

Connecting (With) the Unfamiliar: Theoretical, Didactic, and Methodical Reflections on Facilitating Cosmopolitan Encounters in a Postdigital World

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Abstract *The growing demarcation between analogue and digital realities results in uncertainty. Dealing with this uncertainty constructively calls for a new way of considering the world, the “self”, and the “other”: postdigital cosmopolitanism (Lenehan, 2022). This theoretical bridge marks the first contribution of the chapter. However, linking the postdigital reality to uncertainty and showing it can be responded to by cosmopolitanism results in the question of strengthening and facilitating this postdigital cosmopolitanism. Building on this, two methodological gaps are investigated. Firstly, the discussion introduces facilitating cosmopolitanism via experiential learning (Kolb, 2015) in a postdigital environment as a new didactic approach in the field of cosmopolitan learning. Secondly, the analysis presents virtual action learning (Cho & Egan, 2022) as a methodology to investigate the facilitation of postdigital cosmopolitanism via experiential learning. The discussion centres around theoretical and methodological reflections on facilitating and evaluating a learning intervention that is sensitive to a) a postdigital context marked by uncertainty, b) the learning objective of postdigital cosmopolitanism, and c) the learning process of experiential learning. The chapter therefore begins by exploring how the entangled manifestations of materiality and digitality cause uncertainty and what postdigital cosmopolitanism has to offer as a response. The discussion of these two theoretical arguments results in a presentation of experiential learning as a method to facilitate postdigital cosmopolitanism. The chapter concludes with a presentation of virtual action learning as a form of inquiry to investigate learning and a discussion of VAL's potential to fulfil the prerequisites of the learning environment, objective, and process. The chapter yields insights especially for, but not limited to, researchers and educators interested in facilitating and evaluating experiential learning with digital means as well as for scholars interested in the practice and facilitation of postdigital cosmopolitanism.*

1. Fading Demarcations: Consequences of the Intertwined Manifestations of the Digital and Analogous Worlds

The integration of digitalization¹ into our formerly analogue world has fundamentally transformed our societal landscape, blurring the once clear boundaries between digital and analogue domains. Consequently, distinguishing between the specific impacts stemming from the rise of digital processes and those originating solely from analogue contexts has become progressively convoluted. Furthermore, the emergence of novel phenomena often arises from the intricate interplay and accessibility of both digital and analogue realms, complicating our understanding of their individual contributions. These manifestations, complex and sometimes contradictory in character, lead to increasing uncertainty.

The ramifications of this demarcation between digital and analogue worlds are multifaceted. For instance, there is a potential increase in feelings of anonymity and individualization (Stöttner, 2019: 197–205). Additionally, certain facets of communication undergo a diminution when mediated through digital channels. Roth and Laut (2023: 110–116) lament the initial decline in quality stemming from disparate, non-shared, and physically absent elements of the communicative context, contrasting digital exchanges with face-to-face interactions. Moreover, informal communication frequency and the degree of explicitness often diminish in digital environments. Lastly, the richness of communicated content tends to be reduced in comparison to physically present modes of interaction (Roth & Laut, 2023: 117–119).

Additionally, social processes such as inclusion, radicalization, and tribalism are accelerated by digitality (Ebner, 2019: 278–290). The consequences of increasing digitalization on social dynamics are explored by Ebner: affiliative needs can remain unmet for two reasons: Firstly, social face-to-face interactions decrease, and secondly, algorithms and online behaviour may lead to a feeling of isolation. These emerging social voids are created through digitality but can also be filled with new possibilities to network and connect (Ebner, 2019: 278).

Thorhauer (2017: 11–18) elaborates on a digital spatial turn, observing a proliferation of virtual social spaces alongside a deepening digital divide. On one hand, certain populations face increasing difficulties in gaining internet access, while on

1 Concerning the question of whether to use the term “virtual” or “digital”: Even though the notions of the two concepts seem too entangled to call for the dominance of one over the other, I speak of digital, whenever I am not referring to a specific concept that has been coined as “virtual” by the original author, due to three reasons. Firstly, the term digital implies that something is created or stored using computer technology rather than a simulation of reality. Secondly, it implies that it can be physical or digital instead of not physically presented, and lastly, because it can be tangible or intangible rather than existing only in the mind.

the other hand, those with access experience a widening array of possibilities in utilizing digital tools. Furthermore, surveillance, control, and manipulation contribute to feelings of alienation (Kelsch, 2019: 385–395), while filter bubbles become increasingly difficult to penetrate (Thorhauer, 2017: 23–24).

The resulting manifestations of this demarcation between analogous and digital realities are often contradicting, multifaceted, and intertwined. These muddled developments lead to a double uncertainty: an abstract and philosophical one, but also a personal one. Questions such as “How will the state and the feeling of connection develop in the future?” or “What influences this development?” are examples of this more abstract uncertainty. The personal uncertainty manifests itself in questions such as: “How can I stay and keep feeling connected?” Or, as Zuckerman (2013: 58) asks: How do we know the things we need to know and not only the things we want to know in the age of unbroken access to information? Thus the question arises: How should individuals navigate and respond to this uncertainty?

2. Postdigital Cosmopolitanism as a Response to Uncertainty

Let us therefore turn to a definition of uncertainty and possible ways of dealing with it. As for the latter, this chapter focuses on postdigital cosmopolitanism as a way of dealing with uncertainty. As for the interdisciplinary definition of uncertainty draw on existing literature.

2.1 Defining Uncertainty

Uncertainty in its broadest sense can be defined as a “lack of meaning” (Mughal & Zafar, 2011: 28) or as “a lack of understanding” (Dennis et al., 2008: 576). This lack can result from an unmet need for information, or as Galbraith (1977: 5) defines it, uncertainty is “the difference between the amount of information required [...] and the amount of information already possessed.” Research offers several insights for dealing with the “cognitive state where people feel that the physical and social world is an unpredictable place over which they have little control” (Hogg & Belavadi, 2017: 2).

Communication may aim at filling this lack of meaning or this lack of understanding. Communication is the “process of creating a shared understanding” (Dennis et al., 2008: 576), which can facilitate the constructive management of uncertainty. However, this process is not without its complexities. While effective communication can mitigate uncertainty, misunderstandings may conversely exacerbate them. When examining communication theories in the context of digital environments, one finds a nuanced landscape.

Even though some of the communication theories mentioned here provide insights into questions of communication from a perspective in which the preconditions were different from the present context, they stand the test of time. Firstly, the theories add to each other and address the shortcomings and changed requirements from their predecessors e.g. Dennis and colleagues' Media Synchronicity Theory (2008) criticizes and adds to Daft and Lengel's Media Richness Theory (1986) (Dennis et al., 2008: 577). Lastly, applying their findings and underlying arguments to current requirements of communication is not only possible, but also insightful.

Media Richness Theory posits that the choice of media influences the potential for reducing uncertainty (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Trevino et al., 1987). Information Succession Theory extends this concept by advocating for the use of different media with varying capabilities in sequence (Stephens, 2007). For instance, initiating communication through mass media like a posting on social networks, mailing lists, or intranet, followed by individual discussions can result in reaching the audience with all of the required information. Moreover, the goal of communication shapes the productive degree of synchronicity of communication tools (Dennis et al., 2008). Depending on whether the aim is to convey raw information for analysis or to foster shared understanding, different tools, and levels of synchronicity may be deemed appropriate (Dennis et al., 2008: 583).

The interplay between digital communication and uncertainty is multifaceted. One can approach this relationship from both goal-oriented and selection-oriented perspectives. The communication process may dictate the outcome, or the desired outcome may influence tool selection. Consequently, digital communication and uncertainty are intrinsically linked on a theoretical level, with each influencing the other in a complex interplay.

Dennis et al. (2008: 580–581) argue that uncertainty can be dealt with by creating a shared understanding. Creating this shared understanding, however, is difficult in a digital world, as multiple communication theories explore. Exploring the overarching question of how digital media, communication, and uncertainty intersect reveals a layered and ongoing inquiry. Do digital technologies provide effective means to navigate uncertainty communicatively, or do they pose barriers to shared understanding? Alternatively, do they represent a new environment with distinct characteristics that require adaptation, offering both benefits and challenges? This multifaceted question remains open, underscoring the intricate relationship between digitality, communication, and uncertainty.

2.2 Defining (Postdigital) Cosmopolitanism

It seems contradictory: Developments of increasing digitalization lead, on the one hand, to uncertainty and, thus, to an increasing urgency and relevance to react to this uncertainty. One possible reaction to this uncertainty can be seen in encounters

that occur within contexts of global significance. Encounters with significance can lead to transformations in collective identity and cognition as Delanty (2009: 218) argues, thus responding to uncertainty. But on the other hand, these same developments of digitalization (e.g. tribalism, anonymity and individualization, the digital divide, and filter bubbles, as shown above) make it more difficult to realize these encounters for everyone.

In his 2022 overview article, providing different notions of cosmopolitanism, Lenehan cites Waldron (2010: 168–169) who argues that cosmopolitanism can be achieved by “coming into contact with the ‘other’”. This sole encounter however is insufficient: It needs to result in a revaluation and reassessment of the norms that one has previously adopted. Delanty (2009: 218) adds a context or reason for this encounter when referring to it as a “transformation in self-understanding as the result of engagement with others over issues of global significance.” These forms of encounters as a fundamental characteristic of cosmopolitanism can be found in places where notions of “self” and “other” meet, or, as Delanty (2009: 252) states: Cosmopolitanism is to be found in “collective identity processes, such as debates, narratives, forms of cognition, networks of communication.” This notion then is quite far from its former understanding as a Western-dominated type of intellectual universalism (Lenehan, 2022: 26–27). Giri (2018: 14) adds to this with a perspective influenced by Indian sources, when calling cosmopolitanism not only “transformations in self, culture, society, economy, and polity”, but also “an ongoing process of critique, creativity and border-crossing”. This border-crossing aspect already hints towards the possibility of postdigital cosmopolitanism, or as these potential transformative processes may also take place online, as part of a web of postdigital cosmopolitanism intertwined with material reality (Lenehan 2022: 25). Thus, the encounters constituting postdigital cosmopolitanism not only question notions of the self but also the boundaries of a (material) reality.

Encounters with topics of global significance initiate the re-thinking of “self”, “other”, and the world. This re-thinking then leads first to questioning these concepts, but also to a new connection with them. This new, re-thought connection and the process of re-thinking itself serve as a response to uncertainty. Only questioning the “self”, the “other” and the environment and then re-connecting with them allows us to navigate through times in which we lack understanding or meaning.

In this notion of postdigital cosmopolitanism, outlines for a learning programme start to emerge. Learning from the “other” through self-problematization (Delanty, 2009: 219) is a possible consequence of encountering and reflecting this connection with this “other”. This understanding of postdigital cosmopolitanism focuses on reassessing and re-thinking the world, the “self”, and the “other”. This process with an orientation towards re-thinking has, thus, the potential to lead to learning. But how can this be achieved, especially in debates and networks marked by digital communication?

3. Experiential Learning as a Method to Strengthen Postdigital Cosmopolitanism

Only “coming into contact with the ‘other’” (Waldron, 2010: 168–169) seems insufficient, as stated above. The encounter needs to be within contexts of global significance and lead to a re-thinking of self and other (Delanty, 2009: 218). How can the *facilitating* of such encounters appear? The facilitation is challenged by two hurdles: One is the complex character of the postdigital world, and the other is digital communication, especially the unclear relationship with uncertainty. An answer to the question of facilitating these kinds of encounters promises to be of theoretical, methodological, and practical value.

Learning needs to be holistic, if the facilitation of these encounters and especially the rethinking of “self” and “other” is to be taken seriously. Experiential learning (Kolb, 2015: 38) claims to offer this complete character: “[Experiential] Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.” This two-fold learning of seizing and converting experience manifests the holistic character of the concept: Through the recurrent linking of information intake and interpretation, one learns more sustainably. Both, the intake, and the transformation of information retain two forms: Taking information in may arise through a concrete experience of a situation or via an abstract conceptualization of this experience. Transforming experience – the way individuals interpret information and then change their further actions based on this interpretation – may either arise through reflection or through deriving new impulses for action for future, similar experiences (Kolb, 2015: 51). These two forms of either grasping or transforming information are dialectic, since the forms may be internally contradictory, but may be resolved synthetically when combined.

The manifestations of one dialectic can support the manifestations of the other, creating a spiral of learning: Firstly, a direct experience is the basis for observation and reflection. This reflection is then distilled into abstract concepts, from which new implications and instructions for action (in German: *Vornahmen*) can be generated. These in turn are actively tested and thus serve as a basis for new experiences. Experiential learning entails a cyclical unity of two – alleged – opposites, resulting in characteristics that provide this approach with the potential for facilitating postdigital cosmopolitanism: Re-thinking “self and other”.

Let us assume the following – of course truly fictional – example of how a learning intervention focusing on postdigital cosmopolitanism could be set up.² For the learning intervention to be as flexible, asynchronous, and individual as possible,

2 It is important to note here, that these four points can be conducted/facilitated in this order. This however is only a suggestion. Due to the dialectical character of grasping (Points 1. and

there needs to be an online platform, on which each step is conducted. The character of this setup can vary in its formality, depending e.g. on the target group.

1. Grasping Experience in a concrete situation:

Experiencing the application and consequences of postdigital cosmopolitanism can, for example, be made when participating in the format *“The world talks”* (Blickle et al., 2023), in which two individuals with different worldviews and/or backgrounds are matched and discuss global topics online realizing the goal “to connect people all over the world to discuss the issues that divide them, and the issues that unite them” (Blickle et al., 2023). This set-up of an experience goes hand in hand with the previously established definition of digital cosmopolitanism: “contact with an ‘other’ over topics of global significance” (Delanty, 2009: 218). This contact with an “other” can (as shown above) also be realized through digital means.

2. Transforming experience via reflection:

What topics divide and unite our fictitious pair of individuals? How are these differences and similarities discussed? What aspects help or impede the questioning of the categories of “self” and “other”? These kinds of questions are addressed in the reflection part after the experience on our fictitious online platform. Here, an in-person moderator might guide the individuals through reflective questions, or an online whiteboard made accessible via the online platform may provide these questions. This can be conducted regularly after every interaction, or at the end of the program via e.g. online group debriefing sessions synchronously and/or in learning journals asynchronously.

3. Grasping experience via abstract conceptualization in the form of a theoretical input:

After the experiences have been reflected on, there is a need for understanding not only what has happened, but also why it has happened. This theoretical integration can be conducted again on the online platform, via online videos (recorded or live) or edcasts that focus e.g. on how perception works, communication theories, etc. Providing theory may satisfy the need for understanding through explanation (Kolb, 2015; Mughal & Zafar, 2011).

3.) and transforming (2. and 4.) experience, they can be approached in a different order or from a different starting point as well.

4. Transforming experience in developing new ways of acting:

After an experience has been made, reflected on, and explained, questions such as: “How do I transfer this into the real world or my everyday routine?” or “What would I do again, but also what would I do differently the next time I am confronted with an ‘other?’” need to be addressed. This future and solution-oriented transformation of an experience can be conducted with a wide range of digital and analogous methods, provided via the online platform: A letter to oneself, that is sent to the person in the foreseeable future, a structured online whiteboard, etc.

Why is this chapter referring to “experiential learning” and not to “virtual experiential learning”, even though it is facilitated by digital means? Experiential learning can also take place virtually: “Virtual experiential learning is achieved through the integration of different [...] technologies like virtual reality, augmented reality, games and simulations in an active learning context” (de Carvalho, 2019: 2). Virtual experiential learning thus means facilitating the “concrete experience” part of an experiential learning process with the help of virtual means (Majgaard & Weitze, 2020: 373). Virtuality can enrich experiential learning when the prerequisites do not allow a thick “real” experience. This might be undertaken “due to the nature of the concepts to be taught or due to economic, social or ethical reasons” (Santos et al., 2013: 42). For the case of postdigital cosmopolitanism the case is not so simple. One reason complicating the claim of “virtual experiential learning” is the fact that postdigital cosmopolitanism supposes the existence of entangled processes from both digital and material worlds. The other argument lies in the contradiction of contextual factors: Economic and social reasons might call for solely digital facilitation but also do not have to be used mandatorily. If face-to-face interaction is affordable, and/or access to a device or the internet is not possible, these encounters may as well be face-to-face. Thus, “virtual experiential learning” cannot be used when describing the process of facilitating postdigital cosmopolitanism, due to postdigitality’s basic assumptions, and the possibility – maybe even necessity – to conduct the facilitation without the primary use of digital means.

Experiential learning, characterized by a cyclical process of grasping and transforming experiences, offers a holistic approach to learning that aligns with the characteristics of postdigital cosmopolitanism. By engaging in concrete experiences, reflecting on them, integrating theoretical insights, and transforming behaviours, individuals can navigate the complexities of a postdigital world and foster meaningful connections with others. This can be seen because of encounters and reflections, leading to learning from the other through self-problematization (Delanty, 2009: 219–220). Thus, a hypothetical experiential learning intervention focusing on postdigital cosmopolitanism, illustrates how facilitation can be employed to achieve these transformative encounters. Experiential learning, combined with digital communication may widen our social horizons, otherwise narrowed by

algorithms and the reinforcing of preferences: “We pay attention to what we care about and, especially, to persons we care about. Information may flow globally, but our attention tends to be highly local and highly tribal; we care more deeply about those with whom we share a group identity and much less about a distant ‘other’” (Zuckerman, 2013: 58). Following the previous example, digital communication may enable encounters, spread and echo topics of global significance and facilitate the re-thinking process, if guided.

In this sense, digital communication may serve on one side as a new environment with its own characteristics, reflected in the notion of postdigitality. On the other side, however, and of course only if applied constructively, the benefits and advantages of digital communication for the process of experiential learning outweigh their disadvantages and impediments.

4. Action Research: The Perfect Match for Investigating the Learning of Postdigital Cosmopolitanism?

Claiming to be able to facilitate postdigital cosmopolitan encounters via experiential learning is one thing, being able to investigate factors that influence the learning process is something else altogether. Virtual action learning (VAL) promises to be able to do exactly that in a way that is sensitive to prerequisites of the postdigital world in which this learning process takes place (Cho & Egan, 2022; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Pedler & Burgoyne, 2015).

The requirements posed by the context, learning process, and learning objective lead to a set of compulsory characteristics the method of investigating learning has to offer. Enabling reflection in order to learn and to overcome notions of the “self” or the “other” is as important for the investigating methodology, as a process-oriented character, respecting the character of experiential learning. Furthermore, cooperation and social contact must not only be of interest to the methodological approach, but also in its very character. Finalizing this list of requirements, the methodology needs to be able to investigate, but even more, be able to create spaces of global significance. This section discusses if and how the sub-form of Action Research, Virtual Action Learning respects all of these requirements raised by the method of facilitation, its objective, and environment.

The overarching research methodology of VAL, Action Research (AR), can be broken down to an easily described, but not easily conducted three-step process. Firstly, the researcher acts on a commonly defined problem, before investigating the successes and shortcomings of the action. After this investigation, an adaptation of the actions follows, resulting in new actions until the researcher is satisfied with the results of the action (Bradbury, 2015; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

AR has quite a variety of forms (Cho & Egan, 2022; Pedler & Burgoyne, 2015), virtual action learning (VAL) is selected here due to its focus on learning and emphasis on the virtual character of the learning environment. In their systematic literature review, Cho & Egan (2022) present four aspects of the current state of VAL

- 1 VAL “is under-utilised and only recently getting attention due to the pandemic”;
- 2 Facilitation is important in VAL as it needs the initial conditions to be set up along with resources, skills, and processes;
- 3 “The low-tech [e.g. email] and high-tech [e.g. Second Life] distinction implies that the simpler, the better in the use of technology”; and
- 4 All research concerns educational contexts, therefore evidence is needed that VAL works in business contexts as well. (Cho & Egan, 2022: 14–15)

As shown, the entangled realities of the analogous and digital world lead to uncertainty which can be responded to by postdigital cosmopolitanism. The influence of digitality in the means and objectives of facilitating postdigital cosmopolitanism has two consequences for the method of this facilitation. Firstly, it needs to cater to the complex character of the postdigital, and secondly, it requires reflection on the cyclical and procedural character of learning. It therefore becomes inevitable for Virtual Action Learning as a sub-form of Action Research to respect these prerequisites as well.

Kurt Lewin introduced the idea of investigating learning processes with the help of Action Research, as Majgaard and Weitze (2020: 3) state: “Lewin’s (1946) ideas on Action Research were based on repeating cycles of ideas, execution of actions and fact-finding reflections. The reflections led to new insights, new knowledge, new ideas, and plans.” The emphasis on reflection can be found in Kolb’s understanding of the experiential learning cycle and it can be argued that the re-thinking of the “self” relies on self-reflection as its very base, thus emerging as the first prerequisite. In Action Research in general and in Virtual Action Learning specifically, reflecting plays a crucial role, paving the way for considering where the undertaken action was successful and where new needs in the context of action have emerged. Coughlan and Coughlan (2015) add to this, exploring not only the relevance of reflection in the context of Action Research but also its collaborative character. They argue reflection can be understood literally in the sense of a mirror: members of the research project review, consider, and visualize their understanding of the issue at hand and how to address or deal with it. Thus, the called for self-problematization and questioning as centrepieces of postdigital cosmopolitanism are echoed in the reflective character of action research.

Next to reflection, the methodological approach to investigating learning also needs to take process orientation into account. Majgaard and Weitze (2020: 372–374) attribute precisely this to Action Research: It proceeds incrementally in circles of re-

flection and analysis which results in a process-oriented perspective instead of an outcome-oriented one. As action researchers only move forward after careful reflection, the process orientation of experiential learning can also be found at the very heart of Virtual Action Learning.

Coghlan and Coughlan (2015: 378–380) attribute a deeply collaborative character to AR, considering it even a prerequisite, looking at the contexts in which AR is conducted: Action learning research is found in settings where cooperation is high, such as in team situations or wherever information sharing occurs. Therefore, it is not surprising that the magnitude of facilitation described in Cho and Egan's (2022: 24–15) description of the state of the art of VAL matches the process of experiential learning. Without facilitation in the phases of reflection and understanding, experiential learning would look very different, if it were not impossible to conduct at all. The high use and relevance of collaboration in AR touches back upon AR's fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions: Knowledge creation is considered a collaborative process in AR (Bradbury, 2015; Gibbs et al., 2017). A prerequisite for a collaborative process however is the self-conception of the researcher as an "agent" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006: 29), reflecting their influence and their power, as well as by what and whom they may be influenced by themselves. Again, reflection is something the complex and uncertain environment, objective, and character of the facilitation of postdigital cosmopolitanism asks for and which is at the same time one of the fundamental prerequisites for conducting AR.

Cooperation and the focus on a social component can however be found when looking at the aim of AR. The methodology is considered developmental, aiming at the improvement of learning with social intent. This social intention shows in several forms: "to improve workplace practices through improving learning" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006: 32), by promoting and practising democratic evaluations of learning and its process as well as creating "good social orders by influencing the educational of social formations" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006: 32). AR's social intention, according to McNiff and Whitehead, can thus be closely linked to the character of postdigital cosmopolitanism: Social encounters lead to transformations (e.g. of notions of "self" and "other"), which in turn can result in knowledge through reflection. Since this knowledge emerges collaboratively, its character is of social benefit.

Lastly, postdigital cosmopolitanism calls for encounters within contexts of global significance. Action Research answers this demand with its engagement with problems as one of the methodology's central characteristics. Coghlan and Coughlan (2015: 377–378) argue that "engagement with problems" marks the underlying focus and goal of the research process: Problems that lack clear solutions or are of real-life, adaptive character call for action.

Action learning of high quality then addresses real-life, adaptive problems in a cooperative and reflected manner, with a social intention, aiming at providing solutions. This understanding of VAL as engaging with problems that are of high im-

portance for everyone involved has two consequences. On the one hand, this notion of VAL enables contexts of global significance. On the other hand, however, the emphasis on collaboration also allows the transition of knowledge from the reflection of the concrete experience into the everyday life of participants. Linking these two aspects together, we can claim AR is able to combine and resolve the prerequisites posed by the postdigital context, cosmopolitanism as a learning objective, and experiential learning as the learning process. Thus, Action Research's subtype of virtual action learning is well equipped to investigate the mechanisms of facilitating postdigital cosmopolitanism.

5. Conclusion and Implications for Further Research

The chapter provides reflections on the facilitation and evaluation of a learning intervention aimed at considering the context, objective, and process of learning. The chapter yields four different considerations. The first two are theoretical and explore the postdigital and, thus, uncertain environment of learning, and its subsequent objective in postdigital cosmopolitanism. The last two considerations are methodological, shedding light on how experiential learning can facilitate cosmopolitanism and how this process can be investigated with virtual action learning. By doing so, a theoretical and methodological connection of the context of learning, its objective, and the learning process is set out.

Postdigital cosmopolitanism was shown to be marked by a paradoxical relationship of cause and effect: The demarcation between digital and analogue realities leads to an increased necessity for postdigital cosmopolitanism, yet it makes it harder to achieve. However, postdigital cosmopolitanism and its mechanisms of first re-thinking and then reconnecting with notions of “self”, “other” and the world are presented as an answer to uncertainty. Experiential learning has been presented as one didactic approach to strengthen postdigital cosmopolitanism, holistically and sustainably. Its dialectical relationship of grasping and transforming information results in its appropriateness for the objective of facilitating cosmopolitanism in a postdigital environment. Lastly, VAL's potential to consider the aspects of the learning context as a postdigital environment marked by uncertainty, its objective in facilitating cosmopolitanism, and the experiential learning process pose, has been discussed as well.

The resulting implications for further research ask for an empirical implementation of the suggested design. To answer the question of how encounters over global significance can be facilitated and evaluated based on empirical data could advance research in two fields. On the one hand, the concept of postdigital cosmopolitanism benefits from empirical investigations, on the other hand, the theoretical and methodological debate between action research and evaluation would

be enriched. On a more abstract and methodological level, a critical reflection and verification of the virtual action learning approach may yield enriching perspectives for the scientific community of action researchers. This can be complemented by theoretically investigating and empirically implementing other methodological ways of exploring the learning process of digital cosmopolitanism.

Investigating specific theoretical questions empirically follow subsequently: Can experiential learning facilitate encounters over topics of global significance? What aspects of the postdigital reality and digital communication enable and impede the re-thinking of the “self”, “other” and the world? And what roles do facilitators play in this cyclical process? Especially the last question, focusing on the existential necessity of facilitation both in experiential learning, as well as virtual action learning, is as pressing as it is scarcely researched.

Research on both topics – postdigital cosmopolitanism and facilitating and evaluating its learning via experiential learning and virtual action learning – remain scarce. Since the theoretical concept, the didactic design and the methodological approach are all of high relevance for the questions and challenges our postdigital world poses, applying and evaluating them promises to be of great use for scholars as well as for educators.

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