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# A new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization

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A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization describes a new theoretically guided approach of empirical analysis to capture phenomena and quality of cosmopoliticization. The study and interpretation of cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitanism needs a critical pivot that draws on empirical issues and social facts to some extent to advance the theorizing of notions of cosmopolitan governance and democracy. First, I substantiate the rationale behind a new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization. Then, I argue that the sources of real-world insights of cosmopolitan practices and experiences can be derived from empirical analyses of three major subject matters, namely the formation of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief, the role of cosmopolitan public spheres, and international democratization through civil society participation and deliberation. These analytical categories and units can convey cosmopolitan values and principles that are critical of a significant cosmopolitan departure from dominant nation-state related paradigms and politics because they embody an impetus for recognition and esteem of the ecological and ethical value and meaningfulness of the entire earth system for humankind in terms of a right conduct and practice in present and future.

## KEYWORDS

cosmopoliticization, methodological cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan public sphere, international democratization, cosmopolitan ethos, cosmopolitan solidarity, transnational civil society deliberation, cosmopolitics

## Introduction

The Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the second half of the 18th century and grew rapidly in Europe, USA, Japan, and other Asian countries in the 19th century, was a structural transformation of agricultural societies to industrialized nations with the introduction of machinery. The Industrial Revolution and its related globalization has plunged Earth into a new geological age, the Anthropocene, replacing the Holocene. Human behavior and activity in the era of the Anthropocene have deeply and irreversibly influenced the planet and thus the preconditions of our social being. Since the middle of the last century, we have produced such destructive forces that the biogeochemical cycles and systems of Earth have been severely affected and permanently changed. The myriad human interventions into the geological, biological, chemical, and physical systems of Earth have caused *new* ontological and epistemological uncertainty for the largest entity of human being, the planet Earth.

Consequently, we are facing epochal environmental changes caused by human factors, such as climate change, decline of biodiversity, marine pollution, and fresh water and soil degradation. Furthermore, we are experiencing the onset of a radical ecological, socio-cultural, and political transformation that can be seen as a reverberation of the untamed and unmet consequences of the Industrial Revolution, modernization, and uninhibited globalization. The loss of climate stability and the ecological devastation and decline of diverse habitats and species have begun. Many processes cannot be stopped anymore; drastic changes and points

of no return in terms of tipping elements are inevitable, but much could be lessened. Many things will no longer be ecologically the same as they were in the past and, therefore, neither will the social and cultural nature of human existence. This present radical global ecological and socio-cultural transformation is one in which environmental, political, social, economic, and techno-digital transformation are inextricably interwoven. This is particularly reflected in the issues and deficiencies of the governance of complex global socio-material systems and their interplay. There is an awareness in international politics and beyond that the global governing authority, legitimation, and capacity of the existing global governance complex consisting of multiple agreements and international institutions and organizations is undermined by its perpetual fragmentariness, lack of coordination, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness (see, for example, [Biermann, 2014](#); [Biermann et al., 2009](#); [Biermann and Pattberg, 2012](#); [Held, 2010](#); [Zürn, 2018](#)). My underlying premise is that the navigation of a radical transformation of global socio-material systems and their interlacement and complexity as a planetary entirety can no longer be considered through a lens of spatial and political restrictions.

Beck's *The Metamorphosis of the World* ([Beck, 2016](#)) captures vividly the contours and phenomenology of the radical transformation of a world risk society that is evoked by unfathomable, indeterminable aspects of the global state of the world in which we live. Beck explores the meaning and implications of global eventuations, especially regarding climate change and how they thrust a process of radical transformation onto the world. The processes and developments ignited by global risks, disturbances, confusion, and uncertainty in the second modernity, he argues, cannot be conceptualized through existing notions of change in social science because change suggests that some things change but others remain the same. Metamorphosis goes beyond change and signifies a global "radical transformation in which the old certainties of modern society are falling away and something quite new is emerging" ([Beck, 2016](#), p. 3), which ought to be governed by a cosmopolitan approach. In the same vein, [Latour \(2021\)](#) argues that the metamorphosis of the world is an opportunity to understand the true nature of global risks and being inhabitants of one Earth for which he provides a map for the necessary cosmopolitan re-orientation.

Radical ecological and socio-cultural transformation is marked by existential challenges, uncertainties, risks, the permanent existence of a global polycrisis, as well as the shortcomings and failings of the governance of complex global socio-material systems. Too many members of the global multitude live in conditions of poverty, socio-economic despair, environmental degradation, war, illiberalism, and autocracy. The critical question is how we attain and recuperate an overall humanitarian and environmental constellation that is ecologically, socially, and morally enduring and sustainable a 100 years from now. What does this imply in terms of cosmopolitan processes of social-science inquiry and its range of perception and knowledge? First, the cosmopolitan focus of explanation takes socio-political levels, such as the local, provincial, and national, into account but does not depend on related normative and empirical theorizing. Furthermore, a new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization can engender a sincere, authentic global striving toward a universal community of the Earth system. Yet we neither have a suitable framework of justification and explanatory virtue in the academic disciplines of the social sciences and humanities or in real-world

politics that is sufficiently undergirded theoretically and analytically nor an adequate system of principles, rules, and methods to conduct scientific inquiry on the scale of the entire Earth system that can come to terms with the new planetary issues and challenges. The theoretical and analytical toolboxes of methodological individualism, methodological nationalism, and methodological holism cannot adequately grasp and conceive the global transformations of the world that will change the essence of the human Dasein. In addition, these tools are incapable of meeting the governance needs of the entire Earth system and the welfare of the whole of humankind.

This article is an attempt at a critical methodological response of cosmopolitan approaches in light of current global crises and developments. In this way, a new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization is my attempt to resolve some of the tension between the normative-theoretical, empirical, and methodical aspects of cosmopolitanism that is oriented to what is realized of the cosmopolitan ideas and visions. It refers to a cosmopolitan view that transcends in some way what is depicted as a branch, or doctrine, of philosophy and political theory relating to a broad array of socio-political and moral perspectives and conceptions that express an abstract, normatively desirable ontological state of cosmopolitan being featuring an accomplished state of the world society (see [Beck and Grande, 2012](#)). A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization focuses on the underlying analytical entities and units that can be operationalized to serve the purpose of an empirical inquiry of a process toward a cosmopolitan horizon. Cosmopoliticization is based on the premise that the being of the world is dynamic and that the dynamic nature of the cosmopolitan is the primary focus of a critical methodology of cosmopolitanism, and this in order to be able to explicate the steps and stages toward a more cosmopolitan reality. Thus, a critical cosmopolitan methodology accentuates the analytical-empirical description of actual processes and transitions toward a more cosmopolitan reality. In this, the term *cosmopoliticization* concerns the real-world evolution of new action and behavior, processes, institutions, and configurations that instantiate cosmopolitan claims and ideas. A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization encompasses theoretical grounding and conceptualization, empirical inquiry, and inferences from the explanation of cosmopolitan phenomena. More weight can be attached to empirical claims and more attention paid to the analysis of relevant empirical complexity. It is concurrently fundamental, progressive, and innovative by means of which current global problems and challenges can be reconstructed, analyzed, and explained. Thus, the scientific inquiry of cosmopoliticization needs a theoretical concept from which an empirical study can be derived and operationalized and that investigates ongoing activities and the coming about of developments appealing to cosmopolitan principles and goals that occur and interact across boundaries of territorial and political organization.

A crucial issue is how a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization can deliver an appropriate methodological compendium of scientific inquiry in terms of global problems, such as old and new uncertainties, global systemic risks, complex global socio-material systems, and global radical transformations, that cannot be assigned to any of the disciplines in social sciences and humanities that have relatively clear definitions and meanings. Are there common themes that combine these problems and challenges so as to form a single whole and distinguish a new contemporary methodology of cosmopoliticization from other areas of inquiry?

The underlying assumption of this article is that the reasoning of methodological cosmopolitanism provides a better analytical approach and explanation to grasp the global phenomena mentioned above since no mainstream theory of global governance nor methodological nationalism and intergovernmentalism can adequately conceive of them. A cosmopolitan perspective on and analysis of knowledge production about the transformation of the world and a future global order is constructive because a critical methodology can engender alternative conceptualizations of global subject matter, pay greater attention to the ends of methodological cosmopolitanism, and reflect on the epistemological and ontological commitments of methodological cosmopolitanism. Ruminating on whether and how cosmopoliticization can help navigate the jungle of challenges and problems of a global metamorphosis and its adherent crises can contribute to the attainment of a global constellation that provides more sustainability of the Earth system and that might be morally tolerable for the global multitude because it can dispel some of the deficiencies in the governance of global socio-material systems.

A critical cosmopolitan methodology suggests an approach that can spur empirical scientific inquiry because it exceeds the abstract thinking of the cosmopolitan in philosophical, sociological, and political scientific discourse and raises the question of how approaches to cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitanism can be empirically gauged and evaluated against real-world transnational and global developments. But a critical cosmopolitan methodology is not without problems. How can it be appraised? What are adequate yardsticks of the cosmopolitan? How should requirements for more cosmopolitan action be derived? How can transnational and global governance arrangements operationalize cosmopolitan values and principles such as freedom and liberty, self-determination, justice, and equality? To answer these questions, I argue that a critical methodology ought to focus on three major social categories that can be empirically studied as social progress conveying cosmopoliticization. First, I elucidate the general rationale of the logic of a critical cosmopolitan methodology in the following chapter, which also involves the definition and understanding of relevant terms such as *cosmopoliticization*, *multitude*, *global socio-material system*, and *critical*. Thereafter, I expound each of the three social categories in a chapter: the becoming and formation of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief; the role and function of cosmopolitan public spheres; and international democratization by means of transnational civil society deliberation. These categories embody and convey distinctive values and principles that are critical of and different from mainstream approaches in this field. What makes these social categories a significant cosmopolitan departure from dominant nation-state related paradigms and politics is the impetus they provide for recognition and esteem of the ecological and ethical value and meaningfulness of the entire Earth system for humankind in terms of right conduct and behavior in the present and future. Lastly, the closing chapter contains a final discussion and some conclusions that provide both a summing up and judgment of the points made and a nudge for a further debate on the development of cosmopoliticization toward cosmopolitics.

## Rationale of a critical cosmopolitan methodology

In the interest of providing a rationale combining cosmopolitanism and cosmopoliticization with a new critical methodological approach

that draws on Beck's methodological cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2013; Beck and Sznaider, 2006) as a point of origin, let me first explain what I mean by the term *cosmopoliticization*. Cosmopoliticization links views on cosmopolitanism in moral and socio-political philosophy, sociology, and political science with a research focus on politicization, which, in common knowledge, refers to processes raising consciousness on political matters and conveying specific issues in the political realm. In social sciences, in particular political science, the term *politicization* has gained some attention and has become a relatively popular research subject in recent years. However, there is no uniform definition and conceptualization of politicization. Rather, there are differing approaches and operationalizations in terms of empirical analyses that are contested but also form an interrelated assortment (see, for example, Feindt et al., 2021; Marquardt and Lederer, 2022). I argue that cosmopoliticization is a processual expansion and derivative of politicization emerging on the transnational and global scale that originates in Zürn's (2018, p. 139) definition and conceptualization: "Politicization, in general terms, means the demand for, or the act of, transporting an issue or an institution into the field or sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political" (see also de Wilde et al., 2016; Hutter et al., 2016; Zürn, 2013, 2019). However, cosmopoliticization goes beyond these substantive aspects and transcends methodological nationalism; it embraces a universal and planetary perspective considering transnational and global phenomena that are unnationalistic and not exclusive. Based on this, I define cosmopoliticization as transnational and/or global processes and developments that make global matters political in the interest of the global multitude in which the claim to and use of global reference systems and meaning structures with a planetary horizon and Earth system knowledge produced in the spirit of seeking sustainable, non-exclusive planetary understanding and global problem-solving becomes the legitimating source for behavior and action in terms of the commonwealth of complex global socio-material systems.<sup>1</sup> Interpreting Hardt and Negri (2004, 2017), I use the term *multitude* to refer to the *hoi polloi* (in Greek "the many"), or the common people, of the planet considered as a whole who form a social subject that is capable of recognizing a desire and need for cosmopoliticization. The global multitude supersedes terms like *citizens* and *people*, which are often associated with the nation-state. The global multitude is detached from any national container, territorial sovereignty, or political institution; it is conceived as *the* ontological entity of all inhabitants of the Earth. The global multitude lives in global socio-material systems that are understood as complex global systems and entities, such as the climate, global oceans, biological diversity, the world economy, world politics, the worldwide web, and a digitalized world, in which ecological, social, political, and economic aspects and dimensions are inextricably interwoven; they are neither solely physical nor solely social (see Urry, 2016). They consist of multiple, complex networks, relations, enmeshments, coordinations, and institutions within and among global systemic entities encompassing natural, social, and cultural processes, dynamics, and concerns in local, provincial, national, international, and global layers and facets. They represent intricate, intertwined connections between society and nature that are

<sup>1</sup> Here, the understanding and conceptualization of commonwealth is taken from Hardt and Negri (2009).

impossible to disentangle because they compound the Earth system as a complex whole. This view supports theoretical thoughts that regard the world in an *age of uncertainty* as an ontological sphere of *one* planetary being and our human Dasein as a part of and within it; it spurns a dualism between the social world and the natural, or material, world (Klinke, 2025). Cosmopoliticization raises awareness about, directs the attention to, and gives prominence, focus, and weight to issues (e.g., challenges, uncertainties, risks) of complex socio-material systems in transnational and global public and political spheres; it spotlights non-state actor involvement and activities as a matter of particular interest. Cosmopoliticization contributes issues to the public and political agenda of transnational and global discourses and paves the way to be taken into account in international arenas and in transnational and global political decision making and policy making more thoroughly than before.

A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization is a novel *modus operandi* for scientific inquiry to address current and future global problems and challenges in a new age of “*uncertain modernity*” (Klinke, 2025) that is characterized by multiple global crises, existential risks, and an incipient radical global transformation affecting global socio-material systems. My approach to a new critical methodology favors an understanding of methodology that incorporates theory, analysis, and methods including a reflection on the epistemological and ontological foundations and commitments of the scientific inquiry of cosmopoliticization. The discussion of a new critical methodology contemplates social science and philosophy debates. Adapting a more philosophical view on methodology emphasizing a general approach and commitment in research design that is applicable to the whole (see Harding, 1987; Howell, 2013; Nickles, 1987), I understand a new critical cosmopolitan methodology as an approach to the interplay of theoretical conceptualization, analytical operationalization, empirical investigation, theoretical-conceptual reflection of empirical results, and deductive inferences that instruct scientific inquiry in which epistemology, as the theory of knowledge and knowledge production, and ontology, as the theory of the nature of existence and being, form the foundation of the methodology.

Hence, I regard a critical cosmopolitan methodology as a theoretical-conceptual, analytical, and methodical armamentarium in social sciences and applied philosophy to observe, qualify, and interpret processive bifurcations, developments, and strivings toward cosmopolitan claims. The scope of global problems and transformations and their explanation has expanded beyond the boundaries of methodological individualism and methodological nationalism that are used in mainstream political science, International Relations (IR) and world politics, sociology, and economics. The question arises whether there are any common features that can be methodologically united in interdisciplinary studies or by one methodological approach. To answer this fundamental question, I argue that the social sciences and humanities need a new critical methodology based on methodological cosmopolitanism.

## From philosophical to methodological cosmopolitanism

Ideas of and debates about cosmopolitanism are as old as Classical Greek philosophy, such as Plato’s and Aristotle’s political writings, and

proceeding thought during the Roman empire. The philosophers Kleingeld and Brown (2019, Section 1.1) state that “Stoic cosmopolitanism in its various guises was enormously persuasive throughout the Greco-Roman world.” The spirit of cosmopolitanism resurged during the Enlightenment and early modernity; it figures prominently in contemporary discussions about global governance and new global orders, global democracy, and positive visions about the future of the world. For example, cosmopolitan ideas and theories referring to international political configurations are propounded and advanced in Kant’s *Zum ewigen Frieden* (Kant, 1795/1984) and his ideas of world citizenship (Kant, 1784/1991), Pogge’s view of cosmopolitanism (Pogge, 1992, 2011), Beitz’s “Cosmopolitan Liberalism and the States System” (Beitz, 1994), Rawls’s *The Law of Peoples* (Rawls, 1999), Bohman’s “Cosmopolitan Republicanism” (Bohman, 2001) and *Democracy Across Borders* (Bohman, 2004), Habermas’s *The Postnational Constellation* (Habermas, 2001), and Held’s “Restructuring Global Governance: Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and the Global Order” (Held, 2009). The contemporary epistemological and ontological foundations in the debate of the cosmopolitan concern manifold and diverse normative perspectives and models in socio-political and moral philosophy, sociology, and political science. Some contemporary considerations are inspired or goaded by strands of critical theory, debates about global democracy and global justice, and thoughts on how to transcend methodological nationalism (see, for example, Archibugi, 2010; Beck, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2016; Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Habermas, 1997, 2001; Held, 2010; Ibsen, 2023; Klinke, 2022; Levy, 2017).

A new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization attempts to re-interpret and advance Beck’s methodological cosmopolitanism toward novel and crucial research aspects. Beck’s normative and empirical theorizing on cosmopolitanism is meant to re-define and re-conceptualize the social science perspective and research agenda through a change toward a cosmopolitan focus in order to surmount the container-like thinking associated with methodological nationalism (Beck, 2006, 2013; Beck and Sznaider, 2006). Levy (2017) accentuates methodological cosmopolitanism as an intervention against methodological nationalism. Beck denotes his sociological conceptualization and theory development of the cosmopolitan as *methodological cosmopolitanism* because it replaces an ontology bound to the nation-state as a reference system with a methodology that transcends the national frame of reference toward cosmopolitan social sciences with new research units aligned with the global frame of a world risk society. In empirical terms, Beck and his team of the project titled “Methodological cosmopolitanism: In the laboratory of climate change” compared cosmopolitanism in terms of socio-cultural, activist-political, and techno-scientific responses to the global risks of climate change in East Asia and Europe (see Beck, 2016; Blok and Selchow, 2020). Compared to Beck’s methodological cosmopolitanism, the concept of a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization offers two new aspects that I see not as a contrast, but as a further interpretation and advancement.<sup>2</sup>

First, while Beck (2004, 2006) distinguishes philosophical from social-scientific perspectives and criticizes the prevalent ontological

<sup>2</sup> For another interpretation of how to translate Beck’s methodological cosmopolitanism into empirical research in IR, see Selchow (2020).



view, I attempt to bring back and involve the philosophical ideas and perspectives in an interdisciplinary research methodology, and retrieve the significance of an all-embracing ontology concerning the Earth system as an entirety that includes social and natural being. A new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization recalibrates the cosmopolitan methodology to some extent as an interdisciplinary inquiry molding a coalescence and interplay of philosophical ideas inspiring normative theory and hypotheses formation that, in turn, instruct critical empirical analysis and evaluation. A new critical cosmopolitan methodology reflects on ancient, Enlightenment, and contemporary philosophical debates of cosmopolitanism in order to develop social scientific research with a reciprocal relationship of normative theorizing, empirical analytical inquiry, and critical evaluation and conclusion. In so doing, we need an approach to a *cosmopolitan ontology* (Klinke, 2025, pp. 51–56) as a universal reference frame and meaning structure for the being of the Earth system as an ontological mega-entity that captures and esteems the existence and Dasein of all human and nonhuman forms of being and respects all related rights and interests. A cosmopolitan ontology procures more transparency, openness, and an awareness of being the same, which conveys the attitude, viewpoint, and reasoning that all social and ecological forms of existence and being count and depend on sustainable processes in global socio-material systems to preserve our Earth system. Therefore, a cosmopolitan ontology does not postulate several worlds (social, mental, natural) or ontological differences due to national boundaries. Rather, it advances the ontological and semantical thesis that there is only one concrete Earth system consisting of an interplay of the natural, the mental, the cultural, and the social. The framework of a cosmopolitan ontology is aligned with a *discursive epistemology* (Klinke, 2025, pp. 83–92), which relates to a methodological accentuation of discourse to acquire knowledge and understanding in terms of the ontological frame of reference and meaning of an all-embracing Earth system where “contexts, interdependencies, and recognizable patterns of related things are highly complex and difficult to grasp., facts and information are incomplete, causes and consequences are not known with certainty, and an ambiguity of interpretation arises when ambivalent and plurivalent cognitive statements and explanations are opposed to each other” (Klinke, 2025, p. 84).

Second, a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization focuses on a novel and crucial research object, which is cosmopoliticization as a genuine and on-going, bottom-up process that is empowered by the global multitude, rather than top-down politics in the transnational and global context. Taking up the point of view *from below* embraced by Hardt and Negri (2017) and Ingram (2013), I argue that *cosmopoliticization from below* suggests that individuals and collectives of the multitude become entitled and are authorized to develop and articulate universal values manifesting in cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief that are formed, voiced, and conveyed in the cosmopolitan public sphere and formally argued, reasoned, and justified in organized deliberation. Only a process from the bottom up of the planetary hoi polloi on the basis of transnational and global democratic-deliberative practice, and not a hierarchical system organized and ruled by the hoi oligoi (in Greek “the few”) of governments, transnational corporations, and powerful interest groups, can engender a path toward a cosmopolitan world order. Such a process grasps cosmopoliticization from the ground up, that is, from where the inhabitants of the globe are in their lifeworlds. Only when

communication and discourse from below, when the standpoints and voices of individual members of the multitude and agencies of the unmet needs and rights of non-anthropoidal forms of being are heard, discussed, and have direct political influence, can a high standard of cosmopolitanism and universalism unfold. Since cosmopoliticization aims at international democratization (as the third social category suggests), it would be self-contradictory to impose democratic processes and institutions from above or outside. The act of forcing something impugns the democratic principle of the autonomy of self-governance. I do not mean to suggest that discussion among members of the multitude is sufficient in and of itself, but it represents a powerful ontological substance in social being that needs to be conveyed and put into use for the production and reproduction of cosmopolitan processes and structures. What is of interest in the sense of a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization is the reflection on cosmopolitan ontology combined with a discursive epistemology in the evolution of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief, the emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres, and the aggregation and processing through organized deliberation.

In essence, a new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization (a) must be contrasted with the approaches and systems underlying methodological individualism and methodological nationalism, (b) represents an ontological and epistemological recalibration of thinking, worldviews, general understanding, and language, and (c) is an open conception to address alternatives toward the cosmopolitan. I see a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization as a process of moving forward toward an open, but strategic, research design in which scientific inquiry combines normative-theoretical conceptualization, critical empirical analysis, and critical evaluation. It foregrounds the dimension of conceptualized analytical empirical studies that are inspired by philosophical views and normative theories. Such critical studies focus on the reflective and unbiased analysis of normative-theoretical arguments, facts, and evidence in order to draw rational conclusions and form crucial judgments. Indeed, it is an ethical, socio-political, and methodological commitment to the primacy of a new global reference frame and structure, a sense of epistemic and ontological meaning and validity, as well as means-to-an-end action, taking precedence over methodological individualism and methodological nationalism. It offers a distinct approach of methods, principles, and rules for conducting an inquiry of cosmopolitan phenomena and cosmopoliticization in real-world realms of practical and actual experiences.

A critical cosmopolitan methodology accentuates the desire and necessity of a new methodological imperative in light of global common goods and bads, global systemic risks,<sup>3</sup> the transformation of the world, and the contestation and crisis of global governance. It serves, or ought to serve, as a contemporary adequate compass in social sciences and humanities when studying truth, knowledge, being, language, and teloi and when investigating societal, political, economic, and cultural objects and affairs and their morphoses in the context of complex global socio-material systems. This refers to the claim that the phenomena, processes, and transformations *of, within,*

<sup>3</sup> For the understanding and concept of systemic risks, see Renn et al. (2019) and Renn (2021).

and *among* global socio-material systems must be explained by inquiring how the aggregation of individual and collective actions of nation-states and transnational enterprises entail causes and implications that concern the entirety of the Earth system. On the other hand, the problem is that these actions that have planetary repercussions are explained through reference to the interests and intentions of nation-states and globalized economic actors. IR, world politics, and intermestic politics privilege the action-theoretical level of nation-states and their constituent states as explanation because it is imposed by the structure of methodological nationalism and intergovernmentalism as an aggregated form, interpreting nation-states as primary metaphysical entities. Thereby, it also incorporates the analysis and interpretation of the actions of civil societies, scientific networks, epistemic communities, nongovernmental organizations, and globalizing economic actors. However, causes, impacts, and cascading effects of global risks, processes of radical, socio-cultural transformations, and interactions of complex global socio-material systems must be understood and explained in a context that the action-theoretical level of nation-states cannot, precisely because they concern the entirety of the planet. Yet only the cosmopolitan macro-entirety encompassing the entirety of the Earth system provides the vantage point, frame of reference and meaning, and capacity to tame the effects and navigate through the storm that is building. Hence, the methodological privileging of the cosmopolitan governance of causes, impacts, and cascading effects entails the methodological privileging of the cosmopolitan macro-entirety.

Classical and contemporary theories and visions of cosmopolitanism provide normative and descriptive bases for social inquiry. We are able to relate to the normative-theoretical reasoning, justifications, and definitions of these approaches, but we do not know much about real-world cosmopoliticization and their empirical meaning unless we have an empirical study for it that tests the theoretical hypotheses. If empirical testing of cosmopolitan hypotheses substantiates and elucidates better phenomena and facts in the context of global existential and transformative problems and challenges than other hypotheses, then we can judge that cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitanism hold more truth-value in the representation and explanation of the current global situation than any other theory. Hence, to grasp the significance and explanatory virtue of cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitanism in the form of theoretical and empirical cognition, it is crucial to carve out, analyze, appraise, and interpret proper units, entities, and dimensions for it. For scientific inquiry, it is vital that analysis is used to operationalize theoretical and abstract definitions, propositions, characteristics, key terms as well as variables in hypotheses, that is, to translate abstract reasoning and inference into measurable units of observation.

## Critical inquiry as methodological principle

The methodology of cosmopoliticization uses the referent *critical* in the broad sense of *critical theory* (for philosophical overviews, see Bohman, 2005; Celikates and Flynn, 2023). A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization refers to the impetus to adopt and reflect on *Critical Theory in Critical Times* (Deutscher and Lafont, 2017a). Contemporary critical theory offers new perspectives on issues, such as global crises, risks, and transformations, and offers new ways of conceiving and connecting theories and explanations across

disciplines and fields (Deutscher and Lafont, 2017b, pp. xiii–xiv). The property *critical* particularizes the meaning and quality of the new methodology of cosmopoliticization in that it focuses on criticizing and refiguring global governance forms and constellations by combining normative theories with empirically informed analyses of crises, conflicts, shortcomings, and unmet needs of the current global governance of socio-material systems as well as suggestions about cosmopolitan governance approaches. The interpretation of *critique* and *critical* in the methodology of cosmopoliticization is also associated with reflexivity. Generally speaking, reflexivity is an important dimension in social sciences and philosophy (see Adorno, Arendt, Beck, Foucault, Giddens, Lash, Said) and is an important factor in IR (see Amoureux and Steele, 2016; Jackson, 2011; Neufeld, 1995), though reflexivity in social science research has many ramifications and facets and a complexity that cannot be adequately described in this article. Hence, in conceptualizing a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization, I am only referring schematically to two main aspects of reflexivity in terms of a feedback loop, or circular relationship, and an examination of oneself.

On the one hand, it concerns the reflexive quality of the research subject of cosmopoliticization in how governance processes and institutions embody reflexive properties and capacities. Drawing on Zürn's (2018, pp. 37–61) argument, transnational or global governance institutions form reflexive authority relationships because governing agencies and those governed recognize their own purview and reciprocally, especially with regard to the scope of influence, area of responsibility, and the limitations of rationality and knowledge they produce. Crucial questions for inquiry of cosmopoliticization are whether, how, and to what extent the dimension of reflexivity contributes to a cosmopolitan quality, how relationships and feedback loops between authority holders and constituencies amplify or reinforce phenomena, and how it can be operationalized as cosmopolitan quality for analytical empirical inquiry and evaluation. For example, uncertainty about how the multitude reacts to global risks and global and transnational governance arrangements complicates reflexive relationships and feedback loops between institutions, human behavior, problem-solving, and dynamics of transformation. Reflexive structures can also be associated with reference frames and meaning structures of shared approaches to cosmopolitan ontology, discursive epistemology, and the metaphysical entity perspective in terms of the Earth system.

On the other hand, reflexivity, employing a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization, also figures importantly in the conception and conducting of research. The research process is supposed to be reflexive in that it includes a methodical approach of self-review, examining and comparative rethinking, and self-critique. In general, self-awareness and self-reflexivity, which can be distinguished from the prevailing psychological notion of introspection, could concern various issues, such as implicit paradigms and schools of thought, the premises and theses derived from philosophical visions and outlooks, the socio-political dimensions of normative theories, the choice of empirical methods, the positionality and situatedness of scholars conducting the research, the use of language, and the difficulty of producing objective and nonpolitical insights and knowledge. More specifically in terms of an analytical empirical inquiry of cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitan phenomena, the reflexive focus should be directed to methodological confines and the powerful paradigm

of intergovernmentalism, the explanatory power of prevailing global governance theories, claims of methodological cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitanism as a branch of IR, and the pros and cons of discourse analysis.

To think critically and conduct a critical and reflexive scientific inquiry of cosmopoliticization requires operational knowledge about the epistemological and ontological foundations of cosmopolitanism and its logic and reasoning. A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization distinguishes its theoretical logic and reasoning, objectives, analytic-methodic approach, and ways and forms of explanation from standard understandings underlying methodological nationalism. A first step is the acknowledgment that the world encounters global systemic risks, a great, radical socio-cultural transformation, and the complex global socio-material systems in question. A second step is a critical analysis of and debate about the theoretical, analytical, and methodical apparatus of mainstream disciplines in social sciences and applied philosophy because as prisoners of methodological nationalism they are insufficient to comprehend, conceive of, and explain the phenomena and their implications and endue them with a meaningful language and intelligibility. The scientific inquiry of cosmopoliticization imbeds, or ought to imbed, the forming of an epistemic and ontological understanding, notion, or horizon of a cosmopolitan world. The epistemological and ontological foundation and commitment seeks explanation and justification in terms of the nature, values, social constituents, building blocks, as well as constraints and impediments of cosmopolitan arrangements on international and global scales. In this, a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization refers to

- a) research designs closely linking philosophical thoughts, normative-theoretical foundations, interdisciplinary methodology, empirical analyses, and critique to establish reconstructive approaches that seek to reflect socio-political reality and radically change this reality [cf. Honneth's (2007, 2014) and Jaeggi's (2017, 2018) methodological orientation];
- b) critical concepts with crisis diagnosis and an emancipatory orientation that, on the one hand, pertain to the analysis of causes, conditions, and the nature of political, ecological, and social risks, instability, and deadlocks, and, on the other hand, to the initiation of learning processes that in turn lead to transformation and pave the way for a more cosmopolitan-democratic world order;
- c) deliberative-democratic concepts with a communicative-discursive pivot that foster the transnationalization of public spheres toward cosmopolitan public spheres, the recognition of each other as equals, the acceptance of the force of the better argument in discussions and exchange, and the public use of reason;
- d) empirical inquiry of socio-political reality in terms of cosmopolitan potentials of social categories and/or entities as the evolution of patterns of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief, transnationalization and emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres, and international democratization by means of deliberations involving groups and individuals of transnational and global civil society;
- e) inference and reflection based on factual and judgmental conclusions drawn from distinct statements of theoretical and empirical knowledge; and
- f) plausible conjectures based on "predicative reasoning" in terms of possible cosmopolitan transformation and development "by interlocking the methods of deduction, induction, and abduction in order to crystallize meaningful and comprehensible interpretations about the future" (Klinke, 2025, p. 196).

The combination of normative theorizing, empirical inquiry, and critique is the hallmark of the new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization. In this view, the primary focus is the actions, becoming, and evolution directed toward a cosmopolitan transformation and/or cosmopolitan world order. This approach illuminates the following questions: What on-going activities, developments, and occurrences could be understood as an evolution of cosmopolitan aspects? What are cosmopolitan intentions and objectives? How can we understand the emergence of novel conditions? How can we conceive of cosmopolitan becoming and dynamic cosmopolitan being in terms of human and nonhuman forms of existence? How can we classify them into different kinds of cosmopolitan occurrences? What are socio-political or moral motivating and driving forces? What are adequate analytical and operationizable units and criteria?

In essence, a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization pursues a methodological rationale that turns away, on the one hand, from the classical social-scientific paradigms of methodological individualism and methodological nationalism and, on the other hand, from normatively determined models of the cosmopolitan to approaches of cosmopoliticization as a process of becoming. This article sketches the impetus behind and some of the main features of this turn and its methodological approach. First, a critical methodology of the cosmopolitan and cosmopoliticization outstrips the limitations of the classical social-scientific paradigms. In the reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's (1947) dialectic (see also Adorno, 1966) as saying that the current social order is maintained because the social world has become "second nature" to us (see also Epstein, 2018), one could argue that the primary social entities and categories of the social world are nation-states and their world order governed by them, which is viewed as natural and sacrosanct in terms of the organization of our social being. But nation-states and the intergovernmental world order are neither God-given nor natural. Second, the proposed new methodology is critical in that it seeks theoretical and analytical categories and units by virtue of which ones can be used to conceptualize, measure, and assess socio-political and moral liberation and, decoupled from the restraints and influences of nation-states, aspirations to create a world that satisfies the needs of all human and nonhuman forms of being, transnationalizes democracy, and envisions a humanitarian global constellation that is globally sustainable and morally tolerable. Third, a critical methodology serves as a guideline that inspires, illuminates, recommends, and pre-structures the social inquiry of progressive processes and dynamics toward a cosmopolitan emerging in the metamorphosis of the world by providing the descriptive and normative rationale for how to investigate and explain the transformation and advancement of circumstances that incarcerate humans in poverty, war, socio-economic despair, and environmental degradation. To operationalize, analyze empirically, and evaluate cosmopolitan potentials of social categories, entities, and units in the context of becoming, a broad range of social science methods can be employed: institutional and



processual analysis, network analysis, governance analysis, content analysis, perception studies, cognitive mapping, discourse analysis, speech act analysis,<sup>4</sup> ethnography, surveys, and social experiments.

## Becoming and formation of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief

A commonly shared but vague focal point of all cosmopolitan perspectives is that all human beings are world citizens in a universal community (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019, Introduction), which entails two normative dimensions: First, the being of a world citizen regardless of national affiliation has become an element of individual self-image and self-concept and, second, the envisioning of our planetary world as a single community transcends the territorial borders of nation-states, which is the immovable, primary claim of methodological nationalism.

The normative and analytical approach of a critical cosmopolitan methodology rather eschews the expression and concept of *world citizen* because it implicates a static view of being, which citizenship seems to be already settled into. A broad definition states that a “citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership” (Leydet, 2017, Introduction). However, a political community with rights and duties that can be regarded as a global universal community is only an abstract, theoretical claim that is not (yet) instantiated in real-world international politics. In consequence, there is not yet a determinable “[b]eing-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 84) that constitutes a Dasein as a world citizen but, perhaps, the becoming of a Dasein as an agent and representative of a cosmopolitan demos of the global multitude. The supposition is that, nonetheless, members of the global multitude have generated a new, more unbounded consciousness, unrestrained by nation-state thinking, by being challenged through a collective encounter with global crises, risks, and transformations that is influenced by traditional and new media; a consciousness is burgeoning that increasingly recognizes the necessity to consider and refer to the global magnitude of the entire Earth. The recognition of the entirety of the Earth system, including the biophysical environment, biogeochemical processes, the global multitude, and global socio-material systems, as a critical frame of reference and meaningfulness implies that one bears obligations to treat the Earth system in a certain way, that is, members of the global multitude acknowledge the validity of convincing insights, concerns, values, norms, and goals (see Ikäheimo and Laitinen, 2007). In this, it assumes that the feedback of other members of the global multitude, conveyed through transnational public spheres and discourses, promotes the development of particular attitudes, dispositions, and beliefs. Members of the global multitude identify themselves and others as having a cosmopolitan horizon by virtue of this identification as a group of people who share the same insights, concerns, values, norms,

and goals. The recognition of the planetary entirety as an indispensable ontological and epistemological reference system and meaning structure constitutes a “vital human need” (Taylor, 1992, p. 26) for a growing number of members of the global multitude. This recognition has generated solidarity and belief in a dispositional, affirmative attitude and ethos toward propositions favoring cosmopolitan ideas and visions. Expanding on Rorty’s (1989) argumentation about solidarity and social progress, one could argue that social progress aiming at cosmopolitan goals can only be achieved if members of the global multitude develop and form solidarity through appreciation and sympathy that is intended to “sensitize us to the suffering of others, and refine, deepen and expand our ability to identify with others, to think of others as like ourselves in morally relevant ways” (Ramberg and Dieleman, 2021, Section 3.5). In this way, members of the global multitude internalize an ethos fostering (more) liberty, fairness, justice, and equality, that is, they strive for equal respect for all members of the global multitude and conditions enabling equal social status and equal political participation (see also Anderson, 1999; Cohen, 2008; Gosepath, 2021; Wolff, 1998, 2010). Such an ethos also strives for the sensitization, recognition, and unconditional positive regard of the unmet needs and rights of nonhuman forms of being as a significant part of a cosmopolitan ontology and epistemology in terms of the Earth system.

Cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief contain a critical and skeptical position toward the apparently axiomatic nation-state container of society and can be used to develop empirically justified doubts of its faculty to adequately tackle the challenges and problems arising from global crises, risks, and transformation. It is not destined by close fellowship, feelings of common nationality, or conditions of a supreme power or authority. To perceive and feel oneself as a member of a solidary community of the cosmopolitan in which members of the global multitude mutually share concerns about the entirety of Earth with respect to global justice and equality, global democracy, and global change does not require members to be closely acquainted with each other. It is sufficient that members of the global multitude hold commonly shared perceptions, empathy, solicitousness, and objectives in terms of circumstances that incarcerate humans in poverty, war, socio-economic despair, environmental degradation, and insufficient global governance arrangements in order to understand each other as like-minded members of a cosmopolitan community (see also Mason, 2000). Thus, cosmopoliticization creates cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief, which are characterized by an emphasis on deploying practical reason and moral sense as a way of being that is authentic and true to oneself, all members of the global multitude, and nonhuman forms of being in light of cosmopolitan horizons referring to the entire planet. In other words, morally tolerable and civilizing conditions and the continuance of humankind interdepends on ecologically and socio-politically tolerable conditions and the continuance of the entirety of the Earth system.

## Emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres

Transnational and global public spheres concern multiple realms such as science, politics, markets, and civil society. The evolution and manifestation of public spheres transcending national boundaries play a central role in the process of cosmopoliticization because they can

4 For a theoretical foundation and methodical application of speech act analysis embedded in a broader discourse and institutional analysis to explore, among others, attitudes and identities of individuals and collective actor groups, see Klinke (2006, 2009a).



generate an intermediary between members of the global multitude and coordinated activities fostering evolutionary forces toward cosmopolitan governance. From a sociological perspective, Habermas (1962/1989, 2021) defines the public sphere as a particular realm within a functional society differentiating between civil society and the political system. As Habermas (1962/1989), in his historical social study of the transformation of the public sphere, conceptualized, the high standards of the space in which public opinion and will are formed by means of communicative action are only met within the boundaries of liberal democratic societies. As a result, highly sophisticated claims concerning the public sphere are not realized in many non-democratic nation-states and across borders. Zürn (2021) asserts that the complex of global governance lacks the prerequisites of a demanding concept of the public sphere on a global scale. He argues that the lack of a global public sphere is the cause of the crisis of the global political system. However, we can see, for example, sectoral, problem-oriented transnational and global public spheres that evolved out of epistemic spheres such as the global network of climate researchers and networks and associations concerning international education. In this respect, Fraser (2007, 2014, 2021) argues that transnational public spheres have emerged, but they do not meet the standards of normative democratic legitimacy.

## From transnational to cosmopolitan public spheres

In cosmopolitan terms, transnational and global public spheres are dynamic states of humans being publicly active in relating to a cosmopolitan commonality and thus a field of activity in which they (individuals and collective actor groups) create new awareness, develop new attitudes and identities, and form socio-political opinions that cross national boundaries. Bohman (2005, Section 5.1; italics in original) states that “a *cosmopolitan* public sphere is created when at least two culturally rooted public spheres begin to overlap and intersect” (see also Bohman, 1997). I extend and refine this elementary definition and understanding of cosmopolitan public spheres in the following. Several questions must be raised: What are features and qualities of cosmopolitan public spheres? What drives the emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres? Can transnational and global public spheres transmute into cosmopolitan public spheres and, if so, under what conditions?

Cosmopolitan public spheres create a transnational or global context and scope in which the development and diffusion of ideas are fostered and distributed from narrow domains, such as scientific realms and national publics, into diverse cultures and the global multitude. Cosmopolitan public spheres figure importantly in conveying distinctive communication and discourses by raising issues and expressing concerns that transcend boundaries given through nation-state containers. They disseminate and proliferate information, arguments, and perspectives about the environment, the economy, globalization, political systems, governments, the media, societies, and cultures, in which aspects and arguments with transnational and cosmopolitan relevance are highlighted. In doing so, they generate arenas, forums, and platforms, increasingly through the internet and social media, in which members of the global multitude interact across given publics by exchanging, discussing, and criticizing topics. We ought to conceive of cosmopolitan public spheres as

communicative and discursive amplifiers for the civil society of the global multitude and thus as a breeding ground for a cosmopolitan demos. However, a cosmopolitan public sphere is diverse in character and does not rely on “an assumed common norm of ‘publicity’ or a set of culturally specific practices of communication” (Bohman, 2005, Section 5.1) and discourse as we know it from the public sphere of democratic national society.

Activity in the cosmopolitan public sphere strengthens and conveys the spirit, consciousness, and perception of affiliation and cooperation arising from common interests, intentions, and objectives in terms of a cosmopolitan vision. Thus, cosmopolitan public spheres have a reciprocal relationship with the becoming and formation of cosmopolitan solidarity, ethos, and belief. Conceptually speaking, public spheres are both the socio-political underpinning and scaffolding of cosmopolitan reconfigurations and transformations and thus represent one of the central premises that help support the explanation of a process of cosmopolitanization. Hence, a critical methodology of the cosmopolitan sets forth the emergence and activity of transnational public spheres addressing cosmopolitan thoughts and visions as a relevant explanation of cosmopolitanization that needs to be investigated empirically in order to find evidence that establishes the accuracy or truth of the proposition.

## Empirical analytical claims

Cosmopolitan public spheres are not just regarded as enlargements of national public spheres or above or detached from them, and they are not expected to correspond to the high standards of a public sphere within national boundaries. Rather, they are fluid realms in which members of the global multitude engage in discourse, dialogue, and activity of a cosmopolitan nature. Cosmopolitan public spheres create opportunities for “multiperspectival forms of publicity and democracy” (Bohman, 2005, Section 5.1). In this view, the theoretical conceptualization of cosmopolitanization mobilizes three empirical assumptions.

First, cosmopolitan public spheres form a specific configuration of a social breeding ground where the moral and socio-political thinking, character, and opinions of individuals and groups of the global multitude gradually develop and reflect a cosmopolitan horizon. Members of the global multitude generate and share cosmopolitan epistemic beliefs and ontological judgments through transcendentalized communicative interaction, discourse, and commitment. Speakers who articulate cosmopolitan views, attitudes, or appraisals comment on collectively perceived global problems and challenges or react to other speakers in light of a cosmopolitan horizon help shape public arenas of discourse and deliberation by which a communicative formation of cosmopolitan public opinion and will can pave the way for cosmopolitanization. These members of the global multitude adopt, discuss, and convey a worldview that aspires to detach itself from local, provincial, national, and otherwise partisan prejudices. They consider, couch, and configure transnational and global problems and challenges from a cosmopolitan point of view. For example, cosmopolitan public spheres and discourse arenas have evolved in the context of global climate change conveyed notably by the global network of climate researchers and the global Climate Action Network. If members of the global multitude publicly debate global problems and challenges in a cosmopolitan spirit across

national boundaries, then a cosmopolitan public sphere becomes socially instantiated. The institutionalization of a cosmopolitan public sphere can ignite individual and group-specific adaptation of behavior patterns in terms of cosmopolitan duties, obligations, and conduct determined by respective activities. In terms of an empirical analysis driven by a critical methodology of cosmopolitanization, the deliberative conceptualization of a cosmopolitan public sphere is crucial.

Second, transnational public spheres generate open and civic network structures of the global multitude that shape novel connections, associations, and involvement of a cosmopolitan nature and telos. An empirical analysis of cosmopolitan features and qualities of transnational public spheres ought to consider horizontal and vertical relationships (see also [Gosseries and Parr, 2021](#), Section 2). These relationships are another empirical assumption featuring the existence of a transnational public sphere. More horizontal, conversational relationships exist among members of the global multitude that are supporters of the cosmopolitan and only active in communication and discourse on classical and new media and internet but who do not participate physically in institutionalized, organized action. More vertical, representative relationships unfold between members of the global multitude interested in conversation and discourse and those who are actively engaged in institutionalized deliberation where they argue in favor of a cosmopolitan vision. Transnationally institutionalized forms of deliberation and direct participation allow individuals and groups of the global multitude to engage actively and have political influence on transnational and international public affairs. The cosmopolitan view one advocates and reasons as the best approach will have an impact on the reasons why a transnational public sphere may matter in the process of cosmopolitanization and the extent to which it does.

Third, transnational public spheres serve as quasi-democratic conveyers and mediation authorities in that the rationality of the “wisdom of the crowd” of the global multitude feeds into institutionalized transnational deliberation, which strives toward cosmopolitan ideas and telos. In an Aristotelian sense, the understanding and forming of opinion about the cosmopolitan is the concretion of something like practical wisdom in transnational public spheres and discourses that occurs because of practical globalization. Whereas many theories of wisdom demand theoretical and practical knowledge, this approach to wisdom focuses on being epistemically, practically, and morally rational ([Ryan, 2012](#)). Taking up the approach of wisdom as rationality ([Ryan, 2013](#), Section 5), I argue that the *cosmopolitan wisdom of the global multitude* encompasses (a) epistemically justified beliefs about the diversity of subjects relating to political, moral, economic, and cultural cosmopolitanism, (b) justified beliefs on how to live in a practically rational way in a cosmopolitan society, (c) a commitment to live a life according to a cosmopolitan rationality, and (d) sensitivity to limitations and is critical of beliefs without epistemic and moral justification.

A new critical methodology of cosmopolitanization is theoretical, analytical, pragmatic, and praxeological in that it sees the emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres in relation to the realization of political participation of the global civil society via elements of deliberative democracy in transnational and global governance. The central questions for an empirical inquiry of the cosmopolitan are what forms of public participation and deliberation for members of the multitude can be observed that are beyond the broadly analyzed engagement of

transnational civil society in international organizations and institutions, and what quality do they possess to promote international democratization and cosmopolitanization.

## International democratization through deliberation of transnational civil society

Cosmopolitan public spheres are the intermediary realms from which the process of cosmopolitanization arises because they can be seen as source of cosmopolitan opinion formation, cosmopolitan relationships and networks, and the cosmopolitan wisdom of the global multitude. They enable capabilities that are opportunities of becoming cosmopolitan if members of the global multitude so choose; they are the prerequisite for the democratization of IR in a cosmopolitan sense. Hence, other explanatory variables of cosmopolitanization are transnational or international processes, institutions, and structures that make international and world politics more democratic and meaningful in cosmopolitan terms. The relevant literature on the democratization of international and world politics is manifold. Much of the work by political scientists and sociologists in the context of cosmopolitanism has been directed at the normative-theoretical conceptualization of cosmopolitan democracy and the transnationalization of democracy exemplified by the European Union (see, for example, [Archibugi, 2008, 2010](#); [Bohman, 2004](#); [Goodhart, 2005](#); [Habermas, 2001, 2017](#); [Held, 1995](#)). Less work has been conducted on empirical inquiries of transnational or international democratization in light of cosmopolitan horizons and cosmopolitan objectives.

Models of global and cosmopolitan democracy often represent an institutional constellation in an ideal and aggregated form with final conditions as the end goal (see [Archibugi et al., 2012](#)). A critical methodology of cosmopolitanization pursues another methodological rationale. Cosmopolitanization holds the critical position that a cosmopolitan telos in the form of a normatively desired world-state, a world government with layered sovereignty, or a global federation of nation-states cannot and should not be predetermined but can be part of the outlook of a cosmopolitan process. Accordingly, cosmopolitanization in terms of international democratization is “thought of as an on-going process of democratization in which a set of values are more or less fulfilled” ([Kuyper, 2015](#), Section 3.1). It privileges the cosmopolitan views of individual members of the global multitude over the particular interests of nation-states and the open question whether a common political authority of all humankind is volitional for members of the global multitude, and if so, how. The process of cosmopolitanization itself ought to crystallize the cosmopolitan shape of a political entity on a global scale. Members of the global multitude embody the cosmopolitan demos through self-determination because they identify with each other and the entire planet on the grounds of shared socio-political, environmental, and moral principles and norms referring to a planetary entity (and not nation-states). If we assume that the prerequisites of a cosmopolitan authority or authorities on a global scale are democratic, then it would be the most natural suggestion that the path toward it is also democratically paved. Hence, to approximate and realize cosmopolitan claims in a democratic way, we ought to direct our attention to cosmopolitan values of democratization, that is, novel forms of

self-governance at the transnational and global levels that approach principles and values of deliberative democracy by institutionalizing public discourses and discussion addressing cosmopolitan issues.

A critical methodology of cosmopoliticization presumes that transnational and global governance arrangements can be democratized and cosmopoliticized by realizing deliberations as a means of political participation for the civil society of the global multitude in transnational and global policy-making processes. It is about the social empowerment of the global civil society and its “Earthlings” by bestowing democratic authority on NGOs and other civil society stakeholder groups as well as individual, unorganized members of the global multitude. The underlying normative argument is twofold: On the one hand, formal deliberation can attain the political power that rational, constructive, and purposeful discussion and debate through careful consideration, reciprocal exchange of arguments, orientation toward the better argument, and a collective generation of problem-solving engenders and legitimizes political decisions and policies. On the other hand, individuals and civil society stakeholder groups of the global multitude deserve the right to participate in formal deliberations under egalitarian conditions because they are affected by decisions and policies of transnational and global governance. In terms of a cosmopolitan demos and governance, it is crucial that members of the global multitude are included in global politics, have the liberty to bring forward their interests, views, and ideas, can exercise self-determination, and can convey and channel processes of public opinion and will formation arising in cosmopolitan public spheres. Thus, institutionalized, deliberative practices of logical, reasonable argumentation and interpretation as a basic principle is critical, in that they allow propositions of pros and cons to be pondered and amalgamated into a unified understanding that prescribes policies and regulations. The promotion of international democratization and thus cosmopoliticization of unequal, inequitable, and hierarchical IR requires an empirical analysis of current transformations, new phenomena, and embedded possibilities to involve civil society (see [Bohman, 2005](#), Section 5).

## Empirical analytical approach of cosmopoliticized democratization

A critical investigation of cosmopoliticization suggests a methodological combination of analytical and empirical rigor that focuses on real-world transnational or global occurrences of non-state participation and deliberation. In terms of an empirical inquiry of cosmopoliticization, studies need to critically analyze in detail phenomena and the quality of civil society deliberation at the transnational and global levels, especially regarding actual experiences in terms of expert, civil society stakeholder, and general public involvement. These kinds of deliberations have been proven to be successful in realizing principles and values of deliberative democracy at the domestic level. Expert, civil society stakeholder, and general public deliberations become the locations for the public use of reason by members of civil society of the global multitude. They can provide platforms and procedures to solidify transnational and global discourses where members of the global multitude can reason and publicly justify cosmopolitan claims and ideals, inclusive cosmopolitan democracy, and respective global institutions. In this context,

transnational and global expert networks and deliberation figure importantly because they are assumed to implicate issue-specific, cosmopolitan public spheres and embody at least some cosmopolitan impetus and telos. A presumption that has not yet been sufficiently investigated is that epistemic focal points and their transnational or global networks and communities correlate with cosmopolitan public spheres, that is, they can be a follow-up of claims and requests raised in cosmopolitan public spheres or they can convey and amplify the emergence of cosmopolitan public spheres. Furthermore, it is claimed that they are needed to epistemically inform the deliberation of civil society in transnational and global policy making. Two well-known examples of global expert deliberation are the long-standing Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) established a decade ago, both of which are focal points of global scientific networks and epistemic communities. That national politics and global economy influence the work and reporting of epistemic networks and focal points is repeatedly discussed and criticized. Therefore, it is even more important that more empirical studies, in light of a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization, test cosmopolitan assumptions and hypotheses to develop more critical evaluations of cosmopolitan tendencies and developments in terms of expert, civil society stakeholder group, and general public deliberation.

The engagement of civil society in IR, especially global governance, has captured wide scholarly interest regarding NGOs but only minimally in terms of citizen participation and deliberation. A considerable number of studies addressing NGOs in transnational and global governance have been published in the last three decades; many of the empirical studies focus on the phenomena, roles, functions, and conditions of NGO participation but few study the effect of NGOs on international democratization (for studies providing an empirical overview or review of NGO participation, see [Hale and Held, 2011](#) [contributions in Part III and IV]; [Kaldor et al., 2012](#); [Kalfagianni et al., 2020](#); [Newell et al., 2012](#); [Pattberg and Widerberg, 2016](#); [Steffek and Kortendiek, 2018](#)). The normative assumption is that transnationally or globally organized expert, civil societal stakeholder, and public consultations can advance the democratic process of cosmopolitanization by institutionalizing public access to discussions and deliberations on cosmopolitanism, which needs more empirical scrutiny. Such discussions and consultations can be seen as decentralized, non-electoral, democratic mechanisms that help reassert cosmopolitan influence by means of public deliberation and control over problem-solving and decision-making that is normally intergovernmentally driven. If the transnational general public, stakeholder, and expert deliberations, pursue a rationale exercising public reasoning and justification, then they can promote the development and presentation of arguments favoring cosmopolitan principles and rules that are acceptable and recognized as valid by members of the global multitude for whom these principles and rules are intended. If empirical analyses demonstrate that transnational forms and procedures of public, stakeholder, and expert deliberation convey cosmopolitan values of democratization, traction could be gained on tangible conditions of cosmopoliticization rather than relying on ideal models.

Yet, governments and state actors have a controlling influence over transnational and global governance processes and institutions, albeit the degree of access and involvement of economic and civil



society actors has significantly increased in the past three decades. In terms of cosmopoliticization and international democratization, the participation of civil society actors in transnational and global governance, in particular NGOs and epistemic communities, is a critical factor because the logic behind these actor groups' action, behavior, and motivation is directed toward ideational commonalities, common good interests, and scientific knowledge. NGOs conveying the public interest and will of the global multitude and focal points of epistemic communities advancing recognized scientific knowledge about transnational and global problems have become important, accepted actors in transnational and global policy making and governance in various political fields, such as the global environment, development, human rights, health, trade, refugees, and humanitarianism. Though the degree, conditions, and forms of civil society participation vary considerably, NGOs and scientists are more involved in transnational and global agenda setting, policy formulation, and implementation than actual political decision making. Whereas unorganized, ordinary citizens or, to put it another way, individuals of the global multitude, are more or less excluded from transnational and global policy making and governance. A unique exception so far is the global citizen deliberation on climate and ecological crises, known as Global Assembly, conducted online in 2021, whose results were presented at the COP26 in Glasgow ([Global Assembly Team, 2022](#)). While transnational deliberations have been held in Europe, [Dryzek and Niemeyer \(2024\)](#) prognosticate that more global citizen deliberations will be conducted in the future. Even though the Global Assembly in 2021 was a global citizen deliberation, it would need comprehensive empirical analysis using a critical cosmopolitan methodology approach to qualify the Global Assembly contributing to international democratization and thus cosmopoliticization.

In terms of a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization, it is challenging to specify categories and units of empirical analysis that can be used to adequately ascertain and evaluate the democratic quality, extent, and dimensions of civil society participation. On the one hand, civil society participation is often informal and not constituted in the functionality of intergovernmentalism, which still lays the ideological foundation of formal global governance and treats NGOs as secondary actors. On the other hand, they are often organized as multi-actor dialogues in which governmental, economic, and civil society actors participate. A rare example is a study on the Great Lakes regime across the border of Canada and the United States, which investigates a regional form of transnational governance that features high democratic qualities through cross-border civil society participation and public deliberation ([Klinke, 2006, 2009b](#)). It provides a theoretically guided, broad empirical analysis of various forms of transboundary deliberations revealing that experts, stakeholder groups, NGOs, and unorganized ordinary citizens have fair opportunities for political influence from the local to the binational level through declamatory, discursive, and consultative-mediatory procedures, processes, and institutions ([Klinke, 2009a](#)). Other comprehensive empirical studies of transnational or international democratization and cosmopoliticization through high-quality civil society participation are rare, whereas several inquiries ponder issues of normative conceptualization and the institutional feasibility of theories of deliberative democracy in transnational and global governance (see [Bohman, 1999, 2001, 2004; Klinke, 2014; Smith, 2018](#)). Other empirical studies of transnational and global governance

also disclose democratic deficits and gaps when taking into consideration claims of deliberative democracy, such as the case study on the Global Fund to combat AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria ([Brown, 2010](#)).

## Key aspects of cosmopoliticized democratization

Transnational and global governance can contribute to international democratization in the sense of cosmopoliticization if it promotes the realization of cosmopolitan values and virtues through egalitarian and deliberative processes and procedures of democracy. The crucial underpinning of such transnational and global governance approaches would be liberal, democratic, and cosmopolitan if members of the global multitude are entitled to fair chances and equal rights to participate and discuss the transnational and global policy-making that affects their lives. Accordingly, analysis and evaluation in the sense of a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization must examine questions of how and to what extent transnational and global governance arrangements realize freedom and liberty, self-determination, justice, and equality in terms of deliberation for groups and individuals of the civil society of the global multitude.

Concluding the discussion and elucidation of international democratization by means of civil society deliberation in this chapter, I argue that transnational and global governance arrangements might be on a path toward cosmopoliticization and cosmopolitan governance if the following key cosmopolitan and democratic aspects and principles are instantiated or, at least, approached to some extent:<sup>5</sup>

- a) institutionalization of possibilities and procedures for participation of the multitude, in particular transnational expert, civil society stakeholder group, and general public involvement in deliberations;
- b) fair chances of access to transnational expert, stakeholder, and public deliberations for members of the global multitude;
- c) equal opportunities to exert political influence by means of formal deliberation;
- d) treatment of civil society actors as equals with state- and economic actors;
- e) use of public and practical reason to justify cosmopolitan interests and positions that are deemed to be widely acceptable;
- f) support for arguing over bargaining and a commitment to the force of the better argument; and
- g) a forward-looking, cosmopolitan orientation that takes account of the planetary scale of the Earth system and universal rights of nonhuman forms of being.

<sup>5</sup> These key aspects and principles are deduced from pertinent literature on cosmopolitanism (see [Beck, 2013; Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Bohman, 2001, 2004; Goodhart, 2005, 2008; Kleingeld and Brown, 2019; Kuyper, 2014, 2015; Nour Sckell, 2019; Pogge, 1992, 2011](#)) and deliberative democracy (see [Bächtiger et al., 2018; Bohman, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2004; Bohman and Reh, 1997; Elster, 1998; Goodin, 2008; Habermas, 1984, 1996; Klinke, 2006, 2009a, 2016; Kuyper, 2014, 2015; Macdonald, 2008; Parkinson, 2006; Parkinson and Mansbridge, 2012](#)). The list is partial and not complete or inclusive.



Moreover, it is meaningful to add in conclusion that theoretical-conceptual ruminations and empirical findings suggest that multifaceted configurations of civil society participation and deliberation, in which expert, stakeholder, and public deliberation are combined and aggregated, yield a higher quality of democratization than one-dimensional forms of civil society participation (see Klinke, 2006, 2009a, 2012, 2014, 2020, 2022; Klinke and Renn, 2014). The critical evaluation of how and to what extent these key aspects are implemented and contribute to cosmopoliticization or cosmopolitan governance needs to be subject to a comprehensive empirical analysis and a normative-theoretical reflection of the empirical findings.

## Final discussion and conclusion: from cosmopoliticization to cosmopolitics

Our present time of radical transformations comes with discord, polarization, and conflicts about power, worldviews, and truth values all over the world as well as questions about global goods and bads. This global uncertainty and complexity is reproduced in the deficiencies and gaps of the governance of global socio-material systems. In this context, cosmopoliticization shapes a process striving for an organization of global social being that advocates and respects universal rights for all human and nonhuman forms of being and thus differs from the view of methodological nationalism and intergovernmentalism because nation-states as political and social entities are ill-equipped to capture the epistemological and ontological essence of the reality relating to the entirety of the Earth system. In this, a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization concerns elucidation of, empirical inquiry about, critical evaluation, and normative reflection on anti-intergovernmental phenomena. It ought to explain what is going wrong regarding the governance of global socio-material systems and the navigation of a global socio-cultural transformation. It criticizes the morphology and values by which methodological nationalism and intergovernmentalism define central norms. It confronts the existing configurations of IR and politics and identifies claims of a critical cosmopolitan rationality. Strictly speaking, a critical methodology of cosmopoliticization attempts to develop a scaffolding to guide and map the empirical inquiry of social experiments and processes conveying a cosmopolitan spirit and culture of social progress for the global multitude that is disentangled from territorial and political attachments and interests. It queries, for example, how and where values of liberty, self-determination, fairness, equality, and justice are socialized, advanced, and implemented. Findings of empirical inquiry lead to a critical normative reflection and open-mindedness of how the cosmopolitan quality of the empirical results can be assessed and how achievable goals for social progress implementing cosmopolitan principles and norms can be better aligned. To that end, I argued that a new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization is enlightened by the philosophical strands of political and moral cosmopolitanism, sociological and political science debates on methodological cosmopolitanism, and discussions of cosmopolitanism in IR, critical theory, and democracy theory, especially with regard to deliberative democracy across borders. However, this new critical methodology of cosmopoliticization is not intended to be inclusive or immovable. I see it more as an open-ended approach that is sensitive to normative and empirical theorizing of further aspects relevant to global governance and Earth system

research as well as emerging debates of critical cosmopolitanism. Topics of importance are democratic legitimacy, responsibility, accountability, political representativeness or representation, effectiveness, agency of forms of being beyond man acknowledging the entirety of the Earth system, cosmopolitanism in domestic and local democracy, and so forth. A methodological approach that is receptive to other issues, new ideas, and arguments is better prepared to capture global social progress and broaden the cosmopolitan horizon.

Cosmopoliticization enlightens and encourages members of the global multitude to conceive of themselves as dependents of a universal demos that lays the foundation for the civic scaffolding of *cosmopolitics* (see also Ingram, 2013). *Cosmopolitics* is not a teleological end-state of cosmopoliticization. The ideational goal of *cosmopolitics* of a critical cosmopolitan methodology has fewer demanding conditions than other cosmopolitan ideals, such as world government, world citizenship, or a state-homogenous world republic. Rather, *cosmopolitics* represents activities and processes associated with the governance of issues and challenges of global socio-material systems in which a variety of actors (state, non-state, agency of nonhuman forms of being) is entitled to participate *pari passu* in policy making. The policy making is characterized by discourse and dialogue producing more sustainable, just problem-solving. Thus, *cosmopolitics* takes processual aspects of nature and humankind as essential features of reality and the world, that is, being and Dasein in terms of the planet, the global multitude as a whole, global socio-material systems, and human and nonhuman forms of existence are dynamic and in flux, and the dynamic nature of cosmopolitan being is motivated by striving for reason and morality. Ethically, the point is that cosmopolitan members of the global multitude are concerned about the needs of others, nonhuman forms of being, and the entire Earth system, which does not depend on a national or international society or another organizational level of communality. They are guided by concerns for and the needs of each other and natural entities because only a cosmopolitan spirit and culture can generate a sustainable state of the Earth system tolerable for all members of the global multitude. Hence, a critical cosmopolitan methodology criticizes unfairness, inequality, and injustice in transnational and global systems and disapproves of self-serving behavior and action and pure national interests. Normatively, it describes a social ontological position that asserts that cosmopolitan-motivated members of the global multitude would embody a socio-political form or system of governance without the container-like orientation and pattern of methodological nationalism: a socio-material, planetary entity in which the fact of living on Earth as a member of the global multitude determines social affiliation and cohesion and not a nation-state structure that also demands the recognition of universal rights of non-anthropoidal forms of being. It goes beyond the prevailing paradigm of intergovernmentalism and international cooperation that is based on collaboration *with* each other, but not one for the other. Empirically, the realization of cosmopolitan ideas and claims can barely be accomplished by single individuals, but by a collective, informal authority of a cosmopolitan demos that is not regarded as a higher ranked entity vis-à-vis the individual members of the global multitude. The cosmopolitan-motivated members of the global multitude want to be recognized as natives and inhabitants of one common ontological entity, Earth, where everyone must be treated just like all the rest. Imagining ways we express concern for each other and respect human and nonhuman life as shared mutual responsibility can

empower members of the global multitude to gradually expand cosmopolitan commonalities with which they are in solidarity. Such a cosmopolitan ethos and belief conveys a moral reasoning that is an individual and collective “practical reasoning about what, morally, they ought to do” (Richardson, 2018, Introduction) for the common good of all members of the global multitude and the entirety of Earth.

The advancement and additional value of a critical cosmopolitan methodology would be, on the one hand, that it can better grasp the diverse experiments in different places around the world that mentally and socially form a common cosmopolitan bond in practice by linking conceptualization and empiricism. On the other hand, it can also grasp the organizational aspect of a global movement in which locally realized projects mutually complement each other in a cosmopolitan sense by accommodating each other in a supportive way in their social progress toward cosmopolitan values, principles, and norms. Here, the proposition needs to be conceptually and empirically emphasized that the recognition of cosmopolitanization in the form of experiments in one region always simultaneously increases the chances of success of cosmopolitan experiments in another region. Thus, the empirical inquiry of the evolution and emergence of cosmopolitan mindsets realized in cosmopolitan experiments can contribute to the development of the cosmopolitan as more than merely a normatively understood idea or vision. An advancement of a critical cosmopolitan methodology and its empirical focus should carefully examine the tension a process of cosmopolitanization inheres between the necessity of international interconnectedness and networking and the requirement of the embeddedness in local traditions. The functioning of a cosmopolitan network can only be realized by a cosmopolitan multitude and its stakeholders representing and conveying cosmopolitan values, principles, and norms as well as operational knowledge of the epistemological and ontological foundations of the cosmopolitan at the transnational and global levels. Concurrently, these cosmopolitan values, principles, and norms ought to mobilize local public spheres and ethically take up the socio-cultural conditions of a region.

To face the challenges of an empirical inquiry of cosmopolitan phenomena, I conclude that a critical methodology of cosmopolitanization ought to maintain a vital emphasize on the debate about contemporary cosmopolitanisms and methodological cosmopolitanism and its feasibility in IR. The difficult question remains whether the process toward cosmopolitanization and cosmopolitanism needs to be understood as a project that can evolve in the shadow of nation-state structures holding sway over IR by means of intergovernmentalism or as a project that impugns the nation-state container from the ground up. The answer to this question is complex in light of the contemporary revitalization and re-strengthening of the nation-state, the derogation of multilateralism, the renaissance of bilateralism, and the emergence of a multipolar world order. In view of contemporary reality, there is much to support the assertion that the process of cosmopolitanization should not only be seen as a political effort beyond nation-state borders but also as a horizon at the level of local democracy (see also, for example, Nour Sckell, 2019). However, cosmopolitan aims cannot be achieved through local democracy alone. The cosmopolitan idea and its critical methodology of ought to adapt to the tendency of growing interdependences and increasing governance needs of global socio-material systems by establishing experiments of possible extensions of the cosmopolitan at a level that no longer takes into account state or other political borders because the initiatives of such cosmopolitan experiments must emanate from

cosmopolitan public spheres in any way. However, this is easier in theory than implemented in reality. A critical methodology of cosmopolitanization must consider the non-simultaneities of the international and domestic social reality because the path toward a cosmopolitan society is rockier than ever. To understand the difficulty, it is essential to realize that tendencies toward transnationalization and the cosmopolitan have very different degrees of development.

The bottom line of a new critical methodology of cosmopolitanization is its contribution that the political debate about and theories of cosmopolitanism and methodological cosmopolitanism do not abide in the development and formulation of an idealized global state of the world with respect to social, political, and moral aspects. This vigor is raised to a higher degree when empirical inquiry considers a range of other additional cosmopolitan claims not discussed here, all of which critically challenge the fundamental conceptions of the nation-state, intergovernmentalism, prevailing global governance institutions and structures, and their interrelationships. These could include, for example, cosmopolitan horizons addressed in local democracy, instantiation of cosmopolitan principles, norms, and rules within domestic politics, the role and capacity of intermestic politics, overcoming of neoliberalism and oligarchic structures in politics and economy, and re-organization of global social being. Inquiry guided by a critical cosmopolitan methodology can in fact disclose empirical findings and insights that make the ostensibly utopian outcome of political theories of cosmopolitanism possible and reachable under specific conditions. Therefore, cosmopolitanism can become more than, borrowing Rawls's phrase, a “realistic utopia,” it can be a pragmatic alternative that is rational and reasonable if a critical methodology of cosmopolitanization identifies and unfolds blocked potentials and reliably guides political agency; it thus supports and strengthens political hopes of the realization of a more cosmopolitan future because they are grounded in experiments of social reality from IR to local democracy.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Author contributions

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