

Intercultural Communication: Practices of Sustainable Development and Overcoming Societal Crises

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ABSTRACT:

Intercultural communication constitutes a critical framework for understanding and navigating the complexities of contemporary multicultural societies. Positioned at the intersection of linguistics, anthropology, and sociology, it illuminates the dynamics of cultural diversity, inclusion, and the negotiation of social norms across differing cultural contexts. Within the discourse of sustainable development, intercultural communication emerges as both a conceptual and practical mechanism for reconciling cultural dynamism with societal continuity, addressing crises, and fostering ethical, solidaristic engagement. By examining the interplay of cultural norms, values, and communicative practices, this study foregrounds the significance of intercultural sensitivity as a foundational element in cultivating equitable, resilient, and cohesive communities in an increasingly interconnected and turbulent world.

Keywords: intercultural communication, sustainable development, culture, information society, crisis, conflict, discrimination, inclusion

1. Introduction

Intercultural communication constitutes a highly demanded and avant-garde theme within contemporary scholarly discourse. Its exploration is of acute relevance for addressing the challenges of interaction among representatives of diverse cultural

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communities, migrant adaptation, cultural inclusion, and the formation of a solidaristic political community of the world. It plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development.

In our previous research, we emphasized that intercultural communication, within the framework of sustainable development discourse, is conceptualized as a dynamic equilibrium among different cultures and emerges as a cornerstone of human interaction (Aleksandrova, Kolinko *et al.*, 2024). Cultural diversity provides unique experiences and knowledge that open new perspectives for tackling global challenges.

In practical terms, intercultural communication strategies can be effectively implemented in various spheres. In education, they promote inclusive learning environments and foster mutual understanding among students from different backgrounds. In the media, they encourage balanced representation and challenge stereotypes, thereby shaping a more tolerant public discourse. In policymaking, intercultural approaches facilitate dialogue and cooperation between communities, ensuring that diverse voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Respect for cultural diversity and inclusivity fosters the creation of a more equitable society in which all cultural actors are equally valued. This, in turn, impels us to continue advancing scholarly inquiry into intercultural communication and to reflect upon its strategies in the context of an increasingly turbulent reality.

2. Methodology

The field of intercultural communication research began to take shape in the mid-20th century, within the framework of the development of communication theory as an integral scientific discipline. Intercultural communication represents a complex area of study that combines multiple disciplines and sub-disciplines. Linguistics provides the tools for examining language, its structure, grammar, and vocabulary. Language reflects the cultural space and influences our thinking and perception of others. Anthropology offers knowledge about humans as bio-social beings, their origins, and the formation of their social and cultural environment. It helps to understand differences in worldview, values, customs, and behaviors of cultural subjects. Sociology provides insights into the nature and structure of society, as well as social interactions within a culture and between cultural groups. It demonstrates how social processes and structures impact intercultural communication.

We employ methods such as sociological surveys and content analysis to identify effective strategies in intercultural contexts. The topic of this article necessitates the development of a methodology that integrates diverse methodological tools and approaches. The need to compare modes of interaction among different cultures and their individual structural elements calls for the application of a comparative method.

3. Literature review

An analysis of contemporary studies on intercultural communication reveals the development of distinctive paradigms that may be applied in drawing our conclusions.

While recent scholarly literature offers substantial contributions, it does not yet provide a systematic understanding of the mechanisms underpinning the evolution of contemporary processes of intercultural communication. To construct a coherent conceptual framework of intercultural communication and its role in sustainable development, it is necessary to revisit the core concepts of culture, intercultural communication, and sustainable development, and to integrate them into a unified analytical and practical domain.

Jon Hawkes advanced the working hypothesis of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development (Hawkes, 2001). He emphasized that the effective realization of sustainability objectives requires attention to the value dimension alongside the social, economic, and environmental parameters of societal planning.

Dessein et al. (2015) presented a substantial sociological study entitled "Culture in, for and as Sustainable Development", in which they offered a systematic analysis of the cultural paradigm in the contemporary world. They identified three functions of culture in the pursuit of sustainable development. The formula "culture in sustainable development" positions culture as an additional dimension to the economic, social, and environmental pillars. The formula "culture for sustainable development" interprets culture as a formative force that structures, conceptualizes, and interlinks the other three parameters, mediating a balance between social, economic, and environmental demands and risks. Finally, the fundamental role of "culture as sustainable development" is understood as the ontologization of culture itself, which serves as a shared platform for structuring and implementing the goals of sustainable development (Dessein et al., 2015).

However, the applicability of these models becomes particularly evident in times of crisis. The "culture for sustainable development" framework often proves more adaptive in such contexts, as it emphasizes culture's instrumental role in mediating social cohesion and facilitating recovery processes. Conversely, the "culture as sustainable development" approach highlights resilience as an intrinsic cultural capacity – where culture itself embodies the principles of continuity, creativity, and transformation necessary to withstand disruption. A comparative understanding of these two perspectives allows both scholars and practitioners to better assess how cultural systems contribute to collective resilience and sustainable renewal.

Anita Kangas compiled a digest of recent studies on culture as a condition for sustainable development (Kangas et al., 2024). She emphasizes the conflicting positions of different interpretations of the past within the cultural space and adapts a multi-vector approach to history and cultural heritage for the purposes and goals of sustainable development.

Despite the differing content and objectives across various concepts of intercultural communication, they all converge within the vortex of a cultural crisis, which has emerged as a leitmotif of contemporary global existence. Contemporary scholars link the cultural crisis to social, political, and economic challenges of modern culture. An attempt to reconcile the discourses of sustainable development and cultural crisis was presented by participants of the international conference in Belgrade (Conference, 2014). The French scholar Elizabeth Auclair examined the dynamics and uncertainties in the relationship between culture and sustainable development. She raises the important issue of cultural policy for the creation of sustainable development values. We concur with her critique of the concept of culture as a separate domain within the societal space. The term "cultural

actor" positions activity primarily within the realms of art and architecture. In France, such actors belong to the "New territories of art" (Conference, 2014). For the study of contemporary social transformations, the definition of culture carries a profound anthropological meaning and draws on theoretical reflections on cultural diversity and cultural rights (Conference, 2014, 17). Accordingly, a holistic concept of culture encompasses all spheres of human activity and constitutes a mode of societal existence. This interpretation allows us to construct a methodological framework for analyzing phenomena of intercultural communication as projections of broader cultural processes.

The analysis of the cultural crisis as a threat to sustainable development in the contemporary world generates a robust scholarly and societal discourse. Tarasiuk *et al.* (2023) draw attention to the existential and axiological dimensions of the cultural crisis. Crisis phenomena in contemporary culture are interpreted through an informational-digital lens. Within the cultural crisis of the information society, two key aspects can be distinguished. First, the global-existential dimension refers to the participation of the informational-digital sphere in producing destructive outcomes for overall civilizational development. Second, the axiological dimension characterizes the influence of the informational-digital space on the distortion of certain elements of material and spiritual culture, such as the virtualization of social relations as a form of alienation and the devaluation of moral norms. Tarasiuk *et al.* (2023) emphasize the necessity of constructing a value-based framework to ensure the safe development of the informational-digital segment of culture.

Cultural contexts and linguistic practices constitute a contemporary case study of intercultural issues. They are represented through a communicative vector, as reflected in the works of E. Hall, P. Watzlawick, E. Hirsch, and G. Hofstede. The interpretation of cultural norms, linguistic standards, and communicative intentions in intercultural communication, as well as the overcoming of discrimination, is examined in the series "Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy & Psychology", for instance by Istvan Kecskes (Kecskes, 2023).

Will Baker addresses the discussion on integrating intercultural elements into language practices in education and demonstrates that teachers often fail to implement systematic and in-depth programs for the study of culture and cultural communication. This is explained by limitations of time and resources, as well as by stereotypical and simplified perceptions of intercultural issues (Baker, 2024).

An analysis of contemporary literature leads to the conclusion that existing models of intercultural interaction require transformation in order to effectively implement the goals of sustainable development.

4. Results

In this article, we continue our scientific investigation and further develop the results obtained in previous publications (Aleksandrova *et al.*, 2024; Kolinko, 2019; Kolinko *et al.*, 2023).

Culture serves as an essential concept involved in the interpretation of communicative phenomena; however, the assumption that it provides all the necessary cues for identifying and interpreting what occurs in communication can lead to erroneous

conclusions. The issue becomes even more acute when addressing the cultural subject. Intercultural communication is a process of continuous differentiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar. The researcher faces a particular risk here: the most obvious shortcoming in conducting comparative analysis is the assimilation of another cultural tradition without considering the degree of assumptions, contextuality, external frameworks, and the inherent limitations in interpreting a different cultural tradition. Sometimes, caution in interpretation alone is insufficient for the relevant understanding of a distinct tradition.

A subtler risk is the acceptance of a peripheral cultural sector of a given society as the main trend. This may lead to the temptation to assume that one has correctly understood significant relations and identified the "stable core" of a tradition. While this may sometimes be accurate, it can also result in oversimplification, distortion, or even the erasure of another cultural tradition. Therefore, the comprehension of communication processes and interactions among representatives of different cultures, cultural communities, and groups necessitates a careful study of cultural contexts.

It is also important to recognize that most intercultural frameworks have been developed from predominantly European perspectives, which limits their global applicability. Integrating case studies from non-Western contexts – such as community-based mediation practices in sub-Saharan Africa, collective resilience models in Southeast Asia, or intercultural environmental initiatives in Latin America – would demonstrate that intercultural communication principles operate across diverse cultural systems. Such inclusion not only enriches theoretical understanding but also affirms the universality of the framework by showing how different societies cultivate harmony, dialogue, and sustainable coexistence through culturally embedded practices.

In the context of globalization, cultural homogeneity is no longer a given that states and communities strive to preserve. In traditional communities, homogeneity was a condition for stable development. Contemporary social constructs comprise diverse ethnicities, cultural groups, and subcultures. Cultures oriented toward long-term goals and perspectives are more inclined toward sustainable development. In an era of turbulence, cultures encounter crises of both short-term and long-term nature.

A productive research stance considers the crisis of culture as a window of opportunity. A social or cultural crisis is not merely a period of challenges but also a time of profound transformations and new perspectives. Intercultural communication can become a powerful resource in the pursuit of societal improvement. This perspective opens up the possibility for researchers to develop intercultural communication strategies that respond flexibly to social change and offer effective practical approaches to intercultural understanding and dialogue.

To develop sustainable development strategies, it is necessary to identify the levels of intercultural interaction. In accordance with general social processes, intercultural communication operates at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The macro level of interaction encompasses relationships between cultural regions of the world, countries, and their alliances. These relationships manifest actively both in the political sphere, within institutional structures, and through the activities of international non-governmental organizations. At the meso level, communication channels connect cultural regions, groups, communities, and organizations within countries. Engagement at the macro level

represents an important component of the external policy of cultural groups, aimed at altering or consolidating their positions within the broader cultural space. The micro level involves interpersonal contacts and relationships among representatives of different cultures. Intercultural contacts may occur between members of the same society as well as between members of different societies. In the article "Intercultural Communication: From Differentiation to Inclusion", we systematized the interactions of communicants in intercultural communication according to their spatial context. Contacts may occur within the "home" territory of one of the interacting parties; within a foreign territory for all participants in the communication; in areas of movement, which are dynamically changing and belong to none of the parties; or within shared territory – frontier communication (Kolinko, 2019).

There is still no unified classification of the acculturation process, but all classifications converge on the idea that the result of communicants' integration into a new culture may take various forms of inclusion or exclusion. American scholars K. Ward, S. Bochner, and A. Furnham articulated the following types of acculturation: integration, assimilation, genocide, and segregation (Ward et al., 2005). Assimilation is the absorption of one culture by another. A type of assimilative cultural process can be identified in colonization, as the approach of colonial states took the form of imposing their cultural values and norms on the countries they conquered. The most active postcolonial studies focus on Western culture, its self-reflection, and its analysis of relations with other countries, particularly regarding the civilizational trajectory of technological development. Foundational explorations are presented, for example, in the works of E. Said (Said, 2019) and S. Benhabib. Researchers note a shift from the assimilative "melting pot" policy, in which all elements are "melted together", to a "salad bowl" approach, where each component retains its identity. Critical remarks regarding this approach point out the potential existence of groups that do not actively participate in societal life yet still benefit from social support.

Thus, segregation and genocide are excluded as viable approaches to resolving intercultural challenges. Assimilationist policies require additional adjustment within legislative, political, and public spheres. Cultural diversity does not necessarily lead to conflict. This assertion opens the way for further research into the conditions that either facilitate or hinder intercultural understanding. In implementing the principles of cultural recognition and diversity, many countries adopt a measured integration policy toward migrants, visitors from other cultures, and workers and students from abroad. Attitudes toward multiculturalism in academic and political discourse reflect the sensitivity and complexity of the issue. We consider assimilation and segregation to be controversial in terms of their effectiveness for developing multicultural territories. We advocate for a balanced integration strategy. It is necessary to distance oneself from the romanticized view of multiculturalism that assumes the independent coexistence of different cultures. The strengthening of collective identity in contemporary nations is achieved not through separation, but through consensus regarding the rules of interaction and cooperation operating within society. This shared foundation creates space for the recognition of a multitude of culturally conditioned individual life forms. Only on the basis of such consensus can individuals move beyond predefined cultural frameworks while respecting

other identities. The formation of identity requires the presence of the Other, as an awareness of difference within a shared space.

The integration model describes the structures of culturally pluralistic societies. The term "integration" is sometimes mistakenly used interchangeably with "assimilation", but it is important to emphasize that these terms have entirely different meanings and describe fundamentally distinct processes. Integration characterizes the process of coexisting within the same territory cultural groups that maintain their core cultural identities while interacting and reconfiguring with other groups to pursue equally important objectives, relationships, and shared social processes.

Canadian scholar J. Berry adds marginalization to the processes of integration, assimilation, and separation, wherein an individual or group loses their home culture but does not connect their life to the host culture (Berry, 1994). The choice of a strategic acculturation path depends on the willingness of newcomers to engage with the host culture, as well as the attitudes of the host community toward new members. Intercultural communication in shared frontier territories adds another variant — confrontation — arising when opposing groups participate in the formation of a new cultural space and compete on equal terms to establish cultural norms and patterns.

In contemporary social processes and influences, priority is given to soft power and the creation of horizontal connections for effective communication, collaboration, and social, economic, and political development. Intercultural communication becomes key to effective cooperation among international organizations, local communities, and governments. Joint projects in humanitarian aid, education, healthcare, and media contribute to the establishment of horizontal links and trust. Anthropocentric strategies are developed, wherein the individual becomes not only a carrier of culture but also an ethical agent capable of shaping spaces of trust, openness, and dialogue.

This constitutes one of the key foci of research on cultural boundaries and cultural encounters. People perceive cultural boundaries in diverse ways. We have summarized the possible human behaviors in crisis situations arising from encounters with a new culture. These behaviors may include avoidance, a rejection of new experiences perceived as dangerous or hostile to one's home environment. Another response is the pursuit of knowledge about an unfamiliar cultural space. This pursuit may manifest in activities characterized by liminality and uncertainty, such as staying at borderlands, checkpoints, migrant shelters, or isolated recreational areas. Crossing a border offers opportunities for adaptation and cultural integration, but it may also lead to marginal existence within an unfamiliar cultural world. Refusal to recognize the necessity of acquiring intercultural competencies, or the imaginary blurring or denial of differences, complicates life in another culture. Conversely, the desire to learn the rules and norms of a new cultural environment, including its language, laws, and traditions, promotes effective accumulation of intercultural experience and successful socialization. Intercultural strategies — hospitality, tolerance, solidarity, dialogue, and the development of intercultural sensitivity — support this process.

Intercultural sensitivity manifests as the capacity to understand and accept a multiplicity of cultural perspectives. It develops through the transition from ethnocentrism, which perceives one's own culture as uniquely correct, to cultural relativism, which entails acceptance of diverse cultures and the ability to act appropriately

within the communicative context. To achieve the objectives of this research, we employed Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Bennett's research group defines intercultural sensitivity as the development of the ability to interpret and understand cultural differences and the diversity of cultural interactions (Bennett, Hammer, Wiseman, 2003). Intercultural sensitivity is a primary prerequisite for successful intercultural communication and for building a just and inclusive society. To measure intercultural sensitivity, Milton Bennett created the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), which conceptualizes the movement toward cultural differences and entails a tolerant attitude toward the meanings, codes, and values of other cultures, openness, and the absence of egocentrism.

Bennett's model identifies the stages of transition from ethnocentrism to cultural relativism: denial, defense, reversal, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Each stage reflects changes in worldview following intercultural contact. If an encounter with another cultural space not only articulates but also resolves adaptation challenges, the movement toward integration continues. Bennett's model is based on the hypothesis of unidirectional development of intercultural understanding — from ignorance to progressively greater knowledge of a new cultural way of life. This process is not strictly linear; it includes waves, deviations, and setbacks, yet the trajectory toward greater intercultural competence persists. We concur with this hypothesis. Individuals who do not undergo the process of intercultural adaptation, fail to acquire intercultural competencies, and do not gain knowledge or practical skills for living in another country, are compelled either to leave (or be excluded from) the offered conditions, seek new experiences, or return to their native cultural space.

Cultural centrism entails a tendency toward insularity within one's home culture. Upon encountering a new culture, individuals often experience an initial euphoria — everything novel attracts attention, provokes interest, and amazes. However, this reaction quickly fades, and individuals move into a stage of denial. Cultural differences influence the perception of the other culture as foreign and may lead to separation or even isolation.

Minimization of cultural differentiation occurs when cultural actors assume the universality of their values, perceive similarities between their worldview and that of members of the host culture, and regard elements of their own cultural perspective as universally applicable. This position reflects cultural centrism. Under such assumptions, cultural boundaries appear diffuse and blurred. However, a policy of perceiving others without understanding cultural contexts and differences may result in a worldview crisis, the creation of an illusory shared space, and consequently errors in communication and in developing one's integration strategy.

To avoid such errors, algorithms of cultural relativism are proposed. Behavioral and worldview differences are studied as patterns to be assimilated during adaptation to a new environment. Individuals modify not only their attitudes toward new norms and traditions, cognitive practices, and rules of communication, but also the general organization of their way of life. Exposure to alternative cultural information enriches personal experience. Gradually, a convergence of value systems and cultural practices can be observed, facilitating the integration of the individual into the new social space. The optimal outcome is the internalization of the new culture as one's own.

We conducted a sociological study of students from Ukrainian universities who participated in short-term internships in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and France between 2023 and 2025. The study focused on the following questions:

1. Does the encounter with another culture exhibit signs of a crisis during the internship period?
2. To what extent does exposure to another culture over a short-term period (educational programs and projects abroad) affect the students' level of intercultural sensitivity?

The assessment of intercultural sensitivity was conducted twice — before and after the students' short-term internships. Our objective was to confirm or refute the hypothesis that, as intercultural communication experience accumulates, the level of intercultural competence, including intercultural sensitivity, increases.

The diagnostic group consisted of 100 students from humanities and economics programs at Kyiv universities — namely, Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics and National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. A Likert scale was used for responses to each question: 5 – strongly agree; 4 – agree; 3 – neutral; 2 – disagree; 1 – strongly disagree.

After the questionnaires were completed, the average score for each question was calculated at both stages of the study. Additionally, differences in deviations between pre- and post-internship survey results were computed. Particular attention was paid to responses that demonstrated the highest scores and the greatest deviations.

The survey revealed that students' initial perceptions prior to the short-term educational program exhibited a high level of tolerance and intercultural sensitivity (ranging from 40.7% to 66.3%). We attribute this result, firstly, to the cultural diversity of Ukrainian society. Although the Ukrainian community is predominantly composed of ethnic Ukrainians, other groups, including Crimean Tatars, Jews, Moldovans, Bulgarians, Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, Poles, and others, also reside in the country. While these ethnic groups are not numerically large enough to form separate political entities, the cultural landscape encourages the development of worldview tolerance. Secondly, the stable European orientation of Ukrainian society, coupled with access to education and employment in European countries, fosters a shared value space in which tolerance and respect for other cultures become important markers. Previous intercultural experiences and an open informational environment also help explain the survey results.

Communicative characteristics at the stages of denial and minimization were represented by high scores. 62% of students indicated that they did not notice any obvious cultural differences, while 27% maintained that people of different nationalities have more similarities than differences.

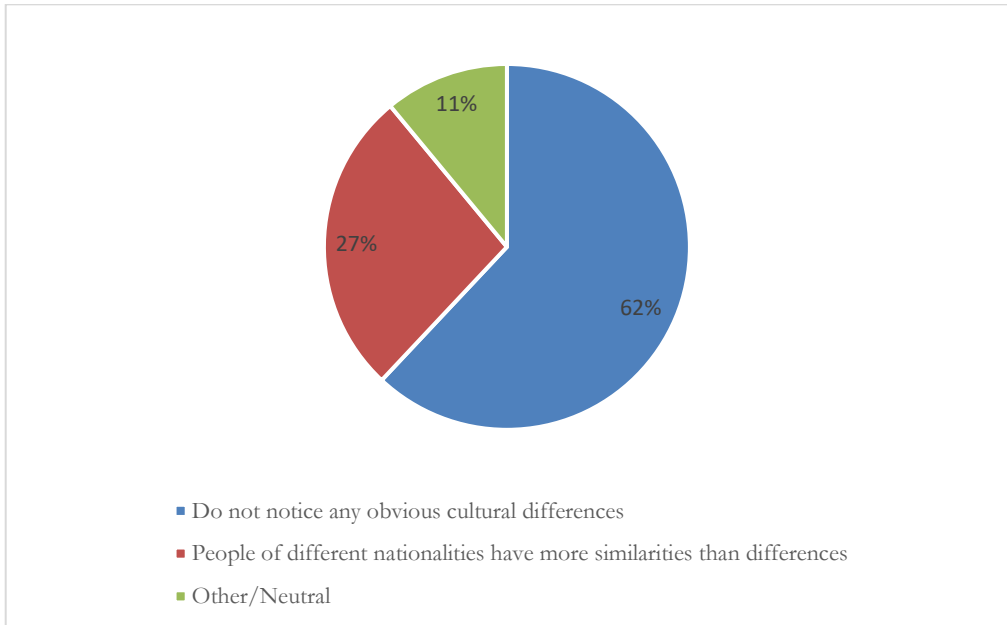


Figure 1. *Students' Perceptions of Cultural Differences During Denial and Minimization Stages*

We interpret these results as reflecting students' limited awareness of the impact of cultural contexts on communication. At the first stage of the survey, the description of adaptation and integration stages elicited active responses, with many answers showing maximum scores. Students confirmed their readiness to modify their verbal and nonverbal behavior to align with that of their communication partner, temporarily suspend their own worldview, and adopt that of another, as well as to make decisions based on the analysis and comparison of cultural features. It should be noted that students received preparatory training in intercultural communication prior to their time abroad. We believe that this training was a key factor contributing to their high level of awareness in this area.

Theoretical understanding of the necessity for adaptation does not imply an easy or rapid restructuring of one's worldview, emotional state, or behavioral patterns in new conditions, as the results showed: positive responses after the internship increased only slightly. The most significant change was observed at the acceptance stage: living in a new culture allowed students to recognize the heterogeneity of both their own and the host culture and to understand that this diversity arises from the varied cultural experiences of its members. This insight contributes to a more sustainable approach to intercultural learning, as it fosters awareness and respect for cultural differences rather than superficial conformity.

The study demonstrated that short-term educational programs effectively promote the development of students' intercultural sensitivity. The process of understanding and accepting a foreign culture begins at the very start of the stay abroad. Initially, students familiarize themselves with the specifics of migration legislation and visa regulations, urban infrastructure, transportation options, and payment systems. At this stage, the first linguistic and social barriers to communication emerge. The more actively students engaged in interpersonal contacts, the higher their level of intercultural sensitivity. The

duration of their stay also positively influenced this development. High levels of intercultural sensitivity enabled students to participate in a variety of university, municipal, and international events, such as conferences, workshops, and ceremonial activities. Such engagement not only strengthens personal competencies but also contributes to the sustainable development of cross-cultural understanding and community cohesion.

However, the results also raise questions about the long-term stability of these outcomes. While short-term immersion enhances openness and acceptance of cultural diversity, it remains uncertain whether such sensitivity endures beyond the program's duration. Future research should therefore investigate whether extended or recurring intercultural experiences foster deeper transformations in empathy, cooperation, and intercultural awareness. Exploring these longitudinal effects would help determine the durability of intercultural competence and provide valuable insights for designing educational policies and programs aimed at sustaining intercultural engagement over time.

Bottom-up intercultural strategies create initiatives aimed at improving intercultural interaction. Importantly, these strategies emerge through the efforts of individuals, groups, and local communities rather than top-down directives. They focus on solving concrete practical challenges and are more flexible and adaptive than centralized institutional approaches. The development trajectory of intercultural competencies — from individual initiatives to broader community and state structures — helps shape a new image of cultural communities capable of overcoming societal crises and implementing sustainable development goals. These grassroots strategies exemplify how intercultural engagement can contribute to resilient, inclusive, and culturally aware societies.

5. Conclusions

In times of disruption, which most analysts consider characteristic of the contemporary period, issues of cultural continuity and the search for ways to reconcile cultural dynamism with the preservation of established forms of human life come to the forefront. Intercultural communication plays a leading role in constructing a sustainable future. The preservation of cultural diversity amid globalization and political turbulence is essential. In times of crisis, intercultural communication facilitates mutual understanding among different ethnic, religious, and social groups. This can reduce tension, mitigate xenophobic attitudes, and create a space for solidarity. Cultural diversity entails various traditions for responding to challenges. Communication across cultures enables learning from one another: adopting practices of survival, self-help, collective support, and community mobilization. Crisis events often expose biases and stereotypes. At the same time, open communication between representatives of different cultures, as well as the exchange of experiences and worldview narratives, helps shift perceptions, develop empathy, and foster acceptance and inclusion of the Other.

Intercultural communication operates in a continuous process of transcending cultural boundaries. Conducting sociological analyses of intercultural communication spaces calls for active engagement with the polysemy of borderlands. Moving beyond one's own cultural world requires studying the fundamentals of intercultural sensitivity. This intercultural competence facilitates a deeper understanding of members of other cultures, including their behaviors, values, speech conventions, and non-verbal cues. It reduces the

risks of conflicts and social exclusion, challenges stereotypes and prejudices, and develops skills for successful professional activity, learning, and self-development.

The diagnostic framework of students' intercultural sensitivity proposed in this article can be useful for designing short-term internship programs, assessing the effectiveness of cultural integration, and planning the overall outcomes of educational activities in higher education institutions. Based on its methodological foundation, it is promising to further develop practices of intercultural interaction and to regulate the legal environment for intercultural dialogue.

To translate these findings into sustainable educational practice, universities should institutionalize intercultural competence as a measurable learning outcome. This may include developing standardized assessment tools — such as intercultural sensitivity scales, reflective portfolios, or peer-evaluation models — to track students' progress over time. Embedding these metrics into curricula and accreditation frameworks would ensure that empathy, solidarity, and intercultural awareness are not treated as abstract ideals but as concrete, assessable dimensions of academic development. Establishing such benchmarks could guide higher education policy toward building fair, inclusive, and culturally resilient communities, aligning institutional practice with the broader goals of sustainable development.

Intercultural sensitivity contributes to the creation of an inclusive society, an open community in which individuals from any cultural background feel valued and accepted. Awareness, empathy, and intercultural competencies are essential traits for individuals in a society committed to sustainable development.

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