# Citizens of one World?
# Decolonizing Cosmopolitanisms at the Border

by Lena Merkle

## Global Injustice and Inequality Need to be Adressed on a Global Scale

The structural problems we are dealing with when adressing global injustice cannot be solved on a national level. Instead we need solutions that transcent the international order to ensure that future projects are not hindered by national and geopolitical interests. This is especially relevant as, to end global inequality, those in power require to give up some of it.

## National Borders are Considered to be Forms of Structural Violence

Structural violence describes structures that keep certain groups of people from fulfilling their needs. Borders that let people pass or not, depending on e.g. their nationality can therefore be considered structures of violence as soon as this leads to people not being able to fulfill their needs. We can assume that this is at least the case with many refugees.

## There is a Postcolonial Responsibility to find Solutions to Global Inequalities

Many of the conflicts and volatile situations in postconflict countries can be linked directly to colonialism, be it through structures of violence, colonial borders or still existing economic dependencies. Those profiting from these global hegemonic practices therefore find themselves responsible to assist those who suffer from it. In doing so, it is important to not take away agency from postcolonial actors.

**WHAT WOULD BE AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO ADRESSING THESE ISSUES?**

**COULD COSMOPOLITANISM BE A SOLUTION?**

**Cosmopolitanism**: A mindset that categorises others primarily as fellow humans and considers diversity to be a positive state. It derives a code of conduct based on respect, openness and appreciation of the other from it. Cosmopolitanism is a meta-cultural paradigm that leads to action in everyday encounters and can be translated into a political or social agenda.

### Pro
- Has equivalents in many different times and places
- Can be empowering and locally rooted
- Leaves room for adaptation and appropriation

### Con
- Commonly very Eurocentric use
- Served as a legitimization of colonialism
- Often considered elitist and abstract

Cosmopolitanism can be a promising approach to finding less violent ways of structuring global human interaction in a more equal and peaceful way. It is particularly applicable as is has a promising theoretical base and a wide empirical relevance that is easily adaptable to local and postcolonial contexts and provides agency through the process. A process of decolonization is, however, neccessary due to its violent abuse in the past and to ensure that it doesn't reproduce hegemonic violence in global structures and governance.

**HOW TO DO THAT?**

## EMPIRICAL APPROACH

Approach: Ethnographic Field Research with participatory aspects, potentially parachute or online ethnography

- Fieldwork allows for a diversity of perspectives and voices outside of the academic realm
- To include empirical perspectives ensures that the debate is linked to everyday and current life experience
- The fieldwork is supposed to take place at a seemingly open border that can be easily passed by those with European passports while e.g. local refugee camps pay testimony to the fact that the same border is closed off to people with certain nationalities
- The aim is to get a holistic perspective on the border from different groups of people with special focus on (de)legitimization of and subversive practice at the border

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

Approach: Desk Research that includes both academic and non-academic writings from all continents, different times and pays attention to a diversity of backgrounds.

- A theoretical approach makes sure that philosophical and spiritual understandings of cosmopolitanism from all over the world are included
- Cosmopolitan theories can be an alternative to approaches of global governance and global equality as they don't pose the same risk of enforcing hegemony. Instead all humans have the same agency in changing their lives' circumstances
- Anarcho-syndicalist approaches can also give valuable insights as they show alternative approaches to the organisation of society without violence

## SYNTHESIS

To live up to the postcolonial aspiration of treating all perspectives as equal the empirical and the theoretical level need to be put into dialogue.

The different perspectives of cosmopolitan theory and practice need to be acknowledged. This also includes using cosmopolitanisms in ist plural form.

**Aim: A new framework of cosmopolitanisms shall be developed that adresses local grievances and contributes to theoretical debates equally.**

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