make a central argument on its behalf: namely, that interculturalism focuses on the integration of individuals into society as a reciprocal process. Interculturalism therefore emphasizes the necessity of intercultural dialogue and solidarity in the form of joint civic interactions and initiatives which, according to these authors, multicultural policies have ignored.

Zapata-Barrero goes even further by underlining the motivational aspect of interactions:

*“Following Faist’s (2009) suggestive analysis of the diversity category, this involves people not only being considered in terms of their rights, but in terms of what they can do and are able to achieve. We take, then, into consideration individual skills (what an individual knows how to do) and competences (what an individual is capable of doing). In fact, this view deserves a special new section, since, as I will argue, it has the feature of giving answers to a question [...] It is not a question focused on the function of interculturalism, such as why positive interaction matters, but rather concerns the incentives of people to interact. Namely, how are people motivated to interact?” (Zapata-Barrero 2013:27-28)*

### 2.3.2. Rejecting the notions of multiculturalism, and diversity left alone

Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2012a; 2012b), in particular, argue in defense

of multiculturalism by stating that interculturalism as a concept is actually nothing new and should merely be seen as a political discourse. They also show that interculturalism, in comparison to multiculturalism, differs in the following four aspects:

*“[F]irst, as something greater than coexistence, in that interculturalism is allegedly more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, that interculturalism is conceived as something less ‘groupist’ or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, that interculturalism is something more committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of such things as societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices (as part of the process of intercultural dialogue)” (Meer / Modood 2012a:177).*

In general, Meer and Modood (2012b) and Modood (2014) distinguish two context-related variants of interculturalism: European and Quebecan versions. The European variant is based on the idea of societal cohesion and inclusion presented by Cattle (2012) and emphasizes cultural encounter and novelty. Furthermore, this type of interculturalism is more focused on interactions at the local community level.

The pluralist Quebecan interculturalism described by Gérard Bouchard (2012), on the other hand, advocates the right of a national community to protect its language and culture against Anglophone Canada (and the USA) and therefore emphasizes the national tradition that Bouchard conceptualizes as open to change.

Whereas Meer and Modood (2012b) make clear that these two forms of interculturalism differ completely from each other, Zapata-Barrero (2013) promotes the European interculturalism as a comprehensive framework for intercultural policy making in a context of diversity. He recognizes the differences between the European and Canadian approaches, but includes both variations. Furthermore, he adds a third complementary

perspective, named constructive, to the former two perspectives.

As the previous citations from Meer and Modood, Cantle, and Zapata-Barrero indicate, all three variants of interculturalism share a criticism toward the group-based multiculturalism and its concept of fixed identity. In this regard, interculturalism relates to intercultural communication research, which has proven that any categorization will eventually lead to essentialism. However, Bouchard presents a partly fixed conception in terms of the national tradition which can therefore be questioned. The three strands of interculturalism also emphasize the need for policies in managing diversity.

However, unlike Cantle (2012) and Bouchard (2012), who both regard diversity as a threat to either social cohesion or traditional national values, Zapata-Barrero (2013) shows a positive attitude towards diversity. Zapata-Barrero sees diversity mainly as a resource and potential for social and individual development. His view is based on a universally formulated premise that each individual has capabilities that he/she wants to make use of but according to empirical studies migrants seem to be at disadvantage. Thus, he (Zapata-Barrero 2013:22) claims that policies based on interculturalism need to recognize the autonomy of individuals and proactively motivate them to interact and participate together as citizens; through interacting, people can actually produce something new. He (Zapata-Barrero 2013:32) also points out that all these introduced perspectives on diversity are interconnected and together they form intercultural purpose-related policy. The additional perspective that Zapata-Barrero contributes can enable interculturalism to become, in his words, “a new paradigm for our democratically diverse societies” (Zapata-Barrero 2013:7).

### 2.3.3. Relying on the notion of citizenship

The perspective of social cohesion stresses the importance of a common space of interaction and a common citizenship through shared values, and

argues that this state is reachable by bridging. Furthermore, Cantle shares the vision of cosmopolitanism regarding the concept of citizenship and the notion of multiple cultural identities:

*“The development of another layer of identity – in a form of a cosmopolitan or global citizenship conception must now gradually added to the already growing complexity of personal identity, if further tensions and conflicts are to be minimized. Nations need to begin to invest in the development of cultural navigation skills to enable citizens to acquire the ability to understand and embrace other cultures.” (Cantle 2012: 207)*

## 2.4. Cosmopolitanists towards traditional interculturalists

Cosmopolitanism is a term that describes both a certain attitude towards life as well as an academic research perspective. Thus, discussions surrounding cosmopolitanism may include acceptable ways of thinking and acting as an individual in a globalized world of multiple cultural identities, as well as ways of researching this phenomenon. Recently, cosmopolitanism started covering a field that was previously covered (at least partly) by intercultural communication research. As Sobre-Denton explains:

*“Cosmopolitanism refers to the idea of intercultural world citizenship as it exists at the local and global levels. [...] This knowledge, that people belong to a world that is greater than, but also made up of, its individual localities or parts, affects identity, communication, knowledge, behavior, and activism.” (Sobre-Denton 2015:126)*

### 2.4.1. Traditional intercultural research ignores recent social developments

One central objection that cosmopolitanism makes towards traditional intercultural research is that intercultural research tends to ignore current developments and incidents. Cosmopolitanist authors Holling and Moon (2015:81), for example – but also convivialists such as Caillé and Vandenber-

ghe (2015:2) – make frequent reference to incidents like the police shootings of black Americans, the massacres of Boko Haram, and the terrorist attacks in Paris, not to mention the increasing flow of war refugees into the European Union. These events, all of which receive heavy coverage in the international news media in 2015, are largely ignored by traditional intercultural research.

#### **2.4.2. Traditional intercultural research is neo-essentialist**

Most scholars writing today agree that earlier essentialist approaches to the description of culture had maneuvered intercultural research into the dead end of inadequate and static overgeneralizations. These authors would largely agree that this paradigm is generally seen as outdated and superseded by newer models. Holliday (2012), however, strongly contests this change of attitudes. Instead, the notions of contemporary authors can at best be termed neo-essentialist, he writes. Although most of the more recent concepts see cultures as dynamic and hybrid constructions, Holliday warns that they ultimately reconfirm former essentialist assumptions. In fact, he argues that these recent concepts emerged on the grounds of essentialist assumptions. As a consequence, ethnocentric biases as well as the influence of strong power imbalances continue to be ignored even today.

#### **2.4.3. Traditional intercultural research does not integrate postcolonial thought**

As mentioned above, Holliday criticizes intercultural research's blindness to power imbalances. Again, most authors today will actually agree that the postcolonial situation is a decisive factor that shapes the contemporary global situation. Accepting this insight, this should mean that any intercultural contact situation needs to be seen under the paradigm of the dichotomies of majority versus minority and center versus periphery. However, instead of integrating them into intercultural theory, authors still tend to present postcolonial approaches as an add-on to intercultural theories.

#### **2.4.4. Traditional intercultural research is post-positivist**

In parallel to Holliday's critique of neo-essentialism, Sobre-Denton and Bardhan (2013) accuse traditional intercultural research of relying on post-positive research methods. To make intercultural research more open to cosmopolitan thought, the authors claim that researchers need to break away from their strict adherence to positivist results and will need to accept the existence and the influence of normative aspects instead. To demonstrate the gap between traditional research and cosmopolitanism, Sobre-Denton and Bardhan (2013:96-101) showcase three important recent descriptive models of intercultural communication from the constructivist field. One major shortcoming here is that most concepts assume that intercultural competence is something that can be obtained by progressing through a linear process of learning and development. Furthermore, it is falsely assumed that progress in acquiring intercultural competence can be measured by means of positivist scales.

#### **2.4.5. The new cosmopolitanism**

On the one hand, cosmopolitanists can look back on a long-standing tradition reaching back to European antiquity; on the other hand, contemporary authors underline that cosmopolitanism recently experienced a remarkable renaissance (Martin 2013:x, Sobre-Denton 2015:126). At the same time, these more recent approaches criticize the earlier concepts as being too radical in their scope, too elitist, too pluralist (Hollinger 2002:228), and too positivist. While earlier concepts defined the so-called cosmopolitan man as an omnipotent person able to perfectly cope with any circumstance all over the world (Schmidt et al. 2007), more recent authors such as Martin (2013:ix-x) concede that these requirements can hardly be reached by any human being and that requirements like these are based on inadequate essentialist and positivist assumptions.

In contrast, authors including Sobre-Denton and Bardhan (2013:5) and

Hollinger (2002:230) argue that more recent approaches to cosmopolitanism rely on considering aspects of critical and postcolonial thinking. Developing a competence-based concept that parallels the former notions of intercultural competence, this approach includes the demand of developing definitions for competence of acting within postcolonial structures.

To reach these aims, cosmopolitanists also claim to adopt a generally open perspective to the world. Holliday (2010) calls on authors to refrain from engaging in stereotyping in their own writings and to avoid relying on only one central model or theory. Cosmopolitanists want to include non-European concepts into their thinking, since they believe that such understandings and insights can be found in traditions from all over the globe (Yousefi 2008).

Cosmopolitanists ensure that the approaches that they develop can be applied to present-day social problems. Instead of confining themselves to theory-building, they argue that they make cosmopolitanism actionable and practically applicable (Hollinger 2002:229-231). Cosmopolitan thought is thus neither a utopian vision, nor is it new or revolutionary. Instead, they claim that even in contemporary research, there are many studies that promote the identification of cosmopolitan aspects in social life.

In Holliday's (2012:45) model of critical cosmopolitanism, individuals must accept responsibility for any action they perform in intercultural settings. This places critical cosmopolitanism in stark contrast to neo-essentialism, which depicted culture as responsible for people's actions. In contrast to traditional intercultural research, cosmopolitanists openly avow a moral and normative vision. Sobre-Denton and Bardhan state this point clearly: "[...] cosmopolitanism can help us [...] bring a planetary moral vision to intercultural communication scholarship and praxis" (Sobre-Denton / Bardhan 2013:9).

### 3. Traditional interculturalists: Their reservations towards the innovationist paradigms

Despite the growing number of recent and alternative approaches to aspects of culture and communication, these innovations do not seem to find their way into the heart of the discipline of traditional intercultural research. As Sobre-Denton and Bardhan ask:

*"We have wondered why the communication discipline, specifically intercultural communication, has paid scant attention to the promise of cosmopolitanism and its ethical vision." (Sobre-Denton / Bardhan 2013:1)*

The reasons why traditional intercultural researchers are wary of cosmopolitanists cannot be identified without a better understanding of the perspective of the traditionalists. A search for the root assumptions of intercultural communication research will, however, likely result in some overemphasizing and a polarizing that will neglect and ignore the multiple facets of the discipline. Identifying the roots of a discipline will always be a deliberate action of re-construction from a later viewpoint. To avoid this pitfall, this article will analyse works from authors of the discipline that try to identify the roots of their school in their writings.

Research on intercultural communication traditionally focused on the description and analysis of the micro-level of social interaction, i. e. on the perceptions and the interaction processes of individuals.

Rogers and Hart (2002:1-2) report that this confinement of the subject has led to a respective structuring of disciplines around this subject: Paradigms such as international communication and development communication complete the picture by adding a macro-level perspective. According to Rogers and Hart (2002:2-3), intercultural communication research rooted in the works of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud. Edward T. Hall, an early founding scholar of the discipline,

concluded from their works that culture is something that occurs to people without their being conscious of it. Consequently, Hall concentrated on the analysis of people's nonverbal behavior and nonverbal communication. Since a large part of nonverbal communication is unconscious, Hall assumed that these phenomena would provide some insights into the unconscious (and cultural) levels of personalities.

Hall had discovered that in many cases, an ethnocentric viewpoint was the first and main obstacle that prevented cultural learning. Instead of simply providing more information about foreign cultures, Hall thus saw the need to open people's viewpoints and to adjust their self-perceptions before confronting them with other cultures. This focus on individuals' perspectives and perceptions has shaped the core fields of intercultural communication research ever since. Instead of analyzing cultures, intercultural communication research has shifted to analyzing people's perceptions of cultures (Rogers/ Hart 2002:3, Moosmüller 2007:13-14, Busch 2013:165).

Later researchers criticized Hall for the scarce validity of his data (Müller/ Gelbrich 2014:25). Most of Hall's models and categories primarily relied on narrations and illustrating examples as well as on the author's own subjective experiences. Successive studies, such as the one performed by Hofstede (1980), put a strong emphasis on empirical and analytical methods that guarantee a high validity of their data. Primarily this involves quantitative and statistical methods.

Hall's efforts on perspectivising cultural descriptions, paired with later empirical and statistical research, confirmed and fostered the consolidation of an ethnocentric viewpoint that has implicitly underpinned large parts of intercultural research in the Western world. Beyond this, this allegedly scientific viewpoint encouraged people from Western cultures to shrug off responsibility for worldwide development: Differences in economic development among countries around the world now could be

seen as the result of underlying cultural differences.

## 4. Mediating from a superordinate perspective

This article has so far argued that it is the new approaches' orientation and commitment to normative goals that makes traditional intercultural researchers wary of them. Although normative changes and worldwide improvement are two of the key motivations for intercultural research, scientific activities tended to be kept clear from these orientations, yet. Aside from this central distinction, the following passages summarize the core aspects in which newer approaches like convivialism, interculturalism, and the new cosmopolitanism have contributed genuinely new insights to the field.

### 4.1. Cosmopolitanism for linking the local and the global

In contrast to intercultural communication research, cosmopolitanism does not restrict its perspective to the micro-level of individuals' interactions. Concentrating on interrelations and links between the micro-level and the macro-level is a core motivation of cosmopolitan research. Widening the perspective from the level of individuals to global structures and processes results in a shift of responsibilities, as well. Intercultural communication research had centered on the identification of aspects of intercultural competence and trying to help individuals to better cope with given situations in intercultural settings. Implicitly, this approach suggests that individuals are fully responsible for the ways and the forms in which situations of interpersonal interaction evolve (Busch 2005:40). A cosmopolitan perspective may instead shed some light on the multiple effects that societies' macro-structures as well as global processes may have on interactions among individuals.

At the same time, contemporary and innovative concepts of cosmopolitanism

see themselves as critical responses to contemporary tendencies of completely neglecting and ignoring local and individual settings in favor of a strong focus on global processes and phenomena. Hollinger (2002:231) explains that the new, contemporary approach to cosmopolitanism is based on the insight that individuals' needs are not sufficiently satisfied when one focuses exclusively on the global level.

## 4.2. People think cosmopolitanly by nature

Strydom (2012:28) points out that a focus on macro-micro-relationships is central to people's natural and cognitive orientation. Sociologists such as Cicourel, Goffman, and Bourdieu had shown on an empirical basis that people cannot help but consider macro-micro-linkages to make sense of their world. These orientations are thus not conventional, but even cognitive. Recent developments in intercultural research rely on a perspective that is counterintuitive to people's perceptions, Strydom complains. In particular, the recent influence of critical thinking on intercultural research has placed an inadequate and exclusive focus on social and cultural boundaries.

## 4.3. The new approaches are based in moral thought

Many of the more recent approaches to communication and culture openly admit that they adopt a moral orientation. Martin views the moral orientation of cosmopolitanism as asking the question of "how do we engage in ethical dialogue with Others?" (Martin 2013:xi). Even more, she sees "cosmopolitanism as a macro-framework and ethical vision for the planet, functions as a 'philosophical net' that holds together and helps articulate views from a variety of disciplines and voices within conditions of 'postcolonial globality'" (Martin 2013:xi). This view is confirmed by Sobre-Denton and Bardhan (2013:2), who state that cosmopolitanism has a "moral vision." Referring to Delanty (2012:2), Sobre-Denton and Bardhan

(2013:2) note that cosmopolitanism may function as an extension of people's moral horizon.

In sum, many of these recent approaches can be understood to have a more political motivation, rather than being initiated by academic reasoning. Since these motivations can be founded in moral reasoning, scientific approaches will have to acknowledge them; these approaches cannot be banned as being non-scientific. On the other hand, authors from traditional intercultural research cannot enter into a debate with cosmopolitanists, either, since they do not argue on a moral basis.

## 4.4. Intercultural research relies on description – philosophy fills the moral gap

While cosmopolitanism freely acknowledges its explicit moral commitments, intercultural communication scholars have tended to restrict themselves to producing scholarly research that is (or claims to be) free of moral judgements. Gudykunst, for example, pledges all intercultural scholars to theory-based research:

*"Finally, there is little or no published research supporting some of the theories presented [...]. Given the state of theorizing in intercultural communication, conducting atheoretical research is unwarranted. Research designed to test the theories presented is needed to advance the state of our understanding of intercultural communication, not more atheoretical research." (Gudykunst 2002:201)*

Here, it may be concluded that by atheoretical research, Gudykunst disapproves approaches that either produce new theories or that stick to moral foundations without making them explicit. Instead, Gudykunst claims that contemporary scholars are well advised to continue existing theories in intercultural communication research.

By sticking to traditional academic disciplines and their criteria for scientific validity, intercultural research has become a field in which most scholars focus on quantitative empirical research.

Gudykunst (2002) in his overview explains a number of key terms to quantitative research such as sampling, validity, equivalence, reliability, etc.; this creates an impressive picture of the extent to which intercultural research aspires to keep up with traditional social research.

When a discipline decides to refrain from moralizing, this does not automatically result in keeping the object of research free from moral consideration. For the example of sociology, Caillé and Vandenberghe (2015) show that moral philosophy has started including research fields from sociology into their scope of action.

Firstly, sociology has been ruled out by what Caillé and Vandenberghe term as “the Studies”: cultural studies, gender studies, and the like. They all refer to approaches such as French Theory and critical theory (Germany). Most of these “Studies” focus on boundaries that are, for them, the most evil phenomena in the social world. As a consequence, boundaries should be transcended or deconstructed – at least in theory. Secondly, moral philosophy and social philosophy have become more “applied” in recent decades: Instead of abstract theorizing, they, too, are coupled with French critical thinking and then applied to contemporary social issues.

#### **4.5. Uniting the approaches in their moral roots**

The reflections above have shown that empirical and descriptive research cannot be initiated except on the basis of moral reasoning. Furthermore, results from empirical research cannot be kept free from moral evaluation – even if this research will be carried out by another discipline. Combining empirical intercultural research with its moral evaluations will result in entering fields of cultural policy. Doing so, intercultural research can be re-enabled to contribute to up-to-date issues and needs.

Sociologists Caillé and Vandenberghe (2015:12) remind us that beyond the recent paradigmatic disputes, traditional

and innovationist approaches still have a lot in common. In particular, most of them share the same (that is, normative) basis: Most of the approaches are concerned with peaceful coexistence within and across societies. Even more, these concepts regarding social and intercultural understanding very often base on notions of dialogue and reciprocity.

Earlier approaches to intercultural research had normative ideals, too. However, contemporary authors warn that many such approaches hindered, rather than helped, from reaching their goals, although their intentions were positive. The concept of hybridity as introduced by Bhabha, for example, blurs the distinction between oppressors and the oppressed, as Holliday (2012:42) warns.

Today, research on intercultural communication is mostly provided by scholars from disciplines like ethnology, cultural anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, and communication studies. Depending on their disciplinary location, works can differ significantly in their theoretical and empirical bases and approaches. However, all these approaches have in common that their scholars have integrated the notion of culture as a theoretical concept into the terminology of their discipline. Even the fact that culture has been introduced here as a term of relevance will turn it into a normative stance that will modify the original discipline’s premises. From this perspective, all intercultural research starts from normative assumptions, and such assumptions have turned every academic discipline into a normative one.

For the discipline of sociology, Caillé and Vandenberghe exemplify that research does not become active until its main focus, i. e. social order, is under threat. Since the central threat to social order for the last centuries had been modernity, traditional sociology centers on the analysis of modernity.

Similarly, intercultural communication research largely had been problem-oriented for decades. The discipline had focused on contexts and situations

that had been perceived as a threat to intercultural understanding and cooperation. As a consequence, the discipline had invested its major productivity into developing concepts of intercultural competence to overcome these challenges. At the same time, the discipline has ignored the multitude of contexts in which intercultural understanding is being achieved successfully.

#### **4.6. What can innovationist scholars do to support intercultural research?**

Developing intercultural communication research further and transforming it into an up-to-date and wide-ranging discipline is not a one-sided undertaking. Both traditional research and innovationist attempts can contribute to forging a joint and productive discipline. Innovationist approaches, too, will need to become and stay aware of their traditions and roots. Making these roots explicit, the concepts will at the same time turn even more scientific as well as understandable.

For the case of convivialist approaches, Caillé and Vandenberghe (2015:10) develop the concept of positive anthropology as a future-oriented approach that is conscious of its own moral roots. More precisely, while neo-classical sociology had focused on people's interests, positive anthropology rejects this notion and favors notions of sympathy as a rejection of former utilitarianism.

#### **4.7. What traditional as well as innovative approaches should do**

Both traditional and innovationist approaches should strive to formulate their concerns in ways that can be followed and understood by any person outside the discipline. In doing so, they will be able to model a more responsible way of life and social action for members of society (Kray 2015:30).

Strydom (2012:29-30) records that cosmopolitan thought has always had a generative as well as a moral dimension, the latter creating the particular kind of

order for modernity. Strydom admits that one of today's major challenges for cosmopolitan research may lie in the fact that these two perspectives have been confused, mingled and combined for a long time. This intermingling was based on the false assumption that societies will approach the state of cosmopolitanism through a linear process. In later periods, according to Strydom, sociology broke with these rationalist paradigms in favor of more interpretive approaches. Authors like Bourdieu, Touraine, and others had seen social action and decision as based on conflict, competition, and emotional motivations. It was at this point that Touraine, as one of the first, started to conclude that the cognitive and the normative facets of a social model could hardly be combined. As a consequence, both perspectives (cognitive and normative) have to be considered separately for an analysis of society as well as of cosmopolitanism (Strydom 2012:30).

#### **4.8. Chances and limitations from discourse**

Convivialism and cosmopolitanism – the approaches presented here – all begin their lines of argument by revealing the (moral) deficits and shortcomings of present approaches to intercultural communication, while interculturalism targets multiculturalism. What they present as a remedy consists of alternative attitudes and perspectives taken as a basis for social action and research. Taking a critical stance to this measure, it may be asked whether a change of attitudes and perspectives will be enough first to overcome old paradigms and pitfalls, and second to reach underlying secondary future goals such as sustainable peace, coexistence, and growth around the globe.

Doubts regarding these aims can be developed from discourse theory, for example. Adrian Holliday (2012), a cosmopolitan scholar close to the tradition of discourse analysis, has started using discourse theoretical methods for cosmopolitan aims. Since cosmopolitanism wants to mediate between cultural and social centers and their peripheries, the

latter will sometimes need to be identified and made visible. Holliday expects this to be a challenging undertaking since the periphery will be shadowed by strong political discourse (Holliday 2012:46).

These assumptions are confirmed by Busch (2013), who reveals that social discourse on culture and on culture's influences on social interaction have the nature of what Michel Foucault termed a *dispositive* (cf. "dispositions," Foucault 1984 [1969]:398). Accordingly, interplays of power structures, knowledge, and discourse cater for the preservation of hidden power imbalances within and across societies. Dispositive structures go unnoticed by society (by both advantaged as well as disadvantaged groups) and they perpetuate until they are replaced by another dispositive that can satisfy the same needs. Busch (2013) has shown that the discourses about culture and intercultural communication not only in society, but also in academia, must be seen as a dispositive. As a consequence, it can be concluded that in this case, even a discourse that pretends to work on a solution for a perceived problem actually covertly perpetuates the problem.

Applying these considerations to the concerns of cosmopolitanism, it appears highly questionable whether this goal-oriented approach will be able to override the unfortunate effects of intercultural communication discourse and research and to establish an alternative perspective. Even the criticism of neo-essentialist approaches is part of our culture and in no way already a part of a global and equal dialogue. Foucault might add here that cosmopolitan ambitions can only be reached if other discursive structures – within cosmopolitan discourse or elsewhere – will be installed to continue the former dispositive's functions as a warrantor for social (power) structures.

## 5. Conclusion: Perspectives for future research

This article started with the observation that traditional research on intercultural

communication has, on the one hand, undergone multiple processes of innovation over the past decades. On the other hand, traditionalist approaches have been criticized for not keeping up with current theory-building fast enough, resulting in the need to establish new schools and paradigms instead. This article has confronted the self-concepts of traditional intercultural research with criticisms and counter-proposals from convivialism, interculturalism, and cosmopolitanism, which represent the most recent developments in this area. As demonstrated, these new approaches primarily differ from the more traditional ones in that they pursue a clear moral vision instead of confining themselves to descriptive research and analysis. A discourse perspective has shown that even traditional intercultural research has moral roots, and that these orientations do not differ overly significantly from the aims of its recent challengers. Consequently, traditional and innovative paradigms could jointly work on common aims and subjects if they agreed to reflect on their moral roots as well as the reasons for these roots. Conversely, a discourse perspective may also reveal some limitations of the innovative potential coming from moralist contributions: insights from dispositive theory strongly challenge the assumption that a clear and literal claim to moral orientation towards societies' futures may be enough to really initiate profound changes.

Still, innovative approaches such as convivialism, interculturalism, and cosmopolitanism may crucially enrich and strengthen intercultural research in reaching its aims and goals. Traditional intercultural research, on the other hand, contributes valid methods of empirical research and description. Analyzing and interpreting these data will produce even further insights if research motivations, actors' responsibilities and scopes of action, as well as multilevel moral reflections including singular interactions as well as global structures are considered.

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