Cosmopolitical realism: on the distinction between cosmopolitanism in philosophy and the social sciences

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Abstract In the article I outline a wide range of challenges, both normative and analytical, that the rise of globalism represents for the social sciences. In the first part, a distinction is drawn between ‘normative’ or ‘philosophical’ cosmopolitanism on the one hand and an analytical-empirical social science cosmopolitanism, which is no longer contained by thinking in national categories, on the other. From such a perspective we can observe the growing interdependence and interconnection of social actors across national boundaries, more often than not as a side effect of actions that are not meant to be ‘cosmopolitan’ in the normative sense. In the second part I focus on the opposition between methodological nationalism and the actual cosmopolitanization of reality and outline the various errors of the former. In the third and final part of the article I outline a research programme of a ‘cosmopolitan social science’ around four topics: first, the rise of a global public arena resulting from the reactions to the unintended side effects (risks) of modernization; second, a cosmopolitan perspective allows us to go beyond International Relations and to analyse a multitude of interconnections not only between states but also between actors on other levels; third, a denationalized social science can research into the global inequalities that are hidden by the traditional focus on national inequality and its legitimation; finally, everyday or banal cosmopolitanism on the level of cultural consumption and media representation leads to a growing awareness of the relativity of one’s own social position and culture in the global arena.

The keyword ‘globalization’ has already been through three tendencies or phases in the social sciences: first, dismissal; second, conceptual clarification and empirical-operational definition; and third, an epistemological turn. In a first reaction, the mainstream denied the reality or importance of (economic) globalization and maintained that there was nothing historically new in any of the phenomena coming under the term; ‘globalization’ was an invention of the mass media, a propaganda offensive on the part of capital to intimidate the unions and the workers, or part of a strategy to dismantle the welfare state. Such alarm calls became less convincing, however, as researchers in all the social sciences got down to the task of conceptualizing the various aspects of globalization and attempted to locate and...
study them both theoretically and empirically (Beisheim and Zürn 1999; Held et al. 1999).

In so far as this was successful, an epistemological turn took shape: that is, it became more widely understood that if the distinctions and boundaries between internal and external, national and international, local and global, ourselves and others grow more confused or hybridized, then the units, issues and basic concepts in each of the social sciences tend to become more contingent. Sociology and political science, in particular, but in different ways also ethnography, ethnology, geography and history have usually taken certain ‘units’ for granted in their theories and research practices in order then to subject them to systematic study and comparison. But what happens if the premises and boundaries defining those units fall apart? The answer that will be outlined here is that a whole set of concepts associated with the ‘national perspective’ become disenchanted: that is deontologized, historicized and stripped of their inner necessity. To be sure, this occurs only within an interpretative framework in which methodology replaces ontology, such that ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ replaces the nationally centred ontology and imagination dominating thought and action. Here we shall briefly outline this far-reaching perspective in three parts.

In the first part I draw a distinction between two kinds of ‘cosmopolitanism’. The more widespread kind is the one that argues for harmony across national and cultural frontiers (‘normative cosmopolitanism’ or ‘philosophical cosmopolitanism’). In contrast, the descriptive-analytic approach of the social sciences frees itself from national categories in its thinking and research (‘cosmopolitan perspective’ or ‘analytic-empirical cosmopolitanism’); it sees the increased interdependence of social actors across national boundaries as an unintended and unforeseen side effect of actions that have no normative ‘cosmopolitan intent’ (‘actually existing cosmopolitanisms’ or ‘cosmopolitanization of reality’). Under certain conditions, this second type of ‘cosmopolitanization’ leads to the emergence of global forums of debate and global regimes covering transnational issues (‘institutionalized cosmopolitanism’).

In the second part I focus on the growing contradiction between ‘methodological nationalism’ and the actual cosmopolitanization of reality. I demonstrate a number of assumptions and errors of methodological nationalism: subsumption of society under the national state; generalization from one society to all others; a territorial conception of culture; a misguided equation of ‘international’ with ‘cosmopolitan’.

In the third part I outline a cosmopolitan research programme for the social sciences, identifying four areas on which the perspectival shift from methodological nationalism to ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ should concentrate. The arenas and conflicts of global public space result from the reactions called forth by the unintended side effects of radical modernization; or, to put it more precisely, the risks of modern society (terrorism, environmental dangers) are transnational and global in their inner logic, and all attempts to control them throw up global arenas of debate and conflict that do not necessarily lead to global solutions. The cosmopolitan perspective also makes it possible to go beyond the current vision of ‘international relations’ and to analyse the multiple forms of interdependence not only between states but also between other players at various levels of aggregation. ‘Denationalized’ social science may further cast fresh light on global inequalities that have
previously been concealed by the focus on national inequalities and their legitimation. Finally, we shall look at various kinds of more or less ‘banal’ cosmopolitanization, such as cultural consumption (music, food, lifestyles) or the transnationalization of law and military matters.

**Cosmopolitanism in philosophy and the social sciences**

The aim must be to overcome the normative antagonism between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, which has charged and spurred on the European dispute that all great minds have pursued since the eighteenth century, and to replace it with an analytic-empirical approach for which the key question is what makes reality itself cosmopolitan and how an objective science of cosmopolitan reality is possible? To answer this question, a clear dividing line needs to be drawn with normative or political cosmopolitanism, for cosmopolitanism and its vilification in the traditional debate are two sides of the same coin. The normative and political meanings of cosmopolitanism have wandered through world history completely entangled in the enemy image drawn up by its national opponents. With the concentration on analytic-empirical cosmopolitanism – that is with the demonstration that a cosmopolitan perspective is epistemologically necessary for a world without frontiers – a new field opens up for research and controversy: the real-world cosmopolitanism of the early twenty-first century. Not only must new categories be found for this reality, but the grammar of the social and the political must also be redefined. A new way of constructing sentences must be found: this is the stirring task that remains to be fulfilled in the face of the reality of cosmopolitanization.

The national perspective and national grammar have become false because they fail to recognize that political, economic and cultural activity, together with all its known and unknown side effects, knows no frontiers, and that where nationalism flares up in a globalized world it can itself be understood only within a cosmopolitan perspective. The experience of an actual removal of boundaries, which may in turn trigger a reflex of neo-national closure, requires a cosmopolitan approach for its analysis. Only in coherent joint action can an answer be found to the threatened national sense of self, ailing and filled with doubts as it confronts the whys and wherefores of the burning issues. But cosmopolitan realism also includes an awareness of the implacability, cheerlessness, cruelty, maliciousness and sheer inhumanity that find both expression and escape in the blurring of boundaries between others and us.

In the age of national modernity, cosmopolitan realism could hold sway only in people’s heads; it could only be conceptualized, not experienced. Nationalism, on the other hand, resounded in people’s hearts. This dualism of head and heart has been reversed in the second modernity where everyday life is banally cosmopolitan, while in the head (even in the theories and research routines of the advanced social sciences) the conceptually suggestive power of the national dimension continues to work its hidden tricks almost without interruption.

In accordance with the philosophy, or practice distinction, in this article I will differentiate between cosmopolitanism and actually existing cosmopolitanization. The
starting point here is a rejection of the claim that cosmopolitanism is a conscious or voluntary (or even elitist) choice. The term ‘cosmopolitanization of reality’ is meant to signal that we are talking also, or even mainly, of a compulsory choice or a side effect of unconscious decisions. As a rule, the choice to become or remain a ‘foreigner’ is not freely made but is the consequence of poverty and hardship, of flight from persecution or an attempted escape from starvation. Or it may be that cosmopolitanization crosses frontiers as a stowaway (accompanying perfectly normal market conditions, for example): someone may develop a passion for pop music or ‘Indian’ food; or another may attempt to evade global risks through a particular diet or a routine of sorting through rubbish for recycling; or yet another may decide to invest his money in countries that conform to the neo-liberal ideal of a world-market orientation. In this sense, ‘cosmopolitanization’ means latent cosmopolitanisms, unconscious cosmopolitanisms, passive cosmopolitanisms, which shape reality as a side effect of world trade or global dangers (climate disaster, terrorism, financial crisis). Without my knowing or explicitly willing it, my existence, my body, my ‘own life’ become part of another world, of foreign cultures, regions and histories and global interdependence risks.

This kind of ‘banal’ cosmopolitanism occurs beneath the surfaces, behind the persisting façades of national spaces and sovereignties where the main signifiers on display continue to proclaim national mentalities, identities and forms of consciousness. This latency makes cosmopolitanization – measured by the high standards of ethical and academic morality – ‘trivial’, negligible or even dubious. Surely, something that has strutted through world history as an elite demand cannot creep into the reality of society and politics through the back door? Is it not a pure contradiction to suppose that unconscious or semi-conscious types of forced cosmopolitanism associated with minorities or migration flows, the cosmopolitanism of globalized production and consumption, global movements and threats to civilization, are changing the world of national states from within and below?

No, the cosmopolitanisms existing in the real world are deformed. As Scott L. Malcomson has argued, the individuals who bear them have very limited scope to speak up for something greater than what their origins have given them in advance.

The decision to enter a political realm larger than the local may sometimes be taken at leisure, but is more often made under force of circumstances. More narrowly market-driven choices usually derive from a desire not to be poor, or simply not to die. Entertainment choices are based on a range of options frequently beyond the control of the individual consumer. Such compulsions may explain in part why the mass of real cosmopolitanism rarely enters into scholarly discussions of cosmopolitanism: to argue that the choice of cosmopolitanism is in some sense self-betraying and made under duress takes away much of its ethical attractiveness. If cosmopolitanism is both indeterminate and inescapable, it becomes difficult to theorize. Yet such is, I think, normally the case.

(Malcomson 1998: 240)
This means that cosmopolitanism in Kant’s sense of the term is an active task – the task of ordering the world. Cosmopolitanization, however, makes one aware of uncontrollable liabilities, of something that merely happens to us. This nurtures a view of globalization as a scourge of humanity, as well as attempts by various groups to cast themselves in the role of victims – victims of the United States, the West, capitalism, neo-liberalism, and so on. The paradoxical impression arises that in one way or another everyone suffers the fate of a minority, the fate of a species threatened with extinction. Even majorities feel driven from their native land, living as foreigners in their own country:

For all communities and all cultures have the sense that they are confronted with overwhelming powers, and are unable to preserve their heritage unscathed. From the viewpoint of the South and the East, it is the West which dominates; from Paris, it is America. But what do you see when you are in the United States? Minorities that mirror all of the world’s diversity and express the need to affirm their original affiliation. And once you have seen all these minorities and heard it said a thousand times that power is in the hands of white males, in the hands of Anglo-Saxon Protestants, Oklahoma City is suddenly shaken by a huge explosion. Who placed the bomb? None other than male white Anglo-Saxon Protestants who are convinced that they are the most neglected and despised minority, and that with globalization the last hour has come for ‘their’ America.

(Maalouf 2000: 109f.)

But the practice corresponding to such conspiracy theories is terrorism.

A cosmopolitanism that people endure without wanting it is undoubtedly a deformed cosmopolitanism. The existing forms of cosmopolitanism came into the world not as noble achievements that had been fought for and won with all the glittering moral authority of the Enlightenment, but as profane deformations carrying the obscurity and anonymity of side effects. This is a first major insight of cosmopolitan realism in the social sciences. An undeformed cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, emerges from the sense of itself being part of the human experiment in civilization – with its own language and cultural symbols, or its own actions to guard against global dangers – and therefore a sense that it is contributing to the development of a world culture.

The distinction between globalization and cosmopolitanization

In order to grasp conceptually the real space of the cosmopolitan perspective, it makes sense to distinguish between globalization (or globalism) and cosmopolitanization. In fashionable political discourse, the term ‘globalization’ is widely used only in a one-dimensional economic sense, closely associated with what we may call ‘globalism’ (see Beck 2000a). Globalism champions the idea of the world market, preaches the virtues of neo-liberal growth, and acclaims the benefits of the more or less unobstructed movement of capital, goods and persons across frontiers; this is precisely
what talk of ‘globalization’ conjures up in the minds of economists and large sections of the public. Globalism, it is argued, has promoted economic growth over the last two decades, especially in the so-called developing countries, by virtue of the market deregulation it helped to bring about in the 1980s; and even the resistance to globalism remains imprisoned within it because it presupposes, emphasizes and defends the power of the autonomous national state – a power that was a reality in the first modernity but not in the second.

Cosmopolitanization, on the other hand, must be understood as a multidimensional process that has irrevocably changed the historical ‘nature’ of social worlds and the status of individual countries within those worlds. It involves the formation of multiple loyalties, the spread of various transnational lifestyles, the rise of non-state political actors (from Amnesty International to the World Trade Organization), and the development of global protest movements against (neo-liberal) globalism and for a different (cosmopolitan) globalization involving the worldwide recognition of human rights, workers’ rights, global protection of the environment, an end to poverty, and so on. All these tendencies may be seen as the beginning, however deformed, of an institutionalized cosmopolitanism – paradoxically in the shape of anti-globalization movements, an International Criminal Court or the United Nations. When the UN Security Council passes a resolution, it is seen as speaking for humanity as a whole.

But is not ‘cosmopolitanization’ merely another name for what has until now been called ‘globalization’? Absolutely not, for it highlights the irreversible fact that people have long been joined together between Moscow and Paris, Rio and Tokyo in a relationship of actual interdependence, which they help to intensify by their production and consumption, in the same way that the ensuing risks to civilization penetrate their everyday lives.

If it is asked who have been the guiding intellectual forces in this inner cosmopolitanization of national societies, the names that occur to one are Adam Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville and John Dewey, but also such German classical thinkers of the past as Kant, Goethe, Herder, Humboldt, Nietzsche, Marx and Simmel. All these regarded modernity as a move away from early conditions of relatively closed communities – a transition that took place mainly through the spread of commerce and the principles of republicanism. For Kant even more than for Marx, but also in different ways for Adam Smith and Georg Simmel, the break-up of small territorial communities and the spread of universalistic social and economic interdependence (not yet riskiness!) was the hallmark or law of world history. Their study of long historical lines of development made it seem implausible that nationally homogenized states and societies were the non plus ultra of world history.

**On the distinction between (latent) cosmopolitanization and cosmopolitan perspective**

Reality is becoming cosmopolitan in its core, while our forms of thought and consciousness, as well as the highways of academic teaching and research, cover up the increasing unreality of the world of national states. A critique of the unreal study of the national, which is dressed up in universalist clothes but can neither deny nor rise above its origins in the horizon of national experience, presupposes the cosmopolitan
perspective and its methodological development. But how should the (latent) cosmopolitanization of reality be distinguished from a cosmopolitan perspective? The (forced) mixing of cultures is nothing new in world history; on the contrary, it has been the rule through all the plunder and conquests, the migrations, slave trade and colonization, the ethnic cleansing, settlements and expulsions. From its very beginnings, the world market required this global mixing and – as the opening of Japan and China in the nineteenth century shows – imposed it when necessary by violent means. Capital tears down all national boundaries and jumbles together that which is ‘one’s own’ and that which is ‘foreign’. What is new is not the compulsory mélange as such but the fact that it is noticed, becomes self-conscious and is politically shown off, the fact that it is reflected and recognized in the global public arena of mass media and international news, in the global social movements of blacks, women and minorities, in the popularity of old concepts such as ‘diaspora’ in cultural theory, and also in projects to achieve a greater degree of articulacy or self-activity. It is this social and social-scientific reflexivity that makes ‘cosmopolitan perspective’ the key concept and issue of the reflexive Second Modernity (see the third section of the article).

On the distinction between cosmopolitanization and institutionalized cosmopolitanism

A further important distinction needs to be drawn between cosmopolitanization and institutionalized cosmopolitanism. What are the conditions under which certain principles of cosmopolitanism are nevertheless implemented and placed on a permanent basis? What are the limits to this process? Which are its key players? Paradigmatically, these questions can be addressed and answered within the framework of the theory of world risk society. For the perception of global interdependence risks brings with it a growth in conflictual pressures for cosmopolitan solutions, as well as in the scope for (and resistance to) such solutions – for example, in environmental or human rights policies.

At some point in the not so distant past a qualitative change occurred in the perception of the social order, so that it was no longer seen mainly in terms of conflict over the production and distribution of ‘goods’. Rather, it is the production and distribution of ‘bads’ that has come into conflict with the claim of established national institutions to control them. This category shift has turned upside down the institutional and functional organization of modern societies and resulted in a global crisis of interdependence whose forms of political expression are thoroughly polyvalent, in relation to such issues as climate change (‘solar risk’), world poverty, international terrorism or the BSE and AIDS crises. This interdependence crisis is what I mean by ‘world risk society’. It also plunges the social sciences and political theory into crisis in so far as they conceive of modern societies, in a combination of Marx and Weber, as both capitalist and rationally purposive. It is this interdependence of dangers and insecurities produced by civilization – together with the resulting dominance of publicly staged risk perception in the mass media – that constitute the crucial difference from the previous epoch. Thus, all levels of world risk society display a compulsive feigning of control over the uncontrollable – in politics and law, in academic studies, in the economy and in everyday life.
Spatially, we are confronted with risks that show no consideration for national or other boundaries: climate change, atmospheric pollution and ozone holes concern everyone, even if not in equal measure. Temporally, the long latency period of various problems (for example, nuclear waste disposal or the effects of genetically modified food) means that they elude the current routines for the handling of industrial dangers. And socially, the ascription of dangers and therefore liability to particular sources becomes more and more of a problem. It is hard to establish who, in a legal sense, has ‘caused’ environmental pollution (or a financial crisis), since these arise out of interaction among many different individuals. The dangers of civilization therefore present themselves as largely deterritorialized – hence as difficult to attribute and almost impossible to control at the level of national states.

At least three axes of conflict need to be distinguished in world risk society. These are: ecological interdependence risks, which set up a global dynamic; economic interdependence risks, which are at first individualized and nationalized; and the threat from terrorist interdependence risks.

For all their differences, ecological, economic and terrorist risks have one essential characteristic in common: they cannot be classed as external environmental risks, but must be understood as facts and elements of insecurity generated by civilization. In this sense, civilizational risks potentially create a sharper awareness of standards among a global public and make a cosmopolitan perspective possible. In world risk society new political disputes flare up over the causes of global dangers and who is responsible for them – disputes that require an institutionalized cosmopolitanism to settle the problems of definition and liability.

Conflicts over civilizational risks arise, for example, when industrial countries demand that developing countries should do more to preserve major global resources such as the rainforests, while they themselves claim the lion’s share of energy resources. The conclusion might seem to follow that we are precisely not dealing with a new global form of socialization, but that would be falsely to equate society with consensus. In fact, such conflicts themselves have an integrative function, since they make it clear that cosmopolitan solutions must be found, and solutions are scarcely conceivable without new global institutions and regulatory mechanisms, and therefore without a certain degree of convergence. Thus, transnational risk communities spring up and establish themselves in connection with long-term consequences and expectations of the unexpected; it is these ‘impact publics’ that lead to an involuntary politicization of world risk society.

The everyday experience of cosmopolitan interdependence does not emerge as a love affair between all social actors; it consists of a perception of global situations of danger. These risks generate a huge pressure to cooperate. Despite all the national moats and boundaries, the construction and acceptance of a dimension of global danger creates a common space of responsibility and action that, by analogy with national space, may (but does not have to) produce political transactions between strangers. This is the case if the accepted dimension of danger leads to cosmopolitan norms and arrangements, hence to an institutionalized cosmopolitanism.

Previous research on the development of supranational or transnational organizations and regimes has shown, however, how difficult it is to pass from identification
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of dangers to agreement on the action that needs to be taken. Constant communication about dangers is an important element in the formation of informal cosmopolitan norms. The socialization of world risk society is inadequately understood, therefore, if its potential is limited to new and still-to-be-created institutions of successful global coordination. Before any cosmopolitan institutionalization takes place, global norms arise out of feelings of outrage at things that no longer seem tolerable. The development of global norms does not necessarily involve conscious efforts to establish 'positive' norms; it may also be fuelled 'negatively', as it were, by an evaluation of global crises and dangers. This is already apparent in the fact that, where new conflicts flare up, the dividing lines are not simply regional but partly elude geographical distinctions (between the First and the Third World, for example). The dynamics of risk-cosmopolitanism are further considered in the third section of the article, 'towards a cosmopolitan social science'.

Analytic-empirical cosmopolitanization must therefore be differentiated from normative-political cosmopolitanism. This distinction makes possible a 'value-free' approach to both the everyday experience and the social-scientific epistemology of world risk society; it forces us to consider separately, though not to disregard, normative political cosmopolitanism in a self-endangering world. First of all, it enables us to ask a question. How are the category definitions and cognitive aspects of the cosmopolitan perspective (for example, the critique of the national perspective) related to the themes of cosmopolitan ethics and politics? How do cosmopolitan democracy, justice, solidarity, legality, politics, statehood and so forth become possible?

The change to a cosmopolitan perspective opens up the possibility, within Cosmopolitan Social Theory (see Beck 2003), of a non-nostalgic critique of the national – of international law, international institutions, of the turn to new-style wars that threaten to break out as the guiding dualisms of the national and the international fade away. The argument unfolds here in two stages: critique of the national perspective (the following section), and preliminary reflections on the cosmopolitan grammar of the social and the political (the third and final section).

Critique of the national perspective and methodological nationalism

A cosmopolitan perspective calls into question one of the most important convictions concerning society and politics, namely that ‘modern society’ and ‘modern politics’ can be organized only in the form of national states. Society is equated with national-territorial society organized in states. When social players subscribe to this belief, I speak of a ‘national perspective’; when it defines the perspective of a scientific observer, I speak of ‘methodological nationalism’. This distinction between the perspectives of social actors and social scientists is important because the link between the two is not logical but only historical. The rise of sociology coincided with the rise of the national state, nationalism and the system of international politics. This historical connection alone gave rise to the axioms of methodological nationalism, according to which nation, state and society are the ‘natural’ social and political forms of the modern world.

The whole world that is being shaken to its foundations by the problems resulting from its victory as a civilization cannot be grasped, investigated or explained within
either the national perspective (of social players) or within the framework of methodological nationalism (the perspective of the scientific observer).

**Principles and errors of methodological nationalism**

Empirical-analytic cosmopolitanism has its sights trained on methodological nationalism, but it does not seek to polemicize against political cosmopolitanism (by using such terms as ‘grand hotel cosmopolitanism’, ‘business lounge cosmopolitanism’ or ‘the patriotism of fools’). Initially, it does not focus on the normative-political element — how cosmopolitan democracy becomes a possibility — but has a purely cognitive interest in social and political conditions at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The critique of methodological nationalism within the cosmopolitan perspective concerns the observational viewpoint of the social sciences. The accusation of methodological nationalism is not meant to imply that some or all social scientists are nationalists. For non-nationalists and anti-nationalists, too, think and conduct research within the framework of methodological nationalism if they use the grammar of the social sciences as the basis for their way of posing problems. So long as the problems are formulated with the concepts of the social sciences, the dogmas of methodological nationalism are taken for granted. What may we identify, then, as the principles of methodological nationalism?3

**Society is subordinate to the state**

A first principle asserts that the national state defines national society and not the reverse. Society does not choose the state; rather, the state promises security, fixes and strengthens boundaries, and creates administrative apparatuses that enable it to shape and control ‘national society’. It follows that there are not one but many societies — or, to be more precise, that there are as many national societies as there are national states and national sociologies. Methodological nationalism implies societies in the plural. It imposes a territorial understanding of society that rests upon state-constructed and state-controlled borders. This ‘container model’ of separate national societies is reinforced and renewed by the reciprocal determination of state and society. The territorial national state is both creator and guarantor of individual civil rights, and citizens organize with the aid of political parties to influence and legitimate the actions of the state.

This axiomatic system may be found in pure form in Durkheim or Talcott Parsons, for example, but also in John Rawls. In *Political liberalism* he defines his theory of justice with reference to ‘political society’ as ‘a complete and closed social system’: ‘It is complete in that it is self-sufficient and has a place for all the main purposes of human life. It is also closed … in that entry into it is only by birth and exit from it is only by death. … For the moment we leave aside entirely relations with other societies’ (Rawls 1996: 40ff.)

This conception of a nationally closed society and democracy takes no theoretical account of all the explosive questions that have come to the fore with the uncoupling of nation, state and society. How, for instance, in the age of ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman 2000), flows and networks, can the distinction be drawn between foreigners
and nationals, citizens and non-citizens, human rights and civil rights in particular social contexts? Who should and should not discuss and decide on these matters, and on what basis, if even the understanding of the constitution is intimately bound up with the suggestive concept of the nation, which for its part becomes ever more fictitious and, indeed, openly contradicts the tendency of transnational realities and causalities to set universal norms?

Martin Shaw (2000) has suggested the metaphor of a stamp collection for the research practice of social sciences that yield to the principle of methodological nationalism. Stamps are issued by national institutions. They are symbols of the state and bear its ‘stamp’. Someone who collects them behaves as someone who collects ‘social facts’: he or she follows the logic of the national perspective. Both stamps and social facts are sorted by symbols and dates, and in accordance with the distinction between intranational and international communication. Social relations and symbols that escape or cut across this ordering by state and territory fall outside the perceptual framework. Like a stamp collector, the social scientist starts from the assumption that the boundaries of society coincide with state boundaries and, therefore, that the research boundaries too can and must be equated with state boundaries.

*The conception of the world in the social sciences is defined by the opposition between national and international*

Theoretically and imaginatively as well as in terms of research practice the opposition between national and international is fundamental for the social sciences. They involve not only an internal-national but also an external-international recognition of societies and states. A single national society is a meaningless concept. There can only be a multiplicity of national societies, which come into being and persist through mutual international recognition. Consequently, the principles of legality and democracy that apply within national states cannot be directly transferred to relations among states. The national presupposes the international and vice versa.

*False inference from particular national society to universal society*

There is an inner affinity between the national and the universal perspective. One’s own society is the model for society in general. It therefore follows that the basic characteristics of universal society can be derived from analysis of *this* society. It was thus in British society that Marx discovered British capitalism, which he then generalized into the capitalism of modern society. Weber universalized the experience of the Prussian bureaucracy into the type of rationality of modernity in general. And when C. Wright Mills criticized the ‘power elites’, he was criticizing not only American society but also modern society as such.

This false inference from national to universal society was criticized and corrected early on by the method of international comparison, for which individual studies were necessary but not sufficient to make general statements about modern society. This approach was and is conceived in terms of comparison between national societies: it presupposes national states as the basic units and involves all the other assumptions of methodological nationalism. The possibility that the unity of state and nation might dissolve or come apart or altogether change therefore falls outside the realm of what
may be anticipated in the social sciences. Anyone who takes for granted the mutually reinforcing differentiation between national and international inevitably thinks of the global as the superlative form of the national. The world systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, for example, starts from this distinction between the national and the international; the result is a global perspective that analyses the relationship between ‘national states’ within the world system. In another variant, the group of authors around John Meyer have investigated the spread of global norms, and here too the national–international duality is not broken down but serves as the foil for studies and prognoses concerning the homogenization of national spaces of experience and action.

The false territorial understanding of cultural plurality: either universal homogenization or incomparability of perspectives

Methodological nationalism involves (and intensifies) a territorial misunderstanding of culture and cultural plurality. If culture is seen as territorially circumscribed, the question of plurality leads to the impasse of a false alternative: either universal sameness (‘McDonaldization’) or non-comparable perspectives (‘incommensurability’).

Many critics see cosmopolitan culture as a natural successor to or even product of postmodern culture. In this view, the link between postmodernism and postnationalism gives rise to various movements of cultural eclecticism or ambivalence and ultimately to a general cultural plasticity; now playfully, now satirically, people use various styles, symbols and concepts stemming from older historical cultures in literature, music, painting or architecture, and reprocess them for the mass media. Upon closer observation, however, this ostensible plurality is re-sorted over and over again and merged into a universalism in which everything is indistinguishable from everything else. This shallow cosmopolitanism of the quotation montage can certainly use the past to keep renewing itself, and scour the world for fashionable inventions. But – in the widely held view – it cannot locate itself in history, or remove from the world the basic fact that cultures and cultural imagination are historically specific and rooted, and therefore territorial.

Besides, a global culture is without time. Forever pursuing an elusive present, an artificial and standardized universal culture has no historical background, no developmental rhythm, no sense of time and sequence. Contextless and timeless, this artificial global culture may quarry the past for illustrative purposes or cynically use motifs from particular pasts with eclectic caprice, but it refuses to locate itself in history. Stripped of any sense of development beyond the performative present, and alien to all ideas of ‘roots’, the genuine global culture is fluid, ubiquitous, formless and historically shallow.

That is precisely not what the cosmopolitan perspective is about. Smith evokes an enemy image in which cosmopolitanism repeats the premises and errors of methodological nationalism; it is a universalism of the human race that maintains that greater sameness, hence the elimination of plurality is a real tendency in the world. Consent to this tendency ultimately leads to a demand for cultural suicide. Cosmopolitanism,
however, means the exact opposite: recognition of the otherness of the other, beyond
the false understanding associated with territoriality and homogenization.

If, in the universalism of the human race, difference is universalized out of exist-
ence, in methodological nationalism the territorial ontology of difference is given a
new lease of life. The result is that, in the national perspective, culture is conceived as
a territorially separate unit turned in on itself; and in the extreme case it is the silence
(at best the roaring silence) of incommensurability that prevails between cultures. A
belief along such lines releases one from the labour of dialogue, leading with a degree
of inevitability to imperialism and the clash of civilizations. The absurdity of this
container model of plurality leaps to the eye: for example, transnational networks,
lifestyles and forms of work and action, even the new experience of a lack of borders
among fixed TV consumers, cannot and must not exist because they blur and confuse
the linguistic frontiers and group boundaries between cultures.

The distinction between international and cosmopolitan

The cold war, too, with its development of a ‘West’ and an ‘East’, has been theorized
and studied with the categories of the national and the international, not with those of
the global. Global and cosmopolitan relations were and are reduced to international
relations (Archibugi et al. 1998; Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2003; Shaw 2000;
Wapner and Ruiz 2000). The emergence of the World Trade Organization, the World
Bank, the International Monetary Fund, NATO, and so on was interpreted in terms of
an institutionalized internationalism, not of an institutionalized cosmopolitanism that
the global world was seeking to order within a structure beyond the national and the
international. Internationalism and cosmopolitanism, however, are by no means two
ways of pursuing the same idea. No doubt cosmopolitan relations presuppose inter-
national relations among others, but they also transform them by opening up and
redrawing boundaries, by transcending or reversing the polarity of the relations
between us and others, and not least by rewriting in cosmopolitan terms the relation-
ship between state, politics and nation.

International and cosmopolitan cannot be equated with each other. The cosmo-
politan perspective registers the change in social and political grammar – and hence,
for example, the process of integration through reflexive globality. The ‘either inside
or outside’ that underlies the distinction between national and international is trans-
cended by a ‘both inside and outside’. The cosmopolitan perspective identifies many
different realities of the spatial, temporal and practical. These remain blind spots
within the national perspective.

What, then, is the core of the critique of methodological nationalism? The funda-
mental criticism is that it regards the national state as a ‘self-evident point of
departure’ (Daniel Lévy). The cosmopolitan perspective retains a reference to the
national state, but locates and analyses it within a radically different horizon (see the
final section below). The arguments of methodological nationalism are falsely cir-
cular: the cosmopolitan perspective analyses the national state by taking its own
premises for granted. It is becoming both correct and necessary to look at the national
state and the flow of international relations within a cosmopolitan perspective; this
sharpens our understanding not only of international relations but also of the ways in
Towards a cosmopolitan social science or the cosmopolitan grammar of the social and the political

The epistemological turn, the empirical-analytic cosmopolitanism being developed here, therefore has a twofold thrust: a critique of the existing methodological nationalism and the development of a new methodological cosmopolitanism. A critique of the national perspective becomes concrete and scientifically credible only if it can be shown how the change to a cosmopolitan perspective modifies the grammar of the social sciences, recentering and casting in a new light the areas of study with which they are concerned. We must now sketch out this substantive, conceptual and methodological transformation of core themes in the social sciences. We shall do this under the following four headings: (1) risk-cosmopolitanism: world public opinion as a side effect; (2) interference from side effects: post-international politics; (3) the invisibility of global inequality; and (4) how everyday life is becoming cosmopolitan: banal cosmopolitanism.

Risk-cosmopolitanism: world public opinion as a side effect

We distinguished above between cosmopolitanism and a cosmopolitan perspective and developed the related argument that cosmopolitanization usually occurs as a forced and unintended side effect. It is quite another question whether this side effect then becomes conscious – leading to a cosmopolitan perspective – or even produces a global public space. The theory of world risk society (Beck 1986; Beck 1999; Beck and Holzer 2004) offers a model of interdependence crises that makes it possible to study theoretically and empirically this connection between latent, forced cosmopolitanization and world public awareness of it through the outbreak of scandals. A system of ‘risk cosmopolitanism’ is emerging in which an exceptional degree of cosmopolitan interdependence, itself a side effect of the side effects of global publics, brings transnational conflicts and commonalities into the everyday practices that compel political (state) and subpolitical (civil society) action.

In its lead story on ‘Living with Risk’ (28 July 2003), Time Magazine recently showed in detail how people in developed civilization are caught up in the hard-to-evaluate risks and inescapable uncertainties produced by the sciences. At best, scientists can define more and more precisely within their field of probabilities the risks of genetically modified foods, mobile telephones and the everyday use of chemicals, but that tells us nothing about whether they are real risks or how a consumer can make a ‘rational’ choice in a particular situation. How worried should we be? Where is the boundary line between due care and crippling fear or hysteria? And who decides on such things? Scientists, whose results anyway often contradict one another at a given moment, change their minds so fundamentally over a longer
time period that what we regard as acceptable today may well prove in two years time to be a ‘cancer risk’. Should we believe the politicians or the mass media – when the former advocate new zero-risk technologies to reduce unemployment, and the latter highlight the risks in order to increase their circulation or viewer ratings? *Time* reports all this in great detail, but it says nothing about how much it actually matters, about what the risk actually involves. It creates public awareness; it focuses public attention on risk.

This can be seen from the major risk conflicts of the past 20 years: the nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl, the AIDS and BSE crises, the controversy over genetically modified ‘Frankenstein foods’, and the birth of a global terror risk on 11 September 2001. The law of double side effects always applies: the self-endangering civilization produces first-grade side effects – fewer rather than more calculable risks and uncertainties – which in turn generate, as second-grade side effects, cross-border publics and corresponding devaluations of products, everyday practices and bureaucratic routines, new market breakthroughs and allocations of responsibility, and all the related costs, conflicts, commonalities and pressures for action. Both the first-grade and second-grade side effects produce and accelerate cosmopolitanization through interdependence – indeed, the relationship between the two indicates how latent, forced cosmopolitanization can change into a forced awareness of risk-cosmopolitanism (Beck 1999).

The theory of world risk society should by no means be confused with a new-model theory of the decline of the West. It should be seen, rather, as a theory of ambivalence. On the one hand, there is the sinister perspective that opened up for the world on 11 September, with an uncontrollable terrorist risk that forces its way into every aspect of life in developed societies and changes them from within. On the other hand, there is the often-asked question of what could make the world one, to which the answer repeatedly given is: an attack from Mars. In a sense that is what occurred on 11 September: an attack from our ‘inner Mars’. And, at least for a while, we actually saw the predicted closing of ranks in international and national politics, against the common enemy of global terrorism. In an age in which belief and confidence in class, nation and progress has become in varying degrees questionable, the global perception of global risk is perhaps the last – ambivalent – source of new commonalities and interconnected action. However paradoxical it may seem, there is also ground for hope in the fact that world risk society marks an epoch in which forced risk-cosmopolitanization changes into a no less forced global public awareness of the ongoing process of risk-cosmopolitanization. Thus, the law of dual side effects also contains an enlightening function.

A change of focus is necessary to elucidate this perspective. For, unlike in conventional political theory, it is not the decision itself but its unpredictable risks and consequences that are here the source of the public and the political (Dewey 1954). In a global public sensitive to risk, the question of power is posed especially in relation to consequences that are experienced as unimaginable and unthinkable. The resulting responsibility beyond frontiers for shared risks is negatively defined in two ways. On the one hand, it is not directed towards things that must on no account exist; it does not involve an integration of values (such as methodological nationalism postulates),
but rather an integration of dangers and defences against danger whose bonding power grows with the extent of the perceived danger. Instead of national and universal integration of values, then, the global character of dangers reflected in a world public brings with it a new dialectic of conflict and cooperation beyond frontiers. Only in this way, on pain of disaster, can the necessary formulas be found and negotiated for a consensus on international action and institutions. It remains an open question, of course, whether this will actually happen.

On the other hand, it is not so much – or anyway not exclusively – social movements or revolutionary upheavals that produce an ‘unintended’ and ‘unforeseen’ global public, but rather the catastrophic intensification of global risks themselves. The more the threat is present in all the media, the more the political force deriving from the perception of risk leaps across frontiers (Adam et al. 2000). In this sense, risks may be understood as a negative means of communication; nearly everyone wants to keep quiet about them. In contrast to the positive means of communication (money, truth, power), they bring about intentional action-contexts beyond national or systemic boundaries. Risks, then, compel communication among those who do not wish to communicate with one another; they force a public to come into existence where there are supposed to be barriers to the formation of any public. Risk allocates duties and obligations to those who decline them (and who often have valid laws on their side). In other words, risks break up the self-reference of national and international political agendas, overturning their priorities and generating action-contexts among parties and camps that disregard and fight one another.

Interference from side effects: postnational politics

A transition is taking place from a politics centred upon national states and international security to a risk politics that is post-international and no longer centred upon national states. This paradigm shift corresponds to the distinction between first and second modernity. The high-modern period of classical nation-states showed to its best advantage a structural and political logic that has become clearly distinguishable only as the end of the cold war brings on its own demise. That logic involved sharply defined boundaries not only between different nations and states but, more generally, among people, things and functional or practical fields; it thus brought about – at least at the level of expectations – clear-cut attributions of responsibility and competence. Today, by contrast, the side effects of radical modernization reflected at the level of a global public create an awareness of new global dangers. This globality, together with the fact that the dangers to civilization are known to be incalculable, has been eroding the basic distinctions and institutions of the first modernity. Whereas the dangers in the first modernity were limited and easy to pinpoint (imperial, geostrategic, ideological, military and economic interests of powerful national states, in a situation defined by rearmament, arms races, corresponding counter-strategies and calculable diplomacy), what we now see are unlimited risks and uncertainties that are much harder to identify (like transnational terrorism, climatic disasters, contested water resources, migration flows, AIDS, genetically modified foods, BSE, and computer viruses able to cripple civil and military
Then there was conscious knowledge and calculability that presupposed state sovereignty; now there is conscious lack of knowledge, or non-conscious lack of knowledge and incalculability, that is cancelling state sovereignty. Then there was prevention following the logic of deterrence; now there is prevention corresponding to the logic of inter-state and post-state cooperation. This, however, entails the beginning of struggles over the form and content of institutionalized cosmopolitanism, in the sense of lasting cooperation among state and post-state players in the global and local space (such as civil society groups and networks, corporations, international organizations, the UN and churches). Of course, it is by no means the case that all frontiers and dualisms are becoming blurred. In fact, the starting-point of the theory of reflexive modernization is the exact opposite (Beck, Bonß and Lau 2001), namely that the removal of frontiers compels distinction; the greater the loss of boundaries, the greater becomes the compulsion to distinguish, the more provisional are the constructed frontiers, and the more permanent are the frontier policies and the frontier conflicts. All players – governments as well as international organizations, political parties and civil society movements – must resituate themselves within this transnational force-field: they must redistribute the burdens and costs, define the goals, find the appropriate ways and means, forge coalitions and imagine futures for a common world in which conflicts appear along deep faults. That demands a post-international politics no longer centred upon national states. ‘The long-existing economic, social and technological unity of the world, the responsibility of all players for preservation of the conditions of life on this overpopulated planet, the ever-growing military potential that protects few but endangers all’ (Gerhardt 2003: 566) – these make a cosmopolitan perspective necessary.

The novelty in the contemporary situation is that the problems of this world do not leave us much time to create a political world order in which law is not only a formality but an actual power in the life of nations. If humanity does not succeed in giving a political form to its really existing unity, and hence in creating organizations that make it possible to act in accordance with certain priorities, then the days even of the present regulatory powers are probably numbered.

(Gerhardt 2003: 566)

But what does that mean for the concept ‘international’, which gives the study of ‘international relations’ its direction (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2003; Wapner and Ruiz 2000).

On no account must the term ‘international’ be eliminated from the vocabulary of politics and political theory. Relations between states remain centrally important, but they are no longer exclusive or monopolizable. The forced, unintended cosmopolitanization of international relations follows the model of interference from side effects – from capital flows, from the spread of cultural symbols, global risks, terrorist actions, migration flows, anti-globalization movements, ecological and economic crises (Beck 2002). The unity of ‘international relations’ is changing. The captivating concept of ‘state’ and ‘nation’ is being rewritten: because in world risk society national problems
can no longer be solved on a nation basis; because human rights are directed against states, and ‘defended’ by states against other states; and because highly mobile capital forces territorially fixed states to give up their power and to transform themselves.

Trans-international politics, then, implies a level of organized, more or less informal politics within, outside, between and below the levels of individual states. It is a politics that reflects all other phenomena: global economic power relations, crises and strategies; situations and reactions of individual countries and groups of countries; interventions by a global public; terrorist dangers and so on. Trans-international politics lies across international politics; it includes international politics. But the reverse is also true: international politics becomes a venue for trans-international politics. The cosmopolitan viewpoint therefore taps the ‘grammatical’ change in the term ‘international’. International relations theory is blind to the dynamics of globality – unless globality is narrowed down to spatial relations among states. To put it more sharply: the cosmopolitanization of reality appears as the enemy of international theory, for it seems to undermine the authority of the theory of the state, to abolish the political monopoly of the national state and international relations. It is precisely in this fear of rejection, however, that the international perspective misjudges the dynamic and reality of the cosmopolitanization of international relations. What are at issue are not the undermining or abandonment of state forms of politics and inter-state relations, but rather their transformation, redefinition and completion.

The invisibility of global inequality

We are confronted with the paradox that, whereas global inequalities are growing dramatically, they receive only marginal attention, if any, in methodological nationalism. How is this to be understood?

In sociology oriented to national states the standard justification for social inequalities is in terms of the performance principle. This applies to inequalities within individual countries. But the cosmopolitan perspective takes this a stage further and shows how the nation-state principle functions as a legitimation for global inequalities. The key point here is that, in keeping with the introverted character of the national perspective, the nation-state principle conceals global inequalities from view. Since methodological nationalism focuses on inequalities inside countries, it can neither systematically address nor answer the questions of the legitimation of global inequalities and the transnationalization of social inequalities.

The performance principle enables a ‘positive’ legitimation of intra-national inequalities, whereas the nation-state principle rests on a ‘negative’ legitimation of global inequalities. ‘Positive’ legitimation means that the performance principle functions as a reciprocal and reflexive legitimation of experienced inequality. Performance (however it may be operationalized) is the yardstick that makes it possible, at least in principle, for even those directly affected to distinguish between the legitimate and illegitimate distribution of wealth. The nation-state principle, on the other hand, should be conceived as a ‘negative’ mode of legitimation because it takes no account of global inequalities. Performance comparison internally is combined with institutional blindness externally. This excludes acceptance of those who are excluded as poor.
Upon closer examination, then, the nation-state principle does not legitimate global inequalities. Rather, the introverted character of the national perspective makes invisible, and hence stabilizes, the lack of legitimation. What are the principles underlying this institutionalized invisibility of global inequalities (Stichweh 2000)?

**National fragmentation**

Just as, in the national perspective, world society is fragmented into separate territorially defined and state-organized societies that are inwardly oriented and outwardly closed, so are the realities, conflicts and dynamics of global inequality fragmented into national inequalities that cease even to appear as global in the horizon of national sociologists. In the national perspective, social inequalities are located in the inter-relationship between the welfare system and the individual; the responsibility for inequality is attributed partly to the state and partly to individuals. Justice is defined accordingly, and so too are social claims on state distributive policy articulated and pursued. This motivates and activates social movements, such as the labour or women’s movement, which denounce their respective lack of privileges and demand compensatory payments from the state.

It is commonly suspected that national inequalities may be not nationally but globally determined, that they may be due to global capital flows, crises and upheavals, but this idea is not often thought through and consistently explored. Only in a cosmopolitan perspective – a cosmopolitan way of looking at national as well as global and transnational inequalities – is this caging of thought and investigation both manifest and capable of being overcome; only here do national welfare states cease to be the focus of attention only as guarantors of individual social security. The question then becomes how, and to what extent, national welfare states shift poverty risks on to other states and countries. The latest textbook example of this occurred at a world conference in the summer of 2003, where, with a now rare transatlantic unanimity, a US–European ‘coalition of the unwilling’ defended Western agricultural protectionism against demands from African and Latin American states that they finally open their markets in accordance with the basic Western principle of a free market economy.

**Restrictive norms of equality**

Inequalities are recognized as inequalities only in so far as there are social norms of equality (civil rights). To the extent that the distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, foreigners and nationals, human rights and citizenship rights become blurred, it also becomes more difficult to separate clearly non-national from national inequalities. In other words, the experiential space of the national state becomes more and more a playground of global inequalities, contradictions and issues relating to justice. Realistically speaking, it is no longer possible to draw political or even sociological-conceptual boundaries between national and international in the matter of social inequalities.

**Institutionalized incomparability**

For global inequalities between national spaces to become institutionally invisible, they must first be impervious to comparison. The comparability of inequalities, which
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is a political necessity within national states, is not actually ruled out between states, but it does become politically ineffective; that, precisely, is the achievement of the introverted national perspective. To be sure, if international and global inequalities romp around in the national experiential space – partly in the form of legal and illegal migration and individual mobility, partly in the form of media representations of opposite lifestyles – the institutionalized incomparability loses its force. In the collision of transnational opposites within the politics of national states, there must be a political-cultural coming to terms with the experience of what we might call ‘incomparable comparabilities’; these must also be made the object of sociological investigation.

These few sketchy points already make it clear that if the firmly established world of national distinctions and boundaries enters into flux, the principles of national blindness to global inequalities lose much of their compulsory force. As a result, the intertwining of intranational, international and transnational inequalities becomes politically explosive.

The cosmopolitan perspective, with its sense of an erosion of frontiers, points to a highly ambivalent reality and future. The opportunities are boundless, but so too are the threats. The suspicion that boundless threats are choking boundless opportunities is difficult to remove. For, in addition, these dangers cannot be grasped with the available concepts or met with the existing institutions. As the danger grows, it becomes ever harder to resist the temptation to deny the danger, or to trim it back down to a size that fits the established categories for its prevention; in the case of the terrorist risk that would mean war against states. The Iraq war was the first war against a global risk (the terrorist risk) to be fought against a particular state. Only in that way could the risk become (ostensibly) controllable by the state, ‘digestible’ by the state. This non-state terrorism is made state digestible by being associated with rogue states that tolerate or indulge it, and that can therefore be defeated through the conventional means of state-against-state warfare.

This results in a new, hidden transnational commonality, which rests on the denial by both sides that the terrorist danger is really novel. To fight the war on terror as a war on states can be justified only if the difference in kind between terrorism and war is suppressed. Only if the terrorist danger is changed back into a danger of war can it be understood with conventional concepts and controlled with the conventional means of military superiority. Then, at last, there is no longer any reason for the most powerful country on earth to feel insecure.

How everyday life is becoming cosmopolitan: banal cosmopolitanism

Consumer society is the actually existing world society. In this sense, we may say that a perfect example of ‘side effect cosmopolitanization’ is the type of consumption in which the dividing line between compulsion and decision, side effect and intention is hard to draw. Cosmopolitanization does not take place only in inconspicuous ways (for example when nationally specific cars such as Volkswagens or London taxis are assembled in accordance with the transnational do-it-yourself principle). Cosmopolitanism has itself become a commodity; the glitter of cultural difference fetches a good
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price. Images of an in-between world, of the black body, exotic beauty, exotic music, exotic food, and so on, are globally cannibalized, re-staged and consumed as products for mass markets. ‘People see black people as trendsetters, they see what we’re on and they wanna [get] onto the same thing, figuring it’s gonna be the next big thing. They try to take things away from us every time. Slang we come up with ends up on t-shirts. We ain’t making no t-shirts’, writes African-American clothing designer Carl Williams, who markets his designs under the ‘Karl Kane’ brand name (cited in Gilroy 2000: 241). Of course, someone who listens to black music and wears pictures or quotations by black people on her t-shirt does not have to identify with the culture from which the pictures or quotations are taken. But she does become the bearer of images and messages that cross frontiers and penetrate otherwise separate experiential spaces. Black culture, styles and creativity are sold to a public that knows no frontiers. Once again we are confronted here with a kind of ‘banal cosmopolitanism’. People do not make a show of symbols of banal cosmopolitanism, but intentionally or unintentionally they do show their colours, as it were, in a cosmopolitan way.

Banal cosmopolitanism is closely bound up with all kinds of consumption. Banal cosmopolitanism may be illustrated not only by the huge variety of meals, food, restaurants and menus routinely present in nearly every city anywhere in the world. It also penetrates other spheres of everyday culture – music, for example. As Maalouf (2000: 99) has written:

There too one is struck by the abundance. Often the most terrible news reaches us from Algeria. But it is also the source of original music, made by young people singing in Arabic, French or Kabyle. The lives of these people is [sic] a little reminiscent of the much older and more extensive odyssey of those Africans who were once carried off as slaves to the Americas. Their music from Louisiana or the Caribbean has since spread all over the world and become part of our musical and affective heritage.

That too is what is meant by ‘banal’ cosmopolitanization. Maalouf continues: ‘Never before has mankind had the technical means to listen to so many different kinds of music: voices from Cameroon, Spain, Egypt, Argentina, Brazil and Cape Verde, as well as from Liverpool, Memphis, Brussels or Naples. Never have so many people had the possibility to compose, play and sing music – and to find an audience.’ That which appears in a postmodern perspective as ‘eclecticism’ or ‘inauthenticity’ (and in critiques of contemporary civilization as ‘lack of roots’ or ‘lack of memory’) may be decoded as a new reflexivity. This may be seen precisely in the cosmopolitanization of music, where elements from many different cultures are continually being compared, rejected, fitted together and remixed. In fact, if we think about it, a whole network of everyday skills and practices emerges to handle the high degree of interdependence and globality.

The question of whether this inner cosmopolitanization of lifeworlds is only objective or also institutionally ‘reflexive’ refers not least to the role of the mass media (Aksoy and Robbins 2003; Appadurai 1995; Caglar 2002; Schiller 1989). The accessibility of other cultures and experiential spaces, fuelled by the possibility of
switching between different channels and programmes, may well lead to a situation where the everyday cosmopolitan interdependence of television viewers becomes gradually more conscious – although, of course, that is an empirical question (to which we shall return later). Mike Featherstone has summarized this argument as follows: ‘The flows of information, knowledge, money, commodities, people and images have intensified to the extent that the sense of spatial distance which separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all the other people which make up what has become known as humanity has become eroded’ (Featherstone 1993: 169).

Thus, in so far as global everyday existence becomes an integral part of media worlds, a kind of globalization of emotions and empathy takes place. People experience themselves as part of a fragmented, endangered civilization and civil society, whose characteristic feature is the simultaneity of events and knowledge of this simultaneity everywhere in the world.

Another less banal example of actually existing cosmopolitanism is the transnationalization of law and the emergence of a legal pluralism. Cosmopolitan realism maintains that, in today’s radically changing landscapes, laws emerge and exist alongside one another internationally beyond any clear distinction between national and international – something that methodological nationalism appears to rule out. Cosmopolitanization goes hand in hand with fragmentation, contextualization and pluralization of law. In criminal law, the national state has for a long time been largely able to defend its monopoly. In patent law, however, or in other core areas concerning economic activity, a both/and combination of state and non-state, public and private is spreading. This involves a broad spectrum of players, ranging from NGOs, transnational corporations and private law firms through to international legal committees, the WTO, IMF, World Bank and so on. In legal matters, too, the national state is far from powerless or irrelevant, but in a confusing both/and combination it has become one powerful body among others, in the South even more clearly than in the North. Methodologically, this means that the banal cosmopolitanization of law can be neither local nor national; its new hybrid forms, marginal constructions and ambivalences, as well as their instrumentalization in the power politics of governments, corporations and NGOs, must be analysed in multi-local and multinational perspectives and case studies (Beck 2002; Marcus 1998).

Another player whose current ‘cosmopolitan renewal’ is viewed with mistrust provides a surprising example of an even less ‘banal’ cosmopolitanism. I mean the armed forces and more especially NATO. Within Europe, but also in the relationship with the United States, the military managers have brought about a curious situation in which the institution meant to be the national inner sanctum has been denationalized in its core. A cause of particular agitation in this respect is the transnationalization of weapons production – tanks, fighter aircraft, transport planes and computerized systems. For a long time now these basic premises of national self-reliance have been removed and turned into their opposite; military security and power are today geared to international cooperation, and are therefore possible only through self-cancellation of the national military sovereignty and security that everything is supposed to serve. The top command centres have themselves been struck down by the multicultural
virus and turned into miniature cosmopolitan societies. Officers and men from all member countries mingle and cooperate inside them, as in a multinational corporation. Large-scale military exercises become transnational ventures and serve to provide training in transnationality. In the end, this raises the far from banal question: why are German soldiers, for example, dying in Afghanistan? The stock answer of the national epoch – for the fatherland or for Germany’s security interests – has become a cliché that may for a while gloss over the embarrassing matter of compliance with a national constitution but cannot conceal its own basic loss of reality.

It may be seen from this example that the national doctrine of cultural homogeneity was a historical exception, which applied only to the first modernity for a brief period of world history (McNeill 1985). Earlier empires and emperors could not afford to entertain the idea that armies should have a national (that is ethnically homogeneous) composition. Of course, the great world conquests – from Caesar’s time to Napoleon’s – were possible only on the basis of multiethnic armies; an empire could be built and secured only through the recruitment and integration of fresh soldiers from outside the limits of the original city-state. Rome’s willingness to make civil rights ethnically non-specific by extending them to an ever-wider catchment area was not the least of the factors that enabled it to achieve its victories.

These examples of banal cosmopolitanization crucially imply that the experiential space of separate national societies, each with its own uniform language, identity and politics, is becoming more and more of a myth. What counts as national is in its essence increasingly transnational or cosmopolitan. Hence, the relationship between our cognitive understanding of the world and the actual social structures is becoming paradoxical: social structures and processes become cosmopolitan, while our knowledge remains caught up in national axioms. It seems likely, moreover, that economic and cultural globalization will tend to strengthen rather than weaken this paradox of knowledge and reality. The social premises of the national state – a uniform space, nation and state – are no longer present, even though new organizational forms of cosmopolitics are not yet clearly discernible.

What defines an experiential space or horizon as ‘cosmopolitan’ rather than national? My own suggestion is that a cosmopolitan sensibility and competence emerge out of the clash of cultures within one’s own life. The cosmopolitan constellation, understood as an experiential space and horizon, denotes the internalized otherness of others, the co-presence or coexistence of rival lifestyles, ‘contradictory certainties’ within the space of individual and social experience. This indicates a world in which it has become a necessity to understand, reflect and criticize the otherness of others, and thereby to affirm oneself and others as different and therefore of equal value. The cosmopolitan perspective and cosmopolitan sensibility open up a space of dialogic imagination – as a practice in everyday life and in the sciences relating to it. Cosmopolitical competence, everyday and social-scientific, forces people to develop the art of translation and bridging. This includes both the location of one’s own lifestyle within the horizon of other possibilities, and the ability to see oneself from the viewpoint of those who are culturally other – as well as to practise this within one’s own experiential space through the imaginative crossing of boundaries.
How far this is successful, and in which contexts, is a completely open empirical question to which I know of no adequate answer. In fact, it is important to take early action against a cosmopolitan *myth* that life between frontiers or in the diaspora automatically implies greater openness to the world. Cosmopolitanization and anti-cosmopolitanization mesh with each other.

Here, at the latest, it is necessary to warn of a possible false conclusion. The basic fact that human experiential space is being subtly changed through an opening to cosmopolitanization should not lead us to assume that we are all becoming cosmopolitans. Even the most positive conceivable development – an erosion of the frontiers between cultural horizons and a growing sensitivity towards unfamiliar geographies of life and coexistence – does not necessarily demand a sense of cosmopolitan responsibility. The question of how such a sense might become even a possibility has up to now scarcely been posed, let alone investigated.

But the inner cosmopolitanization of nationally conceived and organized societies also increases the likelihood of a *national* false conclusion. This is the belief that what happens in the container of one or another national state can also be located, understood and explained on a national basis. This ‘national’ or ‘territorial’ false conclusion applies not least to many of the statistics that are worked up and interpreted by nationally oriented economic and social theory (Beck-Gernsheim 2004).

**Acknowledgements**

The author and the editors wish to express their gratitude to Patrick Camiller for translating the original text from German to English.

**Notes**

1. See the outstanding work by Sigrid Thielking (2000), to which I am much indebted for the present article.
2. The idea of the second modernity as an age of side effects is developed in Beck (1986); Beck, Bonß and Lau (2001); and Beck, Holzer and Kieserling (2001).
3. For the discussion of methodological nationalism, see Beck (2000b); Gilroy (1993); Shaw (2000); Smith (1996); and Taylor (1996) among others.
4. How influential is methodological nationalism in sociological theory? At first sight, explicit references to ‘national societies’ would not appear to be so frequent; this has partly to do with the fact that contemporary social theorists in the public eye use a methodological universalism that has more or less internalized or sublimated methodological nationalism to the point where it is no longer recognizable as such – more in the case of Niklaus Luhmann, less in that of Claus Offe or Pierre Bourdieu. It remains to be shown that Luhmann’s
methodological universalism, for instance, in its either/or logic of the binary code and its construction of system boundaries, shares the underlying assumptions of methodological nationalism.

5. In the following section I summarize, with some minor changes of emphasis, what I have already expounded in greater detail in Beck (2002: 54–69).

6. On the connection between consumption, globalization and everyday culture see, among others, Beck et al. (2003); Beisheim and Zürn (1999: 69–99); Gebesmair (2000); Held et al. (1999); and Katz and Liebes (1993).

References


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