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Digital Cosmopolitan Flows in the Lifeworld: Categorizing the Labyrinth of Postdigital Cosmopolitanism.

Digitale kosmopolitische Strömungen fließen durch die Lebenswelt: Eine Kategorisierung des Labyrinths postdigitaler Kosmopolitismen.

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Abstract (English)

The cosmopolitan idea has a substantial intellectual history, stretching back to ancient times. It is argued here that the term retains a multifacetedness and, especially, a flexibility, which makes it very suitable for the theorization of the contemporary digitalized world. To commence this argument, an overview of the ongoing postdigitality discussion is given, which argues for the present, clear, real and existing convergence of the digital and the analogue. From here three macro-categories of cosmopolitanism within academic writing are proffered, incorporating normative-philosophical, empirical-descriptive, and processual approaches to cosmopolitanism. Building on this categorization, it is then argued that a number of categories of postdigital cosmopolitanism may also be seen, from (empirical) everyday postdigital cosmopolitanism, with both a cultural and a structural form, to processual postdigital cosmopolitanism, which retains an alter-cosmopolitan and a benign form. The discussion concludes with normative-philosophical postdigital cosmopolitanism, which is also linked to visionary re-imaginings of the Internet and its interconnections with the material world.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, postdigitality, postdigital cosmopolitanisms, normative-philosophical cosmopolitanism, lifeworld

Abstract (Deutsch)

Die kosmopolitische Idee hat eine beachtliche Ideengeschichte, die bis in die Antike zurückreicht. Hier wird argumentiert, dass der Begriff eine Vielschichtigkeit und vor allem eine Flexibilität besitzt, die ihn für die Theoretisierung der heutigen digitalisierten Welt sehr geeignet macht. Ausgehend von dieser Argumentation wird ein Überblick über die laufende Postdigitalitätsdiskussion gegeben, die für die gegenwärtig klare reale und bestehende Konvergenz von Digitalem und Analogem plädiert. Von hier aus werden drei Makrokategorien des Kosmopolitismus innerhalb des wissenschaftlichen Diskurs vorgestellt, die normativ-philosophische, empirisch-deskriptive und prozessuale Ansätze des Kosmopolitismus beinhalten. Ausgehend von dieser Kategorisierung wird argumentiert, dass auch eine Reihe von Kategorien des postdigitalen Kosmopolitismus gesehen werden können, vom (empirischen) alltäglichen postdigitalen Kosmopolitismus in kultureller und struktureller Form bis hin zum prozessualen postdigitalen Kosmopolitismus, der eine alter-kosmopolitisch und eine 'gutartige' Form besitzt. Den Abschluss der Diskussion bildet der normativ-philosophische postdigitale Kosmopolitismus, der auch mit visionären Neuinterpretationen des Internets und seiner Verflechtungen mit der materiellen Welt verbunden ist.

Schlagwörter: Kosmopolitismus, Postdigitalität, postdigitale Kosmopolitismen, normativ-philosophischer Kosmopolitismus, Lebenswelt

1. Introduction[1]

Jan comes from Hamburg, but he lives in Leipzig. Over a light breakfast he always checks the Twitter app on his phone and gets a selected overview of world news. While going for a post-breakfast jog, the Strava app records his route, elevation, speed and timing and shares this automatically with Jan's Strava followers. Sometimes he listens to Spotify. Sometimes he prefers not to. Jan works for a firm that produces vinyl, and he often answers e-mails from partners in Bangkok, Cape Town and Melbourne. Currently, everyone at the company is working from home. At 11am everyday a work meeting takes place on Zoom. The employees are largely scattered around the city and join from their bedrooms and sitting rooms. Jan reads about the *Bundesliga* on the *Guardian* app and sometimes orders food from Lieferando for lunch. He edits Wikipedia articles in his free time in German and English. Every now and then, he is active on a Marvel Comics fan site. He used to write a blog called "A Hamburger im Osten" but gave this up two years ago. Jan plays Internet chess at the weekend and buys books from Amazon, based on Amazon's recommendations. He often gets into arguments with his friends in the local bar about pop culture trivia. They usually use Google on their phones to find the answer. One of his older friends has become estranged from the group because of his new radical politics; Jan has described him as lost to conspiracy theories. Jan himself is also politically active in environmental politics and often takes part in demonstrations via a Facebook group, of which he is a member. These demonstrations include marches linked to the Fridays for Future group. He has been learning Dutch on Duolingo and finds it more difficult than he thought he would. He has also been watching *The Squid Game* on Netflix. He started watching it in Korean with German subtitles, but then changed the language settings to German. Before going to sleep, Jan generally checks Twitter. Mobile phone videos circulating online, such as one from Kabul Airport showing people falling to their death from an aeroplane, have meant, in the past, he sometimes finds it difficult to fall asleep.

Jan is not a real person, but the patterns of his life are very real for many people and remain, indeed, far from unusual. These life patterns are embedded within a series of digital and cosmopolitan technologies and discourses. Understanding the digital cosmopolitan flows in the lifeworld is at the centre of this article. Building on the theoretical postdigital discussion and the wide area of both cosmopolitan theory and cosmopolitan empirical research, it is here argued that a number of categories of postdigital cosmopolitanism may be seen to pervade the very real materiality of the daily lifeworld. These range, it is argued, from (empirical) everyday postdigital cosmopolitanism, with both a cultural and a structural form, to processual postdigital cosmopolitanism, which retains an alter-cosmopolitan and a more benign form. The discussion concludes with the more speculative normative-philosophical postdigital cosmopolitanism, which is linked to visionary re-imaginings of the Internet. The article offers, thus, a conceptual framework with which one may analyze the labyrinth of postdigital cosmopolitan flows that saturate the patterns of material life in the contemporary lifeworld.

2. The Postdigital Discussion

One of the most influential conceptualizations of contemporary everyday digital life has been proffered by Felix Stalder (2019), who sees referentiality, communality and algorithmicity as the characteristic forms of a contemporary "Kultur der Digitalität" ("the digital condition") (2019:13). Indeed, Stalder's ideas are not unlike those of Castells (2004:39f), who writes of a global network society guided by "protocols of

communication" and "process" rather than "content"; a new online culture is being fed into the material world and is guided, he believes somewhat optimistically, by sharing, diversity, openness and the breaking down of otherness. Stalder (2019:18) views any material/immaterial dichotomy in critical terms, suggesting that the immaterial is not without materiality and that such a dichotomy remains, thus, essentially foolhardy. As Warf (2021:1) suggests, "the dichotomies of off-line/on-line do not do justice to the diverse ways in which the 'real' and virtual worlds are interpenetrated", "ranging from electronic banking to online education, internet gambling and videogames, e-government and e-commerce, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Google".

Indeed, a theoretically based discussion concerning aspects of the on-line/off-line dichotomy has been ongoing for more than 20 years and may be brought together under the term "post-digitality". In 1998 Negroponte was already suggesting that the digital would soon be noticed by "its absence, not its presence", while two years later Cascone (2000) was the first person to use the actual term "post-digital". The post-digital, in later formations, does not signify a world without computers and the Internet; quite the opposite in fact (Schmitt 2021:7). Cramer (2014:13ff) sees the "post" in "post-digital" as denoting a "continuation" rather than a rupture, as indicative of the "messy state of media, art and design *after* their digitization", eradicating the distinction between old and new media. Cramer (2014:15f) also points to an inherent lack of logic in the digital-analogue dichotomy, at least from a media theory perspective, as digital means simply that something is "divided into discrete, countable units", while analogue denotes a representation that "is determined entirely by its correspondence (analogy) with the original physical phenomenon which it mimics". While often colloquially understood as a material-immaterial opposition, the digital-analogue dichotomy actually denotes thus two distinct forms of representation, he believes (Cramer 2014:17). Similarly, Nassehi (2019) offers the thesis that digitality remains simply the re-combination of already existent social patterns.

But post-digitality also encompasses questions of materiality. The post-digital refers to how computation becomes "experiential, spatial and materialized in its implementation", part of the "texture of life"; materializing also "within the body" (Berry / Dieter 2015:3). The idea of being *either* online *or* offline thus becomes "anachronistic" with "our [sic] always-on smart devices", as the post-digital is "hegemonic" and "entangled" with everyday life and experience in a "complex, messy and difficult to untangle way" (Berry 2015:50). Recent theoretical discussions have viewed the post-digital – increasingly and consciously losing the hyphen in an attempt to normalize the concept (Sinclair / Hayes 2019) – in terms of a "critical understanding" of technology's pervasion of the social (Jandrić et al. 2018; and Peters / Besley 2019), not least its re-ordering of the physical world (Levinson 2019:15), as well as a total "rejection of binaries" (Sinclair and Hayes 2019: 130). For Knox (2019:358) the term postdigital is an attempt to outline what is new regarding our relationship to the digital but also highlights the ways that digital technologies are "embedded in, and entangled with, existing social practices and economic and political systems". Indeed, similarities may be seen here between ideas of postdigitality and Hunsinger's (2020) concept of a "Critical Internet Studies", which, he believes, should always remain conscious of both the very real materiality of the Internet and its use in the generation and rapid distribution of meaning. Thus, the material world is inherently embedded in the digital, and vice versa; both spheres have become inseparable. The material world is also therefore, it is here argued, engraved with a web of

various cosmopolitanisms embedded in the digital, which may be seen as a *labyrinth of postdigital cosmopolitanisms*, of various strengths and meanings. Yet, what exactly is meant by the term cosmopolitanism?

3. Macro-Categories of Cosmopolitanism

Etymologically, the word cosmopolitan derives from the Greek term *kosmopolites*, meaning citizen of the world, and has often been used informally to denote a general openness to the wider world. The Cambridge English Dictionary describes a cosmopolitan as someone "containing or having experience of people and things from many parts of the world" (dictionary.cambridge.org), which is probably the most common colloquial meaning of the term. From an academic perspective, Delanty (2019:1) describes "cosmopolitanism studies" as "an emerging post-disciplinary studies area more or less beyond disciplinary traditions". The same author (Delanty 2019:3) also stresses that cosmopolitanism is not just a synonym of transnationalism, but also "concerns ways of imagining the world", is "more than a condition of mobility or transnational movement", but is, he believes, "particularly bound up with the expansion of democracy and the extension of the space of the political". Thus, cosmopolitanism shares *elements* of both a spatial and political imaginary, often – but it is here argued not always – viewed in terms of a type of internationalist democratic liberalism, which may or may not consist of an institutional endpoint as part of that imaginary.

In terms of disciplinary and methodological engagements with cosmopolitanism, and based principally on the academic writings on the subject in English and German from the last twenty years, three substantial general categorizations may be seen: 1) cosmopolitanism viewed as a type of normative political philosophy; 2) an empirical, often descriptive engagement with cosmopolitanism examining wide cultural links and feelings of solidarity beyond the national, often from a historical or sociological perspective; and 3) a processual approach to cosmopolitanism, which uses the term to examine changes in *outlook*, often from a sociological but also at times from a cultural studies perspective.

3.1 Normative-Philosophical Approaches to Cosmopolitanism

Often seen as having intellectual roots in the cynical and stoic ideational schools of ancient Greece as well as in Immanuel Kant's Enlightenment ideas (Nussbaum 2019:2), authors have also recently sought to locate normative-philosophical cosmopolitanism's roots elsewhere, beyond the "dominant Eurocentric conception of cosmopolitanism" (Kumar Giri 2018b:1). There is no consensus on what a philosophical definition of cosmopolitanism would consist of. Indeed, authors have often differentiated here between a vast variety and often bewildering range of (largely) philosophical cosmopolitanisms, alternating for example from moral, political, legal, cultural, and economic to institutional cosmopolitanisms (Hahn 2017, Costa 2016, Cavallar 2015). Others have categorized cosmopolitanism in terms of dichotomies, such as moderate-extreme and weak-strong (Tan 2012). This is not to say that scholars have shunned attempts at a philosophical definition. Quite the opposite indeed. Cheah (2006:19) sees cosmopolitanism as an "expansive form of solidarity" "attuned to democratic principles and human interests" but "without the restriction of territorial borders". Warf (2012:272) sees cosmopolitanism as an "ethical, moral, and political philosophy that seeks to uncouple ethics from distance" and that views "humanity as a whole". Sable and Torres (2018:1/2) actually see cosmopolitanism as a synonym of universalism, as a "commitment to universal norms which transcend national allegiance". Appiah (2007:xiii) sees cosmopolitanism as a philosophi-

cal space in which universalism and cultural relativity exist uneasily, as there are two "strands that intertwine in the notion of cosmopolitanism"; the idea that human beings have "obligations to others" and that they take "seriously the value" of others' "practices and beliefs". Nussbaum (2019:209), on the other hand, sees the term cosmopolitanism as lacking in materiality, as actually "too vague to be useful" and prefers to write instead of a "materialist global political liberalism". While the content of what is meant in various versions of normative-philosophical cosmopolitanism may at times vary substantially, we are here very much within the speculative realm of philosophical idea formulation and distribution, very often linked to a critique of existing *national* structures.

3.2 Empirical-Descriptive Cosmopolitanism

Scholars engaging with cosmopolitanism from an empirical, descriptive perspective examine wide cultural links and feelings of solidarity beyond the national, often from a historical or sociological perspective. This approach consciously looks to expand the archival artefacts being analyzed, the range of interviewees spoken to, and/or the perspective guiding the methodologies used. Thus, cosmopolitanism appears here not as an intellectual idea discussed by elite philosophers and theorists but, as Sluga and Horne note (2010:370), "a practice, a cultural form" "a 'way of being in the world'"; what Jacob (2006:4) calls a series of "behaviours, social habits". Cosmopolitanism appears in this scholarly context as a 'living' thing that is actively examined, while also theoretically informing an approach that consciously moves away from methodological nationalism. Researchers from these contexts have categorized various kinds of solidarity-oriented cosmopolitanisms beyond the national that still, however, retain a degree of cultural specificity, are not abstract, universal and/or *necessarily* ethically based. These include, for example, "Catholic cosmopolitanism" (Albrecht 2005: 354), "Protestant cosmopolitanism" (Riches 2013), "Coloured cosmopolitanism" (Slate 2012), "Muslim cosmopolitanism" (Alavi 2015), "Confucian cosmopolitanism" (Park / Han 2014:187) and "Afropolitanism" (Bosch Santana 2016, Mbembe / Balakrishnan 2016, Dabiri 2016). Cosmopolitanism appears here, thus, as a wider sense of generally lived solidarity, linked to a specific world-imaginary.

3.3 Processual Cosmopolitanism

The last macro-category of cosmopolitanism to be found in academic writing may be termed, it is here argued, processual cosmopolitanism. This approach to cosmopolitanism uses the term to examine changes in attitude, often from a sociological but also at times from a cultural studies perspective and may be seen partly as both normative *and* empirical; as Delanty and Harris (2019:95) note it may be seen as a "normative theory" and a "particular kind of social phenomenon". Waldron (2010:168f) sees cosmopolitanism as the coming into contact with the other and, as a result of this contact, a process begins by which the cultural norms that one has adopted begin to be reassessed and revalued. For Delanty (2008:218) cosmopolitanism refers to a "transformation in self-understanding as the result of engagement with others over issues of global significance". It occurs "through deliberation", may be seen as "post-universalistic self-understanding", as a "self-problematization and as learning from the other" (Delanty 2008:219). Kumar (2018a:14), drawing largely on Indian sources, calls cosmopolitanism "an ongoing process of critique, creativity and border-crossing", involving "transformations in self, culture, society, economy and polity". Delanty and Harris (2019:91) call their conception of cosmopolitanism critical cosmopolitanism, as it is "a critique of other conceptions of cosmopolitanism" and "an account of social and political reality that seeks to identify transformational possibilities within the

present". They see "one of the features of cosmopolitanism as a process of self-transformation in its communicative dimension"; "a dialogic condition" (Delanty / Harris 2019:95) that may be "understood in terms of critical dialogue". Thus cosmopolitanism, viewed from this perspective, examines forms of language, spaces, agents and representations of various kinds leading to individual and collective transformations, usually seen as positive and 'progressive'. This, however, is not always necessarily the case, it is here argued.

4. Cosmopolitanism and the Digital: Categories of Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

The complexity and differentiated nature of the cosmopolitanism term is actually very helpful here when looking to understand wider cultural aspects of the postdigital condition; the digital permeation of our material world also represents the cosmopolitan permeation of the lifeworld, via the digital. Earlier conceptions of cosmopolitanism saw port cities as the important conveyors of cosmopolitanism (Yeoh / Lin 2019), but this space of contact has been overtaken by the digital. Differentiating between normative-philosophical, descriptive-empirical, and processual cosmopolitanism also helps us to break down the various kinds of postdigital cosmopolitanisms and understand their effects and usages more clearly. The term cosmopolitanism has often been central to thinking about new media, but often the term has been used in an imprecise manner and/or as a synonym simply for internationalism and/or transnationalism. I would like to suggest the existence of a number of postdigital cosmopolitanisms, drawing on the latest scholarship from the area of cosmopolitanism studies, as well as earlier attempts to bring notions of cosmopolitanism and digitality together.

From its very beginnings the Internet has been understood in terms of global metaphors, not least Marshall McLuhan's television-inspired idea of the "global village". At the start of the 1960s McLuhan (2010:3) saw the "electronic age" as ushering in "new shapes and structures of human interdependence and of expression which are 'oral' in form", and which recreate "the world in the image of a global village" (McLuhan 2010:36). The globe would become village-like, as participatory, interconnecting, and non-specialist electronic technology may "serve to restore a tribal pattern of intense involvement" (McLuhan 1994:24), unlike more specialist media such as the book. Ess (2001:18) sees McLuhan's vision as "clearly cosmopolitan in its assumptions and intentions", as it came, he believes, with an implicit idea regarding the "expansion of democracy and individual freedom". Similar ideas are still to be seen within Internet Studies discourse with Margetts (2013:423), for example, believing that an idea of cosmopolitanism – linked in her mind to "a model of democracy that works on the basis that all human groups belong to a single community" – has "also been associated with the Internet". Indeed Castells (2010:393), in his ground-breaking work, expressed the worry that the Internet would actually bolster an elite type of cosmopolitan understanding, which he called the "cosmopolitanism of the new professional and managerial classes", while excluding the majority of society who do not retain a global scope of reference. Yet, he still suggested that the Internet, and the network society he believed it would help to initiate, would result "in ending the ancestral fear of the other" (Castells 2004:40); as the other, due to its ubiquitous presence in digital technologies, would no longer really be *other*. The relationship between cosmopolitanisms and the digital is multifaceted and complex.

In line with the earlier categorization of cosmopolitanism I would also suggest that postdigital cosmopolitanisms may be grouped into three large categories: 1) (Empirical) Everyday Postdigital Cosmopolitanism; 2) Processual

Postdigital Cosmopolitanism; and 3) Normative-Philosophical Postdigital Cosmopolitanism. While the discussion order chosen here differs from the earlier categorization, so that the text may finish with visionary elements of normative critique, the categorizations remains analogous.

4.1 (Empirical) Everyday Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

It is here argued that (Empirical) Everyday Postdigital Cosmopolitanism may be divided into two 'banal' and largely receptive forms, namely a *cultural* postdigital cosmopolitanism and a *systematic* postdigital cosmopolitanism. This has been studied, to an extent, from the perspective of cultural studies, sociology, and philosophy; the literature has been largely descriptive, however, often avoiding questions of identity and wider solidarity, centring on practices and cultural forms.

4.1.1 Everyday Cultural Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

To a certain extent cultural postdigital cosmopolitanism may be seen as having similarities with a type of cultural transnationalism. This discussion has been led by the late sociologist Ulrich Beck, who looked to describe a "banal cosmopolitanism" (2002:28), which he also called a "really-existing cosmopolitanization" (Beck / Sznaider 2010:388) and indeed a "'coercive' cosmopolitanization" (Beck 2011:1348). Beck also sees cosmopolitanism as a necessary perspective change that moves social scientific researchers away from methodological nationalism. Beck (2002:28) believes that societies become "irredeemably locked into globalized cycles of production and consumption", in which "there is no other anymore" (Beck 2011:1348), yet cosmopolitanization can also lead, perhaps paradoxically, to (reactive) "re-nationalization" and is not necessarily the dichotomous other of nationalism, as it may often also include elements of nationalism (Beck 2011:1351). What Beck describes, drawing largely on culinary examples and tourism, remains similar to the idea of "consumer cosmopolitanism" (Woodward / Emontspool 2018:11), in which "for most people 'being cosmopolitan' is based around and afforded by various types of consumption, practices, ideals, and discourses" (Woodward / Emontspool 2018:25).

This type of (largely receptive) cultural cosmopolitanism has taken on a hyper form in the postdigital world, a "mediated cosmopolitanism" (Lindell 2014:74) in which texts, images, and videos from all over the world can be accessed and, often unthinkingly, consumed on mobile phones and various screens. Cicchelli and Octobre (2018:381) have investigated empirically this kind of receptive cultural cosmopolitanism, which they have called "aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism", and which they see as a "strong attraction" to "cultural practices and products from elsewhere" and as a "hybridization with national cultural forms" or "localized individual appropriations"; therefore a type of cultural glocalization. Based on survey research among French young people, they see this interest as linked to increased levels of education, increased mobility, the relatively large number of people with a migratory background looking for cultural "reassurance", and also a general cosmopolitan turn; a more general openness and curiosity (Cicchelli / Octobre 2018:381). "Aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism" is not, they believe, founded on "an organized knowledge" but on the accumulation of "banal encounters" and "common experiences", which are "in the first instance emotional", such as a Facebook like or share (Cicchelli / Octobre 2018:382). In a similar vein Sassatelli (2019) and Papastergiadis (2019) have written on what they call "aesthetic cosmopolitanism", which has often been dismissed as a "consumerist form" due to its "association with the cultural industry" (Sassatelli 2019:187). For Papastergiadis (2019:200) "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" is now the "normal cultural condition in which locally situ-

ated modes of cultural production and consumption are in dialogue with globally hegemonic forms".

Thus, everyday cultural postdigital cosmopolitanism is all pervasive in the postdigital lifeworld, yet may also be seen as often unconscious, banal, unextraordinary and outside of elite culture – actually a relatively common practice. It also remains largely receptive and does not, necessarily, require the active participation of the recipient. It is, therefore, a soft or thin cosmopolitanism, easy to engage in but not necessarily having a transformative effect. Even if ubiquitous, it is also not necessarily thickly layered, often occurring in the background, remaining barely noticed.

4.1.2 Everyday Systematic Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

Systematic postdigital cosmopolitanism is also ubiquitous; indeed, whether it can feasibly be called a cosmopolitanism or not is probably the most pertinent question, something that has most often been asked, if usually indirectly, within the subfield of the philosophy of technology. Kiberd (2021:245), in her essayistic memoir of Internet usage, compares the influence of new technologies with the influence of the Catholic Church, not least in relation to gender. In the same way that the Catholic Church has had universalist claims, we should perhaps view new technologies in terms of a type of potential cultural universalism. Schmidt[2] (2021:14) has argued that the dominating aspect of the postdigital age is a "strongly algorithmic monoculture"; "everyone using identical programmes in an identical manner". Schmidt (2021:14) believes that individuality is becoming lost within a "current of technological Gleichschaltung"; a forceful, quasi-dictatorial homogenization, with more than just a touch of Californian "openness" (Schmidt 2021:22). Indeed, twenty years before Schmidt, Ess (2001:18) had argued that Internet technologies were not "culturally neutral" despite their "ostensibly cosmopolitan image" but, dominated as they were in production from Silicon Valley, came engraved with an "American belief in communication technology as central to the spread of the democratic polity" and were, thus, inscribed with a US-dominated idea of cosmopolitanism. This is a conversation with similarities to the media imperialist arguments of the 1970s (Schiller 1978) and the Cultural Americanization arguments of the 1980s and 1990s (Bouchera 2009:40). The proponents of the cultural imperialist argument often, however, did not assign very much weight to 'native' agency and local creations of meaning. As Appiah (2006) has written, "cultural consumers are not dupes"; "they can adapt products to suit their own needs, and they can decide for themselves what they do and do not approve of". There is, thus, also space for Internet-users to create their own set of meanings and to utilize computer software and hardware as they see fit. The fact that there is a certain unity in the materiality of hardware and software does not, necessarily, exclude this.

Yet, the algorithmic structures of the Internet have undoubtedly more culture-creating power than either the 1980s TV show *Dallas* or the worldwide multinational chain McDonalds, both common examples used in earlier cultural imperialist discussions. As Buchanan (2020:377) emphasizes: "Algorithmic manipulation continually enhances and improves, or dictates, our every movement in today's 'digital environment'". This is especially true for the search engine Google, with its web crawling software and algorithmic system, which, as Black (2020:44) notes, results in the flattening of "our perception of the web and [the] centralizing [of] our experience of it". This results in a type of web "infrastructural imperialism" (Vaidhyanathan cited in: Black 2020:44), in which Google acts as a centre of power by weaving itself into other automated web systems, structuring our agency. Indeed, as Romele (2020a:105ff) argues, algorithms –

whose function is to organize data according to a certain coherence – are also becoming increasingly imaginative and creative. Romele (2020a:105ff) cites Facebook's "Friend's Day" function – in which the Facebook algorithm creates short videos dedicated to one's Facebook 'friends' – as an instance in which, it could at least be argued, algorithms retain hermeneutic and narrativizing agency. Social media algorithms also maintain a filtering function resulting in homophilic clusters dominating online interactions and enabling users to interact with information that adheres to their worldview. This retains therefore a possible counter-cosmopolitan function, *reducing* openness to the other by filtering others, and representations of others, out of a user's newsfeed (Cinelli et al. 2021). However, without algorithms we would also be "blind" (Stalder 2019:13) due to the massive amounts of human-generated and machine-generated data online, which, without a coherence-creating system, would be largely impossible to navigate, and which also enable us to find out about the other online. But existing algorithms, largely programmed in the United States of America, create this coherence in a very distinct manner.

The algorithmic dominance of the world wide web means that using the web is a type of agency linked to a certain global economic and political systematic embeddedness (Knox 2019: 358). Indeed "algorithmic capitalism" has become a central moulding element within what Peters and Besley (2019:40) call "the emerging technoscience global system". While theorizations of algorithmic capitalism are still emerging, it is clear that a large part of the financial and economic might of multinational information-based companies, such as Google and Amazon, owe their success to algorithmic organizational systems (Peters:2017). While early users looked for an Internet shaped by those very same users, the Internet is now clearly dominated by a small number of multinational technology corporations who supply the central platforms and services (Dickel / Schrappe 2017:49). "Human schematizations" are always materialized in technologies, and this is also true for the "digital dynamics of articulation between databases and algorithms" (Romele 2020a:13). Algorithms inevitably reproduce the bias of their designers, as Noble (2018) has illustrated, while Mitchell (2019:124) has shown how data sets for training face-recognition algorithms have resulted in sexism and racism within algorithms. Systematically embedded within flows of everyday postdigital cosmopolitanisms are also systems of surveillance that actually largely rely on complicit agential world-openness, on a type of cosmopolitanism (Christensen and Jansson 2015:1474). The giants of "surveillance capitalism" (York 2021) now retain control over the "speech and visual expression of billions of the world's citizens", with very little in terms of regulation, and with content moderators undertaking a very difficult job, often with minimal training and without local specialized knowledge (York 2021:15). Indeed Kleiner (2020), writing principally about streaming services such as Netflix, has argued that consumer-oriented algorithms pose a long-term threat to democracy as they promote a lack of thinking while people are also losing, he believes, the ability to make decisions for themselves. He provocatively calls this "mindstate California" (Kleiner 2020:263).

Echeverría's theory of modernity may help us think about the algorithmic-dominated Internet. Echeverría's (2019:xxiii) theory is based upon the idea of *blanquitud* or whiteness, which is not meant as a racial or identity category but "a type of human being belonging to a particular history that is already over a century old, but that nowadays threatens to spread throughout the planet". He (Echeverría 2019:xxiii) sees this as: "the pseudo-concretization of the homo capitalisticus" that includes for historical reasons "certain ethnic features of the 'white

man', but only as incarnations of other more decisive features, which are of an ethical order, that characterize a certain type of human behavior, a life or survival strategy". Echeverría (2019:39) thus sees capitalist modernity as retaining a *type* of racism as it "demands the presence of ethical or civilizational 'whiteness' (blanquitud) as a condition of modern humanity", which he (Echeverría 2019:43) also labels the "Americanization" of modernity. This is similar to what Srinivasan (2017:209) has called the "assumptions about technology and culture that are dictated by western concepts of cosmopolitanism".

So, what does this everyday systematic postdigital cosmopolitanism/universalism, this embeddedness of work and leisure tools within Californian-capitalist algorithmic systems, mean for Internet users? In an intervention on the thinking and language debate, Guy Deutscher (2010) has argued that "if different languages influence our minds in different ways, this is not because of what our language allows us to think but rather because of what it habitually obliges us to think about". Language pushes us, thus, to think in certain ways. It orients us towards thinking certain things for which it has signs and symbols – but human beings also retain the ability to think outside of existing signs and symbols. The algorithmic structuring of the Internet acts as a type of international-Californian Internet language, pushing us in certain directions towards certain worldviews but, at least when we retain a degree of digital competence and awareness, we may very consciously decide to go in a different direction. We may wish to delve beyond what we are obliged to think about; to not go in the direction that the existing structure points us towards. The Internet and its algorithms push people towards acting in the manner of a digital homo capitalisticus; an ethical and civilizational algorithmic Anglo-Americanism, a digital blanquitud; meaning here elements such as blind trust in the multinational agents of algorithmic capitalism, the unconscious loss of power in relation to online decision-making and the almost wilful complicity, due to a desire for extreme openness, in the processes of online surveillance. Internet users are pushed towards acting in relation to this dominant Internet cultural 'language', but it is still also possible to act online outside of this, to act in relation to local cultural 'languages' of the Internet that have been developed or are still developing.

4.2 Processual Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

Processual cosmopolitanism, as already discussed, examines forms of language, spaces, agents, and representations of various kinds leading to individual and collective transformations. For Delanty (2008:218), this is essentially processual and involves a "transformation in self-understanding as the result of engagement with others over issues of global significance"; "a process of self-transformation in its communicative dimension" (Delanty / Harris 2019:95). This is usually seen as positive and 'progressive', and as linked to imaginaries of liberalism and global democracy. This, I argue, is not always necessarily the case. The cosmopolitan process, within certain contexts and where actors interact and communicate to *very specific* others, may actually concretize some forms of extreme anti-democratic thought. This is then, I argue, a type of alternative-cosmopolitan process, in which there is however a non-benign transformation in self-understanding as the result of engagement with (selected) others over issues of (supposed) global significance. Thus, we distinguish here between processual postdigital alter-cosmopolitanism and benign processual postdigital cosmopolitanism.

4.2.1 Processual Postdigital Alter-Cosmopolitanism

Appiah (2007:1ff) writes of Sir Richard Francis Burton, a multilingual British adventurer from the 19th century who lived all over the world, from Arabia to Germany, speaking many

languages and getting to know a variety of cultures, retaining (Appiah 2007:4) "one characteristic of European cosmopolitanism"; "a receptiveness to art and literature from other places, and a wider interest in lives elsewhere". Yet, the majority of people he encountered remained, in his mind, culturally inferior and he showed, Appiah tells us, vast contempt for a variety of different peoples, including Arabs, East Africans and the Irish, being in essence an "odd sort of mélange of cosmopolitan and misanthrope" (Appiah 2007:7). Appiah's point here is to show his readers that there are degrees of cosmopolitanism, that cosmopolitanism may also be selective; cultural 'cosmopolitans' are not necessarily averse to hatred and racism and may actually gleefully ignore certain ethical questions, while a type of partial cultural cosmopolitanism also exists.

It has been argued that the digital permeation of our material world also represents the cosmopolitan permeation of the lifeworld. This is, of course, only a partial truth. The digital permeation of the lifeworld also means that certain extremes of thought – such as far-right culture, the example largely used here, but also Islamic fundamentalist extremes and authoritarian and anti-democratic orientations that view themselves as situated on the far-left – have become normalized and part of the mainstream, and may be seen "on TV, on the mobile phone, on the Internet, on social media" (Strick 2021:27). It is also true that "digital fascism" (Strick 2021), although often actually nationalist, is now centred on "transnational communication and networking" (Strick 2021:38), often seeking global solidarities based on racist ideas of white supremacy, opposition to immigration, Islam, and feminism and what it perceives, in the replaying of age-old anti-Semitic tropes, as undue Jewish influence in the world (Nagle 2017). In the "post-digital cultures of the far-right" (Albrecht / Fielitz / Thurston 2019:7), "digital platforms that bypass traditional and governmental controls" "have empowered groups to directly broadcast their content globally to willing and unwilling audiences alike", creating "imagined communities and coalitions" across cyberspace. Far-right online communication creates a sense of community, links actors from various parts of the world, introduces people to what, in this context, are perceived as global issues – even if in other contexts these 'issues' are seen as laden in problematic conspiracy theories – and spurs certain people, as a result of this communication, to action, sometimes of a violent nature.

Of course, we do not just have one world wide web; a cacophony of global utterances also exists on a wide variety of platforms. This includes what Tuters (2019:40) calls the "dark vernacular web", characterized by "anonymous or pseudoanonymous subcultures that largely see themselves as standing in opposition to the dominant culture of the surface web", not least the influential message board 4chan.[3] Schwarz (2020:125) has also shown how the digital far-right now engages in platform-hopping, gaining interested viewers and participants on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube before changing platforms, and sharpening the tone, on platforms such as Steam, Twitch and Telegram; a process mirrored indeed by other anti-democratic extremist groupings.

On 9 October 2019 a far-right extremist murdered two people outside of a synagogue in the German city of Halle. The Halle murderer existed outside of organized real-world, far-right structures and was formed largely by "Internet cultures" (Strick 2021:37). 'Inspired' by an earlier series of streamed far-right murders in New Zealand, the Halle murderer streamed his murders, and attempted murders, live on the platform Twitch, together with a commentary the xenophobic perpetrator gave in English, remaining conscious, apparently, of an English-speaking international audience (Hartleb 2020). The Halle murderer had

earlier been very active on anonymous English-language message boards, treading the same ground as US far-right murderers in a "global network of young men" (Knight 2020), while his gamifying and communicative actions definitely suggest he was looking to 'inspire' an international Internet community, even apparently writing a 'manifesto' of 11 pages in English (Kracher 2019). On 22 July 2016 a murderer murdered 9 people in Munich; a text later found suggested that the murderer was seeking principally people of Turkish heritage in his murderous rampage (Schwarz 2020:176). It was later revealed that the Munich murderer had extensive contact and exchange via the gaming platform Steam with an American far-right enthusiast, who would later also commit mass murder, the American and the German even forming on Steam a racist grouping with the name "Anti-Refugee Club" (Schwarz 2020:177).

Thus, while such murderers are often depicted as 'lone wolves', they are actually often very well integrated within internationalized online far-right circles. There is evidence suggesting that intercultural far-right contacts have had a concretizing and motivating effect, with interactions based on what they see as 'global problems' resulting in a type of self-reflection and, later, action. Alter-globalization, which sought to argue for an alternative, less market-dominated and more democratic form of globalization, was seen broadly as a left-wing idea in the 1990s (Lundström 2018: 67, Starr / Fernandez / Scholl 2011:15) but has more recently also been appropriated by the right and far-right (Worth 2018, Horner et al. 2018), proponents believing that globalization should only serve *some* markets, blending economic nationalism with hard borders. As Slobodian (2018) argues, "right-wing alter-globalization", a belief held, he suggests, by Trumpists, Brexiteers, the AFD and the FPÖ, engages in "cherry-picking aspects of globalization" saying "yes to free finance and free trade", but "no to free migration, democracy, multilateralism and human rights". A type of processual postdigital cosmopolitanism is in evidence here, too. It contains an implicit cherry-picking of some aspects of cosmopolitanism while rejecting others. It may be called alter-cosmopolitanism; a form of cosmopolitanism that retains the same transformative processes as processual cosmopolitanism but with very different, and at times deadly, outcomes. It constitutes an alternative type of postdigital cosmopolitanism, it is here argued, marked by authoritarianism rather than ideas of democracy. While the example of the far-right was concentrated upon above, this type of processual postdigital alter-cosmopolitanism may of course take a variety of forms – which may perhaps also be seen as situated within a wider notion of "digital fascism" (Strick 2021) – such as an Islamic fundamentalist form and, indeed, an authoritarian and anti-democratic form which sees itself as situated on the left.

4.2.2 Benign Processual Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

Despite the negative aspects of cosmopolitanism in some digital contexts, it still remains, essentially, a potentially highly positive force. Internet-based companies, such as Facebook, Google and Twitter, promote an imaginary of themselves based upon a "new global infrastructure" and "interconnected communities" (Bory 2020:21), with Facebook consciously promoting a (general) cosmopolitan image of itself as making the world more open and connected (Hoffmann / Proferes / Zimmer 2018). While it is correct to be sceptical of such sentiments, social media and the world wide web in general also undoubtedly enable global flows of utterances, texts and (potential) conversations, which can, very feasibly, be part of a dialogical process leading towards self-transformation, in the manner that Delanty suggests. McEwan and Sobré-Denton (2011:253) critique what they call "virtual cosmopolitanism" due to its

elitist nature, excluding those who do not possess the required technological resources and the appropriate language skills. While they are indeed correct to highlight the digital divide and differences in language skills and, thus, availability of education, Internet access has undoubtedly become less of an elite commodity since 2011.

The most substantial, largely theoretical, argument in favour of the Internet as a tool for the advancement of a type of processual cosmopolitanism has come from Oliver Hall. Hall (2019: 410) argues that the Internet may be seen as

"a communications media transmitting meaningful symbolic flows, across time-space, in virtual geographies where soft cultural types of cosmopolitan relationships can emerge in expressions of curiosity and openness located in the banal practices of online consumption of different cultural forms, but also from a greater intersubjective reflexiveness arising out of discursive intercultural exchanges".

Thus, he views the Internet not just as a space packed with textual and image-based forms of soft, thinly-layered banal cultural cosmopolitanism, but also as a space for self-reflection resulting from intercultural communication leading to a (potential) transformational process. Hall (2019: 410) sees a practical and political form of this Internet-based cosmopolitanism in the mobilization of a global solidarity march, coordinated transnationally and dialogically across social media, resulting in the organization of demonstrators in urban spaces across 161 countries, protesting against the racism and sexism of the US Trump administration. In an empirical study of three grassroots activist organizations, Sobré-Denton (2016:1718) has also argued in favour of "virtual cosmopolitanism as a space for social justice and intercultural activism", which she defines "as global intercultural concerns bringing together local and rooted activist networks through social media, where the transnational spread of ideas and resources gains voice and momentum beyond what it could accomplish through mere corporeal localities".

Hall and Sobré-Denton are correct in their views. This type of processual postdigital cosmopolitanism does exist and can be very influential, linking local, potential activists with others, allowing them to converse about global concerns and to transform ideas of self within a more global context. This may result in distinct actions. Fridays for Future and the Black Lives Matter movement may undoubtedly be seen as contemporary examples of this phenomenon. Both are heavily indebted to global-oriented forms of Internet communication, organization and activism. Indeed, this topic is far from new, not least if we view benign processual postdigital cosmopolitanism as retaining similar attributes to the structured pedagogical ideas surrounding intercultural competence[4], the e-version of which already retains its own literature (Bolten 2010).

4.3 Normative-Philosophical Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

The final category of postdigital cosmopolitanism is normative-philosophical postdigital cosmopolitanism, which engages in normative Internet-societal critique, while often, at the very least implicitly, offering a different version of this normativity. Indeed, this visionary aspect, the idea that there are alternative ways of doing and being on the Internet, remains highly important as power has been greatly centralized online. The democratic anarcho-left countercultural ideas of the early cyber-utopian thinkers (Turner 2006), with an orientation towards sharing and establishing a cyber space beyond the prevailing economic norms, have generally been far from realized. There is undoubtedly a need to rethink aspects of the Internet and the world wide web. We will discuss firstly some of the prevailing normative critiques and then move on to more visionary arguments.

Philosophers of technology have engaged in numerous, and often highly diverse, analytical and at times speculative arguments relating to the Internet and digital technologies. For example, Capurro (2010:40) has argued for a digital hermeneutics that would allow philosophers to "think the digital". Friend Wise and Williamson Shaffer (2015), very presciently, have made the case for the importance of theory in conjunction with big data, while Taddeo and Floridi (2018) have emphasized the necessity for a proper and thorough ethical engagement with Artificial Intelligence so that it may be a force for good. Žižek (2019:42) has argued for the need to keep the "digital network" "out of the control of private capital and state power" as "the web is now our most important commons, and the struggle for its control is *the* struggle today" (Žižek 2019:104). Mitchell (2019:151), Kleiner (2020) and York (2021) have also convincingly argued, respectively, for more debate *about* and better regulation *of* artificial intelligence, streaming and social media content moderation.

Cosmopolitanism has been an imaginary that Internet commentators and philosophers have utilized from its beginning. Ess (2001:28) looked for a "distinctive and hopeful model for the future of a global Internet", which "cuts between" "the usual dichotomies" of "utopia and dystopia, and between global (and potentially imperialistic) and local (and potentially isolated) cultures". Zuckermann (2013) has argued for a digital cosmopolitanism, inspired by cyber-utopianism, and which would require "us to take responsibility for making these potential connections real". Zuckermann (2015:131) argues for the "rewiring" of the Internet based upon three elements: transparent and contextualized translation (163); bridge figures, especially bloggers, engaged in *cultural* translation; and what he calls "engineered serendipity" (210), which would mean moving, while online, beyond the familiar and towards the idea of randomly coming upon the "provocative and inspiring" (Zuckermann 2015:239). Zuckermann's arguments now seem somewhat dated. Blogging has given way in importance online to the Twitter thread and the TikTok video, while, since 2016, social media timelines have no longer been organized chronologically. As Roisín Kiberd (2021:18) writes: "That year [2016] Twitter, Facebook and Instagram replaced the scrolling newsfeeds users saw when they logged in with algorithmic timelines, tailored to each individual. Now, instead of seeing the latest stories each time we logged in, we were given a version of events curated by the platform". The idea of a consciously engineered serendipity, while essentially positive, has become more difficult to realize in the new online world of resilient, and indeed effective, algorithmic design, which has made the Internet even more finely programmed to exclude the random and the serendipitous.

Stiegler (2016:162), seeing digitality as possibly heralding a new era of (ambivalently imagined) intellectual cosmopolitanism, has argued that the digital should not be in the hands of private enterprise, but instead "universities should take over the digital", thus releasing its full transformative intellectual and creative potential. An interesting proposition, which might require the turning back of time, and which, on the face of it, also ignores the advanced neo-liberalization and market-orientation of universities in various contexts across the world.

Based on the anthropological investigation of the engagement with the digital in a variety of cultural contexts, including rural India and native American communities in Arizona, Srinivasan (2017:209) has posited that "we must reject assumptions about technology and culture that are dictated by western concepts of cosmopolitanism", instead "we can attempt to 'provincialize' digital media by locating the collaboration we create within the situated realities of

time, place, and community" (Srinivasan 2017:210ff). "Provincializing" would mean here that the "materialities and design practices associated with specific devices" would take place in relation to the "culture and communities they are supposed to serve", meaning that its "databases, algorithms and interfaces" would be rewritten "to support the knowledge practices, or ontologies" of those who would use them. His vision is thus a radical decentralization of digital technology, outside of the existing global capitalist norms. Although seeking to decentralize and localize is an attractive vision, creating ethically minded communities within the realm of existing technologies may be the more practicable option.

The telecommunications engineers Díaz-Nafría and Guarda (2018:262) have argued for "an alternative architecture for the digital world based on network structural properties" that would reduce the Internet's domination by the global North, proposing a decentralized, cyber-subsidiarity model "for the organization of human cooperation backed by subsidiarity information management". This would result in a "scale-free network structure" (Díaz-Nafría and Guarda 2018:263) and would probably bring the Internet closer to Zuckermann's (2015:210) idea of an "engineered serendipity", making the Internet a more fortuitous platform for random intercultural interactions. This would again be a very radical change in the way the technology is created and would need a substantial re-thinking and redistribution of digital power.

Another, perhaps more realizable approach, as suggested above, is to look to create utopian spaces within the existent structure of the Internet; spaces marked by openness, a degree of serendipity – allowing one to more randomly 'meet' other people – and the conscious incorporation of both digital and material forms. This may mean alternative, independent, and non-commercial platforms, which allow people to interact and engage with each other, and to share and distribute knowledge. The Glocal Campus, run by the University of Jena, is one of many possible localized examples here. It hosts an online platform for e-learning and intercultural co-operation, providing access to university seminars and lectures from around the world, remaining open to all educational institutions that register on the platform (Berhault 2020). The most influential global example of cyber-utopianism in action is of course Wikipedia. This collaboratively written encyclopaedia was founded in 2001 and has more than 26 million pages, written by circa 12,000 regular editors and 140,000 less regular editors worldwide (Mason 2016:128). Organized on a non-profit basis, the texts are written in a decentralized and collaborative manner, outside of the market and management hierarchies. Indeed Paul Mason (2016) sees Wikipedia as an example of postcapitalism; a type of sharing, largely online economics, which he believes is emerging and will exist parallel to, and within, existent systems for the foreseeable future.

But there remain also other examples of initiatives that look to carve spaces outside of algorithmic capitalism, both online and offline. An example here is the ethicalrevolution.co.uk website in the UK, which sees itself as an ethical alternative to Amazon. There have also been popular cultural attempts to go beyond algorithmic norms, such as Stack Radio, "an app that deliberately delivers music chosen by someone else", or the Trade Journal Cooperative, which sends a different niche publication, in paper form, directly to your door four times a year, meaning that you consciously agree to contact with content well outside of your algorithmic choices and norms (Thorpe 2021). This is undoubtedly a more moderate and less radical approach to re-thinking the Internet, but also probably more realizable. The active re-thinking of the Internet needs to be an ongoing process if even greater inequality is to be avoided.

5. Conclusion

This article has argued that a number of categories of postdigital cosmopolitanism may be seen in contemporary life, from (empirical) everyday postdigital cosmopolitanism, with both a (soft) cultural and a structural form, to processual postdigital cosmopolitanism, which, it is stated, retains an alter-cosmopolitan and a benign form. The discussion concluded with normative-philosophical postdigital cosmopolitanism, which is also linked to visionary re-imaginings of the Internet and its interconnections to the material world. These theoretical arguments led from a discussion of postdigitality as well as an overview and categorization of academic cosmopolitanisms. These are, of course, largely theoretical arguments and would require, in the future, a level of empirical research to back them up. It is also clear, however, that the interdisciplinary cosmopolitanism discussion should also become a staple topic of Critical Intercultural Communication research. The richness, multifacetedness and flexibility of the term make it very useful in this context, and it may contribute very positively to an Internet-oriented strand of Intercultural Communication scholarship.

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Endnotes

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2 All translations from German to English are by the author, except where stated.

3 4chan, at the very top of the image board itself, is described as "a simple image-based bulletin board where anyone can post comments and share images. There are boards dedicat-ed to a variety of topics, from Japanese animation and culture to videogames, music, and photography". https://www.4chan.org [13 December 2021]. Based on complete anonymity and without the need to register in any way, 4chan has become known as an alt-right online space, dominated by ironic racist and sexist memes and pervaded by images of hard por-nography. According to Rob Arthur (2020): "4chan has evolved from a message board where people talked about anime to a casually racist but influential creation engine of internet culture, and now into a generator of far-right propaganda, a place where dangerous con-spiracy theories originate, and an amplifier of online bigotry".

4 For a critique of the concept of intercultural competence, largely from a cultural studies and postcolonial perspective, see Friese 2020.