

Call for chapters:
TEACHING ABOUT “INVISIBLE OTHERS”.
THE CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

Teaching about sensitive topics in educational and academic setting has been a challenge in all multicultural societies, which has been illustrated in a wide range of studies and teaching materials on national and international level. Most of these materials have been developed for and in intercultural and/or cultural diverse setting within a relatively inclusive and open framework of democratic/liberal and multicultural Western societies. Unlike many Western societies, the realities of Central and East European (CEE) countries are often much less diverse and connected with different fragile historical and political processes, which puts tackling sensitive topics in a different context.

Three factors contribute to this context. The first one is the marginal number of third country nationals and ethnic homogeneity (except for the borderline type of multiculturalism, i.e. from neighbouring countries). The Vyšehrad countries are the most homogenous, with the majority ethnic group building up from 86% (Slovakia) to 98% (Poland) of the country's population. In the former USSR republics there are dominant ethnic groups, but also significant Russian minorities (from 5% in Lithuania to 28% in Latvia). The CEE countries are in the earlier phase of encountering the Other – provided it is a linear process – as compared to their Western counterparts. Most of the Others constitute citizens of neighbouring countries, often enjoying a status of national minority. There are indigenous and ethnic groups, which also have been living there for centuries and became familiar to the mainstream society, or even merged to become a part of local cultures. The “distant” Others – that is newcomers originating from countries with significant cultural distance – started arriving only recently, and their number is still marginal. Except for the Vyšehrad countries, other CEE states easily qualify as multicultural; however, it is a sort of a borderland multiculturalism, which does not necessarily translate into greater tolerance towards (distant) Others.

The second one factor comes from lack of colonial past and colonial connections which is typical for Western EU (and so – relevant reflexion). CEE countries have never had any colonies. In fact, many of them had been divided by neighbouring countries and had to fight for their independence. It has two profound consequences. Firstly, CEE societies have been rather focused on what is going on in their countries. Unlike Western European nations, they have never invaded anyone outside of Europe; all their territorial acquisitions had been obtained by expanding their borders and maintaining the country's territorial integrity. Secondly, years of lost independence, two world wars with their grievous consequences and living under the umbrella of the USSR, in some cases created a narrative of victimisation, which has been fuelling the sense of national unity and solidarity. While post-colonial theory has naturally emerged both in ex-colonial powers and countries which have been colonized, it has been absent from intellectual reflection in CEE countries for a long time. Until the early 1990s, many of these countries were closed behind the iron curtain, dominated by another superpower – the USSR, though this type of domination has never

been perceived through colonial lens. Rather, it was a direct result of political division of Europe after WW2 into the first and second world. After the USSR had collapsed and the borders were opened, there were many other urgent issues to deal with such as economic and political transformation, or negotiating national identities.

Strong 'inti' sentiments constitute the third factor (related to gender, Islam, race, etc.). According to the 2018 Pew Research Center Study, despite living together in the European Union, Eastern and Western Europeans significantly differ on their acceptance of Others, including Muslims, Jews, and LGBT. What is more, East Europeans are more likely to perceive their culture as superior to others¹. Similar discrepancy between CEE and Western Europe is visible in the case of other minorities included in the European Values Study, not only ethnic or religious ones, but also e.g. gay people, people with mental illnesses, or the HIV positive. This brings back the homogeneity (or borderland multiculturalism) issue. Lack of exposure to Others can be one of the factors reinforcing a growing fear of diversity.

All these factors make the CEE context unique, and also generate challenges in teaching about sensitive topics 'by dry run', i.e. without the established presence of 'Others', and often in a not so inclusive and not so diverse classroom. We wish to fill in this gap by a peer-reviewed book, written by authors who understand CEE peculiarities that make teaching sensitive topics different than in Western schools. Thus we hope to add our academic perspectives to [the general discussions on intercultural and inclusive education and education about diversity in school](#).

Your contribution

We invite you to contribute to our book project by providing your abstract of the chapter. We are looking for around 16 chapters, which are either focused on a topic in a comparative perspective (e.g. teaching about LGBT across CEE), or a case study (e.g. Muslimless Islamophobia in Poland and how to tackle it in the classroom). By CEE we refer to the Vyšehrad countries, former USSR republics of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria and Romania. The book will be an academic and peer-reviewed publication, hence we are looking for academic articles by specialists (researchers and theoreticians with a reference to practice in their fields).

The deadlines are as follows:

- 30.05.2020 – the abstracts (please check the instruction below)
- 15.06.2020 – review of the abstracts and information for the authors
- 15.01.2021 – the chapters

¹ Pew Research Center, Oct. 29, 2018, "Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues".

Instructions

While preparing the chapter please include the following:

1. Author's name, affiliation, e-mail
2. Title of the material
3. Abstract (max. 300 words)
4. Key words (4-5)
5. Authors bio (around 5 sentences)

In the abstract please let us know why you consider the topic to be specific for the country or the region, and what are the challenges in teaching about it in the school context.

If your abstract is accepted we would like you to consider the following points while preparing your chapter:

1. Introduction
2. Context of the country, social, cultural and historical background of the country the topic/issue refers to with important sources (footnotes and reference list)
3. Brief information about why you want to present this educational material with reference to this sensitive topic. In the form you are presenting it, can it be used only for education on a national level, where and for whom? Can it also be used in an international context? (if yes, provide arguments for...to avoid generating stereotypes).
4. Characterise the situation of the group in your country this material refers to (is it a taboo or media-present subject? Is it based on national stereotypes and prejudice, if so, what stereotypes and prejudice and why? What are their roots?)
5. Ethical approach (reflect on and briefly describe your ethical approach to data, information, sensitive data, interviews, quotations, descriptions of others, personal data protection)
6. Limitations (think also about the limitations in preparing this material – what cannot be accessed, what is missing, what would be worth having access to, etc.)

Please send your abstracts to:

- Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, kgorak@sgh.waw.pl
- Urszula Markowska-Manista, u.markowska-ma@uw.edu.pl

About us

[Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska](#) is associate professor and head of the Middle East and Central Asia Unit at the Institute of International Studies, SGH Warsaw School of Economics. Her research interests focus on contemporary Middle East and Muslim minorities in Poland and wider Europe. She published five monographs including *Deconstructing Islamophobia in Poland* (2014) and edited a book on *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe* (2011). Head of a research project [Managing spoiled identity: the case of Polish female converts to Islam](#) (funded by the Polish National Science Centre).

[Urszula Markowska-Manista](#) is field researcher in education in culturally diversified environments and indigenous childhood and youth studies concerning children's rights. Since 2016, she has been the director of and lecturer in the MA Childhood Studies and Children's Rights (MACR) and is assistant professor at the University of Warsaw. She was acting chairholder of the UNESCO Janusz Korczak Chair at the M. Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw (2017–18) and has conducted extensive field research in Central Africa, the South Caucasus and Central Europe.

This call for papers is part of the [SensiClass: Tackling sensitive topics in a classroom](#) project coordinated by the University of Tartu in partnership with SGH Warsaw School of Economics, University of Hradec and Central European University within the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education.

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