

Multiculturalism or Cosmopolitanism: How Can We Describe and Understand the Diversity of the World?*

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过去数十年来,多元性的文化、社会和政治图景演变甚巨;然而我们却仍未找到一种话语来描述、界定、理解、解释和研究当代世界的超级多元性。关于多元性的社会思想和政治行动大多受制于民族主义方法论和多元文化主义框架;然而,对此应该提出质疑。和民族主义方法论相对的世界主义方法论,是观察多元性问题富有前景的视角。另外,对规范的、哲学意义上的“世界主义”和作为一种结构现象及社会科学研究项目的“世界化”进行区分是非常必要的。我们可以把哲学及规范意义上的世界主义与世界性社会科学结合起来,构建一种世界性的现实主义。

关键词: 超级多元性 民族主义方法论 多元文化主义 世界主义 世界化

Over the last decades the cultural, social and political landscapes of diversity are changing radically, but we do not even have the language through which contemporary superdiversity in the world can be described, conceptualized, understood, explained and researched. Many of the social thoughts and political actions on issues of diversity are now dominated by methodological nationalism and multiculturalism which, however, have to be called into question. As opposed to methodological nationalism, methodological cosmopolitanism is a promising lens through which to look at questions of diversity. And it is essential to draw an essential distinction between “cosmopolitanism” in a normative philosophical sense and “cosmopolitanization” as a structural phenomenon and as a social scientific research programme. Philosophical and normative cosmopolitanism can be combined with cosmopolitan social science to create a cosmopolitan realism.

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A major challenge today is the development of dialogue and cooperation across cultural and

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civilizational worlds at the local as well as the global level. It is in this sense that I want to address the problems and opportunities of living together in conditions of diversity beyond borders from a specific angle: if the superdiversity of the cities and societies of the 21st century is both inevitable (because of global flows of migration, flows of information, capital, risks etc.) and politically challenging, then we must address simultaneously problems that are both ethical and analytical. *Ethically*, we need to consider what it means to live under “*cosmopolitan conditions*” that are the products of both different histories and histories of difference that bear the imprint of colonialism and slavery, domination and racism. *Analytically*, we need to recognize also that living conditions and imagined communities do not stick any longer *to the container of the nation-state*, but are constituted through globalized networks of sentiment, belonging, cooperation and fear. The flows of labour, capital and risks create both: transnational networks of culture and people *and* simultaneously a *new kind of strangeness*, because the interconnectivity of the world is perceived as throwing open the doors to the world and leaving us unprotected from threats that come from previously secure borders.

It is in this sense that over the last decades the cultural, social and political landscapes of diversity are changing radically, but we still use old maps to orientate ourselves. In other words, my main thesis is: *we do not even have the language through which contemporary superdiversity in the world can be described, conceptualized, understood, explained and researched*. I will develop this perspective, very briefly, in two steps:

(1) I will criticize the unreflected *marriage between methodological nationalism and multiculturalism* which dominate much of the social thinking and political action on issues of diversity.

(2) I propose to draw an essential distinction between “cosmopolitanism” in a normative philosophical sense and “cosmopolitanization” as a structural phenomenon and as a social scientific research programme in order to describe, understand and research the ambivalences of superdiversity and its social and political dynamics in the contemporary world.

I. Critique of Methodological Nationalism and Multiculturalism

I think we have to call into question one of the most powerful convictions about society and politics, one which binds both social actors and social scientists: methodological nationalism. Methodological nationalism equates modern society with society organised in territorially limited nation states. Methodological nationalism assumes that the nation, state and society are the “natural” social and political forms of the modern world. Where social actors subscribe to this belief I talk of “*national outlook*”; where it determines the perspective of the social scientific observer, I talk of “*methodological nationalism*.” The distinction between the perspective of the social actor and that of the social scientist is crucial, because there is only a historical connection between the two, not a logical one. The rise of sociology in Europe coincided with the rise of the nation-state, nationalism and the system of international politics.

And methodological nationalism is not a superficial problem or minor error. It involves both the routines of data collection and production and basic concepts of modern sociology and political science like society, class, state, democracy, and last but not least: multiculturalism. What we have to understand is the hidden conjunction between multiculturalism and the national outlook, multiculturalism and methodological nationalism.

So what does “multiculturalism” mean—specifically and in comparison to the other basic concepts to describe the landscapes of diversity? Multiculturalism is one of many concepts and modes of dealing with cultural differences. Multiculturalism means plural monoculturalism. It refers to collective categories of difference and has a tendency to essentialize them by the nation-state social fabric of cultural differences (I will come back to this right away). Thus multiculturalism is geared first to more or less homogenous groups and, second, locates the latter exclusively within the nation-state framework: multiculturalism perceives cultural differences as—so to speak—“little nations” in one nation, which to some extent is a contradiction in itself. This is so because nationalism standardized differences while at the same time demarcating them in accordance with national oppositions. Towards the inside, the national outlook dissolves differences (referring to assimilation/integration and distinguishing between “majority” and “minorities” which have to be “integrated” through promoting uniform norms) while towards the outside difference is emphasized. Thus multiculturalism in the sense of plural monoculturalism on the one hand presupposes the nation-state frame, on the other hand contradicts it.

The ethnic “cultures” which are separated, identified and fixed through the institutionalized lens of multiculturalism are no category of origin, they are the product of the rules of social construction and fabrication inherent in the nation-state mechanism of representation, distribution of resources and definitions of justice. The collective categories of plural monoculturalism are designed and put into practice in the competitive struggles on economic resources and citizenship rights. The separation of plural different monocultures inside the national context and the mobilisation of ethnicities are founded not only in racial discrimination, but also in the competition in becoming equals (which is a paradox). Even the rules of political representation and distribution of resources, rights and acknowledgement have been changed in the US through the construction of panethnic categories (hispanics, blacks, etc.) to increase the power of bigger numbers.

In the straightjacket of methodological nationalism, academic studies potentially reify multicultural separations through ascribed ethnicities that are monitored, counted and measured in the terms of demographic penetration of political systems, employment profiles, and attempts to promote equal opportunities. Such measurements may be pragmatically progressive and politically correct, but inevitably it affirms the institutional logics of multiculturalism, it neglects the “border problems” of definitions of demographic fixity and it reveals the absurdity of racial languages enshrined in policies of affirmative action and census monitoring.

In other words, there is a strong correspondence of multiculturalism with the conventional

model of the nation-state, a similar sense of either-or-identity is presumed to characterize a people *and* the multiple monocultures. Majority and minorities, “identities-borders-orders” are legitimated and reproduced through different narratives, representations, participations, formal bureaucracies and informal social networks, written and unwritten regulations, sets of assumptions and expectations of civility and public behaviour.

Let me, very briefly, give you three examples why I think the language of multiculturalism is today a severe obstacle in describing and understanding the changing landscapes of cultural diversity.

First, there is a mismatch between diversity and the cognitive and political *representations* of diversity, there is what Steven Vertovec calls “*superdiversity*” which means a *diversification of diversity*: the point is that over the last ten years at least in Europe (in the UK, Germany, France, etc.) we have seen a lot of the long-standing patterns of migration diversifying, in the relation to the country of origin, gender, legal status duration of stay, etc. So now you have a new configuration indeed of all these different variables in relation to each other. The traditional patterns and characteristics of, for example, Pakistanis and African Caribbeans and Bangladeshis in the UK are no longer representative of current migration groups of “multicultural communities.” There has been a diversification of places of origin but at the same time changing dimensions of gender, age, education, transnationalism and so forth, usually connected to specific migration channels. Now, for instance, if you talk about “the Philippino community” in the UK you’re talking about a community comprised of 70 percent women aged 20-30 working in the health services.

But in the same Bangladeshis family you can find members with very different status, some may be legal, others illegal, some educated, others not, some come from transnational places others from the “homeland”, etc. One of the most important points is: the multicultural lens makes us blind to the new constellations of diversification of diversity which transcend the borders of the nation-state. Even more important is at the same time when strong political movements and parties reject multiculturalism we can observe an *increase of superdiversity*.

Second, migration: there is currently a large growing body of descriptive studies of transnational migration. These studies document the many ways in which migrants and their descendants live their lives both within and across the borders of multiple nation-states. These studies are opposed to powerful and mainstream narratives about migration and its consequences. In these narratives migrants appear as destabilizing or even criminal intruders into nation-states, or as the last best hope of homelands whose development depends on migrant generated remittances. Rather than addressing these contradictions mainstream migration scholars, especially those concerned with public-policy, respond to contemporary popular attacks on migration and migrants by adopting the perspective of their respective nation-states. Arguing for the need for or providing evidence of the long-term trends towards integration, they accept national borders as the borders of society and as the necessary institutional nexus for citizenship, democratic rights, or a social welfare state. Thus they practice methodological

nationalism in a very specific way: they become partisans in favour of the nation-state against the perspective of the migrants. But if migration scholars set aside their methodological nationalism, transnational migration studies can contribute to a cosmopolitan outlook that elucidate the mutual constitution of the global, national and local. Migration scholarship can provide a perspective on power that explains the relationship between contemporary contradictory narratives about migrants that either demonize them or celebrate them. Rather than being evaluated as either good or bad, migration can be discussed as part of broader processes of ‘cosmopolitanization’ which can be observed within and across nation-states.

Third, the same is true in relation to *religion*. You cannot describe and understand religious diversity at the beginning of the 21st century sticking to a nation-state perspective. Many religious institutions were founded on universal claims and have always been worldwide in scope. In this current period of globalization, however, *religion’s universality and globalism often take precedence over its national forms. Religion, like capitalism or politics, is no longer firmly rooted in a particular country or legal system.*

This happens, in part, because religion is the ultimate boundary crosser. “God needs no passport,” as Peggy Levitt puts it, because faith traditions give their followers symbols, rituals and narratives they use to create alternative sacred landscapes, marked by holy sites and places of worship. Thus instead of the nation-state, religions and their movements have to become the unit of analysis.

II. The Crucial Distinction between Normative Cosmopolitanism and Empirical-analytical Cosmopolitanization

The *idea of a “cosmopolitan-yet-to-come”* has emerged as an increasingly influential paradigm with which to advocate new understandings and models of identity, rights and justice. A cosmopolitan identity is a self-understanding of persons who, while they have ethnic and cultural roots, are aware of themselves as having crossed and continuing to cross between groups, being influenced by experiences and encounters with other cultures, ethnicities, genders and circumstances, and who are never firmly entrenched and wholly enclosed in only one group.

How do nationalism, multiculturalism, universalism and cosmopolitanism relate to each other? The common answer is: the national and the multicultural are about identity, and identity excludes. For every “We” there is a “Them,” the people not like us. There are kin and not-kin, friends and strangers and without these boundaries it is questionable whether we would have an identity at all. This can be called the *territorial prison theory of identity (society and politics)*. This either-or meta-theory of identity is empirically false. It is being falsified and challenged by the both-and-realities, we are many things at the same time...

The paradox is that the very thing we take to be the antithesis of racism—universalism—can also be deeply threatening, and is equally inadequate to describe the human situation

because it neglects and devalues the particular. In the universal framework the true black person is not black, the true Jew is not Jewish, or the true woman is the non-female woman. The narrative of universalism goes: we all are ultimately the same. We are vulnerable. We are embodied creatures. We feel hunger, thirst, fear, pain. We reason, hope, dream, aspire. These things may be true. But again universalism has a long bloody violent history because it ignores the *dignity* of difference. Each language, culture, group has its specificity, its history of difference and its different history.

Cosmopolitanism means what is excluded by both positions: the acknowledgement of the dignity of difference *and* being equal at the same time.

But my determination is a very specific one: I want to turn our focus away from a purely normative, philosophical understanding of cosmopolitanism and to bring cosmopolitanism down to earth, to turn it from its philosophical head unto its social scientific feet. For this reason I introduced the notion “*impure cosmopolitanization*” (*from below*). By this I want to demonstrate that while the ideal of cosmopolitan justice is important for moving beyond the closures of “white-men’s justice,” methodological cosmopolitanism as opposed to methodological nationalism is a promising lens through which to look at questions of race, ethnicity, and diversity.

Therefore the distinction between (philosophical) *cosmopolitanism* and (social scientific) *cosmopolitanization* is crucial. The former refers to the *normative* dimension of cosmopolitanism, while the latter entails a *descriptive analytical* perspective, a research programme, which deliberates itself from methodological nationalism.

Virtually the entire span of human experience and practice is in one way or other influenced by the overwhelming interconnectivity of the world. The core unseen, unwanted consequence of this interconnectivity is: the *end of the global other*—the global other is here in our midst. Let me explain this by referring to environmental issues and climate change. They are about externalization, creating transnational harm—the avoidance of which is a key to cosmopolitan injunction. This way we have laid bare the chains of causal responsibility that bind us to the lives of distant strangers. These are hardly radical insights in themselves but little use seems to have been made of them in debates about the wellspring of cosmopolitanization. Globalization of risks and trade convert us into participating in the lives of “stranger” and *vice versa*. These chains of cause and effect are material rather than mental and they prompt obligation of justice rather than sympathy or pity.

To explain this in terms of social theory: “cosmopolitanization” is a notion that refers to “objective” conditions and processes on the macro but also micro level. No matter if you want it, see it, hate it, reject it or not; no matter if you are a Christian or a Muslim or an atheist, an old-fashion communist or an old-fashion neoliberal capitalist, if you are a neonationalist or a supporter of Attac, of black or white colour—you live at the beginning of the 21st century in the *conditio humana* of cosmopolitanization. What this means in terms of (subjective) attitudes and practices of individuals, groups, countries, cultures, etc. is a completely open

empirical question.

Let me give you a definition. “Cosmopolitanization” means (a) the erosion of clear borders, separating markets, states, civilizations, religions, cultures, life-worlds of common people which (b) implies the involuntary inclusion of the global other. The world has certainly not become borderless, but the boundaries are becoming blurred and indistinct, becoming permeable to flows of information, capital and risks. This does, of course, not mean that everybody is becoming a “cosmopolite.” Often the opposite seems to be the case: a wave of re-nationalization and re-ethnification in many parts of the world. But at the same time it does mean that there is a new need for a “hermeneutics of the global other” in order to live and work in a world in which violent division and unprecedented intermingling coexists, and danger and opportunity vie. This may influence human identity construction, which need no longer to be shaped by the opposition to others, in the negative, confrontational dichotomy of “we” and “them.”

A revealing example of this process is the emergence of global public opinion and cross-border political cooperation. These phenomena do not come about as a result of conscious affirmation of cosmopolitan values, but as secondary side-effects of global risks, which open up windows of opportunity; for example, as reaction to the global financial crisis, the new continent of power, the G-20-states.

From this follows that we need a *cosmopolitan sociology* which develops conceptual and methodological resources for understanding a world that is undergoing a cosmopolitan transformation. I introduce the idea of “cosmopolitanization” to describe, among other things, the creeping emergence of multiple loyalties, of the interpenetration of national cultures, of “super-diversity” and the transnationalisation of law and politics (so far my main example for this is “*Cosmopolitan Europe*”).

Although cosmopolitanization is not to be confused with normative cosmopolitanism, it does give the latter opportunities to gain a foothold in social and political life. The idea is that philosophical and normative cosmopolitanism can be combined with cosmopolitan social science to create a *cosmopolitan realism*: sociologically informed and strategically conscious vision for a cosmopolitan critical theory and sociology. But it is just a beginning and there are lots of questions and only few answers.

Notes on Contributor

Ulrich Beck is a German sociologist who holds a professorship at Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich and the London School of Economics. Beck currently studies modernization, ecological problems, individualization, and globalization. Recently he has also embarked on exploring the changing conditions of work in a world of increasing global capitalism, declining influence of unions, and flexibilisation of the labor process, a new theory rooted in the concept of cosmopolitanism. He has also contributed a number of new words in German sociology, including “risk society,” “second modernity” and reflexive modernization. Beck is the editor of the sociological journal *Soziale Welt* (since 1980), the author of some 150 articles, and the author or editor of many books. E-mail: U.Beck@lmu.de.