

Intercultural Days:

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



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University of Passau

July 21 – 23, 2025

Followed by a workshop by Mary Yoko Brannen:

"Culture and Organizational Ethnography."

July 24, 2025

Background

Since Hofstede's (1980) foundational work, the field of cross-cultural management has explored the multiple ways in which culture and cultural differences impact work across borders (Adler 2008, Barmeyer et al. 2021, Nardon 2017, Schneider et al. 2014). This body of work often uses country-level cultural dimensions as a proxy for culture (e.g. Gunkel et al. 2016; Lü 2018, Szkudlarek et al. 2020) and assumes that individuals possess *one* distinct culture, acquired through participation in a social group.

In the past 50 years, the number of international migrants has tripled, with the latest global estimate being 281 million in mid-2020 (McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024). A significant body of work has explored these individuals' challenges and opportunities (e.g. Grosskopf et al. 2022, Hajro et al. 2021, Nardon & Hari 2022, Stahl et al. 2024). Global migration and the continued increase in cultural mixing through marriages between individuals with different cultural backgrounds will continue to transform and permeate the boundaries of distinctive ethnic groups (McAuliffe & Oucho 2024).

With increasing levels of global mobility, culture's influence on individuals is becoming increasingly multifaceted (Augustin et al. 2024, Vora et al. 2019), and some individuals become multicultural based on their accumulated intercultural experiences (Brannen & Thomas 2010, Lücke et al. 2013). Vora and colleagues (2019) conceptualize multiculturalism at the individual level as the "degree to which someone has knowledge of, identification with, and internalization of more than one societal culture" (p. 506). Individuals can become multicultural through acculturation—the process of adopting a new culture through migration or expatriation—or enculturation—second-generation immigrants, third culture kids, and those growing up in a multicultural home are immersed in multiple cultures from an early age (Martin and Shao, 2016; Vora et al., 2019). These varied experiences of multiculturalism at the individual level require different ways of thinking about culture, intercultural research, and intercultural education.

Questions concerning identities of multicultural individuals are also important in the research context (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos 2005). For a long time, multicultural individuals were referred to as cultural marginals, a term used to describe those who do not feel that they belong to any culture. It is only in recent years that research has started to examine the constructive aspects of multiculturalism, for example cosmopolitanism (Lee & Reade 2018) or potentials of multicultural individuals (Grosskopf 2023), including distinct intercultural skills such as openness, ethnorelativism, empathy, etc. as well as multilingualism (Lakshman et al. 2020). Increasingly, these skills are recognized as valuable resources for organisations (Hong & Minbaeva 2022) or even as sources of a competitive advantage (Fitzsimmons et al. 2019).

Symposium

In accordance with current research and against the backdrop of continuous global migration and mobility, we consider the topic of multicultural individuals to be particularly relevant in today's world – both within and outside of work contexts.

Therefore, for two days our symposium will bring together a group of leading scholars from eight countries and various disciplines to discuss and create an agenda for future research addressing challenges and especially opportunities of multiculturalism at the individual level. Together, we will explore implications for research, education and practice, with a particular focus on fostering innovative and interdisciplinary approaches.

Rather than focusing solely on the presentation of findings, the symposium features a diverse program of activities designed to:

1. *present current research*
2. *integrate diverse ideas, and*
3. *stimulate future research.*

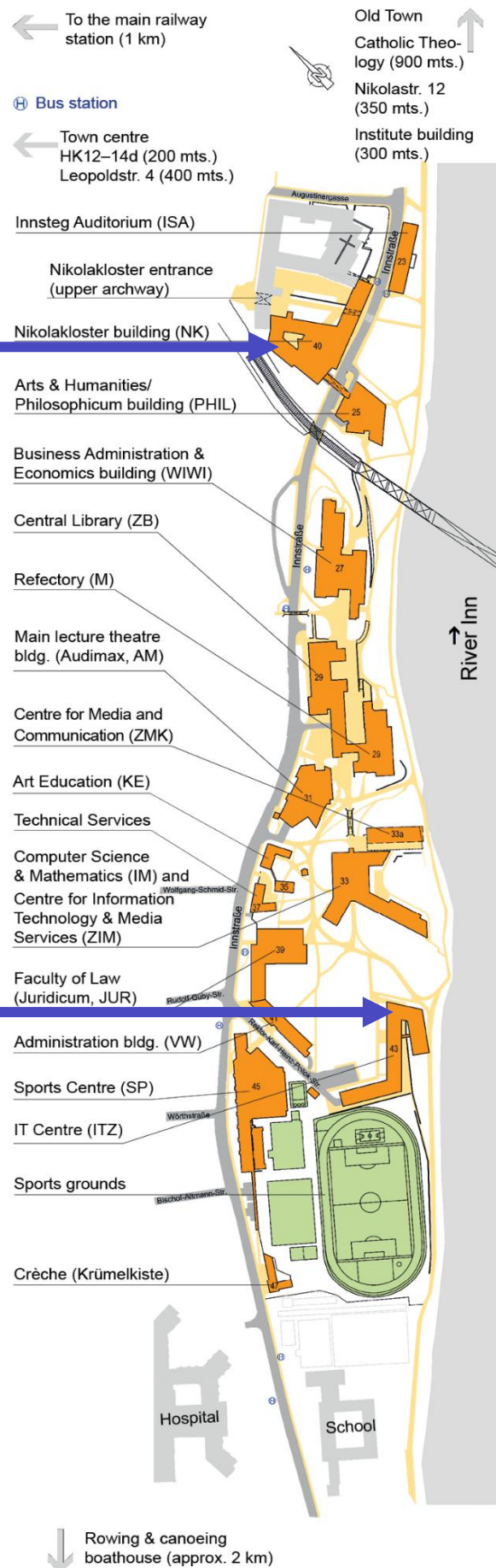
At the heart of the program are interactive working group sessions that build on preceding short presentations by participants. Based on the content of the presentations each group will collaboratively discuss the status quo, generate new ideas, and explore possibilities for further research projects.

A deliberate emphasis is placed on interactivity, openness, and mutual engagement, supported by informal spaces and networking opportunities that encourage new academic collaborations. By integrating diverse perspectives and fostering dialogue, the symposium becomes a vibrant platform for reflection, connection, and innovation in the field of multicultural research.

Campus Plan

NK R403
(Kleiner Exerzierplatz 15A, 94032 Passau)

ITZ R017
(Innstraße 43, 94032 Passau)



Program

Moderation: Christoph Barmeyer & Elisabeth Huber

Monday, July 21st, 2025

17:00

Visit of the historical city of Passau

Meeting point: Nikolakloster; Kleiner Exerzierplatz 15A, 94032 Passau

19:00

Informal coming together (self-paying):
Intercultural Dinner at Bavarian restaurant
“Heilig Geist Stiftskeller”

Heiliggeistgasse 4, 94032 Passau



Tuesday, July 22nd, 2025

Location: NK R403 (Kleiner Exerzierplatz 15A, 94032 Passau)

9:00 – 11:00 Informal Breakfast Mixer and getting to know each other-activity

11:00 – 12:30 Opening

Jan-Hendrik Schumann, Vice President Research, University of Passau
Luciara Nardon, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada &
Christoph Barmeyer, University of Passau

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break

13:30 – 15:00 Presentations and Mixed Working Groups

Davina Vora, State University of New York at New Paltz, USA – “Going beyond identification: Multiculturalism as a complex and multidimensional construct with implications for various contexts”

Tomke Augustin, University of Manitoba, Canada – “Same same, or different? What we learn when we examine both multiculturalism and multilingualism in individuals”

Tuzienka Chenet Ugarte, University of Passau – “Intercultural Leadership: Exploring the Characteristics and Skills of Bi- and Multicultural Individuals”

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break and Intercultural Café

15:30 – 17:00 Presentations and Mixed Working Groups

Mary Yoko Brannen, San José State University, California, USA – “Methods for Researching Multiculturality and its Effects on Organizations”

Sasha Valgardsson, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada – “Towards inclusion through polyculturalism: A critical review of cultural hybridity”

Sina Großkopf, International University of Monaco, Monaco – “Multicultural Boundary Shakers: Persuading, Reconciling, and Nudging in Organizations”

19:00 Intercultural Dinner at Veste Oberhaus (self-paying)

(Oberhaus 1, 94034 Passau)

Wednesday, July 23rd, 2025

Location: NK R403 (Kleiner Exerzierplatz 15A, 94032 Passau)

- 8:15 – 9:00 Wrap up “Opportunities and Challenges of Multiculturality at the Individual Level”
- 9:00 – 10:30 Presentations and Mixed Working Groups
- Lee Martin**, The University of Sydney, Australia – “Cultural mixing and its implications for multicultural individuals”
Yih-teen Lee, IESE Business School University of Navarra, Spain – “Multicultural Being and Becoming: Research and Teaching Opportunities in Navigating Cultures and identities”
Günter Stahl, WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Vienna, Austria – “High-skilled Migrants’ Identity Orientations: How Are They Linked to Integration Outcomes?”
- 10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:00 – 12:30 Presentations and Mixed Working Groups
- Dan Caprar**, The University of Sydney, Australia – “Public sentiment towards cultural inclusion initiatives: The Voice Referendum in Australia”
Carmit Tadmor, Coller School of Management, Israel – “Beyond Borders: How Multicultural Immersion Fuels Tolerance, Creativity, and Success”
Mike Szymanski, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA – “Not all multicultural are created equal: innate and acquired multiculturalism”
- 12:30 – 13:30 Group Photo and Lunch Break
- 13:30 – 14:00 “Walk the Talk”
- 14:00 – 14:30 Wrap up of “Walk the Talk” in plenary session
- 14:30 – 15:00 Coffee Break and Intercultural Café
- 15:00 – 17:00 World Café “Next Steps: Establishing a Future Research Agenda”
- Prof. Dr. Luciara Nardon & Prof. Dr. Christoph Barmeyer**
- 17:00 – 17:30 Closing
- 18:00 – 21:00 Intercultural apéritif and dinner at the rooftop of ICUnet AG
- Dr. Fritz Audebert**, CEO, Business consulting for intercultural training, relocation services & organizational development
Phiya Helena, Singer/Songwriter
- (Rindermarkt 4, 94032 Passau)

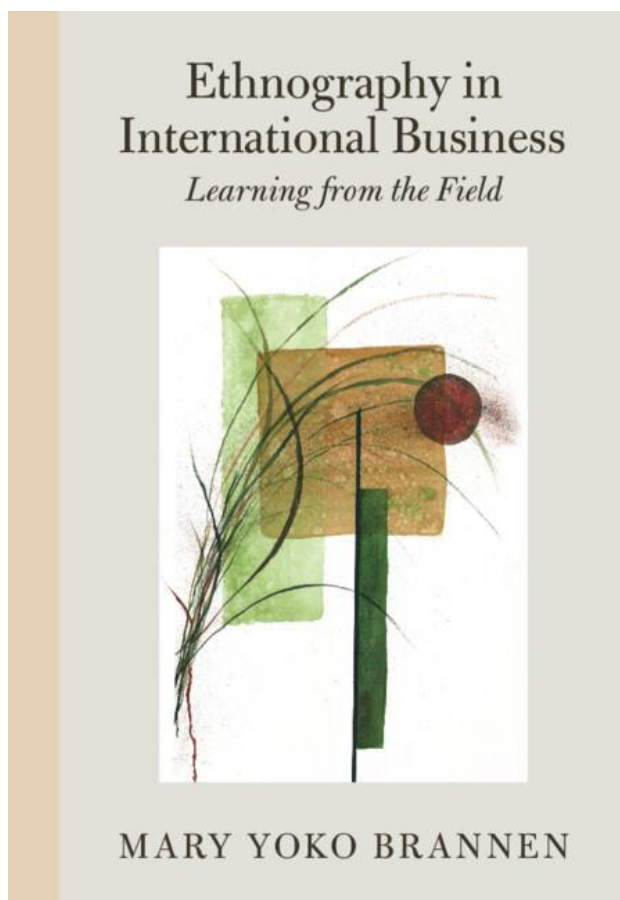
Thursday, July 24th, 2025

Location: ITZ R017 (Innstraße 43, 94032 Passau)

9:00 – 13:00

Presentation & Workshop
“Culture and Organizational Ethnography”

Mary Yoko Brannen, San José State University, California, USA



Presentation & Workshop:

"Culture and Organizational Ethnography."

Mary Yoko Brannen

Professor Emerita from San José State University, California

The workshop is kindly supported financially by the "International Center for Economics and Business Studies" of the University of Passau

In today's globalized world, a deep understanding of how culture affects organizational phenomena is critical to scholarship and practice. Yet, armed with only superficial measures of national cultural differences scholars and practitioners find themselves stereotype rich and operationally poor where culture meets real-world international business context. "Culture" is substantially more complex than this and is made up of multiple interacting cultural spheres (national, regional, institutional, organizational, functional) which are differentially enacted by individuals many of whom are multicultural themselves. Organizational settings are therefore rife with multilevel cultural interactions as individuals with diverging cultural assumptions are brought together in real time (often virtually) across distance and differentiated contexts. Consequently, traditional positivist approaches to understanding culture fall short of adequately capturing the complexity of cultural phenomena in international organizations. Ethnography with its two essential elements – fieldwork, including its central methodological building block of participant observation, and its focus on culture – is the most effective approach for gaining insights into such microlevel embedded cultural phenomena.

In this workshop Professor Brannen will draw upon her recent book, *Ethnography in International Business: Learning from the Field* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), with exercises and discussions to take participants from the preliminary steps of matching research questions with appropriate ethnographic research design, to theory development, and provide pointers on writing it up. Three types of ethnography most consequential for advancing theory in organizational culture research will be introduced: Intracultural Ethnography as culture works within a single international organizational setting such as in an international joint venture (IJV), cross-national merger or acquisition, or wholly owned foreign subsidiary; Transcultural Ethnography as culture works across national boundaries in multinational enterprises (MNEs) as they expand their multi-sited global reach; and Strategic Ethnography as an applied or problem-centered form of inquiry to better inform global organizations of the cultural contexts in which they operate and the associated challenges and opportunities that arise from such cultural complexity.

Mary Yoko Brannen is Professor Emerita at San José State University and Honorary Professor of International Business (IB) at the Copenhagen Business School and Fellow of the Academy of International Business. Dr. Brannen pioneered the use of ethnographic methods in IB research as she sought to understand and theorize from complex cultural phenomena. Her early in-depth studies of the internationalization of large multinational firms such as Disney and NSK Ball Bearings are noted for contributing the constructs of negotiated culture, recontextualization, and biculturals as natural boundary-spanners to the field. As Deputy Editor of the *Journal of International Business Studies* from 2011-2016, at a time when large-scale, cross-sectional, quantitative research was the norm in the field's leading journal, Professor Brannen is credited with broadening the range of research methods recognized by IB scholars to include qualitative and mixed-methods studies, ethnography, semiotics, and linguistic analysis.