



Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda

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Abstract

This article calls for a re-conceptualization of the social sciences by asking for a cosmopolitan turn. The intellectual undertaking of redefining cosmopolitanism is a trans-disciplinary one, which includes geography, anthropology, ethnology, international relations, international law, political philosophy and political theory, and now sociology and social theory. Methodological nationalism, which subsumes society under the nation-state, has until now made this task almost impossible. The alternative, a 'cosmopolitan outlook', is a contested term and project. Cosmopolitanism must not be equalized with the global (or globalization), with 'world system theory' (Wallerstein), with 'world polity' (Meyer and others), or with 'world-society' (Luhmann). All of those concepts presuppose basic dualisms, such as domestic/foreign or national/international, which in reality have become ambiguous. Methodological cosmopolitanism opens up new horizons by demonstrating how we can make the empirical investigation of border crossings and other transnational phenomena possible.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism; methodological cosmopolitanism; methodological nationalism; social theory

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are witnessing a global transformation of modernity which calls for a re-thinking of the humanities and the social sciences. The period after the Second World War was the golden age for social scientific research grounded in seemingly natural, never ending historical 'Wertbeziehungen' (value relations) (Max Weber): The humanities and social sciences drew lessons from the end of Nazi barbarianism, took part in the construction of the welfare state or the process of decolonization,

liberation and democratization around the world; and participated in social movements which were challenging all kinds of domination, injustice and technocratic systems.

This golden age of corresponding cultural, political and social scientific 'value relations' has definitely ended.¹ Already a century ago Max Weber had drawn his own conclusions for the historical sciences. 'But at some point the colour changes. The meaning of the unthinkingly espoused views becomes uncertain, the path gets lost in the twilight. The light of the great cultural problems has moved on (Weber 2002: 148). At that point science, too, prepares to change its position and conceptual equipment and to look from the heights of thought down to the flow of events.

Indeed, the basic idea behind this special issue of the *British Journal of Sociology* is that 'the light of the great cultural problems has moved on' from a nation-state definition of society and politics to a cosmopolitan outlook. At this point the humanities and social sciences need to get ready for a transformation of their own positions and conceptual equipment – that is, to take cosmopolitanism as a research agenda seriously and raise some of the key conceptual, methodological, empirical and normative issues that the cosmopolitanization of reality poses for the social sciences. The intellectual undertaking of redefining cosmopolitanism is a trans-disciplinary one, which includes geography, anthropology, ethnology, international relations, international law, political philosophy and political theory, and now sociology and social theory (see 'A literature on cosmopolitanism' in this issue (Beck and Sznaider 2006: 153–62). Cosmopolitanism is, of course, a contested term; there is no uniform interpretation of it in the growing literature. The boundaries separating it from competitive terms like globalization, transnationalism, universalism, glocalization etc. are not distinct and internally it is traversed by all kind of fault lines. Yet we will argue that the neo-cosmopolitanism in the social sciences – 'realistic cosmopolitanism' or 'cosmopolitan realism' – is an identifiable intellectual movement united by at least three interconnected commitments:

First, the shared *critique of methodological nationalism* which blinds conventional sociology to the multi-dimensional process of change that has irreversibly transformed the very nature of the social world and the place of states within that world. Methodological nationalism does not mean (as the term 'methodological individualism' suggests) that one or many sociologists have consciously created an *explicit* methodology (theory) based on an *explicit* nationalism. The argument rather goes that social scientists in doing research or theorizing take it for granted that society is equated with national society, as Durkheim does when he reflects on the integration of society. He, of course, has in mind the integration of the *national* society (France) without even mentioning, naming or thinking about it. In fact, not using the adjective 'national' as a universal language does not falsify but might sometimes even prove

methodological nationalism. That is the case when the *practice* of the argument or the research presupposes that the unit of analysis is the national society or the national state or the combination of both. The concept of methodological nationalism is not a concept of methodology but of the sociology of sociology or the sociology of social theory.

Second, the shared diagnosis that the twenty-first century is becoming an age of cosmopolitanism. This could and should be compared with other historical moments of cosmopolitanism, such as those in ancient Greece, the Alexandrian empire and the Enlightenment. In the 1960s Hannah Arendt analysed the *Human Condition*, in the 1970s Francois Lyotard the *Post-modern Condition*. Now at the beginning of the twenty-first century we have to discover, map and understand the Cosmopolitan Condition.

Third, there is a shared assumption that for this purpose we need some kind of '*methodological cosmopolitanism*'. Of course, there is a lot of controversy about what this means. The main point for us lies in the fact that the dualities of the global and the local, the national and the international, us and them, have dissolved and merged together in new forms that require conceptual and empirical analysis. The outcome of this is that the concept and phenomena of cosmopolitanism are not spatially fixed; the term itself is not tied to the 'cosmos' or the 'globe', and it certainly does not encompass 'everything'. The principle of cosmopolitanism can be found in specific forms at every level and can be practiced in every field of social and political action: in international organizations, in bi-national families, in neighbourhoods, in global cities, in transnationalized military organizations, in the management of multi-national co-operations, in production networks, human rights organizations, among ecology activists and the paradoxical global opposition to globalization.

Critique of methodological nationalism

Methodological nationalism takes the following premises for granted: it equates societies with nation-state societies and sees states and their governments as the primary focus of social-scientific analysis. It assumes that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which organize themselves internally as nation-states and externally set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states. And it goes further: this outer delimitation as well as the competition between nation-states, represent the most fundamental category of political organization.

The premises of the social sciences assume the collapse of social boundaries with state boundaries, believing that social action occurs primarily within and only secondarily across, these divisions:

[Like] stamp collecting . . . social scientists collected distinctive national social forms. Japanese industrial relations, German national character, the

American constitution, the British class system – not to mention the more exotic institutions of tribal societies – were the currency of social research. The core disciplines of the social sciences, whose intellectual traditions are reference points for each other and for other fields, were therefore *domesticated* – in the sense of being preoccupied not with Western and world civilization as wholes but with the ‘domestic’ forms of particular national societies (Shaw 2000: 68).

The critique of methodological nationalism should not be confused with the thesis that the end of the nation-state has arrived. One does not criticize methodological individualism by proclaiming the end of the individual. Nation-states (as all the research shows – see also the different contributions in this volume) will continue to thrive or will be transformed into transnational states. What, then, is the main point of the critique of methodological nationalism? It adopts categories of practice as categories of analysis. The decisive point is that *national organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as the orienting reference point for the social scientific observer*. One cannot even understand the re-nationalization or re-ethnification trend in Western or Eastern Europe without a cosmopolitan perspective. In this sense, the social sciences can only respond adequately to the challenge of globalization if they manage to overcome methodological nationalism and to raise empirically and theoretically fundamental questions within specialized fields of research, and thereby elaborate the foundations of a newly formulated *cosmopolitan* social science.

As many authors – including the ones in this volume – criticize, in the growing discourse on cosmopolitanism there is a danger of fusing the ideal with the real. What cosmopolitanism *is* cannot ultimately be separated from what cosmopolitanism *should be*. But the same is true of nationalism. The small, but important, difference is that in the case of nationalism the value judgment of the social scientists goes unnoticed because methodological nationalism includes a naturalized conception of nations as real communities. In the case of the cosmopolitan ‘*Wertbeziehung*’ (Max Weber, value relation), by contrast, this silent commitment to a nation-state centred outlook of sociology appears problematic.

In order to unpack the argument in the two cases it is necessary to distinguish between the *actor* perspective and the *observer* perspective. From this it follows that a sharp distinction should be made between *methodological* and *normative* nationalism. The former is linked to the social-scientific observer perspective, whereas the latter refers to the negotiation perspectives of political actors. In a normative sense, nationalism means that every nation has the right to self-determination within the context of its cultural, political and even geographical boundaries and distinctiveness. Methodological nationalism assumes this normative claim as a socio-ontological given and simultaneously

links it to the most important conflict and organization orientations of society and politics. These basic tenets have become the main perceptual grid of the social sciences. Indeed, this social-scientific stance is part of the nation-state's own self-understanding. A national view on society and politics, law, justice, memory and history governs the sociological imagination. To some extent, much of the social sciences has become a prisoner of the nation-state. That this was not always the case is shown in Bryan Turner's paper in this issue (Turner 2006: 133–51). This does not mean, of course, that a cosmopolitan social science can and should ignore different national traditions of law, history, politics and memory. These traditions exist and become part of our cosmopolitan methodology. The comparative analyses of societies, international relations, political theory, and a significant part of history and law all essentially function on the basis of methodological nationalism. This is valid to the extent that the majority of positions in the contemporary debates in social and political science over globalization can be systematically interpreted as transdisciplinary reflexes linked to methodological nationalism.

These premises also structure empirical research, for example, in the choice of statistical indicators, which are almost always exclusively national. A refutation of methodological nationalism from a strictly empirical viewpoint is therefore difficult, indeed, almost impossible, because so many statistical categories and research procedures are based on it. It is therefore of historical importance for the future development of the social sciences that this methodological nationalism, as well as the related categories of perception and disciplinary organization, be theoretically, empirically, and organizationally re-assessed and reformed.

What is at stake here? Whereas in the case of the nation-state centred perspective there is an historical correspondence between normative and methodological nationalism (and for this reason this correspondence has mainly remained latent), this does not hold for the relationship between normative and methodological cosmopolitanism. In fact, the opposite is true: even the re-nationalization or re-ethnification of minds, cultures and institutions has to be analysed within a cosmopolitan frame of reference.

Cosmopolitan social science entails the systematic breaking up of the process through which the national perspective of politics and society, as well as the methodological nationalism of political science, sociology, history, and law, confirm and strengthen each other in their definitions of reality. Thus it also tackles (what had previously been *analytically* excluded as a sort of conspiracy of silence of conflicting basic convictions) the various developmental versions of de-bounded politics and society, corresponding research questions and programmes, the strategic expansions of the national and international political fields, as well as basic transformations in the domains of state, politics, and society.

This paradigmatic de-construction and re-construction of the social sciences from a national to a cosmopolitan outlook can be understood and methodologically justified as a 'positive problem shift' (Lakatos 1970), a broadening of horizons for social science research making visible new realities encouraging new research programmes (Back and Lau 2005 and Beck, Banss and Lau 2003: 1–35). Against the background of cosmopolitan social science, it suddenly becomes obvious that it is neither possible to distinguish clearly between the national and the international, nor, correspondingly, to make a convincing contrast between homogeneous units. National spaces have become denationalized, so that the national is no longer national, just as the international is no longer international. New realities are arising: a new mapping of space and time, new co-ordinates for the social and the political are emerging which have to be theoretically and empirically researched and elaborated.

This entails a re-examination of the fundamental concepts of 'modern society'. *Household, family, class, social inequality, democracy, power, state, commerce, public, community, justice, law, history, memory and politics* must be released from the fetters of methodological nationalism, re-conceptualized, and empirically established within the framework of a new cosmopolitan social and political science. It would be hard to understate the scope of this task. But nevertheless it has to be taken up if the social sciences want to avoid becoming a museum of antiquated ideas.

Structure and normativity: the cosmopolitan condition and the cosmopolitan moment

In order to unpack cosmopolitanism, we need to make another important distinction, namely that between normative-philosophical and empirical-analytical cosmopolitanism; or, to put it differently, between the cosmopolitan *condition* and the cosmopolitan *moment*. Up to now, much of the social scientific discourse has assumed the notion of cosmopolitanism as a moral and political standpoint, a shared normative-philosophical commitment to the primacy of world citizenship over all national, religious, cultural, ethnic and other parochial affiliations; added to this is the notion of cosmopolitanism as an attitude or biographical situation in which the cultural contradictions of the world are unequally distributed, not just out there but also at the centre of one's own life. A world of yesterday turned into an utopian future and reclaimed by social thinkers is elevating 'homelessness', 'fluidity', 'liquidity', 'mobility' to new heights. 'Cosmopolitanism' has a noble ring in a plebeian age, the nobility of a Kant in a postmodern age. This is the kind of cosmopolitanism familiar to philosophers since ancient times, but alien to social scientists. Here, cosmopolitanism is equated with *reflexive* cosmopolitanism. This idea of cosmopolitanism includes the idea that the self-reflexive global

age offers space in which old cosmopolitan ideals could and should be translated and re-configured into concrete social realities and philosophy turned into sociology. Nevertheless, the question has to be asked and answered: *Why* is there a cosmopolitan moment now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

On the other hand the discourse on cosmopolitanism so far has not really paid attention to the fact that, besides the intended, there is an *unintended and lived* cosmopolitanism and this is of growing importance: the increase in interdependence among social actors across national borders (which can only be observed from the cosmopolitan outlook), whereby the peculiarity exists in the fact that this ‘cosmopolitanization’ occurs as unintended and unseen *side-effects* of actions which are not intended as ‘cosmopolitan’ in the normative sense. Only under certain circumstances does this latent cosmopolitanization lead to the emergence of global public spheres, global discussion forums, and global regimes concerned with transnational conflicts (‘institutionalized cosmopolitanism’). Summarizing these aspects, we speak of the *Cosmopolitan Condition* as opposed to the *Post-modern Condition*.

The cosmopolitan condition

If we make a clear distinction between the actor perspective and the observer perspective, both in relation to the national outlook and the cosmopolitan outlook, we end up with four fields in a table representing the possible changes in perspectives and reality. It is at least conceivable (and this needs a lot of optimism!) that the shift in outlook from methodological nationalism to methodological cosmopolitanism will gain acceptance. But this need not have any implications for the prospect for realizing cosmopolitan ideals in society and politics. So, if one is an optimist regarding a cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences, one can certainly also be a pessimist regarding a cosmopolitan turn in the real world. It would be ridiculously naïve to think that a change in scientific paradigm might lead to a situation where people, organizations and governments are becoming more open to the ideals of cosmopolitanism. But again: if this is so why do we need a cosmopolitan outlook for the social sciences? Our answer is: in order to understand the really-existing process of cosmopolitanization of the world.

Like the distinction between ‘modernity’ and ‘modernization’, we have to distinguish between *cosmopolitanism* as a set of normative principles and (really existing) *cosmopolitanization*. This distinction turns on the rejection of the claim that cosmopolitanism is a conscious and voluntary choice, and all too often the choice of an elite. The notion ‘cosmopolitanization’ is designed to draw attention to the fact that the emerging cosmopolitan of reality is also, and even primarily, a function of coerced choices or a side-effect of unconscious decisions. The choice to become or remain an ‘alien’ or a ‘non-national’

is not as a general rule a voluntary one but a response to acute need, political repression or a threat of starvation. A 'banal' cosmopolitanism in this sense unfolds beneath the surface or behind the façades of persisting national spaces, jurisdiction and labelling, while national flags continue to be hoisted and national attitudes, identities and consciousness remain dominant. Judged by the lofty standards of ethical and academic morality, this latent character renders cosmopolitanism trivial, unworthy of comment, even suspect. An ideal that formerly strutted the stage of world history as an ornament of the elite cannot possibly slink into social and political reality by the backdoor. Thus, we emphasize the centrality of emotional engagement and social integration and not only fragmentation as part of the cosmopolitan world. And this emphasizes that the process of cosmopolitanization is bound up with symbol and ritual, and not just with spoken ideas. And it is symbol and ritual that turns philosophy into personal and social identity and consequently relevant for social analysis. The more such rituals contribute to individuals' personal sense of conviction, the larger the critical mass available to be mobilized in cosmopolitan reform movements for instance, be they movements against global inequality or human rights violations (see the contributions by Robert Fine (Fine 2006: 49–67) and Angela McRobbie (McRobbie 2006: 69–86)). And the farther cosmopolitan rituals and symbols spread, the more chance there will be of someday achieving a cosmopolitan political order. This is where normative and empirical cosmopolitanism meet. At the same time, we must remember that a cosmopolitan morality is not the only historically important form of today's globalized world. Another one is nationalism. The nation-state was originally formed out of local units to which people were fiercely attached. They considered these local attachments 'natural' and the nation-state to be soulless and artificial – *Gesellschaft* compared to the local *Gemeinschaft*. But thanks to national rituals and symbols, that eventually changed completely. Now today many people consider national identity to be natural and cosmopolitan or world identity to be an artificial construct. They are right. It will be an artificial construct, if artificial means made by humans. But they are wrong if they think artificial origins prevent something from eventually being regarded as natural. It did not stop the nation-state. And there is no reason it has to stop cosmopolitan morality. However, the challenge will be to see these moral orders not as contradictory but as living side by side in the global world. Cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not mutually exclusive, neither methodologically nor normatively.

There can be no doubt that a cosmopolitanism that is passively and unwillingly suffered is a *deformed* cosmopolitanism. The fact that really-existing cosmopolitanization is not achieved through struggle, that it is not chosen, that it does not come into the world as progress with the reflected moral authority of the Enlightenment, but as something deformed and profane, cloaked in the anonymity of side-effects – this is an essential founding moment within

cosmopolitan realism in the social sciences. Our main point is here to make a distinction between the moral ideal of cosmopolitanism (as expressed in Enlightenment philosophy) and the above mentioned cosmopolitan condition of real people. It's also the distinction between theory and praxis. This means, in our case, the distinction between a cosmopolitan philosophy and a cosmopolitan sociology.

Cosmopolitanism and globalization

But, one might object, isn't 'cosmopolitanization' simply a new word for what used to be called 'globalization'? The answer is 'no': globalization is something taking place 'out there', cosmopolitanization happens 'from within'. Whereas globalization presupposes, cosmopolitanization dissolves the 'onion model' of the world, where the local and the national form the core and inner layer and the international and the global form the outer layers. Cosmopolitanization thus points to the irreversible fact that people, from Moscow to Paris, from Rio to Tokyo, have long since been living in *really-existing relations of interdependence*; they are as much responsible for the intensification of these relations through their production and consumption as are the resulting global risks that impinge on their everyday lives. The question, then, is: how should we operationalize this conception of the world as a collection of different cultures and divergent modernities? Cosmopolitanization should be chiefly conceived of as globalization from *within*, as *internalized* cosmopolitanism. This is how we can suspend the assumption of the nation-state, and this is how we can make the empirical investigation of local–global phenomena possible. We can frame our questions so as to illuminate the transnationality that is arising inside nation-states. This is what a cosmopolitan sociology looks like.

Cosmopolitan traditions

If we ask who are the intellectual progenitors of this internal cosmopolitanization of national societies, Adam Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville and John Dewey come to mind, as well as such classical German thinkers as Kant, Goethe, Herder, Humboldt, Nietzsche, Marx and Simmel. All of them construed the modern period as a transition from early conditions of relatively closed societies to 'universal eras' (*universelle Epochen*, Goethe) of interdependent societies, a transition that essentially involved the expansion of commerce and the dissemination of the principle of republicanism.

For Kant, even more so for Marx, and in different ways also for Adam Smith and Georg Simmel, the dissolution of small territorial communities and the spread of universal social and economic interdependence (through the not yet associated risks) was the essential mark, and even the law, of world history. Their preoccupation with long lines of historical development made them

sceptical towards the idea that state and society in their nationally homogenous manifestations could constitute the end point of world history. Cosmopolitanization thus includes the proliferation of multiple cultures (as with cuisines from around the world), the growth of many transnational forms of life, the emergence of various non-state political actors (from Amnesty International to the World Trade Organization), the paradoxical emergence of global protest movements, the hesitant formation of multi-national states (like the European Union) etc. There is simply no way of turning the clock back to a world of sovereign nation-states and national societies. Therefore we need a cosmopolitan sociology – even to understand why anti-cosmopolitan movements actually influence, and in the future maybe even dominate, the world.

The cosmopolitan moment

While reality is becoming thoroughly cosmopolitan, our habits of thought and consciousness, like the well-worn paths of academic teaching and research, disguise the growing unreality of the national gaze (and methodological nationalism). A critique of the unreal science of the national, which presents itself in universalistic garb but can neither deny nor shake off its historically internalized national gaze, presupposes the cosmopolitan outlook and its methodological elaboration. But what is the difference between (latent) cosmopolitanization and the cosmopolitan outlook?

That is a difficult question which has to be approached from different angles. One answer is: the (forced) mixing of cultures is not anything new in world history but, on the contrary, the rule; one need only think of wars of plunder and conquest, mass migrations, the slave trade and colonization, world wars, ethnic cleansing and forced repatriation and expulsion. From the very beginning, the emerging global market required the mixing of peoples and imposed it by force, if necessary, as the opening up of Japan and China in the nineteenth century demonstrate. Capital tears down all national boundaries and jumbles together the ‘native’ with the ‘foreign’. What is new is not forced mixing but *global awareness* of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public via the mass media, in the news and in the global social movements of blacks, women and minorities, and in the current vogue for such venerable concepts as ‘Diaspora’ in the cultural sciences. It is this, at once social and social scientific, reflexivity that makes the ‘cosmopolitan outlook’ one of the key concepts and topics of the reflexive second modernity.

Therefore, the question ‘Is there a Cosmopolitan Moment Now?’ has to be translated into a research agenda by asking: under what conditions, subject to what limits and by which actors are cosmopolitan principles nevertheless being translated into practice and thereby acquiring enduring reality – and which

principles and against what forms of resistance? What are the characteristics, and who or what is the 'subject', of the cosmopolitan moment at the beginning of the third millennium?

This question can be posed and answered paradigmatically and paradoxically within the theory of *World Risk Society* (Beck 1999). The nation-state is increasingly besieged and permeated by a planetary network of interdependencies, for example, by ecological, economic and terrorist risks, which connect the separate worlds of developed and underdeveloped countries. To the extent that this historical situation is reflected in a global public sphere (last example: the Tsunami-catastrophe), a new historical reality arises, a 'cosmopolitan outlook' in which people view themselves simultaneously as part of a threatened world and as part of their local situations and histories.

We need to distinguish between at least four different axes of conflict in world risk society: first, *ecological* (and *technological*) interdependency crises, which have their own global dynamic; second, *economic* interdependency crises, which are initially individualized and nationalized; third, the threat produced by *terrorist* interdependency crises; and fourth, *moral* interdependency crisis, which springs from the spread of the human rights regime.

Despite their differences, however, ecological, economic, moral and terrorist interdependency crises share one essential feature: they cannot be construed as external environmental crises but must be conceived as culturally manufactured actions, effects, insecurities and uncertainties. In this sense, global risks can sharpen global normative consciousness, generate global publics and promote a cosmopolitan outlook. In world risk society – this is the central point of the research agenda – the question concerning the causes and agencies of global threats sparks new political conflicts, which in turn promote an '*institutionalized cosmopolitanism*' in struggles over definitions and jurisdictions. Another side of '*institutionalized cosmopolitanism*' is represented by individualism or internalized cosmopolitanism. Issues of global concern are becoming part of people's moral life-worlds, no matter whether they are for or against cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan horizon becomes institutionalized in our own subjective lives. A cosmopolitan sociology, therefore, brings the subject back into the social sciences after systems theory and post-structuralist theories have tried to construct a social science without subjects.

Cultural risk perceptions and definitions at the same time draw new boundaries. Those groups, countries, cultures and states which share the same definition of a threat may be said to 'belong to it'; they form the 'inside' of a 'transnational risk community', which develops its profile and institutional structure (national and international players and institutions) in an ultimately preventive defence against certain causes and sources of danger. Those who, for whatever reason, do not share this definition of a threat constitute the 'outside' of the risk community and – even if they wish to remain 'neutral' – can easily become part of the threat against which the fight is being waged. In

this way, conflicts take shape under the aegis of risk perception between regions that enter the terrain of world risk society with very different historical situations, experiences and expectations.

The politics of human rights provides empirical evidence for this claim. If human rights come to be understood as the necessary basis of an increasing number of individuals' autonomy, these people will 'feel' that they are defending the foundations of their own identities when they defend the importance of human rights for foreigners and strangers. The cultural and political diversity that is essential to this kind of life has been slowly elevated to a central political principle. It sometimes seems as if it were even more highly valued than the representative principle with which it now shares pride of place. The interesting thing about an individualistic culture is that it could conceivably embrace a concept like cosmopolitan justice in the same paradoxical way that it is able to embrace the politics of ecology. Ecology in many ways embodies a conservative perspective. It takes the values of local community, the idea of communal responsibility, and magnifies it to the level of civil society. In effect, it treats civil society as a great community, one which should have control over its environment. It treats society as something that can be regarded for these purposes as a single community, despite the fact that it consists of very different subgroups and classes.

This demonstrates that the everyday experience of cosmopolitan interdependence is not a mutual love affair. It arises in a climate of heightened global threats, which create an unavoidable pressure to co-operate. With the conceptualization and recognition of threats on a cosmopolitan scale, a shared space of responsibility and agency bridging all national frontiers and divides is created that *can* (though it need not) found political action among strangers in ways analogous to national politics. This is the case when recognition of the scale of the common threats leads to cosmopolitan norms and agreements and thus to an institutionalized cosmopolitanism.

However, existing research on the emergence of corresponding supra- and transnational organizations and regimes has shown how difficult it is to make the transition from agreement on the definition of the threats to agreement on what form the required response should take. Ongoing communication concerning threats is an important component of informal cosmopolitan norm-formation. The socializing effect of world risk society is not adequately grasped if we restrict its potential to new and yet-to-be founded institutions of successful global co-ordination. Already prior to any cosmopolitan institution-formation, global norms are produced by outrage over circumstances that are felt to be intolerable. The emergence of global norms is not necessarily contingent on the conscious efforts of 'positive' norm formation but can be fuelled 'negatively' by the evaluation of global crises and threats to humanity.

The concept of cosmopolitan memory is a good example in this connection. It is not global in any homogeneous sense. It rather represents a mixture of

the local and national with the global, which in turn never was truly global but sprang from very specific historical occurrences. This 'cosmopolitanization' of memory can potentially create new solidarities and support global-political and global-cultural norms for the effective spread of human rights: cosmopolitanized memory as practical enlightenment, as it were. Through the media and other means of communication, people are drawn into cycles of cosmopolitan sympathies, at times even against their own will (Levy and Sznajder 2005).

Thus analytical-empirical cosmopolitanism simultaneously delimits itself from normative-political cosmopolitanism and presupposes it. This distinction does not only promote a 'value-free' approach to everyday experience and to the epistemology of world risk society in the social sciences; it compels us to demarcate, though not to neglect, normative and political cosmopolitanism in a world that has become a danger to itself. In fact, this distinction first makes it possible to pose the question of the relation between the categories and cognitions of the cosmopolitan outlook (or the critique of methodological nationalism), on the one hand, and the topics of cosmopolitan ethics and politics, on the other. How are cosmopolitan democracy, justice, solidarity, community, identity, law, politics, state, etc. possible? What does a cosmopolitan redefinition of religion mean?

Methodological cosmopolitanism

We can distinguish three phases in how the code word 'globalization' has been used in the social sciences: first, denial, second, conceptual refinement and empirical research, and, third, epistemological shift.

To the extent that the second phase was successful, the insight began to gain ground that the unit of research of the respective social scientific disciplines becomes arbitrary when the distinctions between national and international, local and global, us and them, lose their sharp contours. The question for the research agenda following the epistemological turn is: what happens when the premises and boundaries that define the units of empirical research and theory disintegrate? The answer is that the whole conceptual world of the 'national outlook' becomes disenchanting, that is, de-ontologized, historicized and stripped of its necessity. However, it is only possible to justify this and think through its consequences within the framework of an interpretative alternative which replaces *ontology* with *methodology*, that is, the current leap which replaces the ontology and imaginary of the nation-state with 'methodological cosmopolitanism'.

This leap seeks to overcome the naive universalism of early Western sociology. Methodological cosmopolitanism implies becoming sensitive and open to the many universalisms, the conflicting contextual universalisms – for

example, of the post-colonial experience, critique and imagination, where the retreat from empire has resulted in large waves of immigration from the margins (of former empires to it) to the former metropolitan centres. Methodological cosmopolitanism also means including other ('native') sociologies – the sociologies of and about African, Asian and South-American experiences of 'entangled modernities'. 'Entangled modernities' replace the dualism of the modern and the traditional, pointing to and again creating the image of a de-territorialized melange of conflicting contextual modernities in their economic, cultural and political dimensions. Methodological nationalism is clearly at work in our conviction that the way to clarify any mixture is to segregate out which nation is the influencer and which one is the influenced. The world is generating a growing number of such mixed cases, which make less sense according to the 'either/or' logic of nationality than to the 'both/and' logic of the cosmopolitan vision. Our intellectual frames of reference are so deeply ingrained that this cosmopolitan way of thinking has remained comparatively undeveloped. There are a number of questions which have to be asked and discussed to make the notion of methodological cosmopolitanism concrete. First, what are alternative, non-national units of research? In other words, what are post-national concepts of the social? Second, do we need a notion of 'cosmopolitan understanding' of 'cosmopolitan hermeneutics'? Third, how does cosmopolitanism relate to universalism, relativism etc.?

Alternative units of research

Cosmopolitanism diverges from universalism in that it assumes that there is not just one language of cosmopolitanism, but many languages, tongues, grammars. If cosmopolitanization means that reality itself – social structures – is becoming cosmopolitan, how can we observe and do research on the emergence of a growing 'cosmopolitan interdependence'? Is this cosmopolitanization of national societies ultimately an *irreversible* process? Does the realization that the tragedies of our time are all global in origin and scope in fact create a global horizon of experience and expectation? Is there really a growing awareness that we are living within a global network of responsibility from which none of us can escape? Didn't September 11, 2001 and the attacks in London in July 2005 also show that the opponents of cosmopolitanization can claim some bloody 'successes'? But how is this possible if cosmopolitanization is an inexorable process?

How, then, can *both* cosmopolitanization and anti-cosmopolitanization be understood as two competing and contradictory movements, as consequences of the progressive internal cosmopolitanization of reality? It is important to realize that there is no necessary relation between the internal cosmopolitanization of national societies and the emergence of a cosmopolitan consciousness, subject or agent, regardless of what some cultural theorists seem

to think. Consciousness and politics are for that very reason fundamentally ambivalent.

But doesn't the converse also hold? Because consciousness and politics are fundamentally ambivalent, the cosmopolitanization of reality is advancing. For example, all 'opponents of globalization' share with their 'adversaries' the global communications media (thereby enhancing their utility for promoting and organizing transnational protest movements). The globalized economy can only be regulated globally – only those who fight for regulation at the global level have the remotest chance of success. Thus much of the *anti*-globalization movement is in fact promoting an *alternative* globalization.

How can all those big questions be translated into research agendas? If methodological nationalism has permeated and shaped everything we do in the social sciences, how can we overcome it? We need to create an observer perspective that revives the original sociological curiosity and the sociological cognition of the concrete. This is doubtlessly easier said than done.

The first step is to answer the difficult question: which *alternative* unit of research *beyond* methodological nationalism can be theoretically and empirically developed and justified? How do those research units relate to the specific purposes and topics of the particular research project? And what are the implications and conditions for comparative analysis beyond methodological nationalism?

In the Research Centre on Reflexive Modernization in Munich we are pragmatically testing different solutions for these problems: in one research project the state-centred distinction between national and international politics is being replaced by the new research unit '*transnational regimes of politics*', which can be used as the focus for theoretical and empirical analysis and comparisons. This reconstruction of the unit of research beyond methodological nationalism makes it possible to open up the field of vision to the plurality of interdependencies, not only between states but also between different political actors in different dimensions of action. This could be an important step to denationalizing political science and introduce a cosmopolitan outlook of transnational spaces, strategies of actions and institutions (see the contribution of Grande in this volume (Grande 2006: 87–111) and Grande 2004; Kriesi and Grande 2004).

In a different research project the common equation between national society and national history is being challenged by the research unit of '*transnational spaces and cultures of memory*'. This shift in the focus of research allows it to develop a new kind of comparison in which the timing and themes of different transnational politics of memory can be systematically brought into relation to each other (Beck, Levy and Sznajder 2004).

With the cosmopolitanization of reality the question arises: how to redefine the basic concepts of the social? Should we reflect on Max Weber's notion of sociology as understanding the *meaning of social action* 'with a cosmopolitan

intent' (to use Kant's formula)? Can the concept of 'social system' (Talcott Parsons), the picture book example of methodological nationalism, really be reconstructed in a cosmopolitan way? Or do all concepts of 'system' – as Martin Albrow argues – have one basic characteristic in common, namely, that the semantics of system implies a totalizing discourse.

The most inappropriate way to grasp the reality of the Global Age is to seek how to refit human society back into the systems mould. Systems theory requires a firm position on what constitutes the system and what its environment is. In order to preserve the nation-state society as the unit of analysis, Parsons had to allocate other state societies, as well as the material world, to the category of environment. This was artificial even in the 1950s. Nation-state societies exist within a field of other societies, in persistent exchange and interaction. This has been part of the self-evident premises of the theory of international politics, but it applies equally to those institutions which elude state control, including money, information, science, transport, technology and law. The collapse of the Soviet system is only the most blatant example of what happens if the control attempt is carried through regardless of the risks involved. In other words, totalization discourse was a symptom of the overreach of the nation-state. (Albrow 1996: 111).

What about the basic conceptual ideas which came up since the 1970s, like 'Weltgesellschaft' (Niklas Luhmann), 'world system theory' (Immanuel Wallerstein), 'world polity' (John Meyer and his group)? These are more or less established sociological theories and research programmes which do have a huge impact on the international sociological debates. Their surplus value in conceptualizing the cosmopolitanization of the world has to be examined very carefully. But some problems can be identified and demonstrated.

Niklas Luhmann, on the one hand, criticized what we call 'methodological nationalism' already in the 1970s. On the other hand, he introduced his concept of 'world society' as a logical implication of his theory of communication. His argument is that in principle, there are no borders to communication, therefore there only can be *one* society and that is the world society – without any consideration of empirical facts. Thus his hypothesis can neither be falsified nor verified. If there is – analytically! – only one world society, there is no need, for example, to explore the new realities of fifty years of Europeanization. So here we have another reason why social theory is blind to Europe.

Immanuel Wallerstein's 'world system' theory presupposes the national-international dualism, as does John Meyer's concept of 'world polity'. Even though both concepts are very powerful in producing extremely interesting empirical interpretations, they both ignore the new historical facts of Europeanization (as does Niklas Luhmann's system theory). And neither realizes that the distinction which underpins their view of the world, namely that

between national and international spheres, is now dissolving in what remains a somewhat hazy power space of 'global domestic politics'. None the less, it was this distinction that helped to shape the world of the first modernity, including the key concepts (and theories) of society, identity, state, sovereignty, legitimacy, violence and state authority.

Methodological cosmopolitanism means we have to ask: how might we conceptualize a world in a set of global dynamics in which the problematic consequences of radicalized modernization effectively eliminate corner stones and logics of action – certain historically produced fundamental distinctions and basic institutions – of its nation-state order? Cosmopolitan realism goes as follows: the new global domestic politics that is already at work here and now, beyond the national–international distinction has become a 'meta-power' game whose outcome is completely open-ended. It is a game in which boundaries, basic rules and basic decisions have to be re-negotiated – not only those between the national and the international spheres, but also those between global business and the state, transnational civil society movements, supra-national organizations and national governments and societies (Beck 2005).

Cosmopolitan understanding

How and why is the twenty-first century very different from France in 1912 when Durkheim published *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*? One obvious difference is that Australian aboriginals have access to Durkheim's sociology of religion either through their interaction with contemporary anthropologists, or through educational web-sites, or through participation in university discourses on Durkheim's sociological theory. Cosmopolitan understanding, despite the existence of digital divide, is discursive, dialogic and reflexive. Whereas the *Elementary Forms* assumed that the Aunty tribe was a passive object of sociological inquiry, the contemporary world is connected together as a (more or less) unified place in a (more or less) simultaneous time. Network society makes endless and instant dialogue. (Turner 2004: 11)

The distinction between the actor perspective of society and politics and the observer perspective of the social sciences only unfolds its disruptive potential when the expanded options opened up by cosmopolitanization are viewed from *both* perspectives. It then becomes clear that cosmopolitanization, in both the agent and the observer perspectives, must be developed as a new *politics of perspectives* (of starting points, modes of access, standards, framings, foregrounds and backgrounds, etc.). (On the '*politics of scale*' – i.e., the negotiation of hierarchy and legitimacy among different 'scales' of social interaction – see Brenner 1999, 2000; Tsing 2000; Jonas 1994; Burawoy et al. 2000). It follows that social science can conceptualize and thematize the relational

patterns ‘transnational’, ‘global–local’, ‘global–national’, ‘national–global’ or ‘global–global’:

- with a *local focus* (e.g. transnational lifestyles of Turks in London; global co-operation and conflict within the World Trade Organization, the American government or NGOs; conflicts between national and communal governments over fertility policy; anti-poverty initiatives in New Delhi; the impact of the BSE risk on an agricultural community in Scotland); or
- with a *national focus* (e.g. transnational forms of marriage and family in different countries; the modes and frequency of transnational communication in the USA, Russia, China, North Korea and South Africa; the nationalities and languages of schoolchildren in different countries, etc.); or
- with a *transnational (or translocal) focus* (e.g. German Turks who have developed a transnational lifestyle moving between Berlin and Istanbul are being researched in both Berlin and Istanbul; this involves an exchange of perspectives which sets the nation-state framings of Turkey and Germany into systematic relations with each other (as regards values, administrative regulations, cultural stereotypes, etc., which determine, facilitate or prevent transnationalization); the transnational dynamics of risk and conflict of the BSE crisis and their cultural perception and evaluation in different European countries are being investigated in a comparative study); or
- with a *global focus* (how far advanced is the internal and external cosmopolitanization of national domains of experience in particular countries, what implications does this have, and what theoretical, empirical and political conclusions can be drawn from it?).

Thus methodological cosmopolitanism is not mono- but multi-perspectival. More precisely, it can and must observe and investigate the boundary-transcending and boundary-effacing multi-perspectivalism of social and political agents through very different ‘lenses’. A single phenomenon, transnationality, for example, can, perhaps even must, be analysed both locally and nationally and transnationally and trans-locally and globally.

The result is a host of methodological problems: how can all this and the consequent *politics of perspectives* be made transparent and methodologically tractable? What substantive, thematic–theoretical, and what social and political consequences are associated with the various ‘lenses’? And what consequences does this have, in turn, for the standing of the social sciences in the national, interstate and international fields (financing, public presence and legitimation, contexts of use)? How can the complexity and contingency thereby opened up in the internal and external relations of national and international sociologies be methodologically tamed? Does this imply a decline, a cultural relativization and a subjectivization of the social sciences? Or should we not rather expect just the opposite, namely, that the social sciences bring their claim to knowledge to bear thematically, methodologically, and

politically beyond the state and nation in novel ways which impact on a global public? When and how will the one or the other become possible, or probable, or be excluded?

Universalism and cosmopolitanism

What distinguishes the cosmopolitan outlook from a universalistic outlook? And what makes the cosmopolitan outlook at the beginning of the twenty-first century 'realistic', in contrast with cosmopolitan idealism? Here are just a few considerations by way of exploring these questions:

Political cosmopolitanism in sociological terms answers the question: how do societies deal with difference and borders under conditions of global interdependence crises?

Different social modalities of dealing with difference have to be distinguished – universalism, relativism, ethnicity, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, etc. Universalistic practices, for example, but also relativism, etc., involve conflicting impulses. Universalism obliges us to respect others as equals as a matter of principle, yet for that very reason it does not involve any requirement that would arouse curiosity or respect for what makes others different. On the contrary, the particularity of others is sacrificed to an assumption of universal equality which denies its own context of emergence and interests. Universalism thereby becomes two-faced: respect and hegemony, rationality and terror. Similarly, the emphasis on context and on the relativity of standpoints springs from an impulse to acknowledge the difference of others, but when it is absolutized in thought and practice it flips over into an incommensurability of perspectives which amounts to pre-established ignorance.

Realistic cosmopolitanism – this is the inference – should be conceived, elaborated and practiced not in an exclusive manner but in an *inclusive* relation to universalism, contextualism, nationalism, transnationalism, etc. It is this particular combination of semantic elements which the cosmopolitan outlook shares with the universalistic, relativistic and national outlooks and which at the same time distinguishes it from these other approaches.

Realistic cosmopolitanism presupposes a *universalistic minimum* involving a number of substantive norms which must be upheld at all costs. The principle that women and children should not be sold or enslaved, the principle that people should be able speak freely about God or their government without being tortured or their lives being threatened – these are so self-evident that no violation of them could meet with cosmopolitan tolerance. We can speak of 'cosmopolitan common sense' when we have good reasons to assume that a majority of human beings would be willing to defend these minimum universal norms wherever they have the power, if called upon to do so.

On the other hand, realistic cosmopolitanism includes universal procedural norms, since they alone make it possible to regulate how difference is dealt

with across cultures. Accordingly, realistic cosmopolitanism must also confront the painful questions and dilemmas, such as the *universalist–pluralist dilemma*: is cosmopolitanism single or multiple?

Should recognition of the freedom of others apply equally to despots and democrats, to anti-cosmopolitan predators as well as to those they prey upon? In other words, realistic cosmopolitans must come to terms with the *tolerance–violence dilemma*, particularly alien to cosmopolitan thought, that in making recognition of others central to its conception of society and politics cosmopolitanism makes enemies who can only be checked by force. Hence it must embrace the contradiction that, in order to uphold its basic principles – defending individual liberties and safeguarding difference – it may be necessary to violate them.

Last but not least, there is the *nationalism–cosmopolitanism dilemma*: cosmopolitanism does not only negate nationalism but also presupposes it. Without the stabilizing factors which nationalism affords in dealing with difference, cosmopolitanism is in danger of losing itself in a philosophical never-never land. But can there be many ‘cosmopolitan nationalisms’ and many ‘national cosmopolitanisms’?

Conclusion: methodological cosmopolitanism and its relation to other fields

How does this relate to the post-Second World War period of sociological thinking? In the 1960s the *Frankfurt School* and *Critical Theory* were the dominant intellectual movements, in the 1970s and 1980s this role was assumed by the *French post-modernists*; and now a cosmopolitan mixture in British sociology could give birth to a cosmopolitan vision for the humanities and the social sciences. This opens up new fields and research projects which this issue will hopefully ignite. At the same time, methodological cosmopolitanism emerges out and develops three fields in sociological research and practice.

The first field develops out of the old agenda of sociological theory after the World War II and tries to integrate it within a new cosmopolitan sociological imagination for the twenty-first century. The postwar conflicts in sociological theory in Western Europe, especially in Britain, were pretty much concentrated on the relation between social class, race, gender and the welfare state as an egalitarian actor of expanding citizenship. Sociology then was concerned with ‘bringing the state back in’. It was class and in particular the rise of the working class which was seen as the big social problem and the solidarity of the nation-state was seen as the solution. As in the methodological nationalism of Emile Durkheim fraternity became solidarity and national integration.

The new agenda highlights societal relations as distinct from the nation-state. ‘Society’ no longer appears under anyone’s control. In the cosmopolitan constellation sociology is then concerned with the formation of post-national

and cross-national bonds, or who belongs and who does not, and how inclusion and exclusion arise. Therefore the new agenda does not intend to 'throw the state back out', but to understand how states are being transformed in the cosmopolitan constellation, how new non-state actors arise and a new type of cosmopolitan states might develop. This post-national state formation is not anymore the 'General Will' of modern democracy as mapped by Jean-Jacques Rousseau onto the nation and further developed into sociological theories of Durkheim and Weber. Rousseau's General Will was not only the foundation of modern relativism; it was also the foundation of the modern idea of the nation as the ultimate reality, not as a collection of followers, but as the one thing that reconciled freedom and determinism. It was the birth of society as national society, since the General Will must always be general in its object and its subject and it is only general if it acts generally – that is, when one decides something that applies to all. Now, the general is called universal and the universal is considered to be the nation. This is how methodological nationalism became tied up with universalism in sociological theory. Bryan Turner (2006: 133–51) and Gerard Delanty (2006: 25–47) have problematized the connection between the old and the new agenda in sociological theorizing. Their articles build the bridge to be crossed for the new agenda. The essay from Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry (2006: 113–131) and the one from Edgar Grande (2006: 87–111) push the new agenda a step further: the first through an analysis of mobility and space showing how space can be deconstructed and opened up for a cosmopolitan sociology. Edgar Grande takes the science of the state to new levels by showing what methodological cosmopolitanism can do for the mother science of nationalism and the state.

The second field from which a methodological cosmopolitanism emerges is the cultural field of particularism either in its post-colonial, feminist or cultural theory version. Methodological cosmopolitanism should be aware of 'strategic essentialism' where positive claims are being put forward by so-called 'essentialist' groups which claim that social bonds and moral sentiments are based on particularity and as a consequence, therefore, sociology, as a moral science, needs to theorize the particular. These theories of particularity do not stand in opposition to the above universal theories of the nation. They complement and relate to each other. Theories of particularity oppose the homogenizing character of universal theories, and therefore recognize and criticize how universalizing universalism can be. However, on the other hand they do set a context for these theories that has no universal horizon: i.e. cognitive, moral or political. Angela McRobbie's essay (McRobbie 2006: 69–86) tries to disentangle the importance and dilemmas of these contextualized theories and shows how they can be used fruitfully for newly conceived methodological cosmopolitanism.

The third related field holds the above together. This is the field of normative social science whose followers read Kant as a sociologist. It is based on a

mixture of the moral universalism and cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century and centres itself upon (international) politics and not society as its main field. These cosmopolitan normative theories have a tendency to ignore society and its more banal forms of everyday life. They create an opposition between pure, ennobling public life, and cramping, constraining private life. However, under the conditions of an interdependent global world, a globality of risk and an advanced division of labour, every act of production and consumption and every act of everyday life links actors to millions of unseen others. This is what social life under cosmopolitan conditions means. It creates the moral horizon for a newly conceived form of at times banal, and, at times, moral cosmopolitanism. Robert Fine demonstrates how this works under the shadows of catastrophe and what the sociological preconditions for military interventions could be and how they connect to the social (Fine 2006: 49–67).

Methodological cosmopolitanism does not, therefore, mean the end of the nation but its transformation. It is the newly conceived research agenda which tries to bring sociology back to its subject matter – reality, which, of course, has to be demonstrated in detail and which is no longer a national or international but a cosmopolitan one. This opens up the horizon for the cosmopolitan realism of a New Critical Theory which has a strong standing against the retrogressive idealism of the national perspective in politics, research and theory.

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Notes

1. See also the debates on ‘public sociology’ (Burawoy 2005 and this special issue on Cosmopolitan Sociology 57(1) of the *BJS*).

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