

Sabine Selchow

Imagining a cosmopolitized Europe: from the study of the 'new' to the discovery of the 'unexpected'

Book section

Original citation:

Selchow, Sabine (2015) *Imagining a cosmopolitized Europe: from the study of the 'new' to the discovery of the 'unexpected'*. In: *Imagining Europe: Memory, Visions, and Counter-Narratives. Studies in Euroculture(2)*. Göttingen University Press, Göttingen, Germany, pp. 123-137. ISBN 9783863952327

Reuse of this item is permitted through licensing under the Creative Commons:

© 2015 Göttingen University Press
CC BY-SA 4.0

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68949/>

Available in LSE Research Online: January 2017

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

Imagining a Cosmopolitized Europe. From the Study of the ‘New’ to the Discovery of the ‘Unexpected’*

Sabine Selchow

1 Introduction

The title of the public lecture series, the contributions to which constitute this edited collection, was ‘Imagining Europe: Visions, Memories and Counter-Narratives’. This present chapter is not proposing a distinct vision for the political entity ‘Europe’. Nor is it concerned with the empirical questions, which visions, memories and counter-narratives are held by different social actors within and outside Europe, how the symbolic struggle over ‘Europe’ looks, or with the socio-political consequences of the dominant imaginations. The chapter is about the *scholarly* imagination of Europe. It addresses scholars who are involved in the analysis of contemporary politics within Europe and is concerned with the way in which they imagine their object of study because it is this imagination that preconfigures, which problems are perceived as problems and which questions are addressed in their analysis.

If we look at the contemporary academic discourse of political studies in general and the scholarship on international relations in particular, we notice that many analysts start on the basis that there is something ‘new’ about the world: that it is a “brave new world”¹ we are living in, that we are facing ‘new’ challenges and problems and threats, and that ‘new’ solutions are needed. Starting on this premise, much of the scholarship in political studies and international relations is then about the study of this ‘new’ world and the search for ‘new’ solutions that could address and deal with the perceived ‘new’ challenges we are said to be facing. The many different governance experiments and socio-political constellations that shape the

* This chapter is a revised version of the public lecture entitled “Beyond Globalisation and Transnationalisation – Thinking about Europe in Times of Cosmopolitization”, held on 29 October 2013 at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. I would like to thank Ulrich Beck for his critical engagement with and valuable suggestions for the development of my argument.

¹ Jens Bartelson, “Three Concepts of Globalization,” *International Sociology*, 15(2) (2000): 192.

European landscape these days are manifestations of this search for solutions to the ‘problems’ of the perceived ‘new’ world.

Yet, despite all innovative thinking, scholarly productivity, growth of think tanks and efforts and advances in knowledge transfer, it is striking that in so many instances political reality falls short in dealing adequately with the contemporary, ‘new’ challenges. If we look at how the issue of climate change is dealt with or if we look at the significant and ever growing number of people who die in their attempts to overcome the European border by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, we cannot but realise that existing (European) institutional settings and governance constellations fail the ‘new’ world – despite the mass of scholarly recommendations for how to ‘really’ and ‘properly’ deal with it.

There are two general possibilities for why there is this mismatch between the eager scholarly knowledge production of innovative approaches to the ‘new’ world, on the one side, and the reality of these approaches that seems to fail the ‘new’ world, on the other: either the developed solutions for dealing with the ‘new’ world are not yet the best and have to be improved, or there is something wrong with the very imagination of the ‘new’ world, for which these solutions are developed and suggested.

In this chapter I hold that it is this second aspect that accounts for the mismatch between the supposedly ‘new’ world and the many suggestions to deal with its ‘new’ challenges. The chapter argues that what is needed is not simply a conventional scholarship in and about a ‘new’ world but an unconventional, in the sense of *different in kind* scholarship *from within a differently imagined* world. The chapter argues for a scholarly approach that commences from a different *starting point*, one that opens up different pathways for the exploration of the contemporary (political) world and holds the chance of generating *different* solutions to pressing problems, rather than ‘new’ solutions to ‘new’ problems. At the heart of this approach is a shift from the scholarly goal of dealing with the ‘new’ to the search for the ‘unexpected’.

The aim of this chapter is to sketch the contours of how such a different starting point could look. In that, the chapter starts by distinguishing between the discovery of the ‘unexpected’ and the study of the ‘new’. Reflecting on the potentials and the restrictions of the existing ‘unconventional’ scholarship in the political studies discourse, especially its subfield International Relations (IR), the premises of which foster exactly such a discovery of the ‘unexpected’, the chapter suggests bringing into the study of politics sociologist Ulrich Beck’s theories of ‘cosmopolitanisation’, ‘global risk’ and ‘reflexive modernisation’². This is because Beck’s theories enable a re-imagination of the world, in which key premises that underlie the conventional imagination of the world, prominently the equation of society with *national* society and the distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, are not only dis-

² E.g. Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006) and *ibid.*, *World at Risk*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

mantled but replaced by (an understanding that contemporary socio-political reality is shaped by) a different logic: the logic of ‘cosmopolitisation’. The chapter suggests that this kind of re-imagination of the world is a fruitful starting-point for the critical exploration of the contemporary world and the search for the ‘unexpected’ in attempts to find (institutional) answers to contemporary problems because it enables the exploration of the world *from within* a different world.

2 The discovery of the ‘unexpected’ vs the study of the ‘new’

There is a difference between discovering the ‘unexpected’ and studying the ‘new’. Discovering the ‘unexpected’ is not about challenging conventional knowledge about the world by claiming that something observed is qualitatively ‘different in kind’ and has ‘not been there before’ but it is about generating insights from a position that is different (in kind) from the conventional one/s; it is about generating knowledge from an unconventional starting point. This does not mean that the discovery of the ‘unexpected’ might not discover things that could be labeled qualitatively ‘different in kind’ or ‘not been there before’, i.e. ‘new’. It simply means that the basic aims and claims of the discovery of the ‘unexpected’ are different ones in that it is about (the validity of) the unconventional starting point and the (distinct) world that is apparent from it, and not so much about the (claimed qualitatively ‘different in kind’) nature of the studied object as seen from a conventional perspective.

This is only a fine difference, but it is an important one. So, when Nobel laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi suggests that [d]iscovery consists of looking at the same thing as everyone else and thinking something different³, he captures the nature of conventional scholarly discoveries (potentially of the ‘new’). Setting out to discover the ‘unexpected’, in contrast, does not involve looking at ‘the same thing as everyone else’ but looking at a different (in kind) thing to begin with. The construction of the ‘different in kind’ world with its ‘different in kind’ things is an essential part of the process of the ‘discovery’ of the ‘unexpected’.

For those who set out to discover and study the ‘new’ the challenge is to prove that something is truly ‘new’. This is unavoidably, although, always in contrast to the ‘old’, and, as such, ends up in part reproducing the ‘old’. For those scholars who set out to discover the ‘unexpected’, on the contrary, the challenge is to engage with the conventions in a way that ‘allows’ them to establish and justify their perspective (and the world that is visible from it) as ‘acceptable’, i.e. that allows them to move their different and unconventional starting point and the world that is produced through it into ‘the true’.⁴ As such, the discovery of the ‘unexpected’ is inevitably always also about epistemological concerns.

³ Quoted in Yan Li, Jian Wang, Xianglong Li, Wu Zhao “Design Creativity in Product Innovation.” *The International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology* 33 (2007): 214.

⁴ Michael Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge, 1981) 59-61.

3 For example: unconventional approaches in International Relations

Over the past three decades an exciting, ‘unconventional’ scholarship developed in the political studies subfield International Relations (IR) that strives for the discovery of the ‘unexpected’. Motivated by the assumption that ‘[t]he most challenging political problems of our time [...] arise primarily from a need to re-imagine what we mean by politics’⁵, scholars in this camp set out to intervene in conventional understandings and established practices. In striving for the discovery of the ‘unexpected’, these scholars take a position that questions ‘the very status of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions upon which the mainstream depends’⁶. Knowledge from this unconventional position is produced both *from within* and *about* a world that is understood as being (something) fundamentally different from the ‘thing’ at which the (various) conventional positions look. This world is not only not perceived as ‘having fallen from heaven’⁷, or as being constructed by social actors, but as the product of discourses, of which the conventional scholarly position is one. It is a world that is about ‘textuality’ (discourse) rather than ‘objective reality’ (essence), e.g. a world in which (modern) dichotomies, such as national/international, inside/outside are not (perceived as being) natural but as discursive products.

Consequently, given the way in which the ‘something’ (i.e. the world) that these scholars observe looks, it is at the heart of these ‘unconventional’ approaches to focus on the symbolic systems through which the distinctions that guide life are made. This implies a turning away from the conventional way of conducting social and political scientific research.

Broadly speaking, the conventional way of conducting research is in one way or other linear, in that it determines and formulates a research problem, develops a structure that contains specific hypotheses, which are assessed, and leads to findings that are then interpreted in the light of the pre-set hypotheses. The idea(l) of a decontextualised method and a rigorous deductive approach, which proceeds

Ibid., 59-60 uses the example of Gregor Mendel’s theory of hereditary traits to clarify the difference between ‘truth’ and ‘in the true’ (‘discourse’). While Gregor Mendel’s theory of hereditary traits is today a well-accepted and well-established scientific insight, and, indeed, while one can wonder with Foucault (ibid., 60), “how the botanists or biologists of the nineteenth century managed not to see that what Mendel was saying was true”, it was dismissed outright by biologists for a long time. This was due to the fact that although Mendel “spoke the truth, [...] he was not ‘within the true’ of the biological discourse of his time” (ibid., 61). “It is always possible that one might speak the truth in the space of a wild exteriority, but one is ‘in the true’ only by obeying the rules of a discursive ‘policing’ which one has to reactivate in each of one’s discourses”, explains Foucault (ibid.).

⁵ R.B.J. Walker, “Both Globalization and Sovereignty: Re-Imagining the Political,” in *Principled World Politics*, ed. Wapner, Paul and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz (Lanham: Rowman&Littlefield, 2000), 23.

⁶ Milja Kurki and Colin Wight, “International Relations and Social Science”, in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23.

⁷ Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism Meets Globalization”, in *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies*, ed. David Held and Anthony McGrew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 126-147.

strictly on the basis of a theory that is then transformed into a consistent decontextualised method and is finally verified based on empirical findings, appears ‘suspect’ from this perspective⁸. Instead of verifying a pre-set hypothesis, ‘unconventional’ studies aim to carve out what is typical about a socio-political phenomenon, and discuss and evaluate it as such⁹. Hence, rather than setting out to detect causal explanations and ‘real causes’, they are concerned to de-naturalise alleged natural orders and perceptions and to make things ‘strange’, to use an expression of James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro¹⁰. Importantly, though, they investigate a ‘different in kind’ world to begin with, and, as such, they aim for the discovery of the ‘unexpected’, in the sense of something that is not visible from conventional starting-points but is generated from within a ‘different in kind’ world, which, however, is only visible from an unconventional perspective to begin with.

The case of unconventional IR scholarship shows that it is not easy to bring a different world into ‘the true’, in the Foucaultian sense referred to above. Although there has long been a trend away from the convention of IR positivist positions, its unconventional outlook is still met with profound skepticism by the conventions in the field. Michael H. Lessnoff’s decision to explicitly exclude, among others, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida from his introductory book *Political Philosophers of the Twentieth Century* on the basis that ‘none of them seems [...] to have said anything about politics that is both original and significant – in so far as their writings are comprehensible at all’¹¹, might be an extreme form of this ‘skepticism’ with which ‘unconventional’ approaches are viewed. In its basic sentiment, however, it is symptomatic for the positioning of this scholarship at the margins of the disciplinary and disciplined knowledge production and imagination of the world. Yet, if one understands that (scholarly) knowledge production is not simply a neutral exercise that (critically or not) captures the empirical world, i.e. a routinized, apolitical practice, the unconventional IR scholarship is not only intriguing but serves the important purpose of intervening into conventional knowledge (production). From that perspective it is inspiring.

However, despite its profound theoretical value, it has to be acknowledged that radical *empirical* studies are rarely produced by this scholarship, more precisely, empirical studies that significantly shake up the reality of political life and practices. It might be the almost singular focus on the struggle to bring their ‘different in

⁸ Matthias Jung, *Öffentlichkeit und Sprachwandel: Zur Geschichte des Diskurses über die Atomenergie* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994).

⁹ Wolfgang Wagner, „Die soziale Konstruktion aussenpolitischer Interessen: Deutsche und britische Debatten ueber eine Staerkung der Gemeinsamen Aussen- und Sicherheitspolitik der Europäischen Union,“ in *Konstruktivistische Analysen der international Politik*, ed. Ulbert, Cornelia and Christoph Weller (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 68.

¹⁰ James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, eds., *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington: Lexington, 1989).

¹¹ Lessnoff quoted in Alan Finlayson and Jeremy Valentine, eds., *Politics and Poststructuralism: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 2.

kind' world into 'the true' that accounts for the fact that there is a considerable amount of sophisticated 'unconventional' writings on a) how the 'different in kind' world looks (in contrast to the conventional one), b) what makes it different, and c) why it should be 'in the true' (i.e. what is wrong with (the idea of) the world as it is conventionally constructed and analysed). Yet, as it stands, there are relatively few studies that actually set out in a radical way to empirically discover the 'unexpected' (from) within the 'different in kind' world that this scholarship sees. This has led Thomas Risse¹² to wittily conclude: 'es wird empirisch nichts so heiss gegessen, wie es theoretisch gekocht wird'.¹³ In a similar vein, Jacob Torfing¹⁴ observes that many contributions have 'thrown the methodological baby out with the epistemological bath water'. Instead of discovering the 'unexpected' many existing unconventional analyses 'illustrate a preestablished ['unconventional'] theoretical argument and do not attempt to learn from the empirical analysis'¹⁵. More often than not they 'simply' demonstrate that, and in what ways, society is reproduced through power/knowledge.

Sharing the premises and (political) goals of the unconventional scholarship in IR, i.e. holding the conviction that the discovery and exploration of the 'unexpected' is an imperative task for contemporary political analysts, sharing the insight that what is needed in order to deal with contemporary problems is a re-imagination of what we mean by politics, and believing in the necessity of a contextualisation of social and political scientific research, this chapter advocates adding another dimension to the scholarly pre-imagination of the political world and Europe. It advocates looking beyond the discursive boundaries of political studies and taking up sociologist Ulrich Beck's theoretical suggestions around the concept of 'cosmopolitisation' in order to find ways to establish 'rails on which standard academic [...] inquiry runs into new regions'¹⁶. In short, it also suggests studying politics from *within* a different world but suggests a distinct way of (pre)imagining this world. It suggests imagining it as 'cosmopolitized'. This means it suggests taking a 'cosmopolitan observer perspective' in the pre-imagination of the contemporary political world and Europe.

¹² Thomas Risse, "Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und Theorien Internationaler Beziehungen – warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde," in *Die neuen Internationalen Beziehungen. Forschungsstand und Perspektiven in Deutschland*, ed. Hellmann, Günther, Klaus Dieter Wolf and Michael Zürn (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), 99-132.

¹³ This is an abbreviation of the German saying: 'es wird nichts so heiss gegessen, wie es gekocht wird.' One does not eat things as hot as they have been cooked, i.e. things might be cooked on high temperature but only eaten when they have cooled down. Risse rewrites this saying to: things are 'methodologically' not eaten as hot as they have been theoretically cooked, i.e. what might be discussed radically in theory loses its radicalness when it comes to its methodological application.

¹⁴ Jacob Torfing, (2005) "Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges," in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, ed. Howarth, David and Jacob Torfing (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁶ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 74.

4 The ‘cosmopolitan observer perspective’

The idea of a ‘cosmopolitan observer perspective’ has been developed by Ulrich Beck in his efforts to outline and establish an epistemological turn in the social sciences¹⁷. It goes back to his theory of reflexive modernization. At the heart of this theory – and the various discussions, expansions and amendments of it – is the argument that the state of societies cannot be captured through established conceptions of ‘society’ and through the established grammar that underlies the social sciences, notably the discipline of sociology, to which Beck implicitly and explicitly refers. As such, Beck’s main concern is an epistemological one.

His main thesis is that, rather than capturing societies via established conceptions of ‘society’, they need to be understood as being subject to a process that he calls ‘cosmopolitization’. With ‘cosmopolitization’ he does not refer to a conscious (political) process around the normative project of cosmopolitanism. Rather, he understands it as a process that is the product of the ‘unwanted [in the sense of unintended] and unobserved side effect of actions that are not intended as ‘cosmopolitan’ in the normative sense’¹⁸. What he refers to with the term ‘cosmopolitization’ is ‘an unforeseen social effect of actions directed to other ends performed by human beings operating within a network of global interdependence risks’¹⁹. As such, it is not a process that is voluntarily, let alone strategically, set into gear under the label of ‘cosmopolitization’. It is an effect that inevitably, unintentionally and ‘accidentally’ happens to be set into gear by the actions of social actors, which run under different labels and with different intentions. ‘Cosmopolitization’ then is a reflexive process which brings the ‘global other’ into the midst of other ‘global others’²⁰. It brings the world into one’s life.

Beck does not claim there is anything ‘new’ about the (unintended) multi-perspectival melange that he captures in the term ‘cosmopolitization’; the (forced) mixing of cultures is not anything new in world history’, he stresses²¹. However, what is notable for contemporary times, Beck suggests, is the ‘awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public via the mass media, in the news and in the global social movements of blacks, women and minorities, and in the current vogue for such venerable concepts as „diaspora“ in the cultural sciences’²². It is also manifest in what we could call ‘cosmopolitised institutions’, as seen in the case of ‘patent law and in other core areas of commercial law [where] a state-non-state public-private both/and is

¹⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹ Ibid., 48.

²⁰ Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 417.

²¹ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 21.

²² Ibid.

gaining ground²³. It is this dimension of the (unintended) multi-perspectival mélange, the process of ‘cosmopolitization’, that is interesting for (the sociologist) Beck because, as he suggests, it implies an acknowledgment that there is an internal cosmopolitization of national societies unfolding²⁴.

It is worth pausing here to ensure Beck’s point is clear: his conceptualization of the process of ‘cosmopolitization’ (from the position of a scientific observer, who looks through the lens of the theory of ‘cosmopolitization’), draws a picture of societies as ‘cosmopolitised’ societies, where the adjective ‘cosmopolitised’ refers to the (unintended) side effect of actions by social actors (which Beck calls ‘cosmopolitization’), and explicitly not to normative premises associated with ‘cosmopolitanism’. For Beck, this is a lived reality which has so far not been captured as a distinct process that internally cosmopolitizes national societies. Again, he does not claim that the (unintended) mixing of worlds, which he captures in his term ‘cosmopolitization’, constitutes a ‘new’ reality. Nor does he argue that people have not been / are not aware of the (unintended) mixing of cultures or of the fact that their actions have side effects as such – nor that these phenomena have not been captured under different labels. What he argues is ‘simply’ that this has not been conceptualized as a distinct social effect, namely as the process of (the internal) ‘cosmopolitization’ (of national societies), which he calls ‘cosmopolitization’.

Moving further now, as Beck’s theory suggests, acknowledging it as a distinct process, i.e. as the unintended process of ‘cosmopolitization’, is crucial because the conceptualization of the process of ‘cosmopolitization’, together with the acknowledgement of the internal ‘cosmopolitization’ of national societies as a lived reality, inevitably necessitates acknowledging that ‘the equation of the nation-state with national society’²⁵, that is, ‘one of the most powerful convictions concerning society and politics’²⁶, has become obsolete. This, in turn, constitutes the basis and the need for (and Beck’s efforts towards) an epistemological turn as the central claim and aim of his work.

Calling it the national outlook/perspective (*nationaler Blick*), when held by social actors, and methodological nationalism, when underlying social scientific endeavours, Beck argues that understandings of the world that build on the premise of ‘the equation of the nation-state with national society’ are no longer able to capture the reality of societies. In fact, given his stress that ‘cosmopolitization’ is not ‘new’, he would probably argue it *never* actually captured the reality of societies. Yet, it has been possible (so far) to avoid acknowledging this fact and to live through a national outlook/perspective; this is because this national outlook/perspective is cemented in modern national institutions and, not least, be-

²³ Ibid., 86.

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁵ Ibid., 48.

²⁶ Ibid., 24.

cause, as Beck, Bonss and Lau²⁷ explain, modern thinking is of a kind that makes it resilient against its own demystification since it is based on a system of dualisms and (conceptual) demarcations which automatically stabilizes and reproduces itself. What is needed to capture reality as it is (according to Beck) and what constitutes the core of his epistemological turn, is what he calls a cosmopolitan outlook/perspective (*kosmopolitischer Blick*) on the side of social actors and social sciences researchers, which is based on ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’, again, where the adjective ‘cosmopolitan’ refers to the process of cosmopolitization and not to the normative project of cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan outlook/perspective and social sciences based on methodological cosmopolitanism acknowledge that ‘[t]he national outlook, together with its associated grammar, is becoming false. It fails to grasp that political, economic and cultural actions and their (intended and unintended) consequences know no borders, indeed, it is completely blind to the fact that, even when nationalism is reignited by the collision with globality, this can only be conceptualized from the cosmopolitan perspective’²⁸, e.g. by understanding the revival of exclusive nationalism as a fight against the ‘cosmopolitization’ of life worlds²⁹.

In this sense, the process of ‘cosmopolitization’ is not to be understood as the opposite of nationalization, and ‘the cosmopolitan’ is not to be understood as the opposite of ‘the national’. As Beck³⁰ stresses, ‘the cosmopolitan’ is an integral part of the redefinition of ‘the national’. ‘The national outlook excludes the cosmopolitan outlook. The cosmopolitan outlook, by contrast, conceives the national outlook as national and reveals its constitutive failures. It follows that the cosmopolitan outlook uncovers the same national reality differently, and different, additional, realities, in new ways. The cosmopolitan outlook, therefore, encompasses and reinterprets the reality of the national outlook, whereas the national outlook is blind to and obscures ‘the realities of the cosmopolitan age’³¹. Again, to avoid misunderstandings, Beck’s diagnosis does not suggest that there is a world without (national) borders or that there *should* be a world without (national) borders. Nor does it suggest that the nation-state does not matter anymore or will not matter in the future. Rather, the epistemological turn that he outlines invites analysts to develop and take a position, in which they do not start based on the ‘pre-theoretical

²⁷ Ulrich Beck, Wolfgang Bonss and Christoph Lau „Entgrenzung erzwingt Entscheidung: Was ist neu an der Theorie reflexiver Modernisierung“ in *Entgrenzung und Entscheidung*, ed. Ulrich Beck and Christoph Lau (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), 47.

²⁸ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰ Ulrich Beck, *Der kosmopolitische Blick, oder, Krieg ist Frieden* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 15.

³¹ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 31.

commitment'³² that society means national society and in which they are 'naturally' guided by its related grammar.

On the one side, Beck sees the need for this epistemological turn grounded in the fact that, as he stresses, the unintended and accidental multi-perspectival mélange, that he calls 'cosmopolitization', and the internal 'cosmopolitization' of national societies are a *lived reality*; he invents the German term *Wirklichkeitskosmopolitismus* to make this point clear³³ and introduces the concept of 'cosmopolitan spaces of action'³⁴.

In sketching the concept of 'cosmopolitan spaces of action' Beck distinguishes between 'doctrines' and 'spaces of action', which constitute the parameters of action. While contemporary doctrines could be exclusive, particular, and narrow, e.g. nationalist and anti-European, contemporary action, if it wants to be rational and successful, is inevitably shaped by the parameters of contemporary 'spaces of action', which are cosmopolitan in the sense that contemporary rational successful action cannot *not* build a bridge to the world of others (and beyond borders). An example that Beck³⁵ brings up are anti-European parties such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which follows an exclusive and anti-Europe doctrine, but, at the same time, sits in the European parliament, i.e. its unsuccessful action entails taking advantage of the resources that the 'cosmopolitan spaces of action' offer, namely (the entering of) the European Parliament as an existential aspect of the party's existence. To be clear this does not mean that successful action needs to be literally transborder but it means that it inevitably takes place within a cosmopolitan frame of reference. The concept of 'cosmopolitan spaces of action' then captures that the cosmopolitized reality constitutes everybody's (strategic) lived reality. It is not about cosmopolitan idealism, about cosmopolitan doctrines but about the realism of contemporary rational action. Consequently, everyone who aims to capture lived reality cannot but strive for an epistemological turn with a grammar that acknowledges this reality.

On the other side, Beck sees the need for an epistemological turn grounded in the reality of what he calls 'global risk'. With 'global risk', he refers to a particular kind of uncertainty, namely the potential consequences of 'industrial, that is, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility'³⁶. 'Industrial, techno-

³² Henrietta L. Moore, (2004) "Global Anxieties: Concept-metaphors and Pre-theoretical Commitments in Anthropology," *Anthropological Theory* 4(1) (2004):75.

³³ Beck, *Der kosmopolitische Blick*, 31.

³⁴ Ulrich Beck, "Metamorphosis, 'cosmopolitan spaces of action' and digital data as cosmopolitan data," Paper presented at 'In Search of Cosmopolitan Data and Research Methods-workshop, 8-9 December 2014 (Maison Suger, Paris, France).

³⁵ Ulrich Beck, "How the European Project Can Be Saved: The Cosmopolitan Outlook," Public lecture held on 13 November 2014 (Belgrade: Heinrich Boell Stiftung).

³⁶ Ulrich Beck, "From Industrial Society to Risk Society: Questions of Survival, Social Structure and Ecological Enlightenment," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 9 (1992): 98.

economic decisions and considerations of utility' are, as he explains, those decisions and considerations that have 'their 'peaceful origin' in the centres of rationality and prosperity with the blessings of the guarantors of law and order' (ibid.)³⁷.

As outlined in more detail elsewhere³⁸, there are two distinct aspects to the potential consequences of 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks'. In order to further fill in the picture of Beck's theory it is worth highlighting these here. First, they constitute a specific kind of uncertainty that cannot be simply 'tamed' through a 'traditional' modern imagination, i.e. through the logic of 'risk' as we know it. This is because they cannot be readily and 'naturally' understood as something 'unknown', in the sense of 'not yet known'. Rather, 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks', need to be understood as producing non-knowledge³⁹. Further, potential consequences of 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks', constitute a 'different in kind' uncertainty that can no longer be simply 'tamed' through a 'traditional' modern imagination, i.e. through the logic of 'risk' as we know it, because we know that there are potential consequences which produce instances that stand and remain beyond knowledge. So, in addition to imagining them as non-knowledge (*Nichtwissen*), potential consequences of 'techno-economic decisions and considerations', i.e. 'global risks', also need to be imagined as (which is not to say that they are) instances that might remain beyond knowledge. Last but not least, the potential consequences of 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks' are 'different in kind' because they need to be imagined as 'socially delimited in space and time'⁴⁰. Again, this does not suggest that they are necessarily 'socially delimited in space and time' but that they need to be imagined *as if* they were, because they could be. Overall, as Beck suggests, potential consequences of 'techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks', cannot be taken in a modern sense, namely as if they could be 'tamed' by 'more knowledge but [are] instead a result of more knowledge'⁴¹. The second aspect that makes the potential consequences of 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks', distinct is that they need to be seen as the 'fruits' of the process of modernization. The potential consequences of 'industrial, techno-economic decisions and considerations of utility', i.e. 'global risks', are not the dark side effects but the *results* of the *success* of modernization.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Sabine Selchow, "Security Policy and (Global) Risk(s)", in *Handbook of Global Security Policy*, eds. Mary Kaldor and Iavor Rangelov (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 68-84.

³⁹ *Nichtwissen*; see especially Beck, *World at Risk*; also in depth Peter Wehling, *Im Schatten des Wissens? Perspektiven der Soziologie des Nichtwissens* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006).

⁴⁰ Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, "The Cosmopolitan Turn in Social Theory and Research," *The British Journal of Sociology* 61:3 (2010): 418.

⁴¹ Beck, *World at Risk*, 5.

This turns the whole modern narrative upside down, which, in turn, necessitates an adjustment of the grammar that guides us in analyzing the (no-longer-so-modern) social world. At the same time it also demands that social actors take a ‘cosmopolitan perspective’ because, through a ‘national perspective’, they reproduce an artificial layer which is not only incongruent with the (‘cosmopolitised’) reality of societies, but which also reproduces institutions that are increasingly unsuitable to deal with (‘cosmopolitised’) challenges and, furthermore, that actually *produce* challenges; i.e. are a core part of the ‘problem’.

The theories of ‘reflexive modernisation’ and, in particular, ‘cosmopolitisation’, are fascinating because, as Beck suggests, the observer perspective that they entail ‘uncovers the same [...] reality differently, and different, additional, realities in new ways’⁴². As such, it is not simply about a different perspective on the same world, but a different perspective (coming out of and) on a different world, namely (one that is understood to be) a ‘reflexive modern’ and ‘cosmopolitised’ one. In the imagination of the ‘reflexive modern’ and ‘cosmopolitized’ world key premises that underlie the conventional imagination of the world, namely the equation of society with *national* society and the distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, are already dismantled. In fact, they are actually not only deconstructed and dismantled but replaced by (an understanding for that contemporary socio-political reality is shaped by) a different logic: the logic of ‘cosmopolitisation’.

5 ‘A new research agenda’: Too cold for scholars in political studies

While Beck’s theories make a good case for the need of a shift to ‘cosmopolitan’ social scientific research, at the moment, the scholarship around ‘reflexive modernisation’ and ‘cosmopolitisation’ looks similar to the one around the unconventional IR theories, mentioned above. There is much theory but almost no (radical) empiricism. There are a good number of sophisticated theoretical pieces on ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’, why it matters, why one should take it seriously, i.e. why it should be ‘in the true’, including a monograph that lays out *Cosmopolitan Europe*⁴³. Yet, there has not been much systematic empirical exploration that starts on this theoretical ground; there are no concrete suggestions for a methodology that comes out of and is true to the distinct imagination of the world that is unfolded in these theories. One could come back to Risse, mentioned above, and state that here, too, ‘empirisch (noch) nichts so heiss gegessen, wie es theoretisch gekocht wird’.

One of the very few scholarly attempts that sets out to fill this empirical gap is a recent *Global Networks*-article, entitled ‘Cosmopolitan communities of climate risk: conceptual and empirical suggestions for a new research agenda’ by Ulrich

⁴² Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 31.

⁴³ Beck and Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*.

Beck, Anders Blok, David Tyfield and Joy Zhang⁴⁴. Grounded in the above sketched theories of ‘reflexive modernisation’, ‘global risk’ and ‘cosmopolitisation’, the authors suggest that the process of ‘cosmopolitisation’ is ‘the social force of emerging cosmopolitan realities’⁴⁵, hence, needs to be taken as the empirical focus of social scientific research. They then take this presumption and these theories as the basis for the development of a hypothesis: they presume that ‘one of the [...] realities [that cosmopolitization produces] is the possible emergence, locally and globally, of ‘cosmopolitan communities of climate risk’ in response to a ‘world at risk’ (ibid.)⁴⁶. The hypothesis is then translated into a ‘key research question for contemporary social science [...]: how and where are new cosmopolitan communities of climate risk being imagined and realized?’ In order to provide the ground for answering this question empirically, Beck et al⁴⁷ then define ‘cosmopolitan communities of climate risk’ as

- a. ‘new transnational constellations of social actors’ that
- b. have arisen ‘from common experiences of mediated climate threats, organized around pragmatic reasoning of causal relations and responsibilities’, and
- c. hold ‘the potential of ‘enabling collective action, cosmopolitical decision-making and international norm generation’.

Finally, they introduce three research projects that they understand to be ‘explorations’ of ‘the prospect of new cosmopolitan risk communities across three different social settings – green urbanism; lowcarbon innovation; and grassroots environmentalism’.

This recent *Global Networks*-article is worth mentioning here not only because it is a rare attempt to bring methodological cosmopolitanism to empirical life, but because it exemplifies an approach to (the way in which) methodological cosmopolitanism (could play out) that somewhat tames the potential for an epistemological turn instead of pushing for it. This is because of the nature of the approach that the authors introduce in their ‘new research agenda’. They suggest a traditional, linear research practice that sets out to discover the ‘new’, namely ‘cosmopolitan communities of climate risk’, which they pre-define as ‘new’ and ‘transnational’. With that, and paraphrasing Albert Szent-Györgyi again, they look ‘at the same thing as everyone else’ – namely city networks, lowcarbon innovation and grassroots environmentalism – and ‘think something different’, namely, that these are ‘cosmopolitan communities of climate risk’. The suggested research agenda is designed then to study the ‘new’, namely the ‘cosmopolitan communities of climate

⁴⁴ Ulrich Beck et al., “Cosmopolitan communities of climate risk: conceptual and empirical suggestions for a new research agenda,” *Global Networks* 13:1 (2013): 1-21.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

risk' in these three phenomena, instead of striving for the discovery of the 'unexpected' within a different, i.e. 'cosmopolitised' world.

The development of a 'cosmopolitan' empirical research agenda that establishes the study of a specific, relatively narrow 'new' social phenomenon – namely 'cosmopolitan communities of climate risk' – as it is presented in Beck et al might be fruitful in many respects. However, what it does not provide is 'rails on which standard academic [...] inquiry runs into new regions'⁴⁸, at least not into *radically* 'new regions' within the study of politics, i.e. ones that unfold beyond the borders of sociology. This is not only because, as the authors acknowledge themselves⁴⁹, it only focuses on one distinct (very sociological) aspect of the 'cosmopolitised' reality but because it takes a somewhat conventional and non-radical move in that it sets out to find a 'new', pre-defined phenomenon in the 'old' world, instead of discovering the 'unexpected' *from within a different* world. Empirical endeavors that follow this suggested research agenda inevitably run the danger of primarily testing and reproducing the underlying theory.

6 Conclusion: Eating it (as) hot (as possible)

This chapter started with the conviction that the complex contemporary political world and Europe require scholarly analyses that aim to discover and explore the 'unexpected' rather than study the 'new'. I argued that that studying and searching for the 'new' runs the risk of symbolically reproducing the 'old'. The chapter suggested that this requires a different starting point, a different scholarly imagination of the political world and Europe – different from the conventional one, which has brought out contemporary political reality and its institutions. In order to discover the 'unexpected' in the exploration of the political world and Europe in a way that generates empirical insights that could intervene into the reality of contemporary political practice, the chapter suggested bringing together the premises of the unconventional IR scholarship with a pre-imagination of the world and Europe grounded in Ulrich Beck's theories of 'cosmopolitization', 'global risk' and 'reflexive modernisation'. In other words, I suggested a 'new research agenda', to use Beck et al's⁵⁰ words, that takes the contextualised and experimental methodological 'practice' promoted by 'unconventional' IR scholars *into* the cosmopolitised political world and Europe in order to explore them *from within* and discover the 'unexpected'. Bringing together Beck's theories with the unconventional IR scholarship promises to be fruitful because imagining the political world and Europe through a 'cosmopolitan lens' not only implies the dismantling of key premises that shape the conventional imagination of the world, such as the equation between society and

⁴⁸ Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 74.

⁴⁹ Beck et al., "Cosmopolitan communities of climate risk", 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

national society and the distinction between inside and outside, but replaces them with (the view on) a different logic: the logic of cosmopolitisation.

True to the premise of a contextualised and creative research 'practice' there is no universal research design for the exploration of the 'unexpected' within the cosmopolitised world and Europe. One of many empirical explorations would be to rewrite the notion of politics and power grounded in an analysis of how cosmopolitised political subjects, i.e. subjects understood as products of cosmopolitising discourses, use the resources that the 'cosmopolitan spaces of action' offer.