

'Acerba Diaspora': the Becoming Identity of New Generations

Kseniia Obukhova

Abstract Globalisation, political and social instability, and mass migrations are the phenomena that shape modern society and expose it to an unprecedented diversity of worldviews, cultural backgrounds, and languages. The research project was conducted in Bozen-Bolzano, South Tyrol, a border area filled with cultural tensions, where a net separation between the diverse ethnolinguistic groups can be felt because of the complex historical events.

'Acerba Diaspora' claims that new generations, children of persons with migration backgrounds, could become protagonists in shaping the fluid collective identities that represent contemporary societies. The project's theoretical framework is based on 'diasporic thinking', an approach that shifts focus from a fixed notion of identity to a dynamic one and recognises the mutual influence of cultures and experiences.

Over 11 months, a collaboration with experts from the fields of education, migration, and design and a partnership with three local high schools were initiated to analyse how new generations could become protagonists in shaping the cultural identity of Bozen-Bolzano. The employment of a PAR method and the implementation of participatory design research tools, such as workshops, probes, boundary objects, guided discussions, and awareness campaigns, helped explore young people's concrete needs, facilitate conversations between teenagers, school personnel, and families, and further activate an open and inclusive discourse around the 'new European identity', where everyone can feel represented.

'Acerba Diaspora' challenges the idea of the "exceptionalism" of European culture and highlights the complexity of modern identities. It explores the role of new generations in advocating common values of civic conviviality and encourages a more nuanced understanding of the social and cultural fabric of today's societies by promoting a sense of belonging among all community members, including those with migration backgrounds.

Figure 1: Cover of the thesis project. (Photo: Kseniia Obukhova).



Figure 2: Two pages of the thesis project. (Photo: Kseniia Obukhova).

