



Decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship for a post-COVID-19 world: Towards a reimagined convivial planetary re-existence

Nathan Moyo

E-Mail: nathanmo0707@gmail.com

University of the Free State, South Africa.

Bekithemba Dube

E-Mail: Dubeb@ufs.ac.za

University of the Free State, South Africa.

Abstract

This paper rethinks a decolonial cosmopolitanism citizenship as a potentially useful heuristic to promote a planetary conviviality that could provide succour to humanity in a post COVID-19 world. The outbreak of the COVID- 19 pandemic in 2019 was followed by raced and xenophobic discourses as nations re-bordered in efforts to stem the pandemic. Such action resulted in trauma and acrimony on a planetary scale as the ideal of cosmopolitanism citizenship foundered on the altar of narrow selfish interest. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to foreground a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship as part of a global imaginary for a post-COVID- 19 world. The argument developed is that decoloniality when interpellated with Ubuntu principles guarantees a cosmopolitan citizenship for a convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world.

Key words: COVID-19; Conviviality, Cosmopolitan Citizenship; Decoloniality; Global South; *Ubuntu*

Introduction and Background

In our age of globalizations and exclusions, we are in need of a different form of cosmopolitanism, one that emerges from below, from the below of those who are the majority of the planet. This form of cosmopolitanism is one that speaks from the standpoint of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called ‘subaltern cosmopolitanism,’ but which combined with Mignolo’s call for a ‘decolonized’ and ‘de-colonial cosmopolitanism,’ has become reflexive of its own epistemic standpoint... This form of cosmopolitanism is what I call dialogical cosmopolitanism, and it is the cosmopolitanism of the other (Mendieta, 2009, p. 243).

This paper rethinks a decolonial cosmopolitanism citizenship (Mendieta, 2009; Mignolo, 2011, 2018; Omanga, 2020), as a potentially useful heuristic to promote a “planetary conviviality” (Strand, 2009, p. 103; Mendieta, 2009, p. 243) that could provide succour to humanity in a post COVID-19 world. The COVID-19 pandemic, which is caused by the novel coronavirus, has exposed the futility of a neoliberal cosmopolitan citizenship for people of the Global South, who find themselves at the receiving end of what Claravall and Evans-Amalu (2020, p. 44) call a “tsunami of hate and xenophobia”. An urgent need has arisen, therefore, for a post-pandemic cosmopolitanism, in order to enhance convivial re-existence at the planetary level. As the epigraph above shows, even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was already “need of a different form of cosmopolitanism, one that emerges from below, from the below

of those who are the majority of the planet” (Mendieta, 2009, p. 243). The COVID-19 pandemic, whose discourses and narratives have become interpellated with race and exclusion, emphasise the urgency of the need for a radical de-colonial form of cosmopolitanism. In this paper, we choose to frame such a de-colonial cosmopolitanism as a ‘critical cosmopolitanism for pandemic times’, as it is a response to a world battling to recover from the acrimony and trauma caused by the pandemic. An example of this acrimony is that of the former president of the United States, Donald Trump, who released a racially and ethnically charged wave of attack through the use of such epithets as *Chinese virus*, *Wuhan Disease*, or *Kung Flu* for COVID-19 (Noel, 2020; Rogers et al., 2020). In the same vein, Africans living in China were targeted by Chinese nationals, and hounded out of their dwellings and accused of spreading the disease (Vincent, 2020; Vaughn, et al, 2020; Omanga, 2020). It is ominous that the development of the vaccine in the Global North has been accompanied by the spectre of “vaccine nationalism” (Lagman, 2021, p. 1), and possible hoarding of the vaccine by rich nations – to the disadvantage of the people of the Global South. These incidents are glaring indicators of the flawed nature of neoliberal cosmopolitanism citizenship, which has characterised the world since the epoch of the Enlightenment and its sequel, modernity. At the ideological level, it is apparent that the neoliberal cosmopolitanism that prevails in the new millennium is founded on the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2017), which hierarchises people on the basis of race and geography and, in the process, ascribes differential ontological densities to human life (Omanga, 2020). As the pandemic swept across nations, entry into nation-states was barred to all but bona fide citizens of the nation-state. The logic of modernity and its sequel, coloniality, which gave rise to nation-states, was invoked rather cynically, as if to retort that, “non-national nationals are lesser humans” (Mignolo, 2017, p. 43) and, therefore, not worthy of saving from pandemics. What Brown (2010) has termed “walled states”, has, thus, become a historical reality. Such ‘walled states’ are anathema to what this paper forefronts as a de-colonial notion of cosmopolitanism citizenship for convivial re-existence. For, intentionally or not, ‘walled states’ may give rise to such anti-cosmopolitan practices as “xenophobia, intolerance, injustice, chauvinism and militarism” (Ide, 2018, p. 134). Today’s historical moment, described as the “time of COVID-19” (Shachar, 2020, p. x), makes it imperative that we rethink ‘another cosmopolitanism’ on the basis of decoloniality, to usher in a convivial planetary re-existence in a post-pandemic world order.

This paper foregrounds a reimagined de-colonial cosmopolitan citizenship for a post-COVID-19 world, as a way “of finding humane ways of coexisting and sharing space on this earth” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 367). Doing so resonates with the principles of *Ubuntu* which emphasise the “oneness of humanity, [as] a collectivity, community and set of cultural practices and spiritual values that seek respect and dignity for all humanity” (Goduka, 2000, p. 72). *Ubuntu* is a southern African Nguni word that refers to human interdependence and humanness and, as such, constitutes a philosophical approach to human interaction. At its core, *Ubuntu* views the world as a complex and interdependent ecosystem of humans, nature, and the planet, in which all elements are supposed to coexist in harmony (Waghid, 2014.) Such harmonious co-existence, we aver, has been undermined rather severely by the intrusion of colonialism and its capitalist ethos. A subaltern cosmopolitanism in the context of Africa, as an extension of the Global South, cannot ignore the principles of *Ubuntu*, as *Ubuntu* is the worldview of the people. In this paper, *Ubuntu* is deployed as an underlying trope through which a broader decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship is framed for a post-pandemic convivial re-existence.

In many ways, COVID-19 has revealed the inability and, indeed, unwillingness of nation-states to come together to work to find a global solution to the pandemic, and has exposed a glaring lack of cosmopolitan solidarity. Therefore, the challenge that we confront at this historical juncture, as the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second, and hopefully final wave, is to reimagine and transition, from being pandemic citizens trapped within our national borders, to post-pandemic citizens, who re-exist in deterritorialised, convivial spaces that are cognisant of a ‘new humanity’ that is in favour of social justice for all. It is against this backdrop that the two research questions that the paper poses were developed:

1. What cosmopolitan citizenship can we envisage for planetary conviviality against the backdrop of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 367) calls “a post-COVID-19 de-colonial world order?”
2. How can a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship promote a planetary conviviality that upholds an all-encompassing idea of humanity, to which we can all belong?

To address these two questions, it is imperative that key terms, such as cosmopolitan citizenship, conviviality and re-existence, are defined and clarified in the context of the paper. These key terms are historically embedded and convoluted and, thus, their meanings are contested, because they change over time. Indeed, we are cognisant that there are multiple perspectives to terms such as cosmopolitanism, citizenship and conviviality. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we foreground cosmopolitanism as being principally a “socially grounded concept denoting an individual or collective stance towards world openness” (Leinius, 2014, p. 39). We are attracted to this explanation of cosmopolitanism as moral politics, because its concern with world openness, as opposed to the spectre of walled states and confined beings, is cognisant of planetary entanglements and interconnections that cannot be wished away. We aver that the de-colonial cosmopolitanism forefronted herein ought to be predicated on “de-colonial imaginaries” that recognise the “plurality and ecologies of re-existence free from asymmetrical power relations as well as race and gender as organizing principles of the modern paradigm of difference” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021a, n.p.). While cosmopolitanism and cross-national border thinking is not new in the history of humanity, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the salience of these factors in the context of our global interconnectedness. Thus, this paper’s novel contribution is to map out an eclectic decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship theory superimposed on *Ubuntu*, as a heuristic for planetary re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world.

Our concern with cosmopolitanism relates to the way people interact at the global level, which is of particular interest to us in the Global South, because of persistent marginalisation by the dominant narratives of a neoliberal Eurocentric cosmopolitanism. As Delanty (2006, p. 39) explains,

the inescapability of cosmopolitanism can be partly explained by the very fact of globalization, which in penetrating to all parts of the world and into most spheres of activity in markets, in media, in education, has created a situation in which societies have become increasingly more and more embroiled in each other and in global processes.

The paper is organised as follows: The preceding section outlined the background and research questions that inform this study; the section that follows delves into the theoretical framework that underpins this study. Then, an attempt is made to unpack cosmopolitanism in relation to the envisaged citizen re-existence in a post-pandemic world, which is followed by a brief section on the implicatedness of the COVID-19 pandemic and the supposed demise of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. Then, a detailed section on a reimagined de-colonial cosmopolitanism, based on the epistemologies of the South, is presented. Finally, an argument is made for a way a new humanity for convivial re-existence, predicated on a de-colonial cosmopolitanism, could emerge to guarantee our common humanity. Our argument is that it is within the inter-spaces of a de-colonial cosmopolitan citizenship imaginary that *Ubuntu* (Waghid, 2014; Goduka, 2000) principles can be reframed and harnessed for a peoplehood or *Ubuntu* that values plurality and mutuality in a planetary re-existence. For, in the post-COVID-19 era, we will seek to frame cosmopolitanism anew, as primarily concerned with “new forms of understanding, undergoing, and moving in the world” (Hansen, 2008, p. 298), in ways that celebrate the humanity of all, in contradistinction to the raced and hierarchised discourses central to Euromodernity, and its fear of the body of the immigrant from the Global South. The theoretical framework, which outlines decoloniality’s call for a re-existence as being about beginning anew in a post-pandemic world, follows.

Theoretical framework: decoloniality for re-existence

The theoretical framing that is employed in this paper is premised on decoloniality, as a heuristic for critiquing Euromodernity as a totalising narrative that has produced ideologies such as liberalism, neoliberalism, globalisation and cosmopolitanism. The paradigmatic assumptions at the centre of Euromodernity include the presumed universality of Western science as the only valid way of knowing and interpreting the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, Mignolo, 2017). Western knowledge tends to shun other ways of knowing, or appropriates such knowledges without giving due credit, (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018). De-coloniality, as an offshoot of the Frankfurt School's critical theory, is useful for unmasking neoliberal cosmopolitanism as a Eurocentric construct that is deeply implicated in the coloniality of power and resultant notions of conviviality that favour the Global North. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) avers, coloniality, as the constitutive underside of Euromodernity, produced its antithesis, decoloniality, as a necessary liberation heuristic that could free the world from a hegemonic Euromodernity. A distinguishing characteristic of decoloniality is that it emerges in the colonies and former colonies of what is now commonly referred to as the Global South and is, thus, sensitive to both the geography and biology of knowledge and its origins (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Inherent in decoloniality is what Mignolo (2007) calls the grammar of de-coloniality, which functions as ideology-critique. Such an ideology-critique, according to Kessi et al.,

entails a political and normative ethic and practice of resistance and intentional undoing – unlearning and dismantling unjust practices, assumptions, and institutions – as well as persistent positive action to create and build alternative spaces and ways of knowing (2020, p. 271).

In embracing ideology-critique as central to decoloniality, it becomes possible for people in the Global South to define their own agendas for a new collective future (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018), free from the coloniality of power. Such critique leads to what Delanty (2012, p. 40) avers is a key aspect of cosmopolitanism, namely that it engenders the “transformative vision of an alternative society”.

In this paper, using a decolonial lens allows us to critique the current neoliberal cosmopolitan citizenship and to envisage a possible post-COVID-19 planetary citizenship for re-existence. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted a crisis of modernity; a crisis that is multifaceted, with ecological, existential, and epistemic dimensions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 368). As cogently argued by Kumar and Gaztambide-Fernández (2020, p. 195), the COVID-19 pandemic is a “stark manifestation of imperialism in action”, and how its manifestations are played out viz-a-viz cosmopolitanism is an expression of the tentacles of the coloniality of power. The politics of pandemics and the politics of life as framed by the coloniality of power are best interrogated and unmasked through decoloniality, which asserts that something different, something else, is possible (Dei & Jaimungal, 2018) in relation to our lived experiences in a painfully hegemonic world. As people in the Global South, informed by decoloniality, resist Westernisation, they, in the words of Mignolo (2017, p. 40), “begin to re-exist”. Re-existence is explained as figuring out how to live lives free of the neoliberalism of commodification and corporatisation. Hence, Mignolo's descriptor “delinking” (2017, p. 40) signifies an intended rupture with the dominant grammar of decoloniality, in order to exist anew in convivial practices that draw on the humane principles of *Ubuntu*. In Mignolo's view, “current control of the planet by the bourgeoisie has generated all kinds of conflict, discontent, humiliation, anger and dehumanisation” (2017, p. 44) with the result that tension and acrimony characterise planetary existence. It is against this backdrop that a reimagined cosmopolitanism that emerges from the subaltern (Santos & Rodriguez-Garavito, 2005, p. 14) enjoins us all to be responsible each for the other. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us that, at its core, such a cosmopolitanism reminds us that, “all life is interrelated, and we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of identity. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (Oberlin College Archives, 1961).

In rethinking a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship for a post-pandemic world, we draw on Mignolo's (2017, p. 41) advice that, “there cannot be one and only one decolonial master plan – as decoloniality

operates on pluri-versality". The pluri-verse inherent in decoloniality, thus, opens spaces for us to intercalate into the decoloniality framework the underlying philosophy of *Ubuntu*. While decolonization encapsulates potentialities and possibilities of creating another world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021b), it is when it is interpellated with *Ubuntu* philosophy that decoloniality becomes a sound basis for reimagining a cosmopolitanism citizenship that promotes planetary conviviality. *Ubuntu*, as Ramose (2003) avers, is about enhancing the human-ness that is achievable through affirming one's humanity and by recognising the humanity of others. Such a planetary conviviality is echoed in Spivak's assertion, that, "To be human is to be intended toward the other" (2003, p. 73). *Ubuntu* sums it up brilliantly in the adage, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* [A person is what he is because of other people] (Goduka, 2000).

That *Ubuntu* promotes the philosophy and practice of valuing humaneness toward others, resonates with the Spanish term *convivencia*, which was originally coined to describe "living together" in medieval Spain (Hemer et al. (2020, p. 1). In Gilroy's view, conviviality denotes the acceptance and affirmation of diversity, without restaging communitarian conceptions of ethnic and racial difference (2004, p. xi). Thus, in seeking to enhance a sense of togetherness, conviviality approximates a form of critical cosmopolitanism that is about the genial coexistence of all humanity, which takes the form of planetary conviviality. Hence, what is critical is the connection between conviviality and cosmopolitanism, and the way this intersection of views could be the basis for human re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. Therefore, cosmopolitanism and conviviality are intrinsically related, since both are opposed to colonialism and Eurocentrism and they promote human inequality as a natural fact. Therefore, taken together, conviviality and cosmopolitanism, informed by decoloniality, are likely to result in a pluriverse planet – a world in which many worlds fit and strive (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021b, p. 52). The following section will present the methodological approach that was used in this study.

Methodological approach

The historical method (Cohen et al, 2007; Thayer-Bacon & Moyer, 2014) which involves critical inquiry and interpretation, was employed in this study, because of its ability to employ the past to predict the future, and to use the present to explain the past. As such, the historical method has a dual and unique quality, which makes it particularly useful for all sorts of scholarly study and research (Cohen et al, 2007). As used for this study, the historical method provided insight into the varied historical circumstances that shaped the many forms of cosmopolitanism that have developed over time, since the days of the Enlightenment through to modernity and its aftermath, globalisation. Thus, for example, an historical understanding of the evolution of ideas from the era of the Enlightenment through to modernity makes it possible to frame cosmopolitanism along a continuum, making its key tenets understood through reference to historical context. Attention to context and contingency through the historical method helps bring to the fore the positionality of the main actors, even though this may not be readily acknowledged or factored in in understanding the arguments that may be advanced in particular contexts. In this regard, critical scholarship, of which the locus of enunciation is the Global South (Santos & Rodriguez-Garavito, 2005; Mignolo, 2011, 2018, which rejects the views of the Global North as inherently trapped within the colonial matrix of knowledge and, therefore, oblivious to the ways the Global North is privileged. The data generated through this methodological approach is "inferential in nature because it occurs within [an] interpretive framework" (Duranti & Michetti, 2016, pp. 88, 90). It follows, then, that inductive historical analysis informs the substantive argument that this article makes. Through an iterative historical analysis, it becomes apparent that the prevailing cosmopolitanism, predicated on modernity and its ideological adjunct, neoliberalism, has failed humanity in fundamental ways – the COVID-19 pandemic makes its limitations apparent. The following section will unpack the trajectories of cosmopolitanism in historical context.

Cosmopolitanism: historical context and conceptual clarifications

This section has two parts. The first part will present cosmopolitanism as a historically embedded concept, while the second will provide conceptual clarifications of contemporary cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism has a long history that dates back to Diogenes' famous statement in 4 BCE, "I am citizen of the world" (Schumann, 2018). Since Diogenes was a Cynic, the term that he popularised developed with a fair amount of scepticism and controversy. For example, cosmopolitanism was, in one sense, about belonging to the world in a rather pejorative way –being rootless and, therefore, not likely to be taken seriously. In another sense, cosmopolitanism was seen as being the preserve of elites who could afford international travel, very often for leisure (Osler, 2011), particularly when immigration became common in Europe and cosmopolitanism related to the way diverse cultures were welcomed with a European sense of tolerance and multiculturalism. Subsequent meanings of cosmopolitanism – among which the neoliberal cosmopolitan discourse – while still maintaining a sense of free movement, have become more nuanced, with concerns such as equality and dignity of all humanity. Interestingly, throughout the millennia, cosmopolitanism has become part of a taken-for-granted disciplinary discourse, finding expression in such cognate fields as philosophy, politics, geography, history and education. As the term cosmopolitanism evolved, it garnered broader meanings, to encompass notions of universality, humanity, and community (Delanty, 2012), although there were no precise definitions of what such terms may have entailed in practice.

Like most other ideologies of our time, cosmopolitanism has a long and ambiguous history that is anchored in both the Enlightenment era and its sequel, Western modernity (Santos & Rodriguez-Garavito, 2005). The work of Immanuel Kant is considered foundational to modern cosmopolitan theory, and as Uimonen (2020, p. 81) argues, it is Kant who bequeathed a racist ontology to cosmopolitanism. Kant is on record as having suggested that only five nations, namely, England, France, Spain, Italy and Germany, were worthy of moral character (Uimonen, 2020). In doing so, Kant, wittingly or not, produced a racial hierarchy that would be deployed by Euromodernity, while the Global South was subjected to slavery and colonialism. Mignolo (2000, p. 735), informed by the coloniality critiques of such an artificial colonial matrix of the hierarchisation of humanity, avers that Kant's hierarchy was "not alphabetical but imperial" and represented the geopolitics of knowledge. It was, therefore, inevitable that cosmopolitanism became tainted with the logics of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, racism, and modern neoliberalism. Later variants of cosmopolitanism, which evolved subsequent to Kant's work, includes new cosmopolitanisms such as Appiah's rooted cosmopolitanism (2007) and critical cosmopolitanism (Delanty, 2006; 2012); Nussbaum's (1996) notions of social solidarity, cohesion and a global sense of belonging, and the 'subaltern' cosmopolitanism associated with scholars from Latin America (Mignolo, 2017; Santos & Rodriguez-Garavito, 2005). Space constraints do not allow us to delve into each of these forms of cosmopolitanism. Mendieta (2009) maps a useful path out of the labyrinth in which cosmopolitanism is entangled, by asserting that an enduring concept of cosmopolitan is to think of oneself as a citizen of the entire world, and not just one's local city-state, ethos, nation, or even empire. Appiah (2007) clarifies that cosmopolitanism is principally about the notion of a shared world and that, therefore, it is paramount that we recognise that we live in a shared world. Other scholars in this regard are Schumann (2018), who critiques cosmopolitanism in relation to globalisation, and Papastephanou (2018), who suggests that cosmopolitanism needs rethinking. Critical decolonial scholars Mignolo (2000, 2011, 2017) and Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito (2005), among others, view current cosmopolitanism discourses as trapped within the coloniality of power and coloniality of being, and that, therefore, cosmopolitanism is a political performance undertaken from "the perspective of modernity" (Mignolo, 2011, p. 722). Contemporary neoliberal cosmopolitanism is an outcome of Euromodernity, which, through subtle means, continues to transform and maintain imperial and colonial differences. Having presented the historical context of cosmopolitanism, we will outline the conceptual issues that are at the centre of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism, despite its many variants, is inescapably a normative practice that articulates a universalist moral ideal, whereby human beings should primarily understand themselves as citizens of the world, and be respectful of and conversant with a multiplicity of ways of life (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 234). This view is echoed by Månsson, who asserts that,

Cosmopolitanism denotes a vision, or an idea, of the world that sees all humanity as belonging to the same community as citizens of the world, a community that transcends local loyalties and traditions. The idea is to connect an abstract universalism (shared values such as freedom, justice, and equality) with a specific moral commitment that serves to govern a well-ordered society, or city-state, where citizens, irrespective of religious, cultural, or political affiliation, belong to the same polity on equal grounds and with equal entitlements and obligations (2018, p. 792).

The above view is useful in framing a cosmopolitan citizenship that presupposes the capacity of all individuals to co-exist as free and equal citizens who enjoy the same protection of life – such a view is consonant with cosmopolitanism at its most idealistic level. Generally, the major hallmarks all cosmopolitan positions as presented by Pogge (1992) are,

- Individualism (individual human beings are what ultimately matter);
- Universality (they matter equally, and nobody is exempted by distance or lack of a shared community from potential demands arising out of the counting of everybody equally); and
- Generality (every human being is the ultimate unit of concern for everyone).

The harsh reality of the selfish agendas that underlie such an idealistic cosmopolitanism has been brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic. Decolonial theory helps to explain the perceived differential value of human beings through the concept of colonality of being, which positions some human beings within the “zone of being” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021b, p. 59), that is, the rich Global North. The well-being of faraway strangers, as a primary concern of cosmopolitanism (Kurasawa, p. 236–237), is being severely tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, because “cosmopolitanism in one form or another helps us articulate a moral, ethical, or political response (Schumann, 2018, p. 821), which has not necessarily been the case.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was followed by a resurgence of nationalist feelings and re-borderisation, in ways that indicate that the salience of cosmopolitanism is among the first casualties of the pandemic. Calzada (2020, p. 1) poses rhetorical questions: Will COVID-19 be the end of the global citizen? and Borders are making a comeback — will they come down again once the virus is defeated?”, which are, in effect, questions about the very future of cosmopolitanism. Initial responses to the outbreak of the pandemic were antithetical to the principles of cosmopolitanism, which sees all humanity as belonging to the same community, as citizens of the world, and for which we are all enjoined to care for the other. Maarouf et al (2020, p. 2) describe people’s initial responses to the outbreak of the pandemic in the following way:

The privilege of spectatorship marks people’s abysmal (un)responsiveness to the horror happening on the ground in Wuhan. This unresponsiveness soon grew into a ghastly fit of nauseatingly contagious bigotry, heralded by attacks on Asian people in Europe and the US. On social media the racism and anger were mingled with jokes of horrible taste, culminating into a grotesque presence on the web.

The behaviour described above, while not untypical of humanity’s response to a crisis, was, in this particular instance, a glaring indicator of humanity’s cynical disregard for human life. That we are all “members of the great human family” (Kurasawa, 2004, pp. 236–237), who are entitled to the “same rights and protections regardless of our specific circumstances or identities”, did not matter, as individual, family and national safety came first. In a profound sense, the cosmopolitanism ideal that foregrounds our common humanity was shattered as nation-states resorted to closing their borders at a time when the pandemic knew no boundaries. The closure of national borders was a flagrant violation of the World Health Organization’s

desperate call for “compassion and kindness” towards infected people, as issued in the publication *Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak* (2020). The call was to

Be empathetic to all those who are affected, in and from any country [our emphasis]. People who are affected by COVID-19 have not done anything wrong, and they deserve our support, compassion and kindness.

The appeal is a sad indictment of the cosmopolitan hallmarks of equality and dignity of all human beings, and the failure to extend hospitality and compassion to those who may be strangers in need. These events raised the spectre of racism, exclusion and dehumanisation of the ‘other’, which is reminiscent of the horrors of the age of the slavery of Black people in Europe and The United States. Racism is an inherent factor in colonialism and is, by definition, antithetical to a cosmopolitanism that expresses the equality of all human beings. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 367) reports, “COVID-19 has hit at the very center of planetary human entanglements, affecting both private and public lives”.

The apparently fatal blow the pandemic has delivered to Eurocentric cosmopolitanism has lead scholars, particularly from the Global South, to posit that “we are in need of a different form of cosmopolitanism, one that emerges from below, from the below of those who are the majority of the planet”, (Mendieta, 2009, p. 243). The reimagined decolonial cosmopolitanism citizenship envisaged by Mendieta works to achieve the “re-humanization of the dehumanized/remembering of the dismembered (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021a, n.p; Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2009). In framing the ontological densities of all humanity as equal, decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship resonates with the principles of *Ubuntu*, namely the promotion of one big family of humanity. The following section will expand on the notions of a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship, as necessary for convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world.

Reimagined decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship for convivial re-existence

The public failure of a cosmopolitan citizenship premised on global coloniality became manifest when the world’s response to COVID-19 was characterised by the “strengthening of exclusionary nationalistic messaging” (Estelles & Fischam 2020, p. 1), and not human solidarity and collaboration against the pandemic. We discuss three distinct ways through which such a cosmopolitanism citizenship can be reimagined for convivial re-existence. First, we recentre Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s 10 Ds of the decolonial turn (2020) as a broader framework for a critical cosmopolitanism that is radically different from the neoliberal cosmopolitanism of Euromodernity. Second, we draw on the principles of *Ubuntu*, as key to a robust mosaic that is sensitive to the convivial imperatives of a planetary re-existence in a post-COVID world – that is, *Ubuntu* becomes useful in reframing the normative underpinnings of a decolonial cosmopolitanism. And, finally, we explore how an inherent civic engagement in a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship could enhance struggles for convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. Taken together, the three approaches outlined above illustrate how a de-colonial cosmopolitan citizenship that resists coloniality could promote a planetary conviviality that upholds an all-encompassing idea of humanity, to which we can all belong as equal beings. In order to put these issues into perspective, Table 1 juxtaposes the distinguishing hallmarks of a reimagined decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship against those of a Eurocentric neoliberal cosmopolitanism citizenship.

Table 1

Hallmarks of a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship

Reimagined Decolonial Cosmopolitanism	Neoliberal cosmopolitanism
Ubuntu worldview	Cartesian worldview
Decolonial perspective – hence pluriversality and diversity	Colonial matrix of power – Eurocentric universalism
People-oriented – hence ‘zone of being’ for all	Race-oriented – hence the hierarchisation of human beings

Counter-hegemonic cosmopolitanism	Hegemonic Euromodern cosmopolitanism
Recognition of the precarity of all lives – values life in pluriversal co-existence	Differential grievability of lives – some lives are not worth saving
Responsibility to humanity – care for all humanity	Responsibility for self – care for the select
Normative in favour of a moral social justice for all	Normative in favour of selective justice

(Source: Authors' own)

The raced hierarchies of a neoliberal cosmopolitanism need to be deracialised and decentred, to pave the way for a critical “cosmopolitan project in which everyone participates instead of being participated” (Mignolo 2000, p. 744). The following section will map a decolonial perspective for a reimagined cosmopolitanism.

The decolonial perspective for a reimagined cosmopolitanism

In charting the characteristics of a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship, we draw on the postulates of Santos's (2007, p. 55) “subaltern cosmopolitanisms”, Mignolo's (2011; 2017) “delinking”, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2020b) 10 Ds of decoloniality, to frame a mosaic theory for citizenship that is cognisant of the way the Global South has been marginalised – epistemically, ontologically and in terms of resource distribution. The cosmopolitan citizenship theory forefronted in this paper is premised on “openness towards the Other” (Leinius, 2014, p. 40), as opposed to the totalising and closed narrative of Euromodernity. This form of cosmopolitanism may well be called “dialogical cosmopolitanism, [as] it is the cosmopolitanism of the other” (2009, p. 243). This fondness for dialogue in a critical subaltern cosmopolitanism is reminiscent of what Paulo Freire (2007, p. 72) calls “radical love”, and what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) calls “decolonial love”. The essence of ‘love’ in these descriptors is primarily respect and dignity of human beings in ways that resonate with the central principles of *Ubuntu*, as being centred on the dictum that “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am” (Mbiti, 1970, p. 141). This notion of human connectedness highlights, in our view, the indivisibility of human beings as members of one big human family, all enjoying the same ontological densities, irrespective of race and geography. When deployed as a framework for a reimagined cosmopolitan citizenship, ‘love’ in the sense meant here guarantees a convivial planetary re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. As Nyamnjoh (2017, p. 5) explains, “conviviality depicts diversity, tolerance, trust, equality, inclusiveness, cohabitation, coexistence, mutual accommodation, interaction, interdependence, getting along, generosity, hospitality, congeniality, festivity, civility and privileging peace over conflict, among other forms of sociality”.

The decolonial perspective for dismantling the taken-for-granted assumptions of the dominant neoliberal cosmopolitanism is aptly summed up in Ndlovu-Gatsheni's 10 Ds of the decolonial turn (2020b, p. 384). It is our view that the 10 Ds, taken together, invoke an ontologically combative insurrectionary approach that is certainly capable of decentring the Euromodernity paradigm and posturing an alternative worldview. The 10 Ds are deimperialization, de-Westernisation, depatriachisation, deracialisation, debourgeoisement, decorporatisation, democratisation, deborderisation, decanonisation, and desecularisation. While all 10 concepts are central to our reimagining of a decolonial cosmopolitanism citizenship, we highlight only a few, because of space constraints. First, both deimperialisation and de-Westernisation are critical as counter-hegemonic heuristics that address directly the coloniality of power that is a product of the colonial empire and its logic of extending Western-centric epistemology. Imperialism and Westernisation were/are the axis around which the coloniality of power survives. Added to the axis of coloniality is the imperative for deracialisation, because racial superiority was used to frame an artificial hierarchy of the ontological densities of human beings. In the COVID-19 pandemic, race, as Butler (2020) shows, was part of the politics of pandemics and politics of life, in which the ‘being’ of others is undermined. Second, debourgeoisement and decorporatisation are, in our view, pertinent reminders of

how a moral cosmopolitanism has been hijacked and robbed of its human soul by the forces of capital and the market that puts profits before saving lives. The neoliberalism that, seemingly, destroys the livelihoods of the people of the Global South in its search for profit has often masqueraded in the guise of corporate governance. Critical decisions about which industries could open (or remain closed) in the pandemic were subject to the corporate interests of finance capital. In the Global South, for example, the big mines were permitted to continue operating to ensure profit for conglomerates located in the Global North. Finally, we see both deborderization and decanonization as critical factors in mapping the road towards the future post-COVID world as the planetary entanglements rendered re-borderisation ineffective for combating a pandemic whose transmission knows no borders. Decanonising knowledge is necessary to allow the world to learn and benefit from the knowledges of the Global South. Taken together, both deborderisation and decanonisation would re-allow free movement of the planet, and for pluriversality to form the basis of our engagements, as opposed to the monoperspectivity that breeds the arrogance characterising the universalism of Euromodern values. Seen in this light, a decolonial cosmopolitanism is certain to be an ongoing process of self-constitution through the continuous opening up of new perspectives in light of the encounter with the Other (Delanty, 2009, p. 13). Confronted with pandemics, such as that occasioned by COVID-19, a decolonial cosmopolitanism would not abandon its commitment to human equality, but would draw on a solidarity-based epistemology, in search of the moral obligations inherent in cosmopolitanism. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020b, p. 384), refers to such an envisaged conviviality as a “moral order predicated on decolonial love and its ethics of all humans living together harmoniously”.

The concept of decolonial love, as key to the cosmopolitan demand that all humanity belongs to one large family, is fairly new and, therefore, not fully developed and able to spell out in precise terms what could constitute convivial re-existence for a post-COVID-19 world. It is in view of this shortcoming that we posit the need for a mosaic, in which the decolonial turn is imbricated with *Ubuntu*. We aver that the 10 Ds of the decolonial turn, on their own, provide a critical foundation for a reimagined cosmopolitan citizenship for a post-COVID-19 world, but cannot, on their own, guarantee the virtues of humility and togetherness that *Ubuntu* foregrounds. It is, therefore, important that we draw on *Ubuntu* as the meta-philosophy of a convivial planetary re-existence. Drawing on *Ubuntu* enhances our locus of enunciation as the Global South and validates our courage to map an alternative cosmopolitan citizenship for a post-COVID-19 world. The following section will investigate how *Ubuntu* and the decolonial turn can be imbricated for a reimagined cosmopolitanism citizenship.

The nexus of decoloniality and Ubuntu for a reimagined cosmopolitanism citizenship

If, as this paper has argued, cosmopolitanism is about normative values relating to how we, as human beings, ought to move across the planetary space in which we exist, then *Ubuntu*'s normative value of humanness provides the guarantee for a convivial re-existence that decolonial love does not explicate fully. *Ubuntu* is principally about humanness and humanity, and we refer to Rodríguez's (2020) explanation in order to reassert that critical nexus between *Ubuntu* and the decolonial turn:

Humanity does not have its end in the individual recognition of the subject. Humanity is realised when we embrace a decolonial cosmology, involving the recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependency of the whole of humanity (2020, p. 120).

As Rodríguez explains, we only become fully human when our worldview and our actions are grounded in a decolonial turn and we are cognisant of our planetary entanglements and obligations. *Ubuntu* principles, in their almost utopian nature, when articulated as a meta-philosophy, provide an ideal goal towards which humanity ought to strive. Exemplars of such key principles of *Ubuntu*, according to Ramose (2003), are that *Ubuntu* is,

- Linked ontologically to the traditional value systems of Black Africans – that is, it could serve as a repository of timeless and onomatopoeic knowledges for social and cultural regeneration;

- Epistemologically underscored by critical actions that include sharing and mutual care, which can result in the alleviation of human suffering and prejudice; and,
- An exemplification of the ‘human-ness’ that is achievable through affirming one’s humanity and recognising the humanity of others.

In the mosaic envisaged by this paper, *Ubuntu* suggests that we affirm each other through acknowledging difference as normal always striving for the good of all. At the same time, the decolonial turn works to rescue *Ubuntu* from being (mis)appropriated by coloniality and, thereby, rendered safe for the perpetuation of a neoliberal order. Therefore, a decolonial *Ubuntu*-inspired cosmopolitan citizenship that emerges from suffering as a result of the pandemic should, to borrow Mbembe’s (2019) words, aim at bringing, as equitably as possible, everybody, every person, within the sphere of care and concern, so that lives are not lost. In the post-COVID-19 world that we envisage, the subaltern’s greatest gift would be *Ubuntu*, because *Ubuntu* signifies shared humanity – a complex and interdependent ecosystem of humans, nature, and the planet (Waghid, 2014).

The most immediate challenge confronting our reimagined decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship is resisting vaccination nationalism, which is seemingly accompanying the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. This can be prevented when robust civic engagement underpins a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship.

Decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship is against vaccination nationalism

As the year 2020 was reaching its end, there was a glimmer of hope, as potentially life-saving vaccines, which could stop the spread of COVID-19, were developed and approved for use by the World Health Organization. Inevitably, all the vaccines had been developed in the Global North, thus, leaving the Global South to look to the Global North for supplies. An attempt by the Global South to develop its own medical response to the pandemic (the Madagascar case), was rendered non-scientific by a knowledge-canonised system that is anti-pluriverse. An ominous development after the development of the vaccine is the spectre of so-called vaccination nationalism, which is born of the realisation that “the supply of vaccines is limited and mainly directed to rich regions of the world, with many developing countries left behind,” (Gruszczynski & Wu, 2021, p. 2; Lagman, 2021, p. 1). As part of the new behaviour associated with the pandemic, vaccination nationalism “describes a situation whereby governments take unilateral actions to provide their own populations with access to vaccines ahead of other countries” (Gruszczynski & Wu, 2021, p. 2) – a frightening prospect. In pursuit of vaccine nationalism,

not only the USA but also the UK, the European Union (EU) acting on behalf of its Member States, Canada and Japan – concluded a number of bilateral agreements with pharmaceutical companies to secure their supplies of the future vaccines. Consequently, by mid-January 2021, these countries locked up about 60% of the 7 billion vaccines that were sold, despite the fact that they represented only 14% of the global population. For example, Canada has ordered five times more vaccines than its entire population. All of this means that at least 90% of people in lower-income countries will not be vaccinated by the end of 2021 (Gruszczynski & Wu, 2021, p. 3).

The 90% of people referred to above are the subaltern in the Global South, who are being denied access to life-saving medication through what we aver are acts of greed and selfishness by rich countries. This hoarding of life-saving vaccines shows utter disregard for the lives of the other. It invokes notions of Butler’s planetary precarity, as some lives are considered not worth saving. Such actions are very much against the spirit of *Ubuntu* and decolonial love that remind us that our ontological densities are the same and that all lives are worth saving. It is for this reason that a subaltern cosmopolitanism from below is not only urgent, but also an imperative for a post-COVID-19 global imaginary. The decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship that we have forefronted in this paper must reject vaccine nationalism. The agentic civic engagement of citizens across the North-South divide must, rightly, be reviled by the repugnant act of selfishness. It is for this reason that Santos (2014, p. 135) calls for “subaltern, insurgent cosmopolitanism”

as a form of resisting continued victimisation by neoliberal forces in alliance with capital. The director-general of the World Health Organization was forced to remark as follows: “The pandemic has exposed and exploited the inequalities of our world. There is now the real danger that the very tools that could help to end the pandemic – vaccines – may exacerbate those same inequalities” (World Health Organization, 2021). As decolonial scholars in the Global South, we aver that the exacerbation of these inequalities is nothing new, instead it is a continuation of the exploitative, extractive and dehumanising consequences of Euromodernity that have always undermined the subaltern. Such brazen disregard of the ontological being of the other as the subaltern requires a reimagined cosmopolitanism that is reinvigorated by the decolonial turn, and aspires to a convivial planetary re-existence that is at the centre of *Ubuntu* philosophy. It is a decolonial cosmopolitanism that must be insurrectionary and combative in its moral response to vaccination nationalism. For a reimagined cosmopolitan citizenship to begin to take root, we need, first, a global decolonial imaginary that accentuates our sense of being human and belonging to one great human family. Second, there is need to deepen the heuristics of decoloniality (the 10 Ds) to achieve new mindsets that believe that, indeed, another cosmopolitanism that is inspired by subaltern consciousness is possible and that, above all, it is our guarantee to a convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. That road toward convivial re-existence is premised on our recognition of pluriversal practice as “a connector, a place of encounter and exchange of liberating and decolonizing practices, where it would make sense to fight for the idea that another world is possible” (Mignolo, 2005, p. 125). This paper demands, urgently and ceaselessly, a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship, which can learn from the success of the so-called Rhodes Must Fall movement. The movement, inspired by the decolonial turn, began in South Africa and became so powerful and widespread that it reverberated in far-way London – the citadel of the colonial matrix of power – with the result that the edifices of coloniality, in the form of statues of the architects of slavery and colonialism, were removed from the public gaze. We are confident that a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship could, in its own way, push the world to act in favour of a convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world.

Conclusion

This paper sought to map out an eclectic decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship theory superimposed on *Ubuntu* as a heuristic for planetary re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. The paper illustrated that Eurocentric cosmopolitan citizenship is fundamentally flawed, as it is predicated on coloniality, which hierarchises human beings on the basis of colour, and excludes those considered to be the other. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inadequacies of such a cosmopolitanism, and resulted in the demand that we reimagine a decolonial cosmopolitanism citizenship from below, which reasserts the importance of the human being precisely because it is part of what is threatened by neoliberalism’s adjudication of life along the lines of race and belonging. The trauma and acrimony that resulted from the re-emergence of borders, as well as the racism, xenophobia and sheer disregard for human life, have shattered the edifice of the Western-centric cosmopolitanism as a defensible way of life. Our planet is so entangled that it requires mutual love to avert mutual destruction. Gavarret (2021, p. 43) may well be making a profound call for a decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship when she asserts:

In this XXI century we must loudly proclaim tolerance, inclusion, recognition of the different, the diverse, the heterogeneous, the culture of protection of the weakest, the helpless, and the needy. We need to make a new interpretation of history, philosophy, and the social sciences, contaminated by the colonial and Eurocentric features that we have learned in our schools and universities as unquestionable truths.

This call is illustrative of the very essence of decolonial cosmopolitan citizenship as the new global imaginary for convivial re-existence in a post-COVID-19 world. For, to “confront and question our own convictions inadvertently influenced by the universal claims of European-centric culture” (Gavarret, 2021, p. 43), is to reimagine our planet as a pluriverse that allows for ontological and epistemological re-existence.

The challenge is how to decentre the colonial matrix of power which has influenced the global imaginary to the detriment of the Global South.

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