

The rhetoric of cosmopolitanism in the global corporation

Stream: Flexibility

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Abstract

This paper examines how the ideal of cosmopolitan identity is represented in selected global management texts by Kanter, Ohmae and others. The corporate cosmopolitan ideal is examined at the level of the global corporation as a whole and at the level of the global manager or corporate employee. The paper argues that the corporate cosmopolitan ideal of a flexible cultural identity is characterized by two discourses. The first draws on the Enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitanism, expressed as a moral imperative towards detachment from existing cultural identities and loyalties in the name of the adoption of a universal perspective. This is reflected in the rhetoric of the necessity for managers and employees of the global corporation to 'transform' themselves from 'locals' into 'cosmopolitans'. In the depiction of this ideal the corporation itself is depicted as an allegory of the universal utopia towards which the Enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitanism was directed, here represented as an 'invisible continent' (Ohmae), in which cultural differences are transcended by a universal ideology of consumerism and a universal 'cosmopolitan' professionalism on the part of managers and employees. Corporate cosmopolitanism is also characterized by a second discourse, a 'postmodern' ideal of a completely flexible 'pastiche' identity, distanced through irony from all existing cultural and other loyalties. This discourse is exemplified in the image of the 'hybrid' or 'global nomad' as the ideal corporate employee. The paper argues, by means of a critical discourse analysis of selected texts, that corporate cosmopolitanism is not a utopia in which cultural difference and diversity is respected and celebrated, as its rhetoric claims, but the vision of a world in which cultural difference is made superfluous by the establishment of a culture-free global neo-liberalism and the activities of a flexible transnational capitalist class.

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Monsieur Ballon: You're Norwegian aren't you?

Peer Gynt: By birth. But cosmopolitan
by temperament.
For my success I'm indebted to America.
For my book-learning to the new German
schools.
From France I have acquired my waistcoat
here,
My manners, and the little wit I own.
From England I have learned industriousness
And a quick eye for opportunity.

(Ibsen, *Peer Gynt* Act 4 Scene 1)

There is no way to manage a genuinely global enterprise...without shared languages ... you have to come from the same professional world that they (other managers) do, even though you work for the most part in different countries. If your normal frame of reference is the limited context of your local environment, your worlds will rarely touch or will touch only superficially. Your frame of reference, therefore, must also include, day to day, the universal values you share with your colleagues in every part of the world.

Kenichi Ohmae *The Borderless World* (1990: 118) (my insertion)

Introduction: the corporate cosmopolitan ideal

In the above scene from Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Peer, having escaped from his native Norway, and in the process escaped his troubles in the first three acts of the play, has become a successful capitalist. Wishing to impress his new found English, French, German and American colleagues, Peer here stresses his newly acquired 'cosmopolitan' identity, an identity which is, however, a superficial form of cosmopolitanism which has been pieced together from fashionable requisites, a self which is adopted to hide the absence of a true self, a self from which he constantly seeks to escape, only to find ultimately in death at the end of the play.

Cosmopolitanism, a humanistic idea which has a lineage stretching back to Diogenes and Marcus Aurelius, through the Enlightenment ideas of Kant, has experienced a renaissance in the contemporary globalized world (Kristeva 1991, Anderson 2001, Vertovec and Cohen 2002). This renewed interest in cosmopolitanism has been expressed in the business and management world in the increasing frequency of

programmatic texts invoking the necessity for corporations, managers, and employees to adopt a cosmopolitan identity. In the above extract from Kenichi Ohmae's (1990) guide to globalization for managers, for instance, a form of cosmopolitanism, although not expressly described as such, is clearly advocated, reflected in the rhetoric of the necessity for managers to transcend what Ohmae sees as the limitations of their local and national origins and adopt what is often referred to in global management literature as a 'global mindset' or a 'cosmopolitan' identity, consisting of what Ohmae refers to as 'universal values' shared with managerial colleagues all over the world.

The visions of management gurus such as Ohmae (1990, 2000), Rhinesmith (1996) and Kanter (1995), which set out the necessity for the global corporation, its managers and employees to adopt a cosmopolitan identity, expressed as a set of required dispositions, characteristics and attitudes, are an increasingly prevalent feature of the discourse of globalization in organizations. Fairclough and Chiapello (2002) describe the function of such programmatic texts in creating and globalizing a new 'discourse-led' 'spirit of capitalism' with its concomitant justificatory regime. One of the common elements of such a justificatory regime in management texts is the depiction of a 'state of greatness', the characteristics of persons who embody the qualities deemed desirable within this new spirit of capitalism, and the contrast of this with a 'state of smallness', the depiction of those who lack these qualities (Fairclough and Chiapello 2002: 191). The corporate 'cosmopolitan' can be seen to constitute such a 'great one' within globalized capitalism, a character who serves as a model for identity formation within the global corporation, and the 'local' (Kanter 1995: 23) to constitute the embodiment of the lack of such qualities. These visions of 'greatness' and 'smallness' are in turn reflected in 'prescriptive texts', statements by individual managers, corporate web sites, training programmes, and requirements for recruitment to managerial positions, which aim to put such visions into practice by translating them into practical terms (Fairclough and Thomas 2004).

The nature of the discourse of corporate 'cosmopolitanism' can be demonstrated by the analysis of a typical example of such a programmatic text, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *World Class. Thriving Locally in the Global Economy* (1995):

Cosmopolitans are card-carrying members of the world class – often literally card carrying, with passports or air tickets serving to admit them. They lead companies that are linked to global chains. Comfortable in many places and able to understand and bridge the differences among them, cosmopolitans possess portable skills and a broad outlook. But it is not travel that defines cosmopolitans – some widely traveled people remain hopelessly parochial – it is mind-set.

Cosmopolitans are rich in three intangible assets, three C's that translate into preeminence and power in a global economy: *concepts* – the best and latest knowledge and ideas; *competence* – the ability to operate at the highest standards of any place anywhere; and *connections* – the best relationships, which provide access to the resources of other people and organizations around the world. Indeed, it is because cosmopolitans bring the best and latest concepts, the highest levels of competence, and excellent connections that they gain influence over locals.

Cosmopolitans carry these three C's with them to all the places in which they operate. As they do so, they create and become part of a more universal culture

that transcends the particularities of place – and, in the eyes of some locals, threatens the distinctive identity of groups and communities.

....

At one extreme of the cosmopolitan class is a small group of elite of business leaders creating powerful, border-spanning networks. These cosmopolitans have unlimited opportunities because of their ability to access resources or gain access to knowledge anywhere in the world, Their community and even national affiliations are weak, although they may feel sentimental attachments to places of their use or current residence, and they may ally themselves with local politicians – a source of their power.

...

Locals, by contrast, are defined primarily by particular places. Some are rooted in their communities but remain open to global thinking and opportunities. Others are simply stuck. The isolates at the extreme end of the local class are those whose skills are not particularly unique or desirable, whose connections are limited to a small circle in the neighborhood, and whose opportunities are confined to their own communities. In contrast with the limitless horizons for cosmopolitans, isolates face increasing limits to opportunity. They lack control over resources and knowledge, which can move rapidly in and out of their communities. Because they are dependent on decisions made by cosmopolitans about where to invest and where to locate, they can easily become nativists, resisting and resenting globalism.

Cosmopolitans often have strong feelings of membership in particular communities. They are not antilocal, they are supralocal, connected with communities but transcending them. ... Consequently cosmopolitans often value choices over loyalties – even in terms of which relationships deserve their loyalty. Local nativists value loyalties over choices, preferring to preserve distinctions and protect their own group. Cosmopolitans characteristically try to break through barriers and overcome limits; nativists characteristically try to preserve and even erect new barriers, most often through political means. (Kanter 1995: 23-24)

A discourse analysis of this passage reveals the mentalities, attitudes and competencies which are seen to characterize the ideal 'corporate cosmopolitan'. Fairclough and Chiapello (2002) have highlighted a number of common discursive features of popular management texts, in particular with reference to a previous work of Kanter (1984). The first feature, which Fairclough and Chiapello refer to as a 'defining characteristic of popular management discourse', is its predominant contrastive or adversarial structure, contrasting in this case 'cosmopolitans' with 'locals' (Fairclough and Chiapello 2002: 199). The second common feature of such texts is their strong modality, largely consisting of unmitigated descriptions of what is the case and prescriptions of what should be the case, particularly as reflected in the tendency towards the use of easily consumable lists and bullet points (Fairclough and Chiapello 2002: 199). In the above excerpt this tendency is evident in the forthright and unequivocal listing of characteristics of the 'cosmopolitan' mindset, in particular the encapsulation of this in 'three Cs'. Thirdly, such texts are commonly highly 'inspirationist' in nature (Fairclough and Chiapello 2002: 202). The above excerpt, for example, is intended not just to characterize 'cosmopolitanism', but to inspire its audience, managers, to *become* cosmopolitans. This is accomplished by the use of morally uplifting 'heroic' phrases such as 'transcend', 'unlimited opportunities' and 'break through barriers' to characterize 'cosmopolitans'.

With these principal structuring elements of the text in mind, we can now examine how the attitudes and dispositions of 'corporate cosmopolitans' are characterized in detail.

The most important characteristic of 'cosmopolitans' as described in the text are that they are said to be 'comfortable in many places' and 'able to understand and bridge the differences among them'. There are two elements of this: the ability to 'transcend' place, as reflected in their 'broad outlook', and their possession of 'competence' or 'portable skills'. The first of these, Kanter emphasizes, is related to travel, but is not exclusively defined by it, but rather to the development of a 'mindset' in which place becomes irrelevant as the 'cosmopolitan' develops the resources and networks, and thus sufficient 'control' over place and culture, to make it irrelevant. Important in this characterization is that place (and presumably culture) is seen largely as negative, something to be controlled, rather than as something an interest in which and appreciation of which is worthwhile *in itself*.

The second main characteristic of the 'cosmopolitans' in Kanter's text is that they are able to transcend place because they have weak 'community and even national affiliations'. In an important phrase, although 'cosmopolitans' are said sometimes to feel 'sentimental attachments to places of their use or current residence', they are not 'defined by particular places' (as 'locals' are). The important feature of this characterization is that attachment to place is associated with implicitly irrational and retrogressive emotions, while the transcendence of place is seen as something rational and progressive, as indicated by its association with the semantic field of 'opportunities', 'resources' and 'control'. 'Cosmopolitans' are depicted as having a more 'progressive' outlook towards place than 'locals' as the former 'create and become part of a more universal culture'. Here a significant utopian element associated with Enlightenment thinking on cosmopolitanism enters the discourse: 'cosmopolitans' are in some sense morally superior because they are establishing a more universal, and therefore implicitly progressive, culture than 'locals', who emphasize particularity over universality. It is important, however, to stress that the universalist utopia which corporate cosmopolitans are establishing, is depicted, not as one which encompasses and respects existing cultures, but as one which transcends them and in some sense makes them irrelevant.

The connection between 'cosmopolitanism' as a universalist outlook and as a set of skills is a further important aspect of the text. While the association of 'cosmopolitanism' with a morally superior universalist outlook serves, within the 'inspirationalist' rhetoric of the text, to convince managers of their 'greatness' in relation to the establishment of the utopia described, the connection of this with the acquisition of practical skills and competence ensures the audience that 'cosmopolitanism' is associated in the minds of the audience not just with vague notions of 'transcendence' or universalism, but with something that is within reach and can be acquired and measured by practical means.

Finally, to return to the dominant contrastive or antithetical structure of the text, we can examine how 'locals' are differentiated from and contrasted with 'cosmopolitans'. 'Locals' are characterized as people who have been 'left behind' by 'globalism' or who are 'stuck'. This characterization is in itself, however, insufficient to contrast the 'greatness' of cosmopolitans from the 'smallness' of 'locals', as it still implies that 'locals' might be 'left behind' or stuck through no fault of their own. 'Locals' are instead characterized as people who have *failed to adopt* the necessary attitudes which 'cosmopolitans' have, as people who are actively *antagonistic* towards the 'progressive' forces of 'globalism', as is evident in Kanter's employment of the epithets 'isolates' and 'nativists', suggesting

narrow, retrogressive and even primitive attitudes. It is here that the political or ideological nature of the text becomes most apparent. By characterizing locals in this way the text can portray opposition to or skepticism about globalization in general, what Kanter calls 'globalism', and to the activities of the 'cosmopolitan' class in particular, as essentially emotional, irrational and retrogressive. As Bourdieu and Wacquant point out regarding the establishment of the 'new planetary vulgate' of 'new liberal speak', this derives its rhetorical appeal and popularity from 'a series of oppositions and equivalences which support and reinforce one another to depict the contemporary transformations advanced societies are undergoing ... as in turn benign, necessary, ineluctable or desirable' (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 2001: 4). In Kanter's text, 'cosmopolitanism' gains its rhetorical attractiveness, not just from its association with progressive, morally uplifting universalist sentiments, but equally from the portrayal of doubts or skepticism regarding globalization as 'isolationism' or 'nativism', in other words as an unreasonable negative attitudes towards something which corresponds with reason and progress itself. Having outlined the main elements of the discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism as exemplified in a typical programmatic global management text, I will now examine how the various attitudes and dispositions within 'corporate cosmopolitanism' are expressed at various levels within the global corporation.

The cosmopolitan corporation

The highest level at which the discourse of cosmopolitanism is apparent in the global corporation is that relating to the corporation as a whole, and its representation as part of a cosmopolitan utopia. This can be viewed as part of the increasingly frequent phenomenon of corporations wishing to portray themselves as socially and ethically responsible. Parallel to this wish there has been a move, as Garsten puts it, 'towards positioning the transnational corporation as a cosmopolitan in the world, with a degree of cultural sensitivity and cultural competence as part of its competitive advantage' (Garsten 2003: 357). This is reflected in two main aspects, global reach and local cultural sensitivity. Firstly, corporations wish to portray themselves as operating beyond national boundaries, and therefore project the image that their activities are part of a 'borderless world' (Ohmae 1990, 2000). Allied to this wish to portray the corporation as contributing to the establishment of a global consciousness, however, is the sensitivity of corporations to their being seen as culturally imperialistic, and thus to the necessity of depicting themselves as 'local' as well as global. In its philosophical form, the cosmopolitanism of the global corporation as a whole seems, then, to have a strong moral or utopian element which aligns it with an Enlightenment ideal: the corporation seems to stand as an allegory of a desired utopia of global unity and diversity brought about by its activities. This utopia is projected not just externally to the global public, but is also to be reflected its internal structure and makeup: the corporation itself would then be seen as embodiment of this desired utopia.

This vision of a 'cosmopolitan' world without boundaries encompassing all cultures and the corporation's role in establishing it has been put forward in its most radical form in Ohmae's idea of the 'invisible continent'. If Ohmae's earlier book *The Borderless World* (1990) was primarily concerned with setting out the differences between the global corporation and the national states and enterprises of the past, *The Invisible Continent* goes further in setting out a utopia in which the corporation, imagined as 'a continent without land' (Ohmae 2000: 17), can provide for all needs of all peoples:

The new continent was discovered first by Americans, but no nation holds a monopoly on entrance to it. *Any nation, any company, any race, any ethnic group, or any individual may enter.* In this sense, it is far fairer than the old world. Entrance depends on adopting new types of behaviours ... People who enter, no matter what their ethnic origin or gender, have all learned to act in particular ways and to hold particular beliefs. Otherwise they don't get in. (Ohmae 2000: 18 (Ohmae's emphasis))

The elements of this utopia are clearly delineated: the corporation is a 'continent' which is 'invisible' because it is ubiquitous, beyond place and therefore beyond the restrictions imposed by place (i.e. culture). It is also a promised land which is more egalitarian than the 'real' world, in the sense that all cultures can have entry to it, providing 'they have learned to act in particular ways and to hold these particular beliefs' (Ohmae 2000: 17). This figure of the promised land combines the inclusive and the exclusive: it is exclusive in that entry involves people abandoning their national ways of thinking and identification with their own cultures (Ohmae 2000: 20). It is inclusive as far as it embodies the values of a total individualism of the consumer. As far as people have the individualistic values of the consumer at heart, then, entry to a promised land which is more egalitarian than the 'real' world is guaranteed:

Nor is there one elite setting the tone for the continent's perceptions of the qualities that are worthwhile and the qualities that are not. On this continent, there are thousands of elites - rolling elites, only vaguely aware of one another's values. (Ohmae 2000: 20)

Whereas place-based local or national elites, it is suggested, might restrict entry to groups with certain (cultural) values, the 'invisible continent' does not, because all cultural values (apart from individualist consumerist values) are superfluous, and it is thus by implication more culturally diverse and egalitarian than the 'real' world.

The final binding element of Ohmae's 'cosmopolitan' utopia, expounded in the section of the book entitled 'Platforms not Nations', is the sense of community or loyalty 'the invisible continent' generates, principally through its primary means of linking people together, information technology ('the platform') and its ability to fulfill consumption needs instantly. It thus generates for the consumer a sense of belonging, cultural integration and identification lacking in nations:

Nearly every platform, in one way or another, becomes a vehicle for linking people together - and thus for creating a community. It may not involve as intimate a subject as love and marriage, but it frequently will involve long-standing human loyalty. A satisfied travel or automobile purchaser *who has been drawn in through software to participate in the core of the transaction as never before ...* will perceive a closer and deeper relationship with the enterprise than if he or she "only" had contact with human beings, because the software gives customers a feeling of more control. (Ohmae 2000: 55 (Ohmae's emphasis))

The key phrase here is 'control' – the invisible continent can bind people together in ways which the nation state cannot because it gives the customer the feeling (perhaps illusion) of *perfect control* and the immediate satisfaction of his/her needs, whereas interaction with mere 'human beings' in place-based communities such as nations does not.

Visions of the corporation as a cosmopolitan utopia such as that by Ohmae open up a rhetorical space which is filled by web sites, images, and statements by heads of the global corporations, in which they attempt to convince both employees and the public both that the cosmopolitan utopia is reality and of their principal role in bringing it about (Goldman, Papson and Kersey 1996, 2003).¹

The second main element of the corporate cosmopolitan utopia, that of portraying the corporation as sensitive to local cultures, is, as Garsten (2003) has emphasized, just as important as its global reach. The semiotic function of representations of the 'local' in the publicity material of the global corporations has been summarized by Garsten, using a notion of Robertson (1992), as 'globe talk':

The global corporation feeds on the local as an idea, as a resource for the construction of images and ideas and signs as products. Spaces and cultures of the world appear as distinct identities that are at once marketable as a nostalgic response to our search for the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional, yet threatened by world consumer culture and market forces. (Garsten 2003: 367)

In an examination of texts and imagery in Global 500 company annual reports, Sklair (2001) has summarized the ideological purposes to which this 'globe talk' is put by the corporations as follows: 'whatever else might change or however social systems might diverge ... people would all agree on one principle, namely the desirability of consuming more and more goods and services' (Sklair 2001: 255). The key element in Ohmae's vision of a corporate cosmopolitan utopia, the unifying influence of consumerism, transcends cultural difference through the unification of the universal and particular. The cosmopolitan corporation thus *appears* to be interested in the locality of places and cultures, however, this interest is, as Garsten points out, limited to and defined by the universal value of consumerism:

The most conspicuous feature of corporate cosmopolitanism ... is not ... the fondness of variety ... it celebrates. ... What is being celebrated is not the value of particular places and particular practices, but the irrelevance of place. (Garsten 2003: 369)

The corporate ideal of detachment

The second level of the discourse of cosmopolitanism apparent in the global corporation we can term the *ideal of detachment* of the global manager or corporate employee: the ability of the cosmopolitan manager to detach him/herself from his/her nationality and from the culture of the country in which he/she works. The ideal corporate cosmopolitan,

¹ Examples of such statements by global managers themselves, and their rhetorical closeness to Ohmae's utopia are provided by Sklair (2001), who cites the following statements. Percy Barnevik, Swedish chairman of the company ABB is quoted as follows: "Our vision was to create a truly global company that knows no borders, has many home countries, operates with mixed nationality teams and offers opportunities for all nationalities." (Sklair 2001: 283) Al Zeien of Gillette states: "A global company views the world as a single country. We know Argentina and France are different, but we treat them the same. We sell them the same products, we use the same production methods, we have the same corporate policies. We even use the same advertising, in a different language, of course." (Sklair 2001: 286).

in other words, should be able to relate to a culture, whether his/her 'own' or another, as an outsider, in particular to understand its characteristics as they relate to the needs of the global corporation, but not have a world view which is limited by or to this culture. Ohmae expresses this imperative in the following terms: 'the language you (the global manager) speak – and the worldview it implies – must be global. You really have to believe, deep down, that people may work 'in' different national environments but are not 'of' them. What they are 'of' is the global corporation' (Ohmae 1990: 119, my insertion). For the corporate cosmopolitan, then, the corporation itself has replaced the nation as the principal source of identity, the profession has replaced local or national community as a source of solidarity. As Hannerz comments, specifically referring to Ohmae,

The corporation apparently becomes an alternative, a transnational source of solidarity and collective identity, ...while the nation at the same time becomes defined as little more than an environment, a local market...In the shared life and personal ties of the corporation, it is implied, cultural resonance can again be found. (Hannerz 1996: 86)

The discourse of detachment immediately seems to place corporate cosmopolitanism within an Enlightenment tradition. As Anderson (1998, 2001) points out, Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, in particular the thinking of Kant, advocated the distancing of the self from all 'parochialisms emanating from allegiances to nation, race, and ethnos' (Anderson 1998: 267) in favour of a universal ideal of world citizenship. Such a belief in the desirability of detachment from national identities has been revived in recent times as a counter-balance to the perceived parochialism of national identities, particularly following the upsurge in nationalism in the 1990's (Kristeva 1991, Nussbaum 1996). The cultivation of detachment is also closely related to the nineteenth-century Arnoldian ideal of culture as the formation of the character (Bildung) by means of self-reflection (Anderson 2001: 6).

Both in its political and cultural forms, the Enlightenment ideal of cosmopolitan detachment has a strong ethical element, invoking broad notions such as universality and humanity as its justification. These universalist assumptions of the desirability or feasibility of extending the cosmopolitan idea to humanity as a whole has been questioned by post-Enlightenment or postmodern thinking (Pollock et al. 2002). Firstly, the concept of universality itself has been criticized as totalizing in nature, imposing on the incommensurability of different cultures a universal concept of humanity (Lyotard 1989, 1998). Lyotard asks whether the Enlightenment cosmopolitan 'grand narrative' of universal progress can and should have validity in the postmodern era: 'can we continue today to organize the multitude of events that come to us from the world, ..., by subsuming them beneath the idea of a universal history of humanity?' (Lyotard 1989: 314). For Lyotard, then, cosmopolitan universalist detachment necessarily imposes itself as force, primarily in the form of the imposition of Western ideas upon other cultures (Lyotard 1998). Rorty, in contrast, while equally skeptical about the necessity of an emancipatory element in the cosmopolitan ideal, challenges Lyotard's belief that cosmopolitanism must necessarily involve force, arguing that a pragmatic 'cosmopolitan social democratic community' (Rorty 1992: 60) based on Western democratic values can be achieved by persuasion, a view which itself has been criticized as imperialist (Papastephanou 2000).

In the corporate ideal of detachment, the 'grand narrative' of emancipation is present in the appeal of Ohmae and others to the intersubjective element of the establishment of a

cosmopolitan class: the aspiration of the global corporate employee to become cosmopolitan is supposedly something which can and should be extended to all humanity. The ideal of detachment is also, on the other hand, highly individualistic in nature, in that it is seen as an ethical requirement for the individual manager or employee to separate him/herself from existing communities, and undergo a 'transformation' or emancipation by adopting characteristics seen as desirable in bringing about the universal ethical ideals of cosmopolitanism (Anderson 2001: 31). This *transformational* or *emancipatory* view of cosmopolitanism, however, while expressed in the Enlightenment as a universal ethical ideal (Hill 2000), is expressed within global management literature as a moral imperative, not to identify with the world as a whole, but to remain 'flexible' and to more closely identify with the global corporation which serves as an allegory of this cosmopolitan utopia.

Cosmopolitan identity: choice and loyalty

The ideal of detachment is related to the third major area of the discourse of 'cosmopolitanism' in the global corporation, the privileging of *choice* over *loyalty*. Whilst being careful not to equate cosmopolitanism purely with mobility, texts such as that of Kanter nevertheless make it clear that the manager or employee most likely to fulfill the corporate cosmopolitan ideal is one who has a *choice* over allegiances to place, cultures or groups, rather than someone who is primarily determined by fixed *loyalties*. It seems that this requirement is likely to favour those whose socialization has not been limited to one culture, whether this is reflected in diversity of cultural origin, parentage, upbringing, frequency of travel or prolonged periods of residence abroad. The relationship between transnationalism and cosmopolitanism is, according to Roudometof, a confused one, often leading to the assumption the latter is reducible to the former (Roudometof 2005: 117). In reality, however, amongst people who are by necessity transnationals, such as global business persons, 'individuals can adopt an open, encompassing attitude or a closed, defensive posture ... the presence of a cosmopolitan outlook ... is conceptually distinct from the transnational experience' (Roudometof 2005: 121).

The postulated relationship between transnationalism as expressed in the choice of location by autonomous actors and cosmopolitanism, which restricts this to a particular class or elite of persons (Calhoun 2002, Hannerz 1996, Sklair 2001) has been caricatured in the image of the rootless corporate cosmopolitan who lives in a world between airport lounge and international chain hotel (Iyer 2000). The restriction of cosmopolitanism to such a transnational elite with the means and resources to be mobile (Bauman 1998), has been seen as creating a class of frequent travellers (Robbins 1998, 2001, Calhoun 2002) who use their position of choice to maintain their power:

We ... imagine the world from the vantage point of frequent travellers, easily entering and exiting polities and social relations around the world, armed with visa-friendly passports and credit cards. ... For such frequent travellers cosmopolitanism has considerable rhetorical advantage. It seems hard not to want to be a 'citizen of the world' (Calhoun 2002: 89).

The view of cosmopolitanism which sees place as the principal determinant of culture, and thus mobility as the primary means of detaching oneself from it, has been challenged as inadequate from an anthropological point of view (Clifford 1992, Hannerz 1996), given the frequency and extent of transnational migration and flows involving

different classes and the pervasive influence of global media and communication technology.

The extension of cosmopolitanism to those who are still attached or confined by circumstances to place, as advocated by Clifford, however, seems to imply that, through the global media or global consumption, in some sense *everyone* is actually or potentially a cosmopolitan, at least at the level of 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Urry 2000, Szerszynski and Urry 2002) :

In this perspective the notion that certain classes of people are cosmopolitan (travelers) while the rest are local (natives) appears as the ideology of one (very powerful) traveling culture. ... I'm not saying that there are no locales or homes, that everyone is - or should be - traveling, or cosmopolitan, or deterritorialized. This is not nomadology. (Clifford 1992: 108)

If Clifford's view is a valid critique of a cosmopolitanism which, in its privileging of travel and residence abroad seems to be 'elitist' in nature, the question of the quality or *depth* of cosmopolitan experience remains. The resulting desire to differentiate between *superficial* and *deep* forms of cosmopolitanism has led to the criticism that the cosmopolitanism of the frequent corporate traveller consists of 'consuming' cultures rather than engaging with them (Hannerz 1996, Calhoun 2002). The corporate expatriate is deemed by Hannerz not to be a *true* cosmopolitan as 'he is surrounded by the foreign culture but does not often immerse himself in it...he may reluctantly build up a competence, but he does not enjoy it' (Hannerz 1996: 105). What for Hannerz disqualifies the transnational corporate traveller from being a *true* cosmopolitan is that his/her cosmopolitanism is just a skill or competence acquired for the purposes of a job. Engagement with cultures for the corporate cosmopolitan, is, according to Hannerz, therefore not actually a matter of *choice*, as Kanter's definition implies, but a *necessity*, the necessary cost of functioning successfully in the global business environment.

It seems, then, that the nature of the choice exercised by corporate cosmopolitans over cultural affiliation has a dual aspect. While for Kanter choice refers to the imperative to be 'flexible', to resist existing loyalties in order to fulfill the requirement of the global corporation to be able to operate equally well in any place, for Hannerz the choice of the *true* cosmopolitan relates not to an ideal of flexibility, but to an aesthetic ideal, 'a willingness to engage with the Other. ... an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (Hannerz 1996: 103). The search for difference or diversity rather than uniformity and pleasure in the experience of diversity *for its own sake*, has been traditionally personified in the figure of the cosmopolitan intellectual. In the practical world of global business, however, such a disinterested aesthetic attitude to diversity seems out of place, as an interest in culture is primarily married to and reflected in the need to 'manage' cultural differences which occur and may impinge upon the efficient functioning of global business (Harris et al. 2004).

A starting point for an examination of the second element of cosmopolitan identity, the question of loyalty and identification with organization, profession and national culture, are the terms 'cosmopolitan' and 'local' as defined by Gouldner (1989). For Gouldner, a 'cosmopolitan' is someone who has weak loyalties to their employing organization, is highly committed to specialized role skills, and who is likely to use an outward reference group orientation. A 'local' on the other hand, is someone whose primary loyalty is to the

employing organization, low on commitment to specialized role skills, and likely to use an inner reference group orientation. It seems that the word 'cosmopolitan' has undergone a rhetorical transformation in global management texts such as that of Kanter in comparison to the term as understood by Gouldner. While for Gouldner 'cosmopolitan' seems to be a negative term seen from the point of view of the primary criterion of identification with the employing organization, the term is now employed with positive connotations. If the organization itself, it seems, is no longer local or national, then a 'cosmopolitan' attitude is now to be encouraged, not discouraged. However, there seem to be two limiting elements to this transformation. Firstly, the transformation from the negative to positive valorization of 'cosmopolitan' is accompanied by and reflects a transformation or 'cosmopolitanization' of the organization itself. Kanter, for instance, identifies two types of 'cosmopolitan' whose identification beyond the bounds of Gouldner's 'local' identification with organization would not be a threat but an advantage for the global corporation: industry' cosmopolitans, for whom a global network of industry-specific or professional contacts throughout the world supplants 'local' identity (Kanter 1995: 84), and 'ethnic' cosmopolitans, whose identification is with a global ethnic community rather than a local community (Kanter 1995: 85). In both cases, it is identification with the network, whether professional or ethnic, which, according to Kanter, distinguishes 'cosmopolitans' from locals and guarantees that this form of identification can be of positive benefit to the corporation.

The crucial link between Gouldner's classification and the contemporary ideal of corporate cosmopolitanism, it seems, is professionalism:

Professionalism, with its peculiar ability to produce bands among detached, institutionally scattered subjects, bands not created or sustained by the frequent, face-to-face engagements of the same-site work group, would seem well-suited to new demands for loyalty and solidarity at a distance, whether corporate or quasi-governmental. (Robbins 2001: 23)

The professional network, particularly as facilitated by information technology, seems to embody the necessary 'universal values' which can serve as 'the glue a nation-based orientation once provided' (Ohmae 1990: 112). This universal solidarity, however, as pointed out by Robbins, is not the universal concern with humanity of the Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideal, but a 'partial universalism' which 'involves solidarity with some people outside the nation, not solidarity with humanity as a whole' (Robbins 2001: 29). The decisive question here is whether identification with a global professional network is a sufficient condition for the development of a cosmopolitan attitude, in particular whether the engagement with a global professional network results in subjective reflection on cultural difference beyond and outside the profession. Two recent sociological and anthropological studies of professional networks throw light on this question.

Monaci et al (2003), investigating the conceptions of globalized self among nine groups of Italian professionals in global organizations, defined three dimensions by which the extent of reflexivity in the construction of a global 'cosmopolitan' self can be measured: access to global networks, the extent to which the day to day activities of professionals involved forms of transnational association, exposure to global pressures, the degree to which professionals perceived their day to day activities as determined by the pressures and need to adapt to global trends, and competence in the rhetoric of globalization, and

the propensity of professionals to reflect on the global reality they encounter and their place within it.

With regard to corporate top managers and financial operators Monaci et al conclude that the form of cosmopolitanism which characterizes this professional group is of a 'bounded and elitist' nature, defined as 'an accentuated inclination to depict and present oneself as belonging to a restricted global upper class that is manifestly separated from the rest of people by means of a common lifestyle and a set of behaviour patterns' (Monaci et al 2003: 469). Reflexivity on globalization and cultural differences among this group is limited to the extent that it occurs 'mostly inside the neat, secure, and scarcely flexible boundaries of a prevalently pragmatic logic' (Monaci et al 2003: 470). The profession, in other words, tends to rationalize away cultural differences where they do occur, in that 'the manifestations of cultural diversity most different from one's cognitive and value references are either mediated/sterilized through one's corporate network' (470). Finally, actual encounters with cultural difference through travel abroad, have limited impact on the development of cosmopolitan attitudes in that this always occurs within the bounds of a 'set of well-known and predetermined life spaces' (hotels, offices, airport lounges) (Monaci et al 2003: 470). Professional solidarity, then, is a factor for rationalizing, managing and ultimately controlling cultural difference, rather than recognizing it as a value in its own right. This control element is facilitated not only by ways of thinking and rationalization, but also by the spaces within which this group move, which ensure that culture can never encroach upon the activities of the corporation to any significant extent.

A second recent anthropological study, by Moore (2000, 2002, 2004) of business persons in the City of London branch of a major German bank, has demonstrated how professionals use national and 'cosmopolitan' identities as symbols, particularly as defined by stereotypical characteristics gained from popular intercultural literature on 'business styles' depending on the situation and the advantages to be gained from this. This process of self definition through multivalent symbols, or as Moore terms it the 'symbolic self-presentation of transnational actors' (Moore 2002: 195), shows that,

rather than the multicultural utopia envisioned by Kenichi Ohmae (1990), in which diverse groups unite into a single, business-focused culture, the City is, in practice, constructed through images of specific national identities and these seem, furthermore to be decidedly slanted towards the stereotypical. (Moore 2002: 3).

Cosmopolitanism, therefore, defined as adopting a symbolic identity beyond one's local or national identity, is not simply, a question of *either* identifying with national culture (a 'local') *or* with global professional group (a 'cosmopolitan'), but is a constantly shifting and ambiguous process of identification in which the professional is aware of the necessity of presenting oneself with a particular identity at a particular time and set of circumstances. One might term this understanding of identity postmodern as it understands cosmopolitanism not a fixed identity, but one which seems to abandon the logic of 'either/or' in favour of 'both/and', and is an identity characterized by a high degree of reflexivity and ironic self awareness.

Both these studies, then, throw doubt on any simple identification of loyalty or solidarity with a professional network as being equivalent to the adoption of a cosmopolitan

attitude. Cultural identification with nation tends to be conceptualized within professional networks as an aberration from a presumed culture-free rational-pragmatic professional ideal and as a result of a failure to think in a desired way (e.g. by thinking first as a German or Japanese and only secondarily as a business person or manager). The concern with supposed 'cosmopolitan' attitude of professionals in global management literature might, therefore, better be characterized, not as cosmopolitanism, but rather as motivated by a distrust of 'locals', an attitude which Moore sees as symptomatic of a way of thinking typical in American corporations:

American MNCs who, rather than hiring local managers for their branches, hire American-educated people originating from that area; in such a situation, one might well question whether these individuals are part of "local," American or corporate culture, if indeed any of the three are separable from the others. (Moore 2002: 7)

This distrust of 'locals' to think in the 'correct' way, as firstly an employee of the global corporation and then only secondarily in terms of their local identity, results in the desire by some corporations to wish to employ people with a dual identity: a 'local' cultural background, but with an American business school education, as expressed in the ideal of the 'hybrid' cosmopolitan which will be discussed below.

Cosmopolitanism as competence

The fourth major area of the discourse of cosmopolitanism in the global corporation is that cosmopolitanism is a *skill* or set of skills which can be *acquired*. This understanding of cosmopolitanism is expressed in corporate intercultural training manuals and similar texts. Brennan (1997) in an examination of one such text, Rhinesmith's *A Manager's Guide to Globalization : Six Keys to Success in a Changing World* (1996), has defined the cultural assumptions behind the literature which encourages the cultivation of a 'global mindset' in managers as a set of skills. The rhetorical strategy of such texts is to bridge the gap between the utopian vision of the ideal of detachment and a more prosaic reality, between a vision in which managers would have already transcended their national identity and the fact that, as Rhinesmith admits, 'people never give up their own national backgrounds and differences' (Rhinesmith, quoted in Brennan 1997: 159).

The unfortunate fact of persistence of the national affiliations of managers, together with the consequence that they might be inadequately prepared to handle foreign assignments, or might fail to understand cultural differences as reflected in market preferences, means that intercultural training and business intercultural literature are necessary. As Dahlen (1997) points out this literature conceptualizes culture in a reductive way as its consumers have first to be convinced that culture is a significant factor in explaining their interactions with others, and thus it would appear to be an advantage of the conception of culture as something with its own properties, rather tangible, bounded, atemporal and internally homogeneous. It thereby has an advantageous commodity form, being readily accessible' (Dahlen 1997: 178). As Brennan says, the talk in such literature is not of the moral imperatives of detachment, but of an 'inflated rhetoric of mystified "skills"' whose purpose is 'to make the mind of the accountant shimmer with the light of the Crocean traditional intellectual' (Brennan 1997: 160). The competence in 'managing culture' which this literature propagates conceives culture primarily as something to be controlled, and as 'culture shock' to be overcome,

the exact opposite of an open 'aesthetic' cosmopolitan attitude as defined by Hannerz (Holden 2002). Armed with the 'periodic table' (Holden 2002: 48) of the cultural dimensional models of Hofstede (1994, 2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2002), this literature assumes that 'it is possible, by surveying and systematizing the behaviour and stated attitudes of individual members, to penetrate and expose the core assumptions and values of any culture' (Holden 2002: 28). By acquiring more information about cultural attitudes as reflected in the cultural dimensions of other managers, then, 'culture shock' can be avoided or overcome (Holden 2002: 29). The implicitly negative view of culture in many intercultural training programmes leads Hannerz to call the industry sceptically a 'culture shock prevention industry' (Hannerz 1996: 108). Jack and Lorbiecki (1999) come to the conclusion that the nature of such training programmes may in fact reinforce myths and stereotypes about foreign culture rather than overcome them (Jack and Lorbiecki 1999: 11)

The question whether the competence which intercultural training programmes aim to provide can ultimately lead to the adoption of a deeper cosmopolitanism crucially depends on the relationship between what Hannerz terms 'surrender' to foreign cultures and 'mastery' of them. Whilst a manager might acquire through training a limited cosmopolitan competence understood as 'mastery of a culture', he/she has nevertheless not fully 'surrendered' to the foreign culture: 'One's understandings have expanded, a little more of the world is somehow under control. ... It may be one kind of cosmopolitanism where the individual picks from other cultures only those pieces which suit himself' (Hannerz 196: 103). This state of eclecticism, picking from foreign cultures only 'those pieces which suit oneself', or rather, in the case of the cosmopolitan manager, understanding only those aspects of a culture which are of interest to the needs of the corporation, cannot, for Hannerz, constitute true cosmopolitanism, in which:

the cosmopolitan does not make invidious distinctions among the particular elements of the alien culture in order to admit some of them into his repertoire and refuse others; he does not negotiate with the other culture but accepts it as a package deal. (103)

If we apply Hannerz's criterion of 'surrender to culture' to corporate cosmopolitanism as a form of competence it is unlikely that this will be fulfilled. By definition, the 'cosmopolitan' manager does not accept the foreign culture as a 'package deal' but is primarily interested in those elements of a culture which directly impinge upon the activities of the global corporation as *problems to be dealt with*. Total 'surrender' to or identification with the foreign culture would not be compatible with the corporate cosmopolitan ideal, indeed would be antipathetic to it, as such a surrender to culture would conflict with what is supposed to be the global manager's primary source of loyalty, the corporation itself.

5. 'Hybridity' : the realization of the corporate cosmopolitan ideal of flexibility?

One of the principal postmodern critiques of the Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideal has been that the cosmopolitanism it puts forward has no roots: the cosmopolitan must apparently deny his/her local or national identities in favour of vague notions of humanity or universal values (see Nussbaum 1994 and replies). One response to this critique has been the notion of the 'rooted cosmopolitan', defined by Appiah as someone who is

'attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities', but who takes pleasure 'from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other, different people' (Appiah 1998: 91). The 'rooted cosmopolitan' appears, then, to be a move beyond the binary modernist logic of identity as *either* cosmopolitan *or* local to the cosmopolitan understood as someone who is some sense *both* a cosmopolitan *and* a local.

The 'hybrid', 'mongrel' (Zachary 2000), or 'third culture' identity (Casmir 1993, Gunesch 2004), someone who has experience of two cultures but belongs to neither, seems to be the embodiment of this rooted form of cosmopolitanism and is seen as desirable in the multinational corporation. Zachary portrays the advantages of 'hybrid' identity for the global corporation in social, psychological, and aesthetic terms. Whereas the modernist concept of identity sought to reconcile contradictions and multiple identifications within a consistent and unified autonomous concept of self, the 'hybrid/mongrel' epitomizes a postmodern approach to identity which creates self out of an 'identity toolbox' (Zachary 2000: 18), does not seek to reconcile psychological contradictions, for example between local and global, professional and organizational identities, but lives within and benefits from these contradictions: 'The mongrel is a bundle of contradictions, metaphorically, and exists at odds with others, actually. Discontent is the groundbeat of his life' (Zachary 2000: 60).

Turner (2000) has expressed the nature of such a postmodern 'hybrid' cosmopolitan identity in terms of the binary opposites of 'hot' and 'cool' loyalties and 'thin' and 'thick' solidarities:

Post-modern or cosmopolitan citizenship will be characterized by cool loyalties and thin patterns of solidarity. Indeed we could argue that the characteristic mode of orientation of the cosmopolitan citizen would in fact be one of (Socratic) disloyalty and ironic distance. An ironist always holds her views about the social world in doubt, because they are always subject to revision and reformulation. (Turner 2000: 141)

The postmodern 'hybrid' cosmopolitan, then, has no 'hot' loyalties, such as the emotional attachment to nation or ethnic group, but a series of 'cool' loyalties, which are subject to change, and 'thin' solidarities to different groups, such as profession or organization, none of which has a particular or sole claim on his/her identity. The key element in defining the 'coolness' or 'thinness' of the 'hybrid's' identities, is the ability through ironic distance, to see all commitments and byalties as contingent and thus remain 'flexible' (Turner 2000, Rorty 1989). The postmodern hybrid cosmopolitan seems to embody all the advantages of 'the stranger' as characterized by Simmel in that,

he is not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of 'objectivity.' But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement. (Wolff 1950: 402)

The postmodern 'hybrid' cosmopolitan has sufficient cultural knowledge to understand cultural characteristics, but not so much that his/her loyalties become 'hot'. His/her loyalties are sufficiently 'cool' to remain detached, but not indifferent. 'Hybridity', defined

in these terms, represents the new cosmopolitan ideal for global corporations in that such individuals embody the sought after skills typically defined as essential to function within global teams (Zachary 2000, Marquard and Horvath 2001).

An example of the type of skills which the 'hybrid' is said to offer the corporation is given by Zachary in the following sketch:

When Motorola first tackled India's mobile telephone market, it assigned one of its executives of Indian descent the critical task of dealing with government agencies. It wasn't until the man proved a star that Motorola realized he had never been to India. He was born and raised in Malaysia of Indian-born parents. Being an outsider to both India and the United States helped him succeed in his job, he says. (Zachary 2000: 69)

Significantly, the 'hybrid' depicted here, is a cultural 'outsider' to both countries, but has a certain kind of 'inside' knowledge of Indian culture, at least as defined in the purposive/rational terms (e.g. of market peculiarities) which the corporation requires to mount a successful marketing campaign there. What Motorola does *not* require, it seems, is someone who has *actually* been to or lived in India, because in such a case 'hot' cultural identification might stand in the way of the person being able to identify totally with the interests of the corporation rather than his/her 'own' culture. Similarly, although the 'hybrid' sketched by Zachary has had a predominantly American business education, he is 'not' American in the sense that he does not totally identify with this aspect of his identity either.

Zachary sees this 'hybrid' definition of cosmopolitanism as a counterbalance to Ohmae's view, whom he criticizes for his 'failure to grasp that the opposite of national identity isn't a hollow corporate cosmopolitanism' (Zachary 2000: 211). However, the question arises whether Zachary's own concept of hybridity escapes the more culturally imperialistic elements of Ohmae's corporate cosmopolitanism. As Zachary recognizes, corporations are interested in cultural diversity, not for its own sake, but seek

diversity as a means to an end, not an end in itself. And therein lies a source of great tension: The multinational corporations that promote a new cosmopolitanism may be the very force to undermine the social and cultural structures that are essential to holding together pluralistic nations. (Zachary 2000: 214).

The 'hybrid', who is an outsider or stranger in all cultures, seemingly fits perfectly the requirements of this instrumental logic: his/hers is the totally flexible identity which can give the corporation the 'inside' information about cultures they require, without the disadvantages which too much identification brings.

The 'hybrid' can also be criticized as an example of what Gergen calls a 'pastiche personality':

The pastiche personality is a social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation. If one's identity is properly managed, the rewards can be substantial... (Gergen 1991: 150)

Billig sees such a 'pastiche personality' as a fiction based on the consumerist illusion that national identities are something that can be acquired and discarded like consumer goods:

National identity cannot be exchanged like last year's clothes. ... One can eat Chinese tomorrow and Turkish the day after; one can even dress in Chinese or Turkish styles. But *being* Chinese or Turkish are not commercially available options. (Billig 1995: 138-9, Billig's emphasis)

The 'hybrid' corporate cosmopolitan can be seen as a postmodern re-incarnation of Peer Gynt: he/she is a totally flexible individual who in one sense has 'no self' but in another sense by virtue of this very lack of self can take on any self at will, can in fact be 'Chinese' today and 'Turkish' tomorrow.

Conclusion

The discourse of cosmopolitanism in the global corporation is evident at various levels as expressed in the programmatic texts of gurus such as Ohmae, Rhinesmith and Zachary, and in the prescriptive texts of global managers, corporate advertising and web sites, and in intercultural training and recruitment programmes, which attempt to enact the corporate cosmopolitan utopia in practice.

At the highest level of the discourse, the corporation is seen as an allegory of a 'cosmopolitan' world, transcending cultural diversity in an egalitarian utopia of individualist values. The unifying factor in this utopia is what Sklair calls 'the culture-ideology of consumerism' through which all needs can be satisfied. This utopia is, however, not an instance of 'cosmopolitanization' in Beck's (2002) sense, a world which recognizes cultural diversity as an end in itself, although corporations, through their 'globe talk' may claim to do so, but a neo-liberal 'globalist' utopia in which cultures are rendered superfluous by the establishment of the universal values of the market.

The ideal of the detached 'cosmopolitan manager' can be seen as a reflection of the 'characterological' imperative to bring about the corporate cosmopolitan utopia in the personality of the individual. However, although the discourse of the 'global manager' is often couched in the utopian 'transformational' language of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, the reality is often more prosaic, consisting of the acquisition by the manager of a set of skills or competencies by which he/she can 'prevent culture shock' rather than engage with culture at any deep level.

Within this discourse the corporate employee is seen as under the obligation to transcend his/her 'local' identifications and solidarities by means of greater identification with the corporation and through the supposed 'universal' values of the global professional network. Such identification with profession, however, is, as far as culture is concerned, of a restricted and elitist nature, in the sense that a pragmatic professional logic will always seek to control and 'rationalize away' cultural difference rather than treat it as a value in itself.

The ultimate stage of the discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism is seen in a postmodern turn towards the 'hybrid' or 'third-culture' cosmopolitan, who, by virtue of having multiple yet 'cool' loyalties towards different cultures, incorporates all the

advantageous features of Simmel's 'stranger', distance and nearness, indifference and involvement, and thus is seen as the fulfillment of the corporate cosmopolitan ideal within a neo-liberal utopia.

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