

**Intercultural Dialogues in a Post-Digital World:  
Empirical Perspectives at the Threshold of Complexity**

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*As Michel Foucault observes,  
modern institutions exercise power  
not only through regulation, but  
through the normalisation of culturally embedded assumptions  
and practices.*

**Introduction**

The contemporary world is increasingly defined by a profound tension between growing interconnectedness and persistent cultural, institutional and epistemic divides. Digital and algorithmic systems are now deeply embedded in everyday life, shaping governance, work, education, economic development and cultural production. Yet this intensified connectivity has not eliminated inequality or misunderstanding; rather, it has reconfigured them. In this context, the notion of the *post-digital* does not mark a departure from digital technologies but rather their full entanglement with social, cultural and organisational systems. It is precisely within this condition of entanglement that intercultural dialogue becomes both analytically necessary and socially urgent.

Within this complex framework, interdisciplinary dialogue emerges as a crucial space for examining how interculturality, digital mediation and systemic thinking are reshaping both academic research and societal practices. This challenge was jointly embraced by the Centre for Intercultural

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Studies (CEI) at the Polytechnic University of Porto (P.PORTO), Portugal, and the Doctoral School of the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), Macao/China, whose collaboration gave rise to this 2026 Special Issue “Intercultural Dialogues in a Post-Digital World, 1 – USJ, Macao/China” of *E.REI, The E-Journal of Intercultural Studies*. Approaching such dynamics through an explicitly intercultural and interdisciplinary perspective, this Special Issue establishes a transglobal dialogue between Western and Eastern contexts, which will be further developed through a subsequent and conceptually aligned Special Issue, to be published in 2027 from Portugal, “Intercultural Dialogues in a Post-Digital World, 2 – CEI, P.PORTO”.

The objective of this joint project of alternated Special Issues is to approach intercultural dialogue not as an abstract ideal but as a situated practice unfolding within concrete institutional, professional and socio-technical contexts. Within the framework of this first Special Issue, the focus shifts beyond celebratory narratives of technological progress to an examination of how post-digital transformations intersect with power relations, ethical leadership, public administration reform, regulatory governance, economic development, curatorial practices, social media and inclusive education. Together, they offer empirically grounded insights into how cultural negotiation, ethical responsibility and human agency are shaped, and at times constrained, by technological mediation.

The post-digital condition challenges traditional dichotomies that have long structured academic inquiry, such as tradition *versus* innovation, human *versus* system, or local *versus* global. These oppositions prove insufficient to describe realities characterised by hybrid governance models, data-driven decision-making, algorithmic regulation and artificial intelligence. Interculturality, in this sense, emerges not merely as coexistence between cultures, but as an ongoing process of negotiation within systems that combine historical legacies, institutional norms and technological infrastructures.

Several contributions in this Special Issue illustrate how intercultural dynamics operate within public institutions and governance frameworks in an intersectional way. Research on educational institutions in Australia highlights the critical necessity for educational systems to actively mitigate prejudice and cultivate positive intergroup perceptions in higher education, thereby supporting the broader social integration of minority religious communities. Similarly, research on the integration of generative artificial intelligence in higher education in Bangladesh highlights the perspectives of students with special learning needs, emphasising accessibility, inclusion and agency. These findings challenge universalistic assumptions about educational technology by foregrounding culturally situated expectations, ethical concerns and the necessity of institutional support. Intercultural dialogue here unfolds between students, technologies and policy frameworks, raising critical questions about equity, localisation, interreligious dialogue and AI literacy.

Studies of public administration and security forces in Macao reveal how colonial legacies, bureaucratic traditions, and contemporary policy reforms intersect with gender norms, leadership practices and career development within hegemony-dominated organisations. These – and other – contributions show that institutional cultures are shaped by layered historical experiences and normative expectations that continue to influence decision-making processes and professional hierarchies. Indeed, technological modernisation and policy reform do not automatically translate into social equity or organisational transformation. Instead, deeply embedded cultural assumptions, informal practices and symbolic power relations persist, often shaping institutional behaviour and individual trajectories. These findings underscore the need for interculturally informed governance approaches that simultaneously attend to structural constraints, historical continuities, and the spaces of agency through which actual institutional change may be critically negotiated.

Likewise, matters of ethical leadership and trust, examined through empirical research in Timor-Leste's private sector, further illustrate the role of intercultural values in post-digital organisational settings. Leadership is shown not simply as a matter of personal morality, but as a relational practice embedded in social expectations, historical experience and economic conditions. In contexts of market development and institutional fragility, ethical leadership becomes a critical intercultural resource for building trust, fostering cooperation and sustaining organisational legitimacy.

The Special Issue also addresses interculturality within emerging regulatory and technological environments. Research on the evolution of Macau's public administration, from its colonial legacy to contemporary governance, as well as on Macau's casino industry, explores how regulatory reforms, digital monitoring systems and compliance technologies reshape relationships among regulators, operators and stakeholders. These processes reveal how technological systems mediate power, accountability and trust, generating new forms of fragmentation alongside institutional stabilisation. Intercultural dialogue here involves not only human actors, but also regulatory logics embedded in technological infrastructures, demanding new forms of interpretive and ethical engagement.

The economic and financial dimensions of the post-digital condition are examined through an analysis of green finance and economic growth across international financial centres, highlighting regional disparities and heterogeneous development trajectories. The findings underscore that sustainability-driven financial systems are not culturally neutral, as their effects depend on institutional readiness, regional contexts and socio-economic structures. Intercultural dialogue in this domain is essential to understanding how global policy frameworks are enacted and experienced locally.

Communicative practices within digital culture also raise critical questions about the ethical and cultural challenges inherent in producing content that addresses intercultural issues, particularly in contexts marked by polarised discourse. The creation of content for social media platforms intersects

with digital influencers' role as cultural mediators and with horizontal exchanges within online communities. This convergence underscores the need to re-evaluate communicators' intercultural training by incorporating critical, linguistic, and media-related competencies. Such competencies are expected to promote intercultural dialogue and strengthen discursive responsibility in environments defined by identity-based tensions and symbolic contestation.

Cultural identity is no longer articulated as a fixed or territorially bounded entity, but as a performative construction within transnational networks of artistic creation and circulation. Therefore, contemporary curatorship can also be read as an intercultural practice capable of reshaping cultural imaginaries under post-digital conditions. This Special Issue examines how transnational curatorial practices, developed within post-digital art ecologies, contribute to the reconfiguration of cultural identity in cross-border collaborative contexts, because the post-digital condition denotes not merely the presence of technology but its structural integration into contemporary intercultural practices.

Taken together, the articles in this Special Issue demonstrate that intercultural dialogue in a post-digital world is neither abstract nor peripheral. It unfolds across public institutions, private organisations, regulatory regimes, financial systems, social media and educational environments – spaces where technology amplifies both opportunities and inequalities. What unites these diverse contributions is a shared concern with how human values, ethical responsibility and cultural negotiation endure within increasingly complex socio-technical systems.

This Special Issue is thus not presented as a comprehensive theory of post-digital interculturality, but as an invitation to continued reflection. It calls on researchers to engage critically with empirical realities, to question assumptions of technological neutrality, and to recognise intercultural dialogue as a dynamic process shaped by historical context, institutional practice, and technological mediation. In doing so, it reaffirms the role of intercultural and interdisciplinary research as a vital space for understanding and shaping more inclusive, ethical, and responsible futures at the threshold of post-digital complexity.

### **Brief rationale for the articles that make up this Special Issue.**

While diverse in their disciplinary orientations and geographical settings, all the articles collected in this Special Issue address how cultural negotiation, ethical responsibility and human agency are shaped under conditions of technological mediation and structural complexity.

“The Influences of Educational and Media Institution as Agents of Intragroup Contact and Socialisation: The case of Australian-Muslim tertiary students”, by Abe W. Ata and David T. Teh, examines the attitudes and perceptions of Australian-Muslim tertiary students toward non-Muslim Australians, focusing on the roles of educational and media institutions as agents of socialisation and

intergroup contact. A cross-sectional, structured questionnaire administered to students at major universities in Victoria and New South Wales indicated that, while participants hold a generally positive attitude towards social integration, their tendency to befriend non-Muslims is significantly influenced by negative perceptions of outsiders and unfair media portrayals of the Islamic faith. Notably, the findings suggest that initiating intergroup friendships may counter negative media representations of Muslims and Islam, whereas educational institutions play a vital role in fostering positive interfaith relations.

“Gender Mainstreaming Policies Affecting Career Development within the Public Sector: A case study of the Macao Public Security Police Force”, by Iong Kit Yeng and Chan Wai Kit, examines intercultural dynamics within a traditionally male-dominated public institution. Drawing on qualitative interviews and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study highlights how formal gender mainstreaming policies interact with deeply embedded socio-cultural norms. The findings reveal that post-digital administrative reforms and policy instruments, while necessary, are insufficient on their own to dismantle structural inequality. This contribution situates intercultural dialogue within everyday organisational practices, emphasising the persistence of cultural assumptions that shape career trajectories, leadership and institutional change.

“The Practice of Ethical Leadership and Its Impact on Employee Trust in the Private Sector of Timor-Leste”, by Ivo Martins Hi da Silva, shifts the focus to the private sector amid economic development and institutional fragility. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study examines ethical leadership as a relational, culturally embedded practice rather than a purely individual attribute. By demonstrating how ethical conduct fosters employee trust and organisational legitimacy, the article underscores the importance of intercultural values in sustaining cooperation and accountability in post-digital organisational environments and reinforces the editorial’s emphasis on ethics as a key intercultural resource within complex socio-economic systems.

“Public Administration Reform in Macau: A critical study from the Handover to the present time”, authored by Leung Sok Ieng and Ansoumane Douy Diakite, examines intercultural dynamics within governance and institutional transformation. By tracing the evolution of Macau’s public administration from its colonial legacy to contemporary governance frameworks, the study reveals how bureaucratic traditions, political transitions and digital modernisation intersect. The article demonstrates that post-digital governance is not merely a matter of efficiency or technological integration, but a culturally negotiated process in which historical experience and institutional identity remain central. This analysis aligns closely with this Special Issue’s focus on understanding technology-mediated reform through culturally informed perspectives.

“Green Finance and Economic Growth across Global Financial Centres: Evidence from econometric and machine learning methods”, by Weng Chi Lei and Miguel Chau, extends the discussion to the global economic dimension of the post-digital condition. Combining econometric analysis with machine-learning techniques, the study examines how the development of green finance relates to economic growth across international financial centres. The findings reveal significant regional heterogeneity, indicating that sustainability-oriented financial systems are not culturally or institutionally neutral. This contribution foregrounds intercultural dialogue as an analytical necessity for understanding how global economic models are enacted locally and experienced unevenly across diverse economic and developmental contexts.

“Challenges and Critical Perspectives in Intercultural Communication between Brazil and Portugal: A case study on the *Brazilian Guiana* meme”, by Valdemir Santos Neto and Gabriela Borges, discusses intercultural communicative practices in digital culture, within the context of intercultural relations between Brazil and Portugal, based on the case study of the meme “Guiana Brasileira” and its repercussions in the Lusophone sphere. By problematising the ethical, cultural and communicative challenges involved in the contemporary production of content about immigration in Portugal, the article considers how the absence of critical and integrated training may encourage superficial and polarised discursive practices. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach that combines empirical and statistical data with documentary sources to analyse communicative dynamics in digital environments. The analysis focuses on content production for social media and observes two levels of interaction: the role of digital influencers as cultural mediators and the horizontal exchanges within online communities. The findings underscore the need to rethink the intercultural training of communicators by integrating critical, linguistic, and media competences that foster intercultural dialogue and reinforce discursive responsibility, especially in contexts characterised by identity tensions and symbolic disputes.

“Regulatory Practices and Technology in Macau Casinos: Insights from a Grounded Theory study”, by Hong-Wai Ho and Jenny Phillips, explores intercultural negotiation within a highly regulated, technologically mediated industry. Focusing on Macau’s casino sector, the study examines how regulatory reforms, digital monitoring systems and compliance technologies reshape relationships among regulators, operators and stakeholders. By identifying emerging themes such as regulatory institutionalisation, functional fragmentation and technological mediation, the article illustrates how governance is increasingly enacted through socio-technical systems. In this context, intercultural dialogue extends beyond human interaction to include regulatory logics embedded in technological infrastructures.

“Curating Across Borders: Post-Digital art ecologies and the reconfiguration of cultural identity”, by Selma Pereira, investigates three distinct contexts: the online pavilion “Transient Info” at The Wrong Biennale; simultaneous exhibitions organised by Art on Loop – HollyArt Gallery across multiple cities and countries; and the international programming of Cista Arts. Adopting a qualitative, practice-based approach grounded in artistic and curatorial research, the study combines curatorial discourse analysis, multimodal analysis of artworks, and situated critical reflection. The three selected cases constitute distributed art ecologies in which curatorship functions as a form of intercultural mediation and cultural identity emerges as a dynamic, relational, and negotiated process. The findings demonstrate that, by curating and producing art across borders, post-digital platforms reconfigure geographical centralities, challenge hegemonic cultural narratives, and foster hybrid spaces of belonging and dialogue.

“Gaps, Needs and Expectations: An inquiry into students’ perceptions on the integration of Generative AI in supporting students with special learning needs in higher education in Bangladesh”, by Sayma Arju and Jana Chi-san Ho, brings the discussion into educational contexts shaped by artificial intelligence. Centring the voices of students with special learning needs, the study examines how generative AI is perceived as both an empowering and ethically complex tool. The findings challenge universalistic assumptions about educational technology by emphasising accessibility, agency, localisation and institutional responsibility. This article exemplifies post-digital intercultural dialogue as a negotiation among learners, technologies and policy frameworks, highlighting inclusion as a culturally situated and ethically mediated process.

Taken together, these nine articles demonstrate that intercultural dialogue in a post-digital world is deeply embedded in empirical realities across diverse contexts, showing that technology both enables new possibilities and reproduces existing inequalities. By grounding intercultural theory in concrete contexts, this Special Issue advances a critical, situated understanding of post-digital complexity and reinforces the central role of interdisciplinary, empirical research in shaping more ethical, inclusive and culturally responsive futures.

*The Editors*  
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## Biographies of the Editors

**Clara Sarmento** is a tenured Full Professor at the Polytechnic University of Porto, Portugal. She holds a PhD in Portuguese Culture, an MA in Anglo-American Studies and a BA in Portuguese–English Studies from the University of Porto and obtained her Aggregation in Cultural Studies from the University of Aveiro. She founded and directs the Centre for Intercultural Studies (CEI), the PhD in Intercultural Studies for Innovation and the Master’s in Intercultural Studies for Business. With over three decades of international academic experience, she has taught, supervised and examined research worldwide, in fields such as Cultural and Intercultural Studies, Gender and Feminist Studies, and Art and Literary Studies, in their intersection with business, heritage, tourism and the creative industries. She is actively involved in EU COST Actions, coordinates Erasmus+, FCT and Horizon Europe projects, and is the founding editor of *E.REI – E.Journal of Intercultural Studies* (Scopus). She serves on institutional advisory boards and gender equality commissions, has received several awards for academic merit and research excellence, and is the author and editor of numerous articles, books and indexed publications with international academic publishers.

**Álvaro Barbosa**, born in Angola of Portuguese nationality, was trained as an engineer and educated as an artist. He is a full professor at the University of Saint Joseph in Macau, China, with a background in engineering, the arts, music, and computer science. His academic research is widely available through peer-reviewed publications, in collaboration with numerous renowned international academics. As an artist, he produced, presented and performed various creative projects worldwide, featuring work in interactive installations, electronic and acoustic music, photography, sound design, computer animation and audiovisual media production. He presently holds the academic position of Vice-Rector at the University of Saint Joseph, and his academic focus is on fostering systematic creativity as an essential process for innovation and entrepreneurship by mentoring startups, supervising research projects, creating new programs, and teaching at multiple universities across Europe, the United States, and China.

**Adérito Fernandes-Marcos** is a Full Professor at the University of Saint Joseph, Macau, China, where he is the Director of the Doctoral School. He holds a PhD in Computer Engineering – Computer Graphics from the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany (1997), and an aggregation (habilitation for full professorship) in Information Technology and Systems from the University of Minho, Portugal (2008). In 2019, he was awarded the honorific title of *Professor Honoris Causa* by UNIVEM in São Paulo, Brazil. He is an integrated researcher at CIAC – Centre for Research in Arts and Communication at the University of Algarve, Portugal. He was the founder and first director of the PhD Programme in Digital Media Art, in association with the University of the Algarve and the Open University of Portugal. He is the author/co-author of over 100 articles in leading journals,

conference proceedings, book chapters and scientific brochures. He is President of the Artech-International Association, a worldwide body in digital media art.

The Editors sincerely thank the reviewers for their promptness and the excellence of their evaluations, acknowledging that their thoughtful and constructive feedback has contributed significantly to the improvement of this Special issue. We deeply value the time and effort devoted to the rigorous analysis of the manuscripts.

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