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The 1st International Congress of Transcultural Studies in Italy: Project Development—Conference Realization— Enquiring Outlook

Abstract:

Il saggio riassume gli esiti del 1° *Convegno Internazionale di Studi Transculturali* tenutosi presso l'Università di Macerata (9-10 aprile 2025), ricordando lo sviluppo del progetto, ripercorrendo la realizzazione del convegno e valutando le conclusioni che lo svolgimento delle discussioni comportano. Introducendo si riproducono l'approccio metateorico, le premesse pratiche e il concetto programmatico focalizzando il neologismo della *transculturalità* proposto dal filosofo tedesco Wolfgang Welsch. Introdotto in Italia sistematicamente sul piano accademico negli studi culturali a partire dal 2006, il convegno ha voluto focalizzare la forza proattiva del *transculturalismo*. Riepilogando i singoli contributi del convegno nel loro insieme si constata una crescente unificazione europea sul piano scientifico, riconoscendo, in un ultimo passo, nell'utilità dei metodi, mezzi e strumenti transculturali un progresso (*re-*) *costruttivo* che favorisce la cooperazione piuttosto che la competizione sia sul piano universitario che socioculturale.

The essay summarizes the results of the 1st *International Congress of Transcultural Studies* held at the University of Macerata (April 9-10, 2025), reviewing the development of the project, the organization of the conference, and the conclusions drawn from the discussions. The introduction reproduces the metatheoretical approach, the practical premises, and the programmatic concept, focusing on the neologism of *transculturality* proposed by the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch. Implemented systematically in Italy at the academic level in Cultural Studies since 2006, the conference sought to focus on the proactive power of *transculturalism*. Summarizing the individual methodological contributions, we can see a growing European unification on a scientific level, while finally recognizing in the usefulness of transcultural methods, means, and tools a (*re-*) *constructive* progress that favors cooperation rather than competition on both a higher education and sociocultural level.

Parole chiave

Transcultural Studies – Glocalization – Higher Education – Transdisciplinarity

1. Metatheoretical Approach, Practical Premises and Programmatic Concept

To what an extent can *transculturality* (Welsch 1999) be regarded as a useful scientific tool in today's academia? Starting from this fundamental question, the organizers of the 1st *International Congress of Transcultural Studies* initially unanimously agreed that there was a strong case for finding the systematical transcultural approach *per se* convincing, even if a bunch of questions remained without sustainable answers. This initial situation led to the formulation of a first premise: in the context of constructive narratives and image-generating metaphors, *transculturality* indeed helps us to understand, cope with, and shape the complexity of our everyday lives more easily. Incidentally, by recognizing, applying, and practicing transcultural principles, we also learn about the philosophical content of what not only 'holds the world together at its core,' but also what connects us humans around the globe and enables us to achieve uplifting goals. Yet, the question of where and how transculturality can be implemented or only adequately located in the higher education sector and under which scientific conditions it proves to be particularly proactive remained unanswered.

We therefore hoped that some of the outlines would become clearer during a congress, where we would bring together experts from various disciplines. So, we began to plan the organization. After a labor-intensive preparation period—based on the assumption that transculturality would be useful in '(re-) constructing' connections that were thought to be lost, or skills that had faded into the background and contexts that have become invisible today—we elaborated the theoretical and logistical framework. Step by step, thanks to the cooperation of the core team directed by Raffaele Tumino and Simone Betti, both affiliated to the University of Macerata, and me, operating from abroad, the projected international conference on the research field of Transcultural Studies was finally held in Italy in spring 2025. Twenty-three experts from various countries were invited to join the event at the traditional University of Macerata, founded in 1290, in the medieval provincial capital of the same name, located on one of the central Apennine hills southwest of Rimini in the Marche region, which slopes down toward the Adriatic coast, from April 9th to 10th, 2025. The twenty-two guest speakers (one of the twenty-three was unable to attend) from a wide variety of countries gathered in the Aula Magna of the Faculty of Education, Cultural Heritage, and Tourism—vis-à-vis the picturesque, snow-capped peaks of the Sibillini Mountains rising on the horizon—for an extraordinary, international and bilingual (English-Italian) congress that was subsequently reported also publicly.¹

¹ A preliminary report about this congress was published right after the conclusion of the conference in April 2025 in German language (Dagmar Reichardt: "Internationale Kon-

For the first time on Italian soil, specialists from a wide range of academic and scientific fields systematically examined current research findings from their respective disciplines and expressed their views on the overarching theme of *Borderlands, Mobility and Rights in the Era of Glocalization: Transculturality as a (Re-) Constructive Method*—in Italian: *Terre di frontiera, mobilità e diritti nell'era della glocalizzazione. La transculturalità come metodo (ri-) costruttivo*. The conference guests, who came from Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Morocco, Canada, and all over Italy—from Calabria, Apulia, Lazio, Tuscany, and Lombardy, especially from the three largest and most populous university cities of Rome, Milan, and Naples—gave presentations side by side with the “Maceratesi”—their local colleagues—on the current state of knowledge regarding the growing transcultural and social *glocal* interconnections in Italy and the world, during two days of lively professional exchange, dedicative work, and (re-) constructive results.



“Borderlands, Mobility and Rights in the Era of Glocalization: Transculturality as a (Re-) Constructive Method”. Photo: Università degli Studi di Macerata

ferenz zu Transkulturellen Studien in Italien”, online publication on www.kultur-port.de, 28 April 2025). The essay in hand is an extended and revised version of that original text, now translated in English, enhanced, elaborated and scientifically processed for the present congress proceedings.

Why now Italy? The reasons are as practical as coincidental, yet quite logical. The lectures and plenary discussions focused on the concept of *transculturation* (Spanish: *transculturación*), originally coined in 1940 by Cuban scholar of Afro-Cuban culture Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) in his seminal study about *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Ortiz 1995). Ortiz' essential idea of *transculturation* was then independently but significantly developed further by German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch (born 1946) since the early 1990s. Introducing 'a neologism out of a neologism', i.e. an own neologism that initially emerged independently from Ortiz's neologism, Welsch turned the idea that 'everything is connected to everything' into an innovative concept of *transculturality*, theorizing it in accordance with the zeitgeist of our (late) postmodernism. Thus, the German philosopher invented his own neologism, whereby he retrospectively overlaid Ortiz's neologism, to which he would connect expressively and on an inclusive base only in 2024 (Welsch 2024, pp. 15-17)—irony of cultural history or happy coincidence as it may be considered.

It's on this substantial publication and work-in-progress base that as a cultural and literary scholar but also as an Italianist, after having applied the transcultural terminology in various publications already systematically from 2006 onwards (Reichardt 2006; Reichardt 2017; Reichardt & Moll 2018, *inter alia*), I had the opportunity—together with the postcolonial fictional Italian writer, co-author and antiracist activist Igiaba Scego (born 1974)—to introduce the term of *transculturalismo*, i.e. *transculturalism*, into Italy's leading and academically authoritative encyclopedia, the Enciclopedia Treccani (Reichardt & Scego 2020). Two years later, we were asked to further spread the concept of *transculturalism* online in English language (Reichardt & Scego 2022), too. Starting from these theoretical premises, cooperations and interactions, it was only fitting for editors-in-chief Raffaele Tumino and Alfredo Ancora to name their new online journal, founded in 2022, Transculturale (literally translated into English meaning: 'transcultural'), in which the reader is now able to find the proceedings of the first international conference in Italy ever dedicated exclusively to the research field of Transcultural Studies.

Therefore, the aim of this 1st *International Congress of Transcultural Studies*—designed as the starting point of an ongoing series of free lectures (or at least as a kick-off set of three conferences in quick succession)—was first and foremost to explore the essential approaches to *transculturation*, *transculturality* and *transculturalism* on both the theoretical-philosophical and practical-applicative levels through the history of analytic thought, hinting at its transdisciplinary overview from the outset. Spanning from Cuban anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz and his above-mentioned groundbreaking study from 1940 (Ortiz 1940) to Hungarian–French ethnopsychiatrist George Devereux

(1908-1985), from Italian comparatist Armando Gnisci (1946-2019) to Mediterranean sociologist Franco Cassano (1943-2021), from Belgian pedagogue Alain Goussout (1955-2016) to postmodern German philosopher Welsch's (then) latest publication (Welsch 2024), it was intended to identify, specify and synchronize the individual similarities and conceptual particularities of the transcultural method through the last 85 years of the history of terminology, heralded by Ortiz's *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* first translated in English language already back in 1947 (Ortiz 1995).

While the participants revisited, in these contexts, *transculturality* as an innovative tool of analysis in various scientific fields, they aimed, at the same time, to redefine and reevaluate it as a constructive method in the positive sense of an additional perspective and new angle to better understand both late postmodern societies and complexities in general as well as the specific and diverse cultural and linguistic communities which currently surround us in their plurality in the year 2025. In an age of transition, precarity and planetary polycrisis, the intention was to highlight the potential of transcultural parameters by connecting them with those of *glocalization*—understood as synergy at once local and global—to find constructivist factors with an outcome-related function, i.e. asking what facets can, today, serve as a prospective operational key.

In doing so, the proclaimed (*Re-*) *Constructive Method* wanted to respond not only to a new systematic need after the deconstructivist period of a Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and the increasing fading of the historical era labeled as *Postmodernism*. Rather, by orienting ourselves to the so-called *Constructive Journalism*—far, tendentially, from scandal, scoop and hate speech, but with that no less objective, (self-) critical, investigative and progressive—the transferability of the term and its usability for Transcultural Studies was questioned. By relating the comparative address of this specific 'constructivist' media trend to the fields of philosophy, systemic methodology and cultural-historical analysis, however, it was not intended to investigate primarily *Constructive Journalism* itself. Affirmed since the 2010s and born initially in the Scandinavian and then Anglophone spheres to indicate a tendency of the media to report solution-oriented (rather than negative and conflict-based) news and thus to refute the slogan 'Only bad news are good news', the guest speakers were instead asked to adopt the methodological underpinnings of this type of worldview and appreciative reporting, in order to focus, in this very perspective, on the potential of the transcultural 'toolbox'.

Hence, broadly speaking, also the present proceedings try to conceive the field of *transculture* as a (transcultural) "Laboratorium" (Reichardt 2006, p. 93), in which to examine concise artistic, literary, historical, sociocultural, psychological, medical, physical, biological, legal, political,

geostrategic or communicative landscapes under the banner of an education that aims to re-establish confident gazes toward a human paradigm which has always existed and, at the same time, has to be '(re-) constructed', precisely, in view of a convivial and sustainable future.

2. Content Management, Transcultural Topics and Speakers

During the congress, typical discussion approaches revolved around recurring questions such as: How can we align *transculture* with necessarily cross-cutting and cross-over parameters in the historic wake of the first quarter century of the 2000s? How can we—beginning with our daily social lifestyle today as well as with a proactive, both general and school-related pedagogy—implement it through the various sociopolitical institutions, both into public opinion and university and/or school curricula as well as into the training of teachers as the most suitable form of a polylogue for understanding in solidarity, cross-border cohesion, and osmotic cultural exchange?

Following the hypothesis of such an evolving (*Re-*) *Constructive Philosophy*, within the framework of our convention, the lecturers tried to find various answers and to discuss extensively nowadays possibilities and restrictions of the transcultural approach, defining and concretizing it further. But beyond that, the gathering of experts in Macerata was used also to practice *transdisciplinarity* by examining and debating the applications of the transcultural axiom in the context of the *Borderlands, Mobility and Rights* as announced in the title of the congress. Individual contributions embraced, therefore, various disciplines and aspects as diverse as: philosophy, art, musicology, literature, media industry, geography, anthropology, legal history, pedagogy, and transcultural (medical and/or ethnic) psychiatry.

Right at the opening of the first day, Wolfgang Welsch—the inventor of the transcultural network metaphor, who at an early stage of Transcultural Studies edited among others a book together with Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo (Welsch & Vattimo 1998) and who, after he last researched and taught at the University of Jena, now lives in Berlin as an emeritus professor—as well as Moroccan psychiatrist and anthropologist Rita El-Khayat, who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by former Italian President Giorgio Napolitano for her ongoing commitment to combating gender-based violence, were awarded the official seal of the University of Macerata as guests of honor at the congress.

Regarding the program, the congress initiators and organizers Raffaele Tumino, Simone Betti, and myself were joined by regional representatives from the Marche region at the opening of the congress, as the Rec-

tor of the University of Macerata, John F. McCourt, was unable to attend it because he was on duty in Riga, Latvia, that very day.² In fact, after the 4th Summit of the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA) had taken place in his presence in Vilnius, Lithuania in 2024, and rectors from various European universities had negotiated formal cooperation agreements,³ the first face-to-face meeting of the European University Association (EUA) Leadership Development Programme took place during the Macerata conference, not only at the Academy of Sciences in Latvia's capital Riga. The responsible teams and representatives of the ERUA also met in Sofia to plan the upcoming 5th ERUA Summit at the New Bulgarian University, to which Rector McCourt had also been appointed as a member representative before traveling on to China.

In line with the vision of *Universities without Walls* initially proclaimed for 2030,⁴ the ERUA, as an alliance of European reform universities—just like the transculturality congress at the University of Macerata and its Rector himself—can be seen as a visible sign of a Europe growing together at the university level. Despite his absence at the opening of the congress, the Rector of the University of Macerata also embodies a novelty in the history of science. In November 2022, John McCourt, an Irish English scholar and James Joyce expert, became the first non-Italian to be appointed rector of a state university in Italy. At the same time, John McCourt is considered the first Irish rector of a continental European university since James Smith became rector of Charles University in Prague in 1743. Thus, McCourt's recent appointment was welcomed by the Italian press as encouraging evidence of the growing international presence in the Italian university landscape.⁵

² Cf. the following EUA news about the first cohort meeting of the European University Association (EUA) leadership development pilot program in Riga, Latvia, on 9 April 2025: European University Association EUA (ed.): "EUA holds first on-site Leadership Development Programme session in Riga", 15 April 2025, online: <https://www.eua.eu/news/eua-news/eua-holds-first-on-site-leadership-development-programme-session-in-riga.html>.

³ Cf. the following report on the 4th Summit of the European Reform University Alliance (ERUA) of leading academics, researchers, and policymakers, attended by Rector Prof. John McCourt (second from right in the photo, which can be found on the website cited) in Vilnius, Lithuania, June 25-27, 2024: European University Association ERUA (ed.): "ERUA Summit 2024: A Beacon of Innovation and Collaboration in European Higher Education", 25 June 2024, online: <https://erua-eui.eu/2024/06/25/erua-summit-2024-a-beacon-of-innovation-and-collaboration-in-european-higher-education/>.

⁴ Cf. the official brochure: European University Association ERUA (ed.): *Universities without Walls: A Vision for 2030*, Brussels, February 2021, www.eua.eu, online: <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnncbjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.eua.eu/images/universities20without20walls2020a20vision20for2020301.pdf>.

⁵ Cf. e.g. in English: N.N.: "John McCourt Makes History As First Non-Italian Rector of an Italian University", in: *Intrieste: English Language Magazine*, 13 November



From left to right: Wolfgang Welsch, Raffaele Tumino, and Rita El-Khayat at the awarding of the seal of the University of Macerata. Photo: Università di Macerata (photo editing: Claus Friede)

That Europe is reviving and coming closer together on both a small and large scale—in other words, *glocally*, as the conference title promised—is also reflected in the fact that the expert meeting on Transcultural Studies at the University of Macerata could already be announced under the banner of ERUA. Thus, the (albeit slowly but surely) continental integration process became evident from the press materials, the

2022, online: [https://intrieste.com/2022/11/13/john-mccourt-makes-history-as-first-non-italian-rector-of-an-italian-university/#:~:text=Culture,John%20McCourt%20Makes%20History%20As%20First%20Non,Rector%20of%20an%20Italian%20University&text=Irish%20academic%20known%20for%20hist,rector%20of%20an%20Italian%20university](https://intrieste.com/2022/11/13/john-mccourt-makes-history-as-first-non-italian-rector-of-an-italian-university/#:~:text=Culture,John%20McCourt%20Makes%20History%20As%20First%20Non,Rector%20of%20an%20Italian%20University&text=Irish%20academic%20known%20for%20hist,rector%20of%20an%20Italian%20university;); or in Italian language: N.N.: “L’ateneo di Macerata ha un magnifico irlandese: John Francis McCourt primo rettore straniero in Italia”, in: *La Repubblica*, 1 November 2022, online: https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2022/11/01/news/macerata_universita_primo_rettore_straniero_in_italia_john_francis_mccourt-372532897/; Redazione ANSA: “Università: a Macerata primo rettore straniero in Italia. Prof. irlandese McCourt, ‘io rettore europeo in ateneo europeo’”, in: *ANSA.it*, 2 November 2022, online: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2022/11/02/universita-a-macerata-primo-rettore-straniero-in-italia_f4071ccf-92b0-4c7b-a48f-be23424a0dc2.html.

conference poster, and the program, which featured its logo. In fact, one of the goals of this inter-university institution of European university alliances is—in addition to strengthening scientific ties between several universities for the purpose of disseminating knowledge and exchanging teaching staff—to organize international conferences. Since 2024, thanks to the efforts of Rector McCourt, Macerata has joined the ranks of the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Germany), Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis (France), the University of the Aegean (Greece), the New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria), SWPS University (Poland), the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria / ULP GC (Spain), and Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania).⁶

While the ERUA network is paradigmatically understood as “the voice of European universities”⁷ because it promotes unity, knowledge, creativity, and social responsibility at the macro level of the EU in conjunction with the participating universities, in the micro context of the congress in Macerata, Europe revealed its genuinely transcultural side in very concrete professional terms. This became particularly clear from the multifaceted range of interpretations presented by the speakers in the course of the transdisciplinary exchange on issues relating to *Borderlands, Mobility and Rights in the Era of Glocalization*, in which they questioned *Transculturality as a (Re-) Constructive Method* from ever new perspectives.

Behind the walls of the University of Macerata, which has over 10,000 students and is particularly renowned in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences, discussions focused primarily on countering a misunderstood “splendid isolation of cultures”, as it was said. This concept was considered outdated in the discussions, because it is still based on an asymmetrical relationship between cultures. Indeed, it was revealed that this kind of disproportion continues to have a detrimental effect on many educational institutions, schools, urban infrastructures, as well as care and health facilities around the world. Accordingly, the plenary discussions consistently tried to counter the subjugation of one or more (native) cultures to a supposedly dominant (affiliated) culture with *(re-) constructive*, pacifistic alternatives. Representatives from a wide range of disciplines, including Anthropology, Literary Studies, Psychiatry, Philosophy, Law, Geography, Medicine, Sociology, Education, and Cultural Studies

⁶ View the partner universities of the University of Macerata and the ERUA network by scrolling, for instance, through the “List of Alliances” here: European Commission (ed.): “European Universities alliances and their partners”, online: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative/map>.

⁷ Back cover of the ERUA brochure *Universities without Walls* mentioned above, cf. footnote 4.

(with a particular focus on Transcultural, Migration and Postcolonial Studies), presented the expert audience with case studies that were both constructive and critical, along with corresponding possible solutions.



Palazzo Romani-Adami, Rectorate building of the University of Macerata. Photo: Matteo Musto. License: CC BY-SA 4.0.

One thing stood out among this select group of scholars, apart from their varying degrees of specialization in questions of systematic approaches to transculturality and transculturalism. The working atmosphere was consistently characterized by something that is all too often lacking in the EU Parliament—and, unfortunately, in the international academic landscape as well: a reciprocal, emphatically ‘open,’ inquisitive, and benevolently accepting attitude toward the work results of the speakers, whose academic positions were represented across generations and ranged from doctoral students to postdocs and young scientists to both current and emeritus chair holders. Thanks to their reciprocal, overall open-mindedness regarding the key methodological techniques for understanding the complexity of transcultural realities, which were demonstrated using individual case studies, most of the speakers succeeded in conveying to the audience how authentic relationships to fundamental narratological, philosophical, aesthetic, social, and anthropological topoi of subjectivity and solidarity—such as love, death, health, social cohesion, hope, beauty,

or transcendence—can be (re-) established. In this way, at least during the generously timed discussion rounds, which were enriched by individual keynote speeches, it was possible to put into practice the conviction that promoting cooperation and multilateral communication is more sensible than competition.

In addition to the passion for joint solution-oriented thinking and to the productive working atmosphere of these collaborative, solidarity-based professional encounters among peers, the following insights, discussion results, and further questions can be summarized as the conclusions of the congress. All experts agreed on the general tenor that, for reasons of transnational peace and securing a sustainable future, a paradigm shift in spirit is needed to replace ignorance with respect (**Pietro Barbetta**),⁸ the language of violence with a ‘pedagogy of disobedience’ (**Giancarlo Costabile**), and the ongoing gender issue with the idea of establishing a worldwide ‘brotherhood’ (**Alfredo Ancora**)—and sisterhood, one may add. The latter gender-focused conclusion arose in particular from a further rereading of Fernando Ortiz’s work *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, in which the Cuban author confronts the male-connoted world—embodied by the imaginary figure named “Don Tabaco” (Engl.: “Don Tobacco”)—with “Doña Azúcar” (Engl.: “Doña Sugar”) (Ortiz 1940, p. 2; Ortiz 1995, p. 3), who personifies sugar and whom Ortiz presents to the reader as rather strange and harmful, thus with a tendency toward misogynistic undertones, characteristic of Ortiz’s time and culture.

Various contributions here made it clear how language—and foreign language teaching in particular (**Simona Bartoli-Kucher**)—can be helpful and defusing in gender issues by paying attention to communication that is committed to conviviality, friendliness, and various forms of commitment and connectedness (**Rita El-Khayat**, **Ada Plazzo**, **Stefano Polenta**). Not only language and speech in the linguistic sense have always benefited from individual, consciously chosen, transculturally effective use in promoting civilization, but also the languages of the arts, of aesthetics and art criticism, in the context of creative adoptions and hybridizations (**Wolfgang Welsch**), or of music, e.g. as a counterpoint for layering and mediation in the Gaza conflict (**Iain Chambers**), were demonstrated by a number of particularly striking examples.

⁸ In this paragraph and the following two paragraphs, the proper names in parentheses refer to the contributions of the congress participants mentioned, who devoted particular attention to a specific research aspect in their presentations. It should be noted that a number of topics and scientific approaches overlap or could also be found in other talks. For the sake of conciseness, though, in the above enumeration every participant has been named only once.



Left: Wolfgang Welsch in conversation with a conference participant. Photo: Dagmar Reichardt. Right: Rita El-Khayat, Arianna Alpini (both blurred) and Iain Chambers on the conference podium. Photo: Università degli Studi di Macerata

This would also counteract asymmetrical power distributions in the medical-psychiatric field, whereby, according to the English anthropologist, biologist and sociologist Gregory Bateson (1904-1980), physical symptoms of sick migrants would be recognized as cultural influences and could then be treated accordingly (**Pietro Barbetta, Aditi Chauhan**). At the same time, it would be necessary to recognize that the transcultural language of the mind can be divided not only into (unconscious, universal) feelings and (conscious, individual) emotions, but that it can also be used as a connecting element. Around the globe, transformative environmental protection (**Anna Maria De Simone, Elena Dell'Agnese**), decolonial approaches to Euro-critical comparative studies (**Rosita Deluigi, Isabella Crespi**), anthropological-hermeneutic jurisprudence (**Arianna Alpini**), as well as land acquisition, surveying of the earth, and humanity's urge to territorialize (**Flavia Stara, Gian Luigi Corinto**) were also used as levers to create distance from oneself through objectification and to reveal a new mindset and correspondingly changed behavior. Focusing on commonalities also helps to increase social awareness of post-migrant conditions (**Costantino Maeder, Raffaele Taddeo, Anna Belozorovitch**), to 'creolize' communities according to the so-called *créolité* movement (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, Confiant 1989) and Caribbean author Édouard Glissant (Glissant 1990), to 'decolonize' Europe in the sense of Armando Gnisci (Gnisci 2004, 2007), a writer from Apulia who was actively involved in Rome for decades and, according to southern Italian sociologist Franco Cassano (Cassano 1996, 2012), to face the misery of the world and, more than that, to literally 'mix' with it (**Rino Caputo**), although, as has been critically noted, hybrid identities should not be idealized either (**Amaury Dehoux**).

Given the broad methodological and transdisciplinary approaches of the scientists present, creativity should not have been neglected in this

productive academic experimentation with different worlds. In the final plenary discussion round, various metaphors for the phenomenon of transculturality were searched. These could range from the often-used ‘melting pot’ to comparisons with, for example, a mosaic, puzzle, kaleidoscope, or prism, up to botanical analogies to root networks, rhizomes, or mangrove trees, to bird migrations (in their sky formations crossing national borders), carpet weaves, patchwork quilts, color palettes, suitcases (in the plural), or a simple bowl of salad (which, as a fruit salad—in Italian: *macedonia*—is significantly named after the ancient kingdom and multi-ethnic ‘mix’ of Macedonia).

3. Outcome Conclusions and Project Continuation

In the course of the congress in Macerata, however, it soon became apparent that the enlightening spirit of research among the guest speakers extended far beyond the scientific experiments in the intellectual “transcultural laboratory” (Reichardt 2006, p. 93) of the large auditorium. This was evident in the fact that the network metaphor introduced by philosopher Welsch and used several times during the congress reappeared less than a week after departure in the title of an article authored by postcolonialism expert Iain Chambers and published in the Germanophone digital magazine *KulturPort.De*. In his column about ‘Networks of the Present’ (Chambers 2025), the Neapolitan scientist of Scottish origin critically captured the mood in the US after a recent vacation in California from a postcolonial perspective. Initially, in his op-ed article, Chambers picks up the political slogan ‘No one is illegal’ as an indirect continuation of the historical legal quote ‘All men are created equal,’ which was most recently used as a decisive public argument during Martin Luther King’s constitutional protest march for the civil rights of US citizens in 1964. In doing so, Chambers seems to be sending a friendly signal of symbolic synergizing greeting—whether consciously or unconsciously—not only to his German colleague of almost the same age, but also to all participants of the Macerata congress *post festum* and to all readers interested in the basic concepts of anti-imperialistic theory of communication (Hall 1973) and of *transculturalism*, by indirectly referring to Welsch’s ‘network’ idea in the headline.

Wrapping up my description of the background as well as the ‘making of’ of the first tentative congress event dedicated to the research field of Transcultural Studies held in Italy, as a preliminary conclusion we may state that during the conference various case studies and declinations of *Transculturality as a (Re-) Constructive Method* were theoretically presented, practically proposed and concretely discussed. In over twenty talks it

was attempted to project this hybrid space, which Homi K. Bhabha called paradigmatically a *third space* (Bhabha 1994, p. 36) over thirty years ago, approaching it from transdisciplinary perspectives. This *Borderland*—as Gloria Anzaldúa first defined the areas close to the border and the home of the *New Mestiza* back in 1987 (Anzaldúa 2022)—is still a typical *glocalization* phenomenon of our late postmodern times (Roudomtof 2016; Haensler, Heine, Zanetti. 2022). Also, aesthetical (Welsch 2024), literary (Pratt 1992; Moll 2015; Sinopoli & Contarini 2023) as well as translational and comparative approaches (Casanova 1999; Apter 2006; Nergaard 2023) came up frequently. The political discussions of the so-called Global South (Chambers 1994, 2020; Cassano 1996, 2012; Durisin & Gnisci 2000; Connell 2007) were no less lively. Finally, from a transcultural point of view, the studies presented in the fields of Pedagogy (Tumino 2019, 2023; Roth & Shaked 2007), Clinical Psychology as well as Psychiatry (Leff 1988; Ancora 2006, 2010), and Medical Humanities (El Khayat 2003, 2005; Calabrese 2023) were just as scientifically sound. Considering that Italian Literary Studies opened up to transcultural analytical approaches remarkably early and sustainably (Le Pichon & Caronia 1991; Reichardt 2006), more recently the interest of Ecocriticism (Capone & Valisena 2022) as well as of World Literature (Gnisci, Sinopoli, Moll 2010) and Health Care (Ancora 2006; Ancora & Sbardella 2011) seemed to be particularly able to gain political relevance through a transcultural lens, thus fundamentally matching the focus of interest at this *1st International Congress of Transcultural Studies*.

Under such circumstances, in these *Liquid Times* or our *Age of Uncertainty* as per Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman 2006), it is to be hoped that the European higher education landscape will not only continue to flourish and prosper in the spirit of democracy and of a decolonized, creolized *Transcultural Europe* (Meinhof & Triandafyllidou 2006; Gnisci 2011, 2013) but will also grow in a scientifically (*re-*) *constructive* manner by cooperating with more and more also non-European cultural spheres, universities and social groups. Now all that remains is for the socially relevant ‘inner circles’ from the university disciplines of the 27 individual EU member states to continue to partner cross-culturally and/or transversally, position themselves flexibly, and assert themselves qualitatively in order to become strong when acting on the federal level of the imaginary worldwide *glocal* community that promotes bright minds and team-oriented cooperation for globally resilient cohesion. The *2nd International Congress of Transcultural Studies* is to follow soon and, in line with the motto ‘Building bridges rather than walls’,⁹ intends to increasingly involve non-European specialists

⁹ European Commission (ed.): “Building Bridges rather than Walls”, 18 January 2021, online: <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/projects/success-stories/all/building-bridges-rather-walls>.

and guest speakers in the scientific discourse on inclusive transcultural transformation dynamics, in order to further reveal the desire to explore transcultural mechanisms, expand their potential applications, and stimulate global knowledge exchange.

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