**Dialogical relationalist conceptualization of the notion of ‘integration’**

*Raivo Vetik, abstract*

This presentation will introduce the dialogical notion of ‘integration’, developed in the most recent integration monitoring of Estonian society (2021). I will highlight several shortcomings of both the mainstream conceptualization, based on Durkheimian notion of ‘society’, as well as critical conceptualization, represented, for example, by the decolonial discourse. I will argue that the mainstream and critical approaches conceptualize the notion of ‘integration’ from the perspective of either dominant or dominated subject position in ethnopolitical field, and thus, contribute either to reproduction or resistance to the hegemonic status quo. The political function of these conceptualizations is to take moral high ground, i.e. to establish status difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, in which ‘us’ is described in terms of ‘high’ and ‘them’ in terms of ‘low’. Thus, both approaches recognize the field interest of one side of the binary opposition only, while misrecognizing the field interest of other side, and, as a result, contribute towards radicalization of the opposition. The key argument of the presentation posits that the critical approaches in the field of national integration studies represent just a mirror image of the mainstream, and as such, cannot be considered better or worse than the latter, as one radicalism cannot be treated with another. In this context, an alternative approach developed in the context of the Estonian integration monitoring survey is introduced, representing the moderate subject position both in academic and ethnopolitical fields. The moderate positioning strategy consists in partial recognition of legitimacy of the field interests of the subject positions of both sides. Their competing discourses on integration are one-sided, but should not be dismissed as erroneous, as they represent objective interests in respective fields. Such a positioning strategy is exemplified by Biao Xiang in his idea to combine methodological nationalism and epistemological behaviourism into a holistic meta-theoretical tandem in the field of migration and integration studies (2015). My addition to Xiang is in introducing the idea of meta-theoretical triadic nexus, i. e. in adding a dialogical third element to the binary oppositions found in academic and social fields.