

# THE ART OF CONNECTING

## Paths to Cohesion in a Fractured Society

International Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference

Prague, 22-23.10.2024

Co-organizers: Charles University, University of Zielona Góra, International Connectivity Centre



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We invite you to discuss the art of connecting in the face of divisions. "The Art of Connection" is the fourth conference in the Good Connections series.

The starting point for reflection we want to undertake together is recognizing the paradoxical fact that in the modern era of universal connectivity, we must work intensively on the art of connecting. As individuals, communities, societies, and generations, we are technologically interconnected, but we lack cohesion, understood as the ability to establish and develop positive, mutually beneficial, strengthening, and lasting relationships.

The art of connecting includes ideas, research approaches, action strategies, and social practices that search for and traverse paths of cohesion in a processual, evolving, and collective way.

**We offer participation in four thematic sessions:**

**I Teaching as the art of connecting**

**II Achieving solidarity and cohesion  
through the migration process**

**III Mobility and social cohesion**

**IV Connecting ideas, people, and technologies**

**WE INVITE YOU TO SUBMIT ABSTRACTS CONTAINING THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:**

1. Name, surname, and affiliation of the author
2. Title of the paper
3. Description of the paper (no more than 1500 characters with spaces)
4. Preferred session number and name

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS: June 30th, 2024**

**HOW TO SUBMIT ABSTRACTS: sending the completed form to [M.Kwiatkowski@is.uz.zgora.pl](mailto:M.Kwiatkowski@is.uz.zgora.pl)**

# I SESSION

## Teaching as the art of connecting

Teaching is one of the most essential ways of connecting. A modern teacher has to deal with groups that are very diverse in terms of abilities, cultural capital, social status, and life situation. For their mission to be compelling, as James Coleman's research on social capital in education shows, they must be able to combine the potentials of students, teachers, and parents. How does this happen in the conditions of contemporary tensions and divisions? How do teachers deal with the art of connection? What barriers do they face? How do they shape their skills in this area?

In the theory and practice of teaching, education's didactic and psycho-sociological aspects merge with its philosophical and ethical dimensions. In contemporary society, teachers encounter a myriad of dilemmas that they must integrate into their profession and creatively address.

- Which teaching methods can promote social bonding among people?
- How can the classroom atmosphere be set to encourage cooperation over individualism?
- What type of individualism can be consistent with the requirement to bridge negative social differences and promote inclusion?

The discussion of a divided society can be viewed as a symptom of social pathology and an expression of efforts to seek life paths more worthy of human dignity, which raises fundamental philosophical questions regarding educational goals.

- What goals should teachers pursue in education? Should they focus exclusively on teaching, or should they also consider what we refer to as upbringing?
- What role can educators play in a divided society? Should they strive for a so-called value-neutral position or advocate for values they believe to be right?
- Can the much-desired critical thinking today be cultivated regardless of the attitudes held by students? How can these attitudes be nurtured? Is it realistically feasible without significantly impacting the family background?
- By what means can teachers stimulate critical thinking in students, and what educational content can support this type of thinking?
- What can teachers derive legitimacy from if they change their students' attitudes? Should so-called political correctness limit a teacher's conduct, or is it the teacher's responsibility to lead students towards a "life of thought" (Finkelkraut, Kundera) even with the risk of political conflict?

Contributions addressing these questions and dilemmas are welcome in the Education section at the Good Connections IV conference.

Co-organizers of session number one.

Martin Strouhal (Charles University), Dorota Bazuń (University of Zielona Góra), Magdalena Kohout-Diaz (University of Bordeaux)

### Literature

Coll, R. K. & Eames, C. (2004). *International Handbook for Cooperative Education: An International perspective of the theory, research and practice of work-integrated learning*. Boston MA: The World Association for Cooperative Education.

Davies M. & Barnett R. (2015). *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Durkheim, E. (1999). *Éducation et sociologie*. Paris: PUF.

Finkielkraut, A. (1987). *La défaite de la pensée*. Paris: Gallimard.

Jacquet-Francillon, F.; Kambouchner, D. (dir.). (2005). *La crise de la culture scolaire: Origines, interprétations, perspectives*. PUF.

Kambouchner, D. (2013). *École, question philosophique*. Paris: Fayard.

Kohout-Diaz, M. (2018). *L'éducation inclusive. Un processus en cours*. Paris: Érès.

Morin, E. (1999). *La tête bien faite. Repenser la réforme. Réformer la pensée*. Paris: Seuil.

Strouhal, M. 2020. On the current problems of education for democracy. *Journal of Pedagogy* 11 (2): 73 – 87.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348736424\\_On\\_the\\_current\\_problems\\_of\\_education\\_for\\_democracy](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348736424_On_the_current_problems_of_education_for_democracy)

## II SESSION

### Achieving solidarity and cohesion through the migration process

Today, more people than ever live in a country other than where they were born. According to the IOM World Migration Report 2022, the number of international migrants was estimated to be almost 272 million globally, 51 million more than in 2010. Nearly two-thirds were labour migrants, but there is an increasing number of people who migrate due to wars and environmental disasters. The causes of migration, how they are perceived historically and politically in the country of origin and destination, and how migrants integrate with the destination countries speak directly to cohesion (social, economic, historical, and cultural) and solidarity. How is cohesion achieved in migratory contexts? How can this creation of integration often embed a process of solidarity with migrants, their countries of origin, and the country of destination and its inhabitants?

We invite you to discuss the connections between solidarity and cohesion in the migration process. We are interested in various forms of activity, including how integration and cohesion of migrants can happen through education (vocational and more traditional), training, employment, and self-employment/entrepreneurship, and how government and communities support such activities. While research indicates integration and cohesion may not be achieved due to structural barriers and inflexibilities, and we encourage these studies, we are also interested in studies examining how migrants integrate, in which ways, and how this can lead to different manifestations of solidarity and cohesion.

We aim to participate in a thematic session in significant scientific journals, such as "Journal of Ethnic and Migration" or "International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy."

We are looking for answers to the following questions:

- In which ways do migrants integrate with the destination country?
- What educational opportunities (vocational and more traditional) are available to migrants?
- What employment opportunities (employment, self-employment/entrepreneurship) are available to migrants?
- What are the support mechanisms from governments and local communities available to migrants to support these opportunities?
- What are the difficulties in accessing these educational and/or employment opportunities?

- Based on evidence-based research, what is necessary to improve these opportunities (educational and employment)?
- In which ways can combining these opportunities (education and employment) and solidarity contribute to solving problems such as inequality, social exclusion, stigmatization, and discrimination in the destination country?
- < UNK> How can combining these opportunities (education and employment) and solidarity improve the country of origin?
- How do different types of solidarity (binding, bridging, spontaneous, pragmatic, etc.) affect the forms and opportunities (education and employment) of migrants?

Perhaps these papers will outline a new approach, the essence of which will be solidarity implemented through education and employment opportunities and how these can strengthen solidarity.

"Solidarity is understood at a general level as the willingness to share resources with others or as practices with a social impact improving the lives of others (Solidarity, 2018, p. 5)." The essential importance of solidarity is reflected in classical and contemporary sociological literature (Durkheim 1893/1997). However, in the face of new social processes on a global and local scale, its importance is growing (Stjerno, 2012). Describing, explaining, and solving new problems requires looking for a new approach. The solidarity initiatives observed and described in research reports related to responses to various crises, including the migration crisis or the crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic, indicate not only the vital role of the principle of solidarity but also the crucial role of its adequate interpretation. One of the key issues is the transition from symbolic or spontaneous solidarity to systemic solidarity that strengthens both sides of the relationship (Bazuń, Kwiatkowski 2022).

#### Co-organizers of session number two

Ana Cruz Garcia (Munster Technological University), Anna Mielczarek-Żejmo (University of Zielona Góra), Wei Xiong (Munster Technological University), Mariusz Kwiatkowski (University of Zielona Góra)

#### Literature

Bazuń, D. & Kwiatkowski, M. (2022). *Solidarity with Ukrainian Refugees in Transformative Perspective*. In.: *Designing and Implementing Public Policy in Contemporary Society. New Perspectives*. Dorota Szaban, Magdalena Zapotoczna, Piotr Pochyły (ed.), Göttingen: V&R Unipress, Brill Deutschland GmbH, p. 153-168.

Solidarity in Europe (2018) *Alive and Active Europe* European Commission Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Cruz García, A. and Villares-Varela, M. (2023). Contesting the boundaries of marianismo and entrepreneurial identity: meanings of motherhood amongst Latin American migrant women entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 15(2), 149-169. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-06-2022-0102>

Durkheim, E. (1893/1997). *The Division of Labour in Society*. New York: Free Press.

Stjerno, S. (2012). *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# III SESSION

## Mobility and social cohesion

A feature of modern society is its mobility. It manifests in various forms - spatial and social, virtual and real, voluntary and forced. The essence of all types of mobility is to cause multiple changes. They include information flows, ideas, things, resources, and people. Different forms of mobility are the cause and effect of climate, economic, political, and social change. In this way, they contribute to changes in all individual and collective life spheres. This ubiquitous and multiple mobility and the associated variability may be perceived as a threat to the quality and durability of interpersonal bonds and social cohesion. We draw on the achievements of researchers and social practitioners who conduct their research and related social practices within the new mobility paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2009; Sheller 2018), but also within the transformative (Mertens 2021) and other related paradigms. Their common aspect is the view of mobility as a factor of expected changes.

Social cohesion can be broadly described as the presence of the following characteristics and attitudes in a given community: shared values, shared experiences, civic participation, mutual help, trust in others, social networks, social order, acceptance of diversity, and well-being. We can also define social cohesion more precisely and narrowly as a high quality of social cooperation that results in lasting social relations, a positive emotional bond between its members and the community, and a clear focus on the common good. In short, a cohesive community is distinguished by following common rules, maintaining positive relationships, and sharing resources (Bazuń, Kwiatkowski 2022).

We invite you to a scientific discussion on the relationship between various forms of mobility and social cohesion or its components.

- What are the interrelationships between mobility and social cohesion?
- Does mobility threaten social cohesion?
- What types of mobile social practices can strengthen social cohesion?
- How can research on the relationship between mobility and social cohesion be conducted?
- How can mobile learning contribute to strengthening social cohesion?

The session organizers will strive to obtain the possibility of publishing the best articles in renowned scientific journals as part of the thematic issue (e.g. "Mobilities").

**Co-organizers of session number three**

**Mariusz Kwiatkowski (University of Zielona Góra), Margarida Pocinho (University of Madeira), Alastair Roy (University of Central Lancashire).**

### Literature

Bazuń, D. and Kwiatkowski, M. (2022), Exploratory walks and local cohesion, "Mobilities"

# **IV SESSION – ROUND TABLE**

## **Connecting ideas, people, and technologies**

We invite those who prefer to combine perspectives, fields, and scientific disciplines and those who want to share the latest ideas and innovative solutions, including technological ones, to participate in this session. The session will be an opportunity to exercise social imagination in searching for ways and tools to connect people in a fractured society. We encourage you to submit abstracts and exchange ideas during a round table.

**On behalf of the Scientific and Organizing Committee:**

**Dorota Bazuń - University of Zielona Góra**

**Mariusz Kwiatkowski – University of Zielona Góra**

**Martin Strouhal – Charles University**