Diversity within the media
Cosmopolitan perspectives on social positions
and structures in Germany

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Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to develop a conceptual framework and theoretically fruitful perspectives for the study of demographic diversity in the media structures from a cosmopolitan point of view. Inspired by the (self-)critical debate about a cosmopolitan approach in communication studies that is going on for a while now, the guiding question is how far the diversity paradigm may enrich this debate and helps unveil how inequality and social positions are shaped in and by media in respect to a communication studies definition (Badr et al., 2020; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014; Wasserman, 2020).

The accelerated cultural diversification of Western societies gives rise to challenges such as racism and social inequality, particularly for individuals who "embody diversity" (Ahmed & Swan, 2006, p. 96). The eight major diversity categories (ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, religion, social status, and race) are the starting points that are commonly used for analysis and will be critically assessed later in this chapter.[1] Diversity within the media, or "Media Diversity," refers to the presence (or absence) of pluralistic perspectives, and viewpoints within organizations and media structures, particularly focusing on minority voices (Douglas, 2022). This idea of Media Diversity is of particular relevance to communication studies, given the pivotal role of the media as social constructors and reproducers of social realities (Bayer, 2013).

However, to understand diversity as a structural and global phenomenon, a cosmopolitan approach in cosmopolitan communication is imperative (Badr et al., 2020; Badr & Ganter, 2021; Siapera, 2010). Beck and Sznaider (2006) proposed a lived, reflexive form of cosmopolitanism that "emerges from within" in diverse contexts and manifests

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1   The concept of "race" is replaced by "migration background" in this context due to the historical connotations with the Nazi era in German-speaking countries (Vinz & Schniederig, 2010). "Ethnicity" is replaced by "migration background" or "history," thus encompassing all individuals vulnerable to racism and discrimination within the German context.

distinctive attributes (p. 9). This internal perspective is the focus of this chapter because before carrying out international comparative studies, an understanding of the contexts of comparison must first be available, because even in contexts we are familiar with, we often do not understand communication phenomena ourselves (Grüne, 2016). This also applies, for instance, to the diasporic media and the communicative realms of minorities. From the viewpoint of a cosmopolitan critique, it is hence necessary to first gain insight into the German context, because even in the West, such as in the USA and Germany, the focus categories of difference vary significantly while speaking of demographic diversity.

While US-American research gather expertise on racist and sexist portrayals of marginalized groups, the approach in German communication studies has been different. It prioritizes framing and content analysis with regard to Muslims and immigrants, as anti-Islamic sentiment and biased media reporting further exacerbate long existing negative public discourse about these groups (Hafez, 2016, 2019; Richter & Paasch-Colberg, 2023; Schiffer, 2005). Furthermore, the German diversity approach is rather top-down and politically instrumentalized. Thus, it is reasonable acknowledging context-specific definitions first, before recognizing diversity as a global phenomenon.

In Germany, approximately 27% of the population has a migration background, 9.4% live with a disability, 7% identify as LGBTQ+, and about 6.6% as Muslims (Pfündel et al., 2021; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2022, 2024; YouGov, 2021). These and other groups at the margins remain vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination. For example, there remains a significant lack of communication research, particularly about classism in German media (Theißl, 2023; Hanitzsch & Rick, 2021). Whereas the underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and invisibility in media content is well documented in national and international communication studies, notable research gaps persist regarding "structural" diversity (Horz et al., 2020; Fengler & Kreutler, 2020; Saner et al., 2024).

A critical diversity approach that is proposed here can be useful to offer crucial insights into the processes that (re-)construct social positions in the media sector and the conditions that influence how content is produced, shared, and consumed (see also Ganter in this book; Napoli, 1999). Secondly, if marginalized groups participate in the media at all, it raises concerns of whether this is an emancipatory project or an "elite capture" where hegemonial groups define whose perspectives should be included in the first place (Bayer, 2013, pp. 27–28.; Táíwò, 2022). Moreover and most importantly, Media Diversity in a broader sense can be linked to the normative idea of a pluralistic media system and liberal public spheres, which ultimately makes it a political issue that needs further investigation (Padovani et al., 2022).

A critical diversity approach, further developed to an analytical tool for cosmopolitan communication research bears the potential to help analyze how social structures shape each other within the media sector, which includes institutional, organizational, and governmental structures. It may shed light on the relationalities that emerge within systems and internal organizational structures, focusing on interdependencies between individuals and the organization rather than formal hierarchies. Network and organizational analysis of diversity-related structures can therefore address power dynamics within legacy media and digital networks between disparate groups. This chapter examines to what extent the diversity paradigm can enhance our understanding of the mean-

ing and the complexity of power structures and structural discrimination in the media sector, as well as media participation, identity formation, networks, and international connectivity of minorities through their own media outlets. Instead of presenting a comprehensive conceptual framework from a Western perspective, the chapter is meant as a starting point for further dialogue with scholars from diverse contexts. After a brief and critical evaluation of the theoretical discourse on the diversity paradigm, the current trajectory of German communication studies follows.

Unboxing the diversity paradigm from a cosmopolitan perspective

A comprehensive theory of diversity that transcends paradigmatic debates does not yet exist, neither in Germany nor internationally, as its meaning shifts depending on the context (Erdur, 2024; Hipfl, 2023; Klein, 2020). A possible baseline to develop a heuristic tool is to explore how diversity has been historically and socially constructed (Vertovec, 2021, p. 1275).

The long-standing diversity discourse has paved the way for its analytical exploration (Nieswand, 2021). The most fundamental definition assumes that differences between individuals are a social and cultural fact, particularly in post-migrant and postcolonial societies. As such, demographic diversity inherently challenges the prevailing models of normality, including those perpetuated in the media associated with the White, male, and Western citizen. An increasing awareness and social learning process about diversity in Germany is currently inspired by more prominent migrant voices and knowledge in public debates. Diversity has thus become an integral part of self-understanding processes within the super-diverse society, despite the accompanying tensions (El-Mafaalani, 2020).

Two key strands of the paradigmatic debate are particularly relevant: normative-democratic approaches and utilitarian approaches. The normative-democratic strand focuses on promoting equality, fairness, and respect. It is rooted in the US-American civil rights movement and resolutions of international organizations. The UN for example, asserts that accessibility to the media is vital for all people (United Nations, 2018). In communication studies, this is reflected in the idea that media access is a crucial resource of "cultural citizenship" (Klaus & Lünenborg, 2004). However, access alone does not ensure trust, as migrant communities' trust in German media has declined over time, due to biased reporting (Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration [SVR], 2021). In that sense, fostering Media Diversity is not only an ethical exercise, but also a task for the whole of society. Therefore, it is one that is ultimately political in nature and intended to prevent power dynamics that perpetuate inequality formed by a history of exclusion and discrimination (Decker et al., 2022; Zick et al., 2011). The normative-democratic approach to diversity asserts the emancipatory potential of minority communication phenomena. Diversity is then a "cosmopolitan almost narrative," despite the overall "top-down approach" (Sarikakis, 2014, p. 89). The utilitarian strand, the second of the two, links demographic diversity to economic utility. Within the neoliberal agenda, diversity is legitimized as a resource to employ the uniqueness of one's competencies and value in a market economy (Lentin & Titley, 2008). This perspective originates in

the 1980s and 1990s in the USA as a reaction to the influx of women, Black individuals, and immigrants into the labor market (Johnston & Packer, 1987). The new diversity had to be managed to prevent conflicts disrupting the emerging neoliberal economy. This commercialization of empowerment, which is individualized and market-oriented, is not aimed at making structural changes. Instead, the success of minorities is anchored on an individual level without addressing the underlying systemic inequalities (Banet-Weiser, 2015). It obscures the unequal power relations that exist within organizations, hindering the ability to challenge them (Ahmed, 2012). Moreover, the categorizations of difference themselves raise concerns of being excessively hierarchical and implicitly rooted in a White/Western liberal framework that neutralizes "histories of political struggles" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 96). The "photogenic diversity" or "diversity washing" that often comes along with diversity Management serves as a superficial display of difference without substantive change (Nieswand, 2021, p. 8).

As a result, Critical Diversity Studies, which consists of an interdisciplinary merging of feminist theory, postcolonialism, and critical race theory criticizes the utilitarian approach for undermining the emancipatory potential of diversity due to its Janus-faced nature (Bayer, 2013, pp. 36–37). Hence, it is "less about analysis and more about management, less about theory and more about application" (Hardmeier & Vinz, 2007, p. 27). However, research faces the dilemma that it may reinforce stereotypes when employing pre-constructed categories. This can only be resolved through "pragmatic deconstruction" to reveal processes of othering and social positioning (Knapp, 2008, p. 167). Consequently, a "non-positivistic, non-essentialist" definition of the diversity categories is necessary (Zanoni et al., 2010, p. 10). In this view, difference is not an inherent reality, but because of ongoing "interpretative actions," it is redefined through ongoing symbolic interaction – hence communication processes (Fuchs, 2007, p. 17).

The discursive lines of the paradigmatic debates thus address the question of whether or not diversity is an empirical description of the demographic plurality of a society, which simply needs to be managed and made useful for human resources. Or, on the contrary, if it is a critical reading, which produces and represents attributions of difference along which power asymmetries, hegemonic practices, and inequality that can be examined and rectified in a non-essentialist manner and that can also be linked to discover emancipatory communication phenomena. In the media, these debates manifest in unique ways. Media are embedded systems with context-related functions for society. However, even public service media, seen as merit goods, cannot escape the competitive market environment, with diversity management often reduced to pragmatic human resource practices (Thomass & Dupuis, 2016, p. 25). Thereby, diversity can also serve as a "Trojan horse" for transforming power dynamics from within (Jones & Stablein, 2006, p. 145). However, the emancipatory potential of access to and visibility in the media should not be overrated. The assumption that simply recruiting marginalized individuals will automatically lead to the pluralization of perspectives in the public sphere is lacking complexity (Meier et al., 2024). In fact, some evidence suggests that the boundaries between inclusive and exclusive debates on diversity are becoming increasingly blurred, fostered by the emergence of new affective communities that normalize right-wing ideologies (Zahn & Lünenborg, 2024). An inevitably interdisciplinary cosmopolitan approach has to address these blurred lines from a critical perspective.

A cosmopolitan critique of diversity-related communication research in the German context

To get closer to a diversity framework, we need to self-critically address current blind spots (Badr et al., 2020). To do so, we must first acknowledge that there is a robust research output on media representation of marginalized groups, particularly migrants and Muslims within German-speaking communication studies (Hafez & Schmidt, 2020; Zick et al., 2011). Findings indicate that media representations play a pivotal role in the reinforcement of negative images of and violence against immigrants, refugees, and Muslims (Arlt & Wolling, 2016; Beck, 2017; Benček & Strasheim, 2016). Journalistic reporting often victimizes these minorities or denotes them as dangerous intruders and objects of state measures, while rarely portraying them as active agents in their own narratives (Fengler & Kreutler, 2020; Holzberg et al., 2018; Richter & Paasch-Colberg, 2023). The cosmopolitan critique, however, underscores the significant limitation of German communication studies on representation and content analysis with an "ethnic lens" (Badr et al., 2020; Glick Schiller et al., 2006). In this context, the term *Vielfalt* (diversity) is frequently employed to signify demographic variety and is often involved in othering (Larrazet & Rigoni, 2014). The emphasis on specific group identities over others neglects the complexities of intersectionality. Due to the scarcity of demographic data in German legacy media, structural analysis is difficult in the first place. For instance, the number of journalists with a migration background can only be estimated at 1% to 4% of the workforce, with a suspected but unverified increase among trainees (Kraemer et al., 2020). Figures about more powerful positions, such as editors in chief, show that only 6.4% have migration backgrounds in Germany's most widely consumed legacy media. However, the reasons for the existing homogeneity of leadership positions and imbalances in the "workforce" and "programming" need further investigation (Horz et al., 2020).

Most importantly, representation studies rarely draw conclusions about the importance of structural diversity as an influencing factor on observed biased and negative media images. Obviously, communication studies do not always ask the right questions that are necessary to generate their own rationales to give impulses to policies and political strategies. Moreover, findings on structural diversity do only sporadically translate into media practice, such as changes in personnel and recruitment structures in media organizations (Meier et al., 2024; Saner et al., 2024). Only a few international comparative studies about media systems and democratic functions address diversity as one structural item, among others basically in the sense of gender diversity (Padovani et al., 2022; Trappel & Tomaz, 2021). One critical point is the emphasis on politically charged research topics such as media representation of migration, refugees, and Islam. Communication studies in Germany has aligned closely with domestic and foreign policy interests, explicitly or implicitly legitimizing disintegration policies intertwined with neoliberal agendas (Horz, 2016; Richter et al., 2023). One example is that approaches such as the "intercultural integration" of migrants in the media were co-opted into official policies (Geißler, 2010; Presse und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 2011, pp. 320–327). A common focus in this respect is the question of whether media consumption aids integration or not and if the pre-constructed "others" need special attention. As a result, to date, "mediated symbolic realms" often reinforce the idea of discrete ethno-media and segregation

(Sarikakis, 2014, p. 90). This perspective overlooks questions about migrants' communicative performance, their participation in cultural production, and the significance of communication spaces. Consequently, diverse media cultures and outlets remain unrecognized as integral to German culture. This essentialist view constructs an "us vs. them" dichotomy, which fails to acknowledge culture as a dynamic process and the interconnectedness of a globalized contexts and lifeworlds (Couldry, 2007, p. 250; Hafez & Grüne, 2021). The biased perspective and compliance with official politics underlines the necessity to revise the existing concepts, epistemologies, and foci of research. One goal of a cosmopolitan approach is to challenge the binary between "native" and "migrant," exploring the "in-between" spaces of post-migrant societies (Foroutan, 2019; Badr et al., 2020, p. 300). Consequently, research with a cosmopolitan perspective needs to challenge and transcend the political instrumentalization of this subject matter, particularly in terms of fostering a more impartial and objective investigation.

Another critical point is a prerequisite of a cosmopolitan perspective, namely the awareness that German communication studies have largely neglected other communities, for example, LGBTQ+ individuals. As noted by Comella and Sender (2013, p. 2564), sexuality research is an emerging subfield within international communication studies. In their book, Dhoest et al. (2017) provided a comprehensive analysis of LGBTQ+ media and culture in Europe, exploring media programming by queer individuals, their creation of outlets and programming, and their participation in counter-publics and online political debates. Notably, the collection lacks contributions from German scholars. In contrast, even undergraduate students in the USA are engaging in intersectional research on Black LGBTQ+ individuals and social media empowerment (Bonjo, 2017). The study of Black, African, and Afrodiasporic people in workforce structures and as media actors in Germany is another field that is still embryonic. Admittedly, a major obstacle is the lack of reliable demographic data on these groups in Germany, underscoring the need for more research. Estimates of the "Afrozensus" suggest that there are around 1.27 million people in these communities, with 71% having been born in Germany (Aikins et al., 2021; Mediendienst Integration, n.d.). Despite being a small minority, research on anti-Black racism and embodied differences in media content and structures could lead to valuable results for research related to other People of Color (PoC). These and more shortcomings in German communication studies raise questions about whether the objectives of funding institutions are to blame, or rather a broader lack of cosmopolitan thinking (Richter et al., 2023). Fortunately, a growing responsiveness to issues of diversity, racism, and discrimination in editorial staff structures and decision-making bodies can be observed; however, this is currently mostly confined to a focus on the meso levels of news media (González Hauck et al., 2024; Grabenheinrich, 2023; Meier et al., 2024).

To sum up, there is a need for more politically and practically impactful communication studies—not instrumental ones—with the aim to better address significant knowledge gaps about structural inequalities and the richness of communication phenomena in superdiverse societies. As discussed above, the current issues can be at least partly attributed to the dominance of hegemonial perspectives in communication studies and their strong migration policy orientation toward the study diversity.

Toward a heuristic framework of diversity
for a cosmopolitan communication approach

To achieve a holistic structural analysis of Media Diversity, the proposed analytical tool combines Stephen Vertovec's (2021) social science approach to diversity with Philipp Napoli's (1999) deconstruction of the latter as part of the normative media pluralism model to propose a heuristic matrix for empirical research across various media fields and levels.

Vertovec's (2021) conceptualization of diversity as a "social organization of difference" (p. 1275) is based on the abovementioned normative-democratic strand and critical approaches to the diversity paradigm. He suggests a diversity approach that helps unveil structures of inequality in "distinct times, scales and contexts" (Vertovec, 2021, p. 1273). As such, diversity "is not intended for explicating mechanisms but for interpreting how social structures shape each other" (Vertovec, 2021, pp. 1275–1276). Vertovec referred to diversity as a structural category, as discussed above. He has taken into account three key intertwined dimensions involved in reproducing difference and shaping inequalities: configurations, representations, and encounters of diversity. However, the following overview will mainly emphasize configurations and encounters, as both are still underrepresented topics in communication studies, while being inherently necessary to gain insight into the structural conditions that frame content production and the ways social groups are represented.

Configurations of diversity are the "organizational arrangements of diversity" that shape social positions through political and organizational structures. They describe "both vertical and horizontal inequalities" that intersect with race, class, and gender, evolving over time and encompassing historical, cultural, and economic factors (Vertovec, 2021, p. 1276; Lünenborg et al., 2011). These structural patterns affect consciousness, group interactions, and access to power and privileges, forming a "matrix of domination" (Andersen & Collins, 2018, p. 400). These configurations highlight not just the numbers but the social positions of diverse staff, such as journalists or camerapersons, and the extent to which domination manifests itself, that is, in legacy media (Graf, 2011; Grabenheinrich, 2023). Journalistic innovations like "entrepreneurial journalism," however, emphasize the transformation of existing inequalities, as this type of journalism is potentially less hierarchical due to more flexible structures (Suhr, 2023, pp. 1, 4).

Encounters of diversity refer to dynamic social interactions across social categories, manifesting in both mediated and interpersonal communication (Vertovec, 2021, p. 1282). As Gerhards and Neidhardt (1990) claimed, these micro-publics form the communicative core of the public sphere. By emphasizing these encounters, the focus is on investigating how interactions between media professionals with and without diversity characteristics are structured.

These encounters are often informal and laden with stereotypes about a respective minority, formed over time in (mediated) communicative interactions. Consequently, unequal status among staff members in media organizations may reinforce exclusionary practices, whereas staff with equal statuses are less likely to be excluded (Allport, 1954; Vertovec, 2021, p. 1282). The unequal access to media professions and job allocation, i.e.

due hurdles such as unpaid internships in media organizations, results in an unequal status for minority staff members. Communicator research highlights, for instance, how minority staff in legacy media—often those with migration backgrounds—are sometimes treated as experts on minority issues or, conversely, as tokens or intruders (Graf, 2011). These encounters are both structured and structure hegemonial and discriminatory practices. In contrast, alternative independent media outlets such as channels and hashtags online can challenge dominant discourse and media images by their own perspectives and self-representation, thereby potentially empowering previously silenced voices. Thus, it is crucial to intensify research as to what extent these communication phenomena actually do so and to what degree they facilitate transcultural connections, community, and identity building, as well as the development of critical counter-publics. A cosmopolitan approach to communication studies can thus benefit from the concept of encounters in terms of diversity research by questioning the communicative conditions that foster a convivial workplace or, on the contrary, simply reconfigure existing stereotypes and discrimination (Cottle, 1998). Vertovec's (2021) broader social science concept discussed above has now been merged with Napoli's (1999) media pluralism concept to shift diversity to communication studies and to come closer to an analytical framework for a cosmopolitan communication approach.

Philip M. Napoli (1999) deconstructed the "diversity principle," which he perceived as part of the media pluralism model.[2] Whereas "diversity" denotes the multiplicity of perspectives within a system, "pluralism" serves as the structural framework that facilitates them.

Both normative concepts are reflected in the German broadcasting system: "internal pluralism" refers to the range of perspectives within public service media (PSM), and "external pluralism" pertains to the multiplicity of commercial outlets. This "dual system" reflects the normative concept of pluralism, wherein both social and cultural diversity play a crucial role. Nevertheless, apart from the normative idea, power imbalances and bureaucratic structures within legacy media are key reasons why diverse perspectives are is often silenced (Cottle, 1998). Hence, it is necessary to analyze the paradoxes that dilute the normative ideal. Napoli (1999, p. 11) identified three pillars of media pluralism: source diversity, content diversity, and exposure diversity. Since our focus is on structural aspects of diversity in the media, we concentrate on examining source diversity, although all three elements are certainly interrelated.

Source diversity is divided further into two components: (a) ownership diversity, again subdivided into outlet and programming[3] and (b) workforce diversity. Both the components and the subcomponents will be described below.

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2   In the English-speaking context, the term diversity was used until the late 1990s as a synonym for what we understand today as media pluralism. Napoli integrated both pluralism and diversity (in the sense that we use it currently and in this chapter) into the term diversity.

3   Napoli confusingly employs the terms "programming" and "content diversity" synonymously, alternating between the two, although the category named "content" is a separate factor of his model (that is not discussed here). For reasons of clarity, the term "programming" is used in this chapter, because it is more focused on the making of content and not the content itself.

Ownership diversity: Outlets and programming

Ownership diversity as one structural aspect of source diversity includes the diversity related to a wide range of media programming and media outlets. A research focus on outlets may include commercial TV channels or PSM that are owned by the general public. Developed in the era of linear media, Napoli's hypothesis faces new challenges with the platformization and proliferation of networked communities on social media, such as YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok. Content creators, for example, are owners and creators of their accounts at the same time. These platforms have created novel avenues for agency, participation, and media production, requiring a rethinking of publicness in a decentralized media landscape fueled by the platform economy (Lünenborg, 2019, p. 319; Schankweiler & Straub, 2023; Walsh, 2024).

Workforce diversity

The context dependency of diversity discussed earlier can be exemplified with source diversity's second structural aspect of workforce diversity in its contextualized setting: for example, whereas the regulatory framework requires broadcasting outlets in the USA to compose their staff according to "the demographics of the surrounding market" (Napoli, 1999, pp. 13–14), the German broadcasting regulation is less systematic. According to Napoli, workforce diversity includes not only editorial staff but also management, administrative personnel, technical professionals, and self-regulatory bodies across various media outlets with the potential to pervade traditional power structures. Workforce can certainly be expanded into digital outlets by investigating content producers and their role in the production process, usually addressed by Production Studies (Mayer et al., 2009).

Hence, this approach can help to promote network analysis instead of communicator surveys that cannot explain the "how" and "why" of certain power structures. The broad focus across all professional levels in the workforce helps to better understand the actor constellations and structural settings at play.

The critical source diversity concept

The critical concept proposed here is based on the synthesis of Vertovec (2021) and Napoli's (1999) approaches, which were discussed above. This synthesis holds promise, as it asks new questions about structural inequalities and, at the same time, emphasizes bottom-up research perspectives. Such an approach integrates the earlier interpretations and unleashes their potential for empirical research on the axes of power as well as bottom-up participation, reflecting the plurality of socially situated knowledge and perspectives within media structures and organizations. Figure 1 explains the synthesized model. The framework is shaped by Napoli's source diversity (1999), which comprises ownership (outlet and programming) and the workforce diversity. Vertovec's (2021) approach of diversity as "the social organization of difference" is what occurs within this

framework. Both components and subcomponents shape each other, as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overview (source: author's compilation)
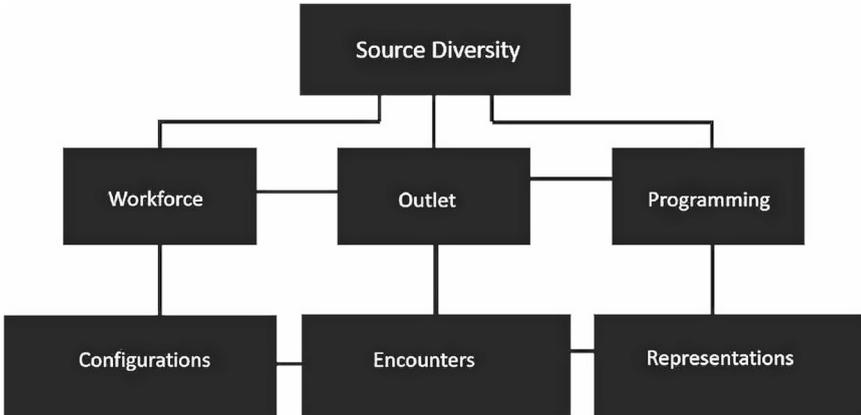
Possible research areas

The approach proposed here can transcend the conventional political-utilitarian approach to this subject matter and, above all, is less biased. Ultimately, it can be incorporated into various research areas. Empirical research of Media Diversity could start with one of Vertovec's (2021) dimensions of "social organization of difference" combined with one of Napoli's structural aspects. Table 1 shows exemplary research areas with an intersectional approach.

This approach allows for systematic examination of how diversity categories intersect. The reciprocal formation processes of Media Diversity can then be analyzed. Due to the limited space of this chapter, it is not possible to exhaustively discuss research areas or offer a detailed delineation of the interrelated set of meanings. To provide a more concise summary, few interwoven aspects of Vertovec's (2021) dimensions are outlined.

Table 1: Diversity matrix as an analytical tool: Examples of possible research areas (source: author's compilation)

	Configurations *Examines how the respective category is structurally organized (e.g., composition and status of the workforce)*	**Encounters** *Investigates how interactions occur (e.g., collaboration between different groups and professions, interaction with stakeholders and audiences)*	**Representation** *Explores how diversity is represented (e.g., representation of minorities in the media)*
Workforce *Analyzes the diversity of professionals in a respective outlet involved in media production*	Composition and status of diverse staff; identity; professional roles (Intersectional and more combinations)	Power asymmetries; discrimination; professional networks (Intersectional and more combinations)	token; diversity expert; equally treated (Intersectional and more combinations)
Outlets *Examines the diversity and structure of media platforms or accounts*	single person or group; community members only (Intersectional and more combinations)	participation in public discourse; counterpublics; emancipatory approach; self-explaining (Intersectional and more combinations)	identity and community representation (Intersectional and more combinations)
Programming *Examines how diversity is reflected in productions and how it is presented*	issue orientation; community orientation (Intersectional and more combinations)	interaction with community; included in programming (Intersectional and more combinations)	self-presentation; voice (Intersectional and more combinations)

According to Napoli (1999) ownership is subdivided into outlet and programming. For practical reasons both specifications replace the overarching term ownership.

Configurations and workforce

A thorough understanding of Media Diversity, and what it actually means, requires expanding the focus beyond newsroom structures. NGOs such as the German "Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen" publish science-based assistance to foster diversity at the professional level. Additionally, governance structures need more attention because of their importance in addressing systemic barriers in media institutions (Ganter & Badr, 2022; Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen, 2022). Noteworthy, these critical topics have largely been left to non-academics and contracted research to explore.

Gendered power dynamics, exemplified by the #MeToo cases, gender pay gaps, and the lack of support for care responsibilities, particularly in Western media institutions, raises concerns about the role of configurations within the workforce in traditional media outlets, thus demanding more attention from a comparative perspective (Orosz & Löer, 2018). Context-led research on this topic seems rewarding, as some international

comparative studies have indicated (Trappel & Tomaz, 2021). However, there remains a clear need to intensify our efforts to analyze the reproductions of power structures within media organizations from a cosmopolitan point of view. Class disparities within the media workforce also remain a blind spot in German research: one survey found that 95% of media trainees in Germany come from academic backgrounds, raising concerns about the misrepresentation of other social classes (Kraemer et al., 2020). This highlights a gap in scholarly research that requires urgent measures, because these and other foci of Media Diversity research reveal the quality of media pluralism and the public sphere (Theißl, 2023). We can then look at how online outlets take up and respond to the issue to learn more about the networked bandwidth of discourse around diversity in the media.

Configurations and ownership

The role of digital outlets in spreading alternative narratives, both inclusive and exclusionary, is also a crucial area of analysis. Influencers such as Madeline Stuart, a model with Down syndrome, exemplify how normative-democratic and utilitarian strands of diversity purposefully intersect on digital outlets for community-building and monetization at the same time, reflecting broader trends in Media Diversity informed by the platform economy (Christensen-Strynø & Eriksen, 2020). Other outlets can follow this trend by propagating exclusionary content. For example, so called Tradwife influencers on TikTok promote ultraconservative gender roles that are also propagated by right-wing ideologies, blurring the lines between family values and political extremism—and at the same time are self-made women, which can generate high income with their accounts. TikTok's recommendation algorithms often contribute to the normalization of such views (Sykes & Hopner, 2024). A study from Media Matters on tradwives revealed that 30.6% of the content on TikTok's "For You" page included this type of material, even within a single afternoon of browsing (Little, 2024).

Issues such as disability, social status, and gender at intersections are crucial for a cosmopolitan understanding of the workforce in contemporary communication phenomena and the evolution of networked publics (boyd, 2011). This also means engaging with emerging fields, such as queer production studies, which explore how "queers produce their own media outlets both within and outside of 'mainstream' cultural industries" (Martin, 2018, p. 7). Queer studies, in particular, offer critical insights into how norms, gendering, and heteronormativity are reproduced or challenged in the media (Drushel, 2017; Ernst, 2024).

Encounters and outlets & programming

Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok allow individuals to act as content creators, influencing the media landscape in ways that transform user behavior and aspirations. This also plays a role in transcultural identity formation and international protest cultures, as digital outlets offer new spaces for encounters as a prerequisite for collective action and representation (Monshipouri & Prompichai, 2018; Schankweiler & Straub, 2023).

Encounters in co-determination bodies of PSM broadcasting councils should also be taken into account more seriously to gain insight into how structural exclusion

mechanisms affect marginalized groups like women, disabled people, Sinti and Roma, LGBTQ+, PoC, and others (Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen, 2022). Comparative studies show that PSM still struggle to dismantle barriers to minority access, although they are obliged to integrate and reflect on society as a whole (McGonagle, 2014; Horz-Ishak & Thomass, 2021). This paradox persists despite demographic changes and the growing intersectional complexity of social inequalities. Structural barriers preventing those with experiences of racism and discrimination from joining broadcasting bodies therefore require attention and systematic investigations. Network analysis seems to be a suitable method to examine how diversity dimensions interact and intersect in these encounters (McRuer, 2006; Zahn & Lünenborg, 2024).

Further examination of encounters beyond traditional media outlets is essential to be able to respond to current trends. Bottom-up approaches, such as the radical pluralism model, have the potential to enhance our understanding of transcultural communication across diverse contexts. A cosmopolitan approach should investigate how encounters in specific outlets contribute to community building, whether through hegemonic, counter-hegemonic, or emancipatory efforts. Social networks like #BlackLivesMatter can be viewed not only as protest cultures but also as nodes of intersecting communicative encounters that have the potential to evolve into broader social movements involving various actors. This requires a combination of established and innovative methodologies, including ethnographic techniques and network analysis.

Exploring innovative methods from a cosmopolitan point of view

The abovementioned phenomena create a resonance space for empirical studies on Media Diversity with a cosmopolitan perspective. Epistemic approaches, heuristics, and methods need to be decolonized to avoid replicating boundaries in research (Badr & Ganter, 2021). Addressing these issues allows for insights beyond critiques of media representation and is important to advancing cosmopolitan research. Some useful attempts have been made by scholars from the Global South that promote to de-Westernize approaches by including local and regional contexts into theory building (Mano & milton, 2021; Moyo, 2020).

In order to gain a truly cosmopolitan perspective, it is necessary to adopt subject-oriented methods. In contrast to what I would call a "parachute research" approach, which involves the usually brief fieldwork to gather data, "embedded research" is a more comprehensive and immersive methodology. It entails deeper engagement with the subject matter, allowing researchers to gain a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of their research subjects and partners. Clifford Geertz's (1987) ethnographic method of "dense description" is an appropriate means of approaching the "ethics of listening" (Wasserman, 2013). Standpoint theory, a feminist social theory approach that acknowledges individual's unique perspective that shapes the perception of the world, could integrate advocacy elements into research and reveal socially situated knowledge. For example, feminist scholar Sandra Harding (1994, pp. 284–285) demanded that researchers "reinvent" themselves by involving research subjects in methodology generation, concept development, research design, data collection, and result interpretation. A participatory

approach can hence include minority knowledge and demonstrate respect for the reluctance of vulnerable groups to cooperate with powerful groups such as researchers. For instance, interviewing the people involved in diasporas necessitates a considerable investment of time and resources to establish rapport and trust prior to the commencement of research (Horz, 2014). By incorporating interdisciplinary approaches from postcolonial studies or ethnography, cosmopolitan communication scholars can create new analytical frameworks to better understand the meaning of structural diversity in the media and its societal implications, laying the groundwork for internationally comparative studies on Media Diversity (Johanssen & Garrisi, 2020).

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