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Cosmopolitanism as a Source of Identity and Belonging

Skovgaard-Smith, Irene; Poulfelt, Flemming

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Abstract

Current literature tends to see cosmopolitan identity formation as an individual endeavour of developing a stance of openness, and transcending discourses of national and other cultural identities. This article challenges the essentialism inherent in this model by proposing a different framing of cosmopolitan identity formation that shifts the focus to how people collectively mobilize cosmopolitanism as a resource for cultural identity construction. The article is based on an anthropological study of transnational professionals who are part of a diverse expatriate community in Amsterdam. The analysis shows how these professionals draw on cosmopolitanism to define themselves as 'non-nationals'. This involves downplaying national affiliations and cultural differences while also marking national identity categories and 'cultural features' to maintain the difference they collectively embrace. This however does not imply openness to all otherness. Boundary drawing to demarcate the cosmopolitan 'us' in relation to national (mono)culture is equally important. The article argues that cosmopolitan identities are socially accomplished as particular modes of collective belonging that are part of – not beyond – a global discursive sphere of identity politics.

Introduction

The question was put to him what countryman he was, and he replied,

'A Citizen of the world' (kosmopolitês)

Diogenes the Cynic (Laertius and Yonge, 1853)

The past two decades have seen an exponential growth in scholarship on cosmopolitanism across the social sciences. This trend is closely associated with transnational interconnectedness and encounters with difference on an unprecedented scale as a result of cross-border business, migration, mobility, media and consumption (Beck and Sznaider, 2006). The genealogy of the idea can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy (Inglis, 2014) and later the notion of the cosmopolitan as a 'citizen of the world' who rejects cultural belonging in allegiance to humanity as a whole (Nussbaum, 1994) and has developed a stance of openness and 'willingness to engage with the Other' (Hannerz, 1996, p. 103).

While this image is contested in the sociological literature on cosmopolitanism, the concept of openness to cultural difference remains widely regarded as a defining characteristic of the cosmopolitan – despite its analytical problems and normative undertones (Inglis, 2014; Skey, 2012; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013). Moreover, cosmopolitan identity formation tends to be understood as an individual endeavour 'signified by the icons of singular personhood' (Pollock et al, 2000, p. 581). The assumption is that cosmopolitanism presupposes individualization (Beck, 2002) and a cosmopolitan identity is seen as an expression of selfhood that transcends cultural identity and collective belonging. As such, it is in theory 'a model of identity liberated from the modern grid of identity formation' (Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013, p. 11).

In this article we challenge this model and its assumptions by arguing that cosmopolitan identity projects are socially and relationally accomplished using

cosmopolitanism as a cultural resource. The theoretical starting point is that cosmopolitanism is culture and not its absence (Calhoun, 2003). *How* this cultural ideology is collectively mobilized and established as an identity discourse within particular social settings is the empirical question. We explore this through a contextualized analysis of the identity narratives of group of transnational professionals who are part of a diverse 'expat' community in Amsterdam where they work in headquarters of multinational companies (MNCs). These professionals belong to the educated middle classes for whom more autonomous global mobility and pursuit of careers across both organizational and national boundaries has increasingly become an option (Baruch and Reis, 2016; Colic-Peisker, 2010; Dickman and Baruch, 2011; Kennedy, 2004).

We show how the professionals in our study draw on a discourse of cosmopolitanism to construct a collective identity as 'non-nationals' in the context of diverse social spaces and shared circumstances. Defining themselves as open they establish a dual sense of *commonality in difference* by downplaying national affiliations and cultural differences through mutual social efforts of 'neutralizing' and being flexible while also marking national identity categories and 'cultural features' to maintain them as objects of celebration and embrace. This however does not imply openness to and embrace of all manifestations and performances of cultural difference. It equally involves boundary drawing to establish who does *not* belong and what the 'non-nationals' define themselves vis-à-vis, namely national (mono)culture and parochialism.

The article contributes to developing an understanding of how cosmopolitan identities are socially and relationally accomplished in the context of shared social spaces and conditions. Our analysis illuminates that cosmopolitan identity formation cannot be presumed to represent an individual endeavour of transcending culture and belonging in unbounded openness and embrace of otherness in any absolute or preconceived sense. The mobilization

of cosmopolitanism as an identity discourse implies constructing both the otherness that is included and the otherness that is excluded. We furthermore argue that cosmopolitan identities are no less cultural and collective than national, ethnic or ethno-religious identities. The collective here does not refer to an abstract notion of humanity as a whole or a global culture, but *particular* situated modes of belonging contingent on shared social spaces, circumstances and a set of collectively held understandings that represent a discourse of cosmopolitanism.

By approaching cosmopolitanism as a cultural identity discourse, we propose a different framing to that found in much of the literature. In the following we continue by positioning our approach in relation to the sociological debate on cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan identities. We then describe the empirical setting and research approach after which we present the empirical account of our analysis. We conclude with a discussion of the contributions of the article and broader implications.

Conceptions of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan identities

The concept of cosmopolitanism has been employed in a range of ways across disciplines from political theory and philosophy to sociology and anthropology and there is little agreement about its theoretical conceptualization and empirical operationalization. The expanding body of literature consequently resembles 'the veritable ruins of a tower of babel' as Mendieta (2009, p. 241) notes. Nevertheless, a broad distinction between moral, political and cultural cosmopolitanism is generally accepted.

Moral cosmopolitanism refers to a universal normative ideal related to the equal worth of all human beings as part of humanity with roots in ancient Greek Cynicism and Stoicism, and later Kantian philosophy (Inglis, 2014; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). As political philosopher Nussbaum (1994) so influentially argued, what the world needs in

response to nationalism is 'the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world' (p. 3). For some proponents, this implies a vision of a world civilization beyond cultural affiliations. Related to this, political cosmopolitanism concerns global governance structures and civil society based on Kantian notions of a league of states cooperating to ensure world peace, respect for human rights and universal hospitality where people can freely travel and trade (Inglis, 2014).

Cultural cosmopolitanism on the other hand is understood as a lived and practiced empirical phenomenon where cosmopolitan rituals and symbols 'turn philosophy into personal and social identity […] relevant for social analysis' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006, p. 8). This is the domain of sociological and anthropological studies and theorizing on cosmopolitanism in relation to which this article is positioned. The focus in this body of literature is primarily macro processes of cosmopolitanization (Beck and Sznaider, 2006) and identities, dispositions and practices of openness 'towards peoples, places and experiences from different cultures' (Szerszynski and Urry, 2002, p. 468). The notion of openness is widely used as a defining characteristic of the cosmopolitan (Inglis, 2014; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Skrbiš and Woodward (2013) argue that openness is 'an epistemological principle of cosmopolitanism: it limits and fixates the definitional horizon by reminding us that beyond openness lies a sphere of all things un-cosmopolitan' (p. 2).

Delanty's (2006) proposition is that the cosmopolitan moment arises in the construction of identities and forms of self-understanding articulated through cultural models of world openness that accord with 'the desire to go beyond ethnocentricity and particularity' (p. 42). Similarly for Beck (2002) cosmopolitanism is 'an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities which include the otherness of the other' (p. 18). These processes are constructivist involving cultural contestation, pluralization and self-problematization in and through cultural encounters (Delanty, 2006).

This represents a critical, post-universalistic direction in the sociology of cosmopolitanism. Here cosmopolitanism is conceptualized as socially situated (Delanty, 2006) and this means that it can emerge in multiple forms, potentially occurs in all strata and is not merely a Western phenomenon (Appiah, 1997; Delanty, 2014; Hannerz, 2010; Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Werbner, 1999). Furthermore, cosmopolitan and national identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Beck and Sznaider, 2006) and the classic opposition between cosmopolitans and locals (e.g. Gouldner, 1957; Hannerz, 1996) is similarly rejected. Practiced cosmopolitanism means '*rooted* cosmopolitanism, having 'roots' and 'wings' at the same time' as Beck (2002, p. 19) argues using Appiah's (1997) term. As such it is always geographically and socially located within specific contexts where cultural encounters arise – such as in global cities, multinational corporations, transnational communities, activist groups, diverse social and other networks, bi-national families and so forth (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006).

This post-universalistic direction in the sociology of cosmopolitanism implies a clear distinction from normative-political approaches and there is no postulation of the development of a single world culture (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006; Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). However, a normative dimension is nevertheless often maintained. Beck and Sznaider (2006), Delanty (2006) and Turner (2001) for instance all convey that cosmopolitanism presupposes universalistic norms related to openness, tolerance and virtues such as rejection of parochialism and ethnocentricity, respect for cultural difference and commitment to dialogue between cultures.

This maintenance of a normative dimension results, as Calhoun (2010) argues, in an underlying ambiguity even in sophisticated sociological theories of cosmopolitanism. This fuels the debate on how to study 'actually existing' variants of cosmopolitanism (Calhoun, 2002, p. 68) and the extent to which practices of openness, engagement with the Other and

embrace of otherness are 'real', deep or authentic rather than merely superficial or banal (Inglis, 2014). Argyrou (2015) goes as far as to suggest that cosmopolitanism is nowhere to be found, asserting that it is an idealization. This highlights the analytical problems with the concept and its empirical operationalization (Skey, 2012; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013).

Furthermore, cosmopolitanism is seen to presuppose individualization thus freeing the individual from being 'a mere epiphenomenon of his culture' (Beck, 2002, p. 37). Practiced cosmopolitanism is expected to transform people's identities in ways that transcend national and cultural boundaries and make them open to the world as a whole (Delanty, 2006; Pichler, 2011). It represents a notion of never being fully at home in any cultural category (Turner 2001). This is similar to Nussbaum's (1994) classic representation:

> Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business. It is, in effect, as Diogenes said, a kind of exile – from the comfort of local truths, from the warm nestling feeling of patriotism, from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and one's own. (p. 33).

Developing a cosmopolitan sense of self is seen as a matter of embracing otherness and engaging with a plurality of cultures while remaining personally autonomous vis-à-vis these cultural worlds (Hannerz, 1996). The dominant assumption is that 'cosmopolitan identities develop separately from the discourses of national or local anchors and collectivities' (Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013, p. 11).

Calhoun's (2003) critique of the idea that individuals are somehow able to transcend cultural worlds and collectivities is important here. He argues that this idea is misleading, because 'it is impossible not to belong to social groups, relations, or culture' (p. 536). People occupy particular social positions and are situated in particular communities and webs of belonging (Calhoun, 2002, 2003). Embracing cosmopolitanism therefore does not mean

'freedom from social affiliation but a different organization of affiliations' and 'participation in a particular process of cultural production and social interconnection that spans boundaries' (Calhoun, 2003, p. 537, 544).

The implications of this critique are however yet to be fully pursued as it has mostly focused on emphasizing the social basis of cosmopolitan identity formation, such as class and professional status, and the continued significance of prevalent national, ethnic or religious identities. This means that cosmopolitan identity formation can involve embracing multiple affiliations (Appiah, 1997; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002) and that it is contingent on cultural, and social conditions, the status of the actors involved and the settings they are part of (Daskalaki, 2012; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013). Nonetheless despite the emphasis on shared social conditions, status and settings, cosmopolitan identity formation remains understood primarily as an individual-level phenomenon (Levy et al., 2006). It is conceptualized as a socially recognizable, but 'personally managed expression of selfhood' (Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013, p. 11) that develops separately from collective anchors of identity. Practiced cosmopolitanism is in this sense 'an individual practice that signifies the discovery of one's own way through other localities and cultures' (Daskalaki, 2012 p. 430).

In existing research on transnational professionals relevant in the context of our study, the resulting identity transformation has been shown to involve profession or occupation becoming a central axis of identity while identification with both nation of origin and host nation tend to be weak (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Kennedy, 2004; Mao and Shen, 2015). Colic-Peisker (2010) argues that the identity constructions of transnationally mobile professionals are intrinsically individualistic and that immersion in various transnational settings along with 'the attitude of openness reinforce each other in diminishing local and national affiliations' (p. 485). In the following we continue by discussing conditions and social settings of practiced cosmopolitanism relevant in the case of middle-class transnational

professionals, before moving on to outline the analytical approach we propose for understanding cosmopolitan identity formation.

Conditions and social sites of practiced cosmopolitanism

The importance of class, education, occupation and mobility have generally been emphasised in the literature (Calhoun, 2002; Colic-Peisker, 2010; Daskalaki, 2012; Elliott and Urry, 2010, Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Mobility is considered particularly significant (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006) and can include actual, potential and virtual mobility as well as the travel of commodities, cultural ideas and technologies (Urry, 2007). In the case of transnational professionals, geographical movements – whether temporary, semi-permanent or permanent – play a key role as a condition of cosmopolitan identity formation (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Daskalaki, 2012; Elliott and Urry, 2010; Kennedy, 2010).

Yet, no matter how deterritorialized and transient, social life and work is also grounded in locality (Meier, 2015). Global cities such as New York, London, Tokyo, Singapore, Shanghai, Paris and Amsterdam to name a few, represent key locations for transnational professionals. These cities are increasingly defined by transnational networks and have emerged as partly denationalized platforms for intertwined global capital and labour mobility (Sassen, 2001). Multinational corporations and other transnational institutions cluster here providing access to international career opportunities and professional and social networks (Beaverstock, 2002; Meier, 2015).

Beaverstock (2002, 2011) shows how British professionals working in Singapore are socially and culturally embedded in translocalities such as expatriate clubs, international workplaces and specific residential districts where other expatriates of various nationalities also live. Appadurai (1996) define translocalities as social spaces characterized by the logic of movement. These are spaces where everyday life, social ties and networks of connections

related to work, business, marriage and leisure ground and weave together circulating transnational populations and certain categories of locals (Appadurai, 1996). These social spaces are located in specific places but also simultaneously transcend and transgress them. This can include movement from place to place (Daskalaki, 2012) and local-to-local connections (Smith, 2001), but the emphasis is on the spaces that *ground* mobile people in locality and social relations (Sinatti, 2008). The concept of translocality challenges the traditional dichotomies of home versus non-home and fixity versus mobility (Daskalaki et al. 2015) and points to the emplacement of transnational actors. Daskalaki (2012) argues that this multidimensionality and indeterminacy of 'being located yet mobile' (p. 431) is key to understanding practiced cosmopolitanism as a mode of identity transformation.

Culturally diverse professional and social networks furthermore enable the process of cosmopolitan identity formation (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Mao and Shen, 2015). Beaverstock (2002) suggests that expatriate translocalities tend to be diverse and international in scope and reach, representing a range of nationalities including local nationals with similar professional status and networks. The diverse social spaces they share represent what Beaverstock (2011) calls 'a spatial matrix of cosmopolitanism, where members can reproduce the logics and attitudes of cooperation, and celebrate diversity and co-existence with a multitude of nationalities' (p. 724). In other words, diverse translocalities represent social sites for practiced cosmopolitanism in and through cultural encounters (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Delanty, 2006).

Cosmopolitanism as a cultural identity discourse

The theoretical starting point for the analytical approach we propose in this article is a conception of cosmopolitanism as culture and not its absence (Calhoun, 2003). Other similar conceptualizations define cosmopolitanism as a cultural repertoire and emphasize the

situatedness of openness and its limitations in various ways (Hannerz, 2010; Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Skey, 2012; Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013; Glick Schiller et al., 2011).

Our approach furthermore involves a 'rigorous anti-essentialism' (Beck, 2002, p. 37) – not just in relation to conceptions of national or ethnic 'cultures' as Beck argues – but also in relation to cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan identities. In our framing the concept of a cosmopolitan identity does not refer to something people have, are or become in any essential or absolute sense. Rather it is something people *make* drawing on a discourse of cosmopolitanism. To paraphrase Beck and Sznaider (2006, p. 8): It is people who 'turn philosophy into personal and social identity' and they do this together with and in relation to others drawing on collectively held understandings related to this philosophy.

This framing is underpinned by what Jenkins (2008) terms a basic anthropological model of identity. People actively construct cultural identity and belonging in relation to a range of Others drawing on collectively established discursive and symbolic resources (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1985; Eriksen, 2010; Jenkins, 2008, 2014; Ybema et al., 2009). Such identity construction is a matter of meaning-making, and this always involves interaction and relations between people situated in specific social settings and networks (Jenkins, 2014). Cultural identities are thus socially and relationally accomplished through acts of internal definition and external differentiation drawing on shared cultural resources (Baumann, 1999, Barth, 1969; Jenkins, 2014). This we argue also applies to cosmopolitan identities. The empirical task in this article is to explore *how* cosmopolitanism is collectively mobilized and established as a cultural identity discourse in the specific context of a diverse community of transnational professionals working for MNCs in a global city.

Setting and research approach

The setting of our study was Amsterdam, a regional headquarter hub with an ever-increasing inflow of 'highly skilled migrants' which is the official term for knowledge workers recruited from outside the Netherlands (Amsterdam Economic Board, 2014). More than 2,500 international companies in sectors such as ICT, Logistics, and Creative, Financial and Business services have established offices in the city and they account for approximately 15% of the employment in the area (Foreign Investment Agency, 2015). Both the number of MNCs and the high volume and share of highly skilled migrants is a significant feature of Amsterdam life and the local economy (Bontje et al., 2009). In some neighborhoods in and around Amsterdam the concentration of 'highly skilled migrants' can be as high as one in five (Bontje et al., 2009) and a significant service economy has evolved to cater for the 'expats' as they are commonly known in the city.

The study is anthropological in the sense that it attends to social life where it takes place and adheres to a mode of relational knowing about that world which is grounded in experience (Hastrup, 2005). This implies an ethnographic sensibility that refers neither simply to method nor thick description of social life, but is defined as a particular sensitivity to and awareness of particularities and complexities through engagement with and interpretation of lived social worlds (Hastrup 2005). Furthermore, 'anthropology is 'realist' in the sense of having to take perceived realities seriously' (Hastrup, 2004, p. 469). This implies a study from an emic perspective – the perspective of people socially situated in a specific community and how they experience and make sense of their social world.

The first author (hereafter the anthropologist) conducted the study while working in Amsterdam for three years as a 'highly skilled migrant' in a university context. Personal encounters with expats working in MNCs were a key feature of Amsterdam life and this provided an opportunity for the type of engagement with their social world and network of social relations that makes it possible to feel the 'nature and directive force' of these relations

(Hastrup, 2004, p. 464). This experience constitutes a source of ethnographic sensibility and contextual awareness which informs the study and the analysis.

In this article we draw primarily on material from in-depth narrative interviews. These took the form of non-directive, open-ended conversations involving what Forsey (2010) calls participant listening with an 'ethnographic imaginary' (p. 567). Such conversations form part of participant observation when, as in this case, the anthropologist is familiar with the relevant social context (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). The approach is to enquire about significant experience from the perspective of research participants, rather than asking for specific information sought by the researcher. This in turn allows people to talk about their life and their social world in, and on, their own terms. To establish such a conversation the parties must be present in the same social space, namely *their* space (Hastrup, 2004). In the context of our study where the anthropologist was present in their space as a peripheral participant, they talked about their international life and career assuming a degree of mutual knowledge and understanding related to specific circumstances, people, networks and social life amongst this group of 'expats' in Amsterdam.

The approach for identifying the research participants was similarly ethnographic in the sense that the aim is to locate 'good informants' based on current involvement in the relevant cultural scene (Spradley, 1979, p. 46). Personal contacts were used as a starting point as well as snowballing, which both relies on and provides further insight into organic social networks (Noy, 2008). Twenty-one professionals participated in the study, all of whom were at the time of interview in 2012 working in regional or main headquarters of MNCs located in Amsterdam. Most of them had worked for several MNCs during their careers and their social networks are significantly intertwined with this work history. All participants were on local host country contracts and represented an average of nine years of international experience. They come from fourteen different countries, with a majority from Western European and

Anglo-Saxon countries. One is from Mexico and one from Azerbaijan; both had studied in Europe and America respectively. Two have another ethnic background, one Tanzanian/Ugandan and the other Ethiopian, both held European passports. One participant is Dutch. The interviewees were in their 30s or 40s at the time of interview, and there is an almost equal distribution of men and women in the sample (11 men and 10 women). Six were single and the remainder in mixed-nationality relationships, six of which were married and four had children. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the sample. The names used in the article are pseudonyms.

The sample resonates to some extent with samples of self-initiated expatriates in the expatriation literature, namely relatively young, well-educated middle-class professionals who have moved primarily between developed countries and with a higher proportion of women than traditional company expatriation (Doherty, 2013). However, a diverse sample such as ours reflecting a range of nationalities and organizational experiences is relatively rare, perhaps due in part to the challenge of identifying and accessing self-initiated expatriates or global careerists in MNCs (Doherty, 2013; Suutari et al., 2012). Furthermore, our research participants represent a group of expatriates with a long-term (or permanent) orientation that have received less attention. They are not moving across borders frequently, some have lived in Amsterdam for many years and most still live there at the time of writing.

The analysis followed a logic of abductive reasoning (Van Maanen et al., 2007) involving interplay between conceptual ideas and empirical material as a process of interpretive theorizing to make sense of 'the research puzzles arising in the field' (Watson and Watson, 2012, p. 685). Following transcription, the interview material was first organized into themes and categories based on what the informants talked about (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995) using NVivo as a tool. Codes were created and rephrased dynamically, often incorporating emic terms such as 'non-nationality/international

nationality/globalism', 'expat bubble/community', 'multicultural vibe/melting pot', 'open mentality/flexibility', 'neutralizing/denouncing nationality', 'stereotyping', 'monocultural' etc. This approach to coding is inclusive and flexible, limiting the inherent risk of fragmenting, simplifying and decontextualizing the data (Pierre and Jackson, 2014).

This in turn enables holistic analysis of interesting empirical patterns involving continuous close reading of the material and interplay with conceptual ideas as part of an abductive process. Here we focused on interrelated empirical patterns of how our research participants talked about the 'expat bubble', the cultural diversity of their work and social environments and their sense of identifying as 'non-nationals'. The analytical framework employed in this process was the anthropological model of identity (Jenkins, 2008) outlined in the previous section. The focus was exploration of the discursive resources that people draw on in their identity talk as they work on their individual and collective selves (Kornberger and Brown, 2007; Ybema et al., 2009). It was only later on that theories of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan identities became central in the interpretive process. Our research participants did not explicitly use the term cosmopolitanism neither did they call themselves cosmopolitans (the emic terms are 'non-nationals', 'internationals' or 'global persons'), but as we show in the next section it is cosmopolitan ideas and understandings they draw on in their identity talk.

An ethnographic sensibility and contextual awareness based on the anthropologist's encounter with and experience of their social world was important in this process of analysis and in developing our contribution to the literature on cosmopolitanism. This ethnographic sensibility enabled contextualized interpretation with the aim of being true to their social world and sense of identity while also making theoretical sense of it. What they talk about in their narratives – their sense of community, identity and belonging as 'non-nationals' – is also lived and performed within a particular social context. In the following we begin our

empirical account by providing contextual insight into their social world and the conditions and circumstances they share.

Expat life, work and community in Amsterdam

At the time of interview all the professionals in our study lived in gentrified neighborhoods in the historic part of Amsterdam – also referred to as 'old Amsterdam' or 'inside the ring'. This is a relatively small and confined city space where everyone is in easy reach of each other by tram or more typically bicycle which is the preferred mode of transport for both the Dutch and this demographic of expats. On the face of it, the expats appear to live similar urban lifestyles to Dutch middle-class professionals living in the same traditional Amsterdam apartments. However, the expats inhabit the city translocally by constructing an 'expat bubble' within which they are embedded.

> If I ever go back to France I would miss the expat lifestyle. It would be only French people. I would miss the international environment. I feel like I am at home. I own my house, have good friends, network etc. But I don't speak Dutch - I live in the expat bubble. Amsterdam is home, but I'm aware I'm not fully integrated […] The expat population is big enough here to live a nice life. It's great. (Henri)

This translocality (Appadurai, 1996) is constituted in part through the detachment from the host country context while at the same representing inhabitation of and embeddedness in a particular locality, the city. Diversity is an important characteristic of their shared social space.

I feel more at home in a multicultural setting. […] I don't feel at home in any one culture. The more mixed, the more comfortable I feel somehow. So an environment like this, it's perfect. (Amara)

These environments are constructed as convivial spaces where anyone can potentially feel welcome and comfortable as Beaverstock's (2002, 2011) study in Singapore similarly indicates. In Amsterdam there is a distinct community feeling amongst these professionals based in part on a sense of separateness in relation to 'non-expats'. As Jack described it:

There is always a divide between expats and non-expats. They don't mix well. The groups don't mix. […] There are bars, clubs and restaurants that are expats only.

A whole range of specialized services and outlets for expats and the high concentration of these professionals in a relatively small global city space contribute to enabling a shared lifestyle, friendship networks and community formation.

Amsterdam is the easiest place to integrate – in the expat community. Probably easier than London even. (Amara)

It is also significant that 'expat' refers to a recognized social category in this city context both socially and commercially, and in some respects also institutionally. If you are officially categorized as a 'highly skilled migrant', for instance, you can use the services of the 'Amsterdam Expatcenter' to handle various formal matters in English and you are also entitled to a favorable tax status for 10 years, known as the 'expat tax'.

In talk related to the work domain, detachment from the national host country context was also apparent. *'It's like leaving the Netherlands when you go to work,'* as one participant described it. In Amsterdam, MNC headquarters are typically located in placeless office parks close to the airport or in some cases at the airport in on-site office complexes, thus almost merging with this global non-place (Auge, 2008). Use of English as the corporate language further signifies separateness along with the demographic make-up of the staff in MNC offices generally described as nationally diverse.

> We had at that time Finish, Norwegian, German, English, Dutch, lots of Italian, Spanish, South African – all in our small team of 25. (Helena)

> Lots of different nationalities – people from everywhere in the world. Management is also a mixture of nationalities. (Fabio)

Although recruitment is described as tending to *'sway away from the Dutch crowd'* there are also local Dutch nationals who pursue global careers in MNCs in Amsterdam and are part of the associated social networks.

> We have some Dutch friends that have basically turned themselves into expats living in their own city. They have travelled a lot and they work in the same circles, [with the] same level of education and corporate experience working for international organizations. (Patricia)

As Appadurai (1996) argues, translocalities weave together circulating populations and certain categories of locals. In this case some of these local nationals are seen to 'turn themselves into expats' and become 'non-nationals' as a result:

He [a Dutch friend] has transformed into that non-nationality. I mean you spend half your life in these environments. So a Dutch person in that environment spends half their life in a non-Dutch environment. (Jack)

The Dutch nationals relevant in our case share important characteristics and social conditions with the expats, namely similar level of education and a career in MNCs. The occupational identity and status they share in broad terms is related to being global career professionals with international experience in various central MNC functions, both managerial and specialist, within areas such as cross-border sales, marketing, business development, project management, demand planning etc. within particular global industries. Regardless of their specific expertise, they see themselves as '*global thinkers*'.

If you live in the expat bubble as most of us do, we have a few Dutch friends, but you live in your little expat bubble and you have people around you who are highly educated, who are knowledge workers, are used to being global thinkers. I use the analogy of going out to dinner with 10 friends, and we are probably speaking 7 different languages and come from 7 different countries. And that is kind of the norm in Amsterdam, for the expat world. And so that is why I do kind of identify myself as more of a global… more of a global person rather than Australian. (Suzanna)

The practice of mobility is another important aspect of what they have in common. The Dutch participant in our study, who had moved to Amsterdam after working in London, Sydney, Geneva and Dublin for different MNCs, described it like this:

> I kind of live an expat life. I have a lot of expat friends, I'm married to a Swiss, I'm at least every other month in either London, Paris or Dublin or Genève. I live an expat life. I'm comfortable with that. (Margriet)

An expat life is one of being 'located yet mobile' (Daskalaki, 2012, p. 431). For our research participants this included frequent travel for work to other parts of the global organization, visits to family as well as friends who have relocated to other cities and meeting up for holidays and weddings in various tourist locations around the globe, sabbaticals from the corporate job to travel for volunteering and NGO work and so on. Virtual connectedness both for work and on social media to maintain transnational networks is similarly important. This social space thus transcends and transgresses the local in the establishment of social relations and connections across localities (Smith, 2001) through various forms of actual, potential and virtual mobility in Urry's (2007) terms.

These social spaces are furthermore transient to some extent, with a continuous turnover of professionals relocating to, from and between places such as global cities as Beaverstock (2011) similarly shows. However, in the context of this community in Amsterdam there is also a relatively stable population of expats who are not necessarily continuously relocating. Many of the participants in our study appear to be semi- or permanently settled in Amsterdam, owning their apartments and having lived there long-term – one for 23 years at the time of interview (Raphael). Nevertheless their sense of being mobile people remains and this is closely associated with their sense of identity.

If I go home to France, the only people I can relate to are people who have also lived other places, who have been abroad. There is this new nationality which is globalism, you know. I have a French passport, but I don't feel French. I have lived in Holland for 15 years, but I don't feel Dutch either. I do still live in the expat bubble as well. Even after 15 years. (Viviane)

This sense of belongingness with a 'nationality which is globalism', described by other participants as a 'non-nationality' or an 'international nationality', is intertwined with the practice of past, current and future (potential) mobility as well as a life grounded in the 'expat bubble'. This 'non-nationality' is conceived as an imagined community, to use Anderson's (1983) term, territorialized in diverse expatriate translocalities.

Mobilizing cosmopolitanism as a resource for identity construction

The accomplishment of such a sense of identity as 'non-nationals' or 'global persons' depends on more than shared social spaces and common circumstances and conditions such as mobility. It also has to be established through discursive acts of internal definition and external differentiation drawing on shared cultural resources to define 'us' as having something in common vis-à-vis Others (Barth, 1969; Baumann, 1999; Jenkins, 2008, 2014).

International people are more open to things, more open to change and more open to anything basically. More interested in other cultures, less narrow-minded. […] They share the same mentality with you. (Tomi)

Our friends are from all over the world […] you know from Russia, Spain, France, Germany, South Africa, America… just from all over, and seeing how all these

likeminded individuals interact together and get along so well because we all have that sort of same mindset to see the world and live the same type of lifestyle. Travel and learn and great flexibility (Patricia)

The transnational professionals in our study construct commonality by drawing on a discourse of cosmopolitanism that revolves firstly around notions of openness, embrace of diversity and 'willingness to engage with the Other' to use Hannerz's (1996, p. 103) well-know phrase. They talk about being 'likeminded' by virtue of having the same mentality or mindset of openness and interest in 'other cultures' as well as a common lifestyle. Flexibility, respect and humility in relation to the difference of others are described as ways of practicing the open mentality they see themselves as sharing.

You are aware that some things might be offensive or hurtful to your colleagues. You know they are from a different culture so they have different values and you are, I think, much more careful with that than when in a monocultural environment. There is a lot of respect for each other (Raphael).

International people are more open […] You have to be humble, listen. We are here to learn. Then you can enrich yourself. (Fabio)

Commonality however is not just about shared flexibility in relation to each other's difference, but also about an idea of transcending your own culture that is similarly cosmopolitan.

When you put all these nationalities together they just become one nationality almost. [...] People almost try and take away their standout cultural features. They always try and neutralize themselves. [...] I always denounce my nationality (Jack).

The way the achievement of commonality is evoked here is illuminating because it points to an active effort of 'neutralizing' your 'cultural features' and 'denouncing' your national identity or in other words transcending cultural belonging.

I don't feel English, I just feel like Helena. You become a lot more nomadic. (Helena) You don't identify yourself with your nationality in the same way. (Katrine)

I feel privileged to work with all kinds of different people. Cultural differences does not matter that much. […] They are not as French or as British or as 'wherever you come from'. […] That's the common thing. (Hernando)

Commonality is thus about being not as 'wherever you come from' to become 'one nationality almost' through mutual social efforts of downplaying cultural differences by being open, flexible, show respect and 'neutralizing'. Openness and transcendence of your culture is what is socially expected in accordance with collectively held cosmopolitan understandings and values.

However, this construction of commonality drawing on a cosmopolitan imaginary also depends on *simultaneous* maintenance of difference in a particular way. Even when commonality is expressed most strongly as 'one nationality almost', it is also clear that 'cultural features' are not done away with. The following statements by Raphael illustrate

how the 'non-national' is constructed as a dual sense of *commonality in difference* that involves downplaying, but also maintaining difference.

> I think this non-national thing is quite a good thing. It makes you see everything in a more open way. Your nationality is absolutely totally unimportant. […] It makes you more flexible and open, I think. And more aware how you are different from other people in a quite obvious way. The differences are positive. Of course there are prejudices and stereotypes – the Spanish are like this, etc. – and sometimes there is some truth to it. But it doesn't matter because everybody is kind of on the same page. You have to be open, and we actually learn from each other. […] You use all these prejudices to joke about it etc. But it's like really on the joke level, it doesn't mean anything. You are just all different and you are playing with it. (Raphael)

Cultural differences are marked and thus also maintained through practices such as stereotyping and joking about national cultural differences.

> I tend to generalize and stereotype a lot, particularly about nationalities. Like you meet a German person: 'oh great are you going to be very organized and organize all the new events in the group' [laughs]. I do tend to do that a little bit more than I guess most people do (Suzanna)

This practice of stereotyping indicates that cultural differences are being made relevant in interaction and reified, but in a way that renders them benign and positive as we also saw in Raphael's description. National identity categories are cultivated, marked and emphasized in

a range of ways, and it is clear that these professionals are not just 'neutralizing' national cultural identities, but also maintaining them.

> We have Spanish people and Portuguese people and French people - they do Friday lunches so you know if we have a Spanish person in the team he says 'I'm not joining for lunch, I have Spanish lunch'. (Katrine)

Most couples in this community are mixed-nationality, and their weddings tend to become community rituals featuring a wide range of nationalities amongst the guests and various ways of marking and celebrating this diversity. '*At our wedding for instance we had 21 nationalities and only 2-3 Dutch people'*, as one participant indicated the symbolic and social importance of a plurality of nationalities.

Across domains it is an important part of their lives to practice this cosmopolitan embrace of diversity and inclusion of otherness, both at work and when socializing and engaging in leisure activities – such as Latin dancing, doing sports or hang out in the local cafés and bars with other internationals, attending international events and celebrating each other's national holidays, traditions, food and music. They talked about their social world as a '*the melting pot'* and how they love it *'because things are always different'* (Keith). The following description by Basil is illustrative:

> I surround myself with people from everywhere generally speaking. I don't know any other way than being with people from different places. […] I've been lucky enough to be working for international companies the last few years and basically with people from various places, and I insist on having this sort of multicultural vibe around me. […] I got an Arab sitting next to me in the office and we joke in Arabic, I know a few

words […] and then we got a Slovenian, Russian, Polish and Slovakian. Germans behind me. Brits. Three meters in front of me we've got the south European team, the Latins, basically the French, Italians, Spanish etc. You know we just joke around, with languages and whatever and it's very, very relaxed. People coming from various places, they are a lot more flexible. You know, they have this frame of mind that they can deal with different cultures, different ways, different mentalities - jokes, food, music. […] That makes it beautiful. (Basil)

In this description we see how national identity categories and 'different cultures' are evoked to create the sense that the world is all around you ready to be embraced. In the same breath, however, the common 'flexible mentality' is equally emphasized and it is the combination 'that makes it beautiful'. The discursive practices of downplaying and marking difference go hand in hand, representing a dual repertoire for achieving *commonality in difference*.

The maintenance of national identity categories and associated cultural and linguistic boundaries contributes to structuring interaction (Barth, 1969) and is part of how this collective identification opportunity can be constituted through a playful mutual performance of slipping in and out of each other's difference – yielding into otherness and trying it out for size (Taussig, 1993). This equally involves linguistic performances as illustrated in Basil's description. English as lingua franca enables interaction in these social spaces as well as representing a homogenizing force of organizational Englishization (Boussebaa and Brown, 2017). However, there is also a degree of play with other languages that is part of how everyday cosmopolitanism can be practiced as Janssens and Steyaert (2014) argue.

My language has changed. I have integrated words from other languages into my English. Dutch, Danish, German etc. words. (Jack)

For some this extends to various degrees of multilingualism:

> I can work in English, Italian, Spanish, my French is not bad, my Dutch could be
> better, then I know a little bit of Polish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic. (Fabio)

The accomplishment of commonality in this context involves particular acts of *internal* differentiation to mark and make differences relevant, interesting and enriching while also downplaying to make them easily negotiated and thus suitable for collective appropriation. These acts of internal differentiation function to make collective identification possible by constructing cultural differences as a property of 'us' using a cosmopolitan imaginary. However, not all difference is created equal.

External differentiation

The construction and performance of a 'non-national' identity drawing on a discourse of cosmopolitanism also involves *external* differentiation. Anyone can potentially be included, and any type of cultural difference potentially embraced, but only when there is also at the same time commonality in the way that this difference is performed.

> Sometimes there would be people who fit the stereotype [of] where they come [from].
> Which makes things a bit weird, because I don't really believe that crap, right. We
> dismiss it. […] I could think of a couple of people who were like that, who came from
> [an] interesting background, but we would still take them on and hang out –
> sometimes very uncomfortably. We would try, give them a shot. We are still so
> flexible that we would still try. […] Americans that are republican can't cope with the

environment here. They are too narrow-minded. They can't cope with people from different cultural backgrounds. (Basil)

This description of those perceived *not* to belong is particularly interesting. Stereotypes are not really considered valid, but still used to construct both the internal difference that is embraced as we saw earlier and also the external difference that is excluded. The latter involves differentiation in relation to those who are not bringing off the expected performance of cosmopolitan openness, flexibility, neutralization and, as hinted at here, also liberalist political views associated with cosmopolitanism as a civic ideology. The Others are those who fit the stereotype and the 'narrow-minded' who cannot 'cope with people from different cultural backgrounds'. These Others can include for instance 'traditional expats'. This is how Viviane, herself from France, described her experience of such French expats:

Traditional expats on assignment for 2-3 years often have a bad attitude – all they do is complain about the country they live in. You feel like telling them 'Go back, then'. They are not curious; don't like the local food etc. I experienced French expats who would go to Antwerp to do their grocery shopping – to get French food. (Viviane)

In talk related to the work domain, parent country nationals on traditional assignments where similarly described as essentially different from 'us', such as expatriates in Japanese MNCs:

Everybody tries to adapt to each other. Except for the Japanese, they stick with their own way. (Tomi)

This differentiation is not necessarily just about someone being Japanese; it can be performed in relation to expats of any nationality, including your own as we saw in the above example of the French expats. Furthermore, there were also stories of Japanese expats on other types of contracts and roles who were described as more open, with some participating in the same social events and networks. The difference that makes a difference is that the Others 'stick with their own way' rather than adapting in the mutual cosmopolitan performance of being open, flexible and 'neutralizing'.

Commonality is thus in part accomplished through differentiation in relation to all things (persons, environments, communities) interpreted as national. The experience of monocultural working environments characterized for instance by dominance of Dutch nationals was attributed with a negative symbolic significance.

It was my first experience working with Dutch and it was not really like… I didn't have interaction with people from other nationalities. I just didn't fit in the company and not at all with my manager. I can't really blame it all on the Dutch, but definitely there were some aspects of Dutch culture which is like… my manager had never lived anywhere else. (Pierre)

It was a bit of shock to the system […]. It was insanely Dutch. I came from a business unit of over a 100 people and there were literally only 3 or 4 Dutch people there. […] I was used to managers being so correct and proper. I went from this very proper environment to one where I felt very uncomfortable. (Suzanna)

The expressions used here illustrate how working environments that lack diversity (and managers who have lived elsewhere) are experienced as social spaces where 'non-nationals'

feel they do *not* belong. Other participants told similar stories related to other national contexts, including Gloria who had temporary returned to nation of origin only to move back to Amsterdam. Monocultural working environments, regardless of societal context, were consistently described negatively through talk about feeling uncomfortable, not fitting in and feeling like you can't trust anyone. This indicates how significant the social and cultural affiliation is with diverse translocal social spaces where shared cosmopolitan values and norms are collectively upheld. Pierre summed these up like this:

Some kind of solidarity. Less racism. Open to all kinds of nationalities (Pierre)

A sense of collectivity based on a discourse of cosmopolitanism, shared conditions and social spaces can potentially enable community formation, bonds and mutual social support amongst this category of 'expats'.

We do the same things, we act the same way, you know, we fear the same fears. (Jack)

You develop really deep bonds very quickly. You become families. (Amara)

Individuals who are part of these social networks of course would not necessarily all subscribe to such strongly expressed sentiments of similarity and deep bonds. It will inevitably vary how important and central the expat community is to each individual as will the extent to which being a 'global person' is a core part of people's sense of self at the individual level. This is the same principle as with any other form of collective identity (Jenkins, 2014). Individuals always differ in terms of their multiple, hybrid webs of

belongings and collective identifications and there can be a great deal of variation in terms of how salient these are in different situations and over time.

Discussion

The preceding analysis showed how transnational professionals who share social conditions and diverse social spaces use a discourse of cosmopolitanism as a resource for cultural identity construction. The mobilization of this particular cultural model of openness, to use Delanty's (2006) terms, involves downplaying national affiliations and cultural differences while also marking national identity categories and 'cultural features' to maintain difference. A dual sense of *commonality in difference* is accomplished through these acts of internal differentiation that render cultural differences malleable and easily negotiated as well as enriching. Difference is mutually downplayed through the social effort of 'neutralizing', showing respect and being flexible and humble. At the same time however, internal cultural differences also have to be reproduced and maintained so they can be celebrated and embraced. National identity categories and 'cultural features' are thus marked and symbolized in a particular way that reifies them – often in stereotypical terms – as objects of cosmopolitan inclusion.

We suggest that this internal negotiation and appropriation of difference, along with social norms for performing it in interaction, is key for the accomplishment of a shared sense of identity and belonging drawing on cosmopolitanism as a cultural resource. This variant of cosmopolitanism, rather than representing the imagination of an alternative way of life which 'include[s] the otherness of the other' (Beck, 2002, p. 18), is one which instead includes the otherness of the collective self. As such accomplishing it involves construction of the otherness that is suitable for inclusion. However, it also involves construction of the otherness that is excluded.

This is established through particular acts of *external* differentiation to demarcate the cosmopolitan 'us' which means that this particular cultural model of openness is bounded. In the context of our study, external differentiation involved establishing national monoculture as the otherness in relation to which it becomes possible to conceive a 'non-nationality'. National monoculture is thus constructed as the anti-thesis – that which 'we' are *not* – drawing on a cosmopolitan notion of moving beyond national belonging and parochialism. These discursive acts of external differentiation define those who display a strong affiliation with their national identity and culture as the Other. However, external differentiation does not result in social boundaries that are fixed or given (Barth, 1969). The distinction between those who belong and those who do not, is fluid and dynamic because the criteria of inclusion are to do with subtle and ambiguous matters of how you bring off the expected performance of transcending your culture and being open and flexible in relation to each other's difference.

This mode of belongingness is analytically distinct from diasporic identities based on discourses of national, ethnic or ethno-religious heritage associated with an original 'homeland' (Eriksen, 2010). While other migrating and mobile groups often construct diasporic communities, transnational professionals instead 'weave very different strands into the emerging tapestry of global society' (Kennedy, 2004, p. 161) as existing research indicates. Our study however suggests that these strands cannot be assumed to epitomise individualization and the identity constructions of transnational professionals are not necessarily inherently individualistic as Colic-Peisker (2010) argues. Cosmopolitan identities can share some characteristics with ethnic modes of belonging as a matter of establishing what 'we' have in common that distinguishes 'us' from other cultural groups based on shared cultural resources and social circumstances. This is not rootlessness, non-belonging, loss of

'home' or a non-identitarian position, but another form of cultural identity and belonging based on a cosmopolitan imaginary.

It is also not a view from nowhere or everywhere as Calhoun (2003) argues. It is related to and dependent on particular social positions which in this case are the prerogative of the educated middle classes (Igarashi and Saito, 2014) who have access to autonomous global mobility (Elliott and Urry, 2010), 'expat' lifestyles and professional careers in transnational organizations in global cities. These are social and occupational conditions shared by transnational professionals as also emphasised in existing literature (Beaverstock, 2002, 2011; Colic-Peisker, 2010; Daskalaki, 2012; Elliott and Urry, 2010). Our analysis further points to the particular importance of expatriate translocalities as social spaces that enable interaction and social relations between professionals of different cultural backgrounds, while at the same time also creating separateness in relation to those who are not part of these social environments. These spaces represent a sense of home and 'non-national' social territory for people of various nationalities who are 'located yet mobile' (Daskalaki, 2012, p. 431) and it is within such social spaces that a shared sense of identity and belonging can be constituted.

Because this mode of belongingness is dependent on shared social spaces and conditions, it is not a given that it is consistently salient for, or indeed accessible to, individuals over time or across contexts as with all forms of collective identification. The opportunity to be part of diverse environments of other transnational professionals cannot be taken for granted. Not all MNC offices for instance are diverse workplaces and diverse 'expat' communities may not necessarily have emerged in the same way in other locations. Freedoms of movement across national borders are also becoming increasingly restricted, at least for some. All this means that the social position and sense of belonging of 'non-nationals' is also potentially precarious.

A limitation of an anthropological study such as ours is thus that we cannot necessarily generalise to 'expats' everywhere or to other global cities where similar transnational populations are present. It is the task for future research to explore the mobilization of cosmopolitanism as a cultural identity discourse in other contexts. However, the analytical approach we propose and the cosmopolitan identity processes we conceptualize have broader theoretical applicability for studies on cosmopolitanism. An important task here is to explore how other variants of cosmopolitanism might be mobilized for instance by other categories of migrants and descendants who are embedded in other types of translocalities in global cities – such as communities of coping (Jiang and Korczynski, 2016), inner-city housing estates (Rosbrook-Thompson, 2015) or multi-ethnic ghettos (Baumann, 1996). As existing research has shown, practiced cosmopolitanism is not just an elite, or upper middle-class, phenomenon (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002; Werbner, 1999).

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to challenge the premise that cosmopolitan identities are individualist expressions of selfhood that transcend culture and belonging in openness and willingness to engage with and include otherness. The argument we put forward is that cosmopolitan identity formation is socially and relationally accomplished drawing on cosmopolitanism as a cultural resource. As such it cannot be assumed to presuppose individualization or imply an escape (or exile) from particularity and the notion of openness that define it will always be bounded in some way. Furthermore, cosmopolitan openness is not well understood as an individual disposition or orientation only. The meanings attached to the cultural value of openness are constituted in specific contexts with corresponding social norms and expectations of how to perform it in interaction.

The theoretical contribution we make to the literature on cosmopolitanism is to offer an analytical approach that implies a move beyond essentialist conceptualisations of cosmopolitan identities and avoids taking the meaning of openness and the otherness in relation to which it is performed for granted. Accomplishing a cosmopolitan identity involves establishing both the otherness that is embraced and the otherness in *contrast* to which you can conceive yourself as cosmopolitan.

Cosmopolitanism represents a cultural particularity in and of itself. It is thus also bounded and characterized by its own specific kind of parochialism – despite being imagined as the opposite. Cosmopolitan identity formation, whether individual or collective, is not *post*-identity politics or 'a model of identity liberated from the modern grid of identity formation' (Skrbiš and Woodward, 2013, p. 11). Rather it is a model of identity that is part and parcel of that grid. As a cultural identity discourse cosmopolitanism is mutually dependent on discourses of national, ethnic or ethno-religious identities.

In a broader perspective, the mobilization of cosmopolitanism does not necessarily contribute to the opening up of discursive spaces of world openness and dialogue as Delanty (2006) envisions. Nor can we assume that 'the farther cosmopolitan rituals and symbols spread, the more chance there will be of someday achieving a cosmopolitan political order' as Beck (2002, p. 8) proposes. These visions do not take into account that the mobilization of cosmopolitanism also contributes to closing down dialogue as well as relational boundary drawing and polarization. 'As soon as there are cosmopolitans, there are also enemies of cosmopolitanism' (Argyrou, 2015, p, 354). As the British prime minister Theresa May so pointedly expressed the growing nationalist sentiment towards 'the international elite' in the wake of the UK's vote to leave the European Union: 'If you believe you're a citizen of the world, you're a citizen of nowhere' (Conservative party conference, Oct. 5th 2016).

Cosmopolitanism in all its variants is *part of* – not beyond – a global discursive sphere of identity politics that revolve in part around the differentiation between cultural imaginaries of cosmopolitan world openness and anti-cosmopolitan nationalism. A key task for the sociology of cosmopolitanism is to focus on the relational dynamics of how this ideology is being mobilised and with what implications in order to create a better understanding of the social dramas of identity and belonging currently shaping our world. This requires an unambiguous commitment to anti-essentialism in relation to cosmopolitanism itself as well as recognition of the premises of the variants of this discourse we might ourselves subscribe to as social scientists.

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Appendix 1. Overview of research participants.

Pseudonym	Job title at time of interview	MNC employment	Nationality, passport (+ other background)	Years of international experience	Job locations outside country of origin (+ study)
Suzanna	Global director E-commerce, Corporate Markets	1. Publisher 2. Consulting firm 3. Technology company 4. Technology company	Australian/British/ New Zealand	8	Amsterdam, NL
Margriet	Commercial Marketing manager	5. Technology company 6. Software company 3. Technology company 7. Technology company	Dutch	8	London, UK Sydney, AU Genève, CH Dublin, IE
Henri	Manager Investor Relations	8. Transport company 9. Consulting firm	French	12	Amsterdam, NL Luxembourg, LU
Helena	Product Life-cycle Manager, Europe	10. Footwear manufacturer 11. Sportswear company 12. Footwear manufacturer	British	6	Amsterdam, NL
Fabio	Manager Credit and Collections, EMEA	13. Data management company 14. Food processing company	Italian	14	Amsterdam, NL London, UK
Amara	Senior manager, Client Services Europe	3. Technology company 4. Technology company	American/Irish (Ethiopian)	7	Amsterdam, NL
Hernando	Supervisor, Central Operations, Europe	15. Electronics company 16. Car manufacturer	Mexican	4	Amsterdam, NL Rotterdam, NL (Sweden)
Gloria	Executive assistant to VP	17. Food products company 15. Electronics company 18. International education org.	Portuguese	7	Amsterdam, NL London, UK Genève, CH
Pierre	Internal Auditor	19. Engineered products company 20. Retailer 21. Food manufacturer 9. Consulting firm	French	12	Amsterdam, NL Co. Kerry, IE Luxembourg, LU
Viviane	Senior Manager, Social Media Consumer Care	22. Electronics company 15. Electronics company 23. Market research company	French	15	Amsterdam, NL
Leyla	Global Account Manager	3. Technology company 24. Oil and gas company	Azerbaijan	4	Amsterdam, NL (America)
Adam	Global Business Development Manager	3. Technology company	Canadian	16	Amsterdam, NL
Patricia	Relationship Marketing Manager, Central & Eastern Europe	25. Technology company	Canadian	4	Amsterdam, NL
Basil	Territory & partner account manager, South & sub-Saharan Africa	26. Technology company 3. Technology company 27. Software company	German (Tanzanian/ Ugandan)	7	Amsterdam, NL London, UK
Katrine	Demand planning team leader, Europe	15. Electronics company 28. Electronics company	Danish	10	Amsterdam, NL London, UK
Jack	Web collaboration manager, Commercial sales	3. Technology company 4. Technology company	British	10	Amsterdam, NL Rotterdam, NL
Selma	Technical account manager	3. Technology company 4. Technology company 29. Paperboard manufacturer	German	9	Amsterdam, NL
John	Senior manager, EMEAR sales operations	3. Technology company 4 Technology company	American	8	Amsterdam, NL (London, UK)
Keith	Commercial Sales Manager, Nordic region	3. Technology company	American	5	Amsterdam, NL
Raphael	Senior Marketing Intelligence consultant	30. Software company 15. Electronics company	French	23	Amsterdam, NL
Tomi	Project Manager	15. Electronics company 31. Industrial gases company	Finish	8	Amsterdam, NL Switzerland

Note: MNC = multinational company; NL = Netherlands; UK = United Kingdom; AU = Australia; CH = Switzerland; IE = Ireland; LU = Luxembourg. The names used in the article are pseudonyms.

Irene Skovgaard-Smith is senior lecturer at Lord Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University, UK. She has a background in social anthropology and her research focuses on identity, status and social interaction in the context of professional elites such as transnational professionals and management consultants. She has a forthcoming publication in *Critique of Anthropology*, and her work has appeared in *European Journal of International Management*, and in books from Palgrave Macmillan and Information Age Publishing. [Email: irene.smith@anglia.ac.uk]

Flemming Poulfelt is Professor of Management and Strategy, Vice Dean of Research Communication at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark and ICMCI Academic Fellow. He has published more than 25 books on strategy, management and consulting with Routledge, Wiley and South-Western Thompson Learning and others. His research has appeared in a variety of outlets such as *European Journal of International Management, Scandinavian Journal of Management, The Service Industries Journal, International Journal of Business Strategy, German Journal of Research in Human Resource Management, European Review, Consultation and The International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing* [Email: poulfelt@cbs.dk].