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The discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism

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This paper examines how the ideal of cosmopolitan identity is represented in selected popular global management texts. The paper argues that the corporate cosmopolitan ideal of a flexible identity draws interdiscursively on two main discourses. Firstly, 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 to 'transform' themselves from 'locals' into 'cosmopolitans'. This uplifting rhetoric of 'transformation' is however accompanied by the more prosaic discourse of cosmopolitanism as a competence in 'managing culture' which can be acquired by all. Secondly, 'corporate cosmopolitanism' draws on a 'postmodern' ideal of a flexible 'pastiche' identity, distanced through irony from all existing cultural and other 'hot' loyalties. This discourse is personified in the image of the 'hybrid' as the ideal corporate cosmopolitan. The paper argues that corporate cosmopolitanism represents, not a utopia in which cultural difference and diversity is respected and celebrated, but a dystopia in which cultural difference is made superfluous by the establishment of a flexible transnational capitalist class with no attachment to or responsibility for place.

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, p. 118) (my insertion)

Introduction

In the above scene from Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Peer, having escaped from his native Norway has become a successful capitalist. Wishing to impress his new found English, French, German and American colleagues, he 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.

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 contemporary thought (Kristeva, 1991; Anderson, 2001; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). This renewed interest has been reflected in the business and management world in the increasing frequency of programmatic texts invoking the necessity for corporations and managers to adopt a 'cosmopolitan' identity. In the above extract from 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.

The visions of management gurus such as Ohmae (1990), Kanter (1995), Rhinesmith (1996), Lewis (1996), Friedman (2000; 2005), Zachary (2000), and Florida (2005), which

will be examined here, set out the necessity for the corporation and its managers to adopt a set of required ‘cosmopolitan’ dispositions, characteristics and attitudes, and are an increasingly prevalent feature of the discourse of a new ‘discourse-led’ ‘spirit of capitalism’ with its concomitant justifactory regime (Fairclough and Chiapello, 2002). One of the common elements of this is the depiction of a ‘state of greatness’, defined as 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, p. 191). The corporate ‘cosmopolitan’ can be seen to constitute such a ‘great one’, a character who serves as a model for identity formation within the global corporation, and the ‘local’ (Kanter, 1995, p. 23) to constitute the embodiment of the lack of such qualities. These programmatic visions of ‘greatness’ and ‘smallness’ are in turn reflected in statements by individual managers, corporate web sites, training programmes, and job requirements for recruitment to managerial positions, which aim to put such visions into practice (Fairclough and Thomas, 2004).

In what follows I will examine the discourse of cosmopolitanism *for* the corporation rather than *in* the corporation. In other words I will examine how popular management texts prescribe an ideal set of attitudes and characteristics, rather than the degree to which these attitudes are actually present in individual managers and organizations, an area in which some empirical research has been carried out (Moore, 2004, 2005; Monaci *et al.*, 2003). My analysis falls within what Beck (2006) defines as ‘normative’ or ‘philosophical’ cosmopolitanism, that is the philosophical analysis of the legitimacy and validity of what are deemed ‘cosmopolitan’ attitudes. Beck (2004) defines his project in the social sciences, in contrast, as ‘cosmopolitical realism’, that is the investigation of ‘analytical-empirical’ questions relating to ‘really existing cosmopolitanism’, the processes by which the cosmopolitan perspective replaces the national in people’s everyday lives (Beck, 2004, p. 139). As far as management is concerned, however, there is arguably a need for both kinds of research, an analysis of the prescribed norms of flexibility in management literature under the aegis of ‘cosmopolitanism’ on the one hand, and an analysis of the degree of incorporation of cosmopolitan perspectives in management practices and professional lives on the other.

The discourse of ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a legitimizing resource

Within the organizational context discourse can be defined as a ‘structured collection of meaningful texts’ which legitimize and bring an object into being (Phillips *et al.*, 2004, p. 636). Discourses, in other words, are used as a legitimizing resource within organizations – to legitimize certain courses of action and to portray certain states and characteristics as desirable and necessary, in this case the adoption of a ‘cosmopolitan’ disposition (Phillips *et al.*, 2004, p. 642).

Certain features of discourses can be defined as lending them legitimacy at a particular time within an organizational setting. Firstly, legitimacy is increased if the author of a text or texts is recognized as being ‘consensually validated,’ or having the authority to speak on a certain subject (Hardy *et al.*, 1998). In the case of popular management texts such as the ones to be examined here, certain features of the genre can be identified as

lending the authors of such texts such discursive legitimacy. Firstly they have a predominant contrastive or adversarial structure, in the case of the texts to be examined their contrast of a 'cosmopolitan' mentality with that of the 'local'. Secondly, they have a 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 extended metaphors, easily consumable lists and bullet points. Thirdly, they are characterized by 'inspirationist' rhetoric (Fairclough and Chiapello, 2002, p. 199-202).

A second feature of texts which 'leave traces' within organizations is that they tend to draw on other texts and discourses for legitimacy by means of intertextuality or interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1992). In the case of the popular management texts to be examined here, for instance, the discourse of 'corporate cosmopolitanism' draws for its legitimacy both on the Enlightenment tradition of cosmopolitanism, in order to imbue the required flexibility of the manager with the morally uplifting sentiments of what I will term an 'ideal of detachment', and also on the recent critique of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, particularly in the discourse of 'hybridity'. The substance of this critique is that the universalist sentiments of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism are at odds with cultural difference and the incommensurability of different cultures. Nussbaum (1996), for instance, clearly subscribes to such universal sentiments when she defines a cosmopolitan as someone who 'puts right before country and universal reason before the symbols of national belonging' (p. 17). Butler (1996), on the other hand, in reply to Nussbaum, argues that 'the articulation of the universal ... can happen only if we find ways to effect cultural translations ... in order to see which versions of the universal are proposed, on what exclusions they are based' (p. 51). The abstract universalism of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, in other words, by not recognizing that 'universal' is understood differently in different cultures, imposes a conformist logic upon them. Similarly, Lyotard (1989) asks 'can we continue ... 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?' (p. 314). Such doubts about and criticisms of the universality of the 'ideal of detachment' are reflected in the discourse of hybridity, in that this appears to embrace the positivity of 'hybrid' and 'diaspora' identities, albeit, as I will argue, entirely from the perspective of the instrumental logic of 'flexibility' – such a discourse serves the purpose of understanding just those aspects of a culture necessary to 'manage' the problems of cultural diversity for the global corporation.

Finally, texts are more likely to be considered legitimate if they fulfil the cognitive requirements of discourse, that is they represent ideologies which are taken as a 'fact' (Phillips *et al.*, 2004, p. 644-645). The most important ideology in this case is the economically-driven neo-liberal conception of globalization or what Hay and Rosamond (2002) call a 'hyperglobalization' hypothesis, to which there is seen to be no alternative and which is surrounded by a 'logic of inevitability' (Hay and Marsh, 2000). In terms of the legitimization of the discourse of 'corporate cosmopolitanism' what is important is not whether such a 'hyperglobalization' hypothesis is true or not (Hay and Rosamond, 2002, p. 148), but that it serves as a useful rhetorical resource to justify the flexibility deemed necessary of the 'corporate cosmopolitan'.

Selection of texts

As argued above, popular management texts dealing with globalization can be viewed as a 'structured collection of meaningful texts' which bring an object, here corporate cosmopolitanism, into being. The generic characteristics of the texts examined here are that they set out an 'ideal-typical' state or set of attitudes, characteristics and attributes which are deemed desirable for managers to have or adopt. Some of these texts expressly invoke the term 'cosmopolitan', others allude to it and its resonances in how they describe the prescribed attitudes of flexibility. In selecting texts for discourse analysis, four criteria were applied:

- The text sets out the nature of globalization as a 'logic of inevitability' and the attitudes necessary for managers to adapt to this
- The text describes the characteristics of those who do not fit with the corporate cosmopolitan ideal
- The text refers to a cosmopolitan class or elite which is conscious of its elite status in the globalized world
- The text embodies a programme of training, preparation or advice for managers wishing to become cosmopolitans

The texts referred to above, which meet some or all of these criteria, are a representative number of popular management texts published over a period from 1990-2005. In the detailed discourse analysis which follows I will illustrate, using both larger and shorter textual extracts, firstly the general nature of the discourse of 'corporate cosmopolitanism' and then discuss in detail the main facets of this discourse, illustrating how these sub-discourses contribute to the legitimization of the ideal of flexibility within the corporation.

The general nature of the discourse of 'corporate cosmopolitanism'

The general nature of the discourse of corporate 'cosmopolitanism' can be demonstrated in paradigmatic terms by a detailed analysis of a substantial extract from a management text which makes specific reference to 'cosmopolitanism', 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, p. 23-24)

The most important characteristic of 'cosmopolitans', as described in the text, is 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 of 'cosmopolitans' to 'transcend' place, 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 refers to the development of a 'mindset' in which place becomes irrelevant as the 'cosmopolitan' develops resources and networks, and thus sufficient 'control' over place and culture. Important in this characterization is that place (and presumably culture) is

seen largely in negative terms, as something to be controlled, rather than as something an appreciation of which is worthwhile *in itself*.

The second main characteristic of ‘cosmopolitans’ is that they are said to be able to transcend place because they have weak ‘community and even national affiliations’. In an important phrase, although they are said sometimes to feel ‘sentimental attachments to places of their use or current residence’, ‘cosmopolitans’ 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 rational and progressive, as indicated by its association with the semantic field of ‘opportunities’, ‘resources’ and ‘control’. Florida (2004) similarly defines lack of attachment to place as a characteristic of the ‘creative class’:

Creative Class people I have interviewed in these places do not desire the strong ties and long-term commitments associated with traditional social capital. Rather, they prefer a more flexible, quasi-anonymous community – where they can quickly plug in, pursue opportunities and build a wide range of relationships. (Florida, 2004, p. 220)

The use of the phrases ‘plug in’ ‘pursue opportunities’ and ‘flexible, quasi-autonomous community’ here lends the mobile, transitory lifestyle an element of attractiveness, place becoming merely equivalent to a virtual network which can be ‘plugged into’ and left at will.

Finally, to return to the dominant contrastive or antithetical structure of the Kanter text, ‘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, 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’ to describe ‘locals’, suggesting narrow, retrogressive and even primitive attitudes. A similar antithesis between progressive universal sentiments and irrational ‘tribalism’ is put forward by Friedman (2000) in his use of the extended metaphors ‘Lexus’ and ‘olive tree’ to describe the polarizing forces of globalization. While conceding that people need ‘olive trees’ or local rootedness,

an attachment to one’s olive trees, when taken to excess, can lead us into forging identities, bonds and communities based on the exclusion of others. And when these obsessions really run amok, as with the Nazis in Germany, or the murderous Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan or the Serbs in Yugoslavia, they lead to the extermination of others. (Friedman, 2000, p. 32)

The association here of too much attachment to the local with a disparate group of ‘extremists’ detached from any historical or political contextualization serves to increase

the attractiveness of the universalist sentiments associated in the text with 'Lexus'. In Kanter's text, similarly, 'cosmopolitanism' gains its rhetorical attractiveness not just from its association with progressive, morally uplifting sentiments, but also from the portrayal of doubts or skepticism regarding globalization as 'isolationism' or 'nativism'.

Having outlined the main elements of the discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism, I will now examine the various facets of the attitudes and dispositions outlined above.

The corporate ideal of detachment

The first aspect of the discourse of 'cosmopolitanism' apparent in popular global management texts I will term the *ideal of detachment* of the global manager: the ability to detach oneself from one's nationality and from the culture of the country in which one works. The ideal corporate cosmopolitan, in other words, should be able to relate to a culture, whether his/her 'own' or another, as a 'stranger' (Simmel, 1950; Kristeva, 1991), to understand its characteristics as they relate to the needs of the corporation, but not have a world view which is limited by or to it. Ohmae expresses this ideal of detachment 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, p. 119, my insertion). The reference to language here raises a significant aspect of 'corporate cosmopolitanism', namely the universalist aspirations of 'managerial pseudo-jargon' and its role in providing a sense of solidarity among managers from different national and cultural backgrounds (Watson 2004). Managerialist language has a 'strongly discursive' function as part of the attempt to 'mystify and neutralize the political and value dimensions of managerial work' (Watson 2004, p. 80). The ideal of a 'shared language' which raises the 'cosmopolitan' managerial elite above the supposed parochialisms of national languages is an essential part of the rhetorical attractiveness of 'corporate cosmopolitanism'.

For the ideal corporate cosmopolitan in Ohmae's view, the corporation itself has replaced the nation as the principal source of identity and the profession has replaced local or national community as a source of solidarity, as Hannerz (1996) comments:

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, p. 86)

The discourse of detachment immediately places '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' (1998, p. 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 upsurge in nationalism in the 1990s (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, p. 6).

In the corporate ideal of detachment, this ‘grand narrative’ of emancipation of the individual from national origins is present in the appeal of Ohmae and others to the establishment of a ‘cosmopolitan’ class. The ideal is highly individualistic in nature, in that it is seen as an ethical requirement for the individual manager to separate him/herself from existing communities, and undergo a ‘transformation’ by adopting characteristics seen as desirable in bringing about universal ethical ideals (Anderson, 2001, p. 31). This *transformational* or *emancipatory* view of cosmopolitanism, however, while expressed in the Enlightenment rhetoric of a universal ethical ideal (Hill, 2000), is, within popular global management literature, a moral imperative to identify, not with the world as a whole, but to remain ‘flexible’ and to more closely identify with the corporation, which serves as an allegory of a cosmopolitan utopia.

The individualist rhetoric of detachment and autonomy also serves to mask the clear aspirations of the ‘cosmopolitan’ class towards solidarity as a global elite. As Sklair (2001) and Robinson (2004) point out, the transnational capitalist class has constituted itself in Marx’s terms not just as a class *in* itself, but as a class *for* itself, in other words its legitimacy is founded on an ability to ‘forge a collective political and or/cultural protagonism, that is, a self-representation and that class formation involves the mutual constitution of antagonistic classes’ (Robinson, 2004, p. 38). Such a clear strategy of differentiation of the ‘cosmopolitan’ class from others can be seen in the following passage:

Those in the Working Class and the Service Class are primarily paid to execute according to plan, while those in the Creative Class are primarily paid to create and have considerably more autonomy and flexibility than the other two classes do. (Florida, 2004, p. 8)

Cosmopolitanism as competence

In contrast to the elitist, moralizing rhetoric of the ideal of detachment, the second aspect of the discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism, that it can be acquired as a *competence* or set of skills, has a clearly more egalitarian tone. 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), for instance, has defined the rhetorical strategy of such texts as bridging the gap between the utopian vision of the ideal of detachment and a more prosaic reality, between an ideal vision in which managers would have already transcended their national identity and the unfortunate fact that ‘people never give up their own national backgrounds and differences’ (Rhinesmith, quoted in Brennan, 1997, p. 159).

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, p. 48) of the cultural dimensional models of Hofstede (1994, 2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997, 2002), this discourse 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, p. 28). The implicitly negative view of culture leads Hannerz to call the intercultural training industry a 'culture shock prevention industry' (Hannerz, 1996, p. 108).

The question whether the acquisition of such competence 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. Managers might acquire through training only a limited cosmopolitan competence understood as 'mastery of a 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, 1996, p. 103).

Both these elements of the discourse of corporate cosmopolitanism as competence, eclecticism and 'culture shock avoidance' can clearly be seen in the following extract from a text dealing with the requirements of good members of multicultural teams:

Common sense, good breeding and a modicum of unhurried thought are all useful resources for avoiding behaviour which might provide irritants to our partners. If we accept that certain things are not going to disappear (American drive, German seriousness, French sense of superiority, Japanese opacity, Spanish tardiness, Italian deviousness, Norwegian obstinacy, Swiss secrecy, Russian sentiment, Arab passion) we may come to the realisation that these very traits can make a positive contribution to our team effort. (Lewis, 1996, p. 91-92)

In this stereotypical list of attributes (mostly negative, but which can be turned into positive attributes by being added to a 'cosmopolitan' mixture) we are close to the words of Peer Gynt quoted above.

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. (Hannerz, 1996, p. 103)

Cosmopolitan identity: privileging of choice over loyalty

The ideal of detachment and its counterpoint in the concept of cosmopolitanism as competence, are integrated in a model of 'flexible' identity which emphasizes 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 parentage, upbringing, frequency of travel or prolonged periods of residence abroad.

The postulated equivalence between transnational socialization, as expressed in the choice of autonomous actors over location, and cosmopolitanism, appears to restrict cosmopolitans to an elite with the means and resources to be mobile (Bauman, 1998; Sklair, 2001; 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, p. 89).

Calhoun's point relates to the rhetorical attractiveness of 'transnationalism from above' (Smith, 2005). A focus on transnational elites existing in a postmodern 'now' beyond time and place diverts attention away from the fact that transnational actors are 'still classed, raced and gendered bodies in motion in specific historical contexts, within certain political formations and spaces' (Smith, 2004, p. 238). The rhetoric of choice of location, in other words, tends to mask the important influence of class, race, and gender on the concrete 'place-making practices of the translocal' (Smith, 2004, p. 243).

It seems that the nature of the choice exercised by corporate cosmopolitans over cultural affiliation has an ambiguous aspect. While in popular management texts choice refers primarily to the imperative to be flexible, to resist existing loyalties in order to be able to operate equally well in any place, the choice of the *true* cosmopolitan, as defined by Hannerz, relates 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' (1996, p. 103). This aesthetic 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 (Kristeva, 1991; Pels, 1999). 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 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 a critical examination of the discourse of the privileging of choice over loyalty are the definitions of 'cosmopolitan' and 'local' by Gouldner (1989). For Gouldner, a 'cosmopolitan' was someone who had weak loyalties to their employing organization, was highly committed to specialized role skills, and who was likely to use an outward reference group orientation. A 'local', on the other hand, he defined as 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 now undergone a rhetorical transformation in global management texts in comparison to how the term was understood by Gouldner. While for Gouldner both 'cosmopolitan' and 'local' were seen as having value as far as the employing organization was concerned, the 'disloyalty' of the 'cosmopolitan' is now employed with unambiguously positive connotations:

Fewer people today find lifelong identity in the company for which they work. We live in a world where many traditional institutions have ceased to provide meaning, stability and support. In the old corporate-driven economy, many people took their cues from the corporation and found their identity there. ... The combination of where we live and what we do has come to replace who we work for as a main element of identity. (Florida, 2004, p. 229)

The 'disloyalty' of Gouldner's 'cosmopolitan' has now, it seems, become a necessity. Kanter also identifies two types of 'cosmopolitan' whose loyalty beyond the bounds of Gouldner's 'local' identification constitute not a threat but an advantage: 'industry' cosmopolitans, for whom a global network of industry-specific or professional contacts throughout the world supplants 'local' identity (1995, p. 84), and 'ethnic' cosmopolitans, whose identification is with a global ethnic community rather than a local community (p. 85).

In the first of these the crucial link between Gouldner's schema and the contemporary ideal of 'corporate cosmopolitanism' is professionalism. 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, p. 112). This universal solidarity of the professional, however, is not the universal concern with humanity of the Enlightenment cosmopolitan, but a 'partial universalism' which 'involves solidarity with some people outside the nation, not solidarity with humanity as a whole' (Robbins, 2001, p. 29). The decisive question here is whether identification with a global professional network is a sufficient condition for the development of a cosmopolitan attitude.

Recent sociological and anthropological studies of professional networks throw doubt on whether this is the case. Monaci *et al.*, (2003), for instance, investigating the conceptions of globalized self among groups of Italian professionals in global organizations, concluded 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 of 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'

(p. 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, p. 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.

Similarly, an anthropological study by Moore (2004, 2005) of business persons in the City of London branch of a major German bank has demonstrated how professionals use national and ‘cosmopolitan’ identities as multivalent symbols, particularly by defining themselves and others by means of stereotypical characteristics gained from popular intercultural literature on ‘business styles’. ‘Cosmopolitanism’, Moore finds, is not simply, a question of *either* identifying with national culture *or* with global professional group, 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 such an understanding of a cosmopolitan identity ‘postmodern’ as it understands cosmopolitanism not as a fixed identity, but one which seems to abandon the logic of *either* ‘cosmopolitan’ *or* ‘local’ (as is presented in Kanter’s schema), in favour of an identity which is both, and is characterized by a high degree of reflexivity and ironic self awareness.

‘Hybridity’: the realization of the corporate cosmopolitan ideal of flexibility?

One of the principal critiques of the cosmopolitan ideal, as argued above, has been that the cosmopolitan must apparently deny his/her local or national identities in favour of vague notions of humanity or universal values (Nussbaum, 1996). One response to this critique has been the notion of the ‘rooted cosmopolitan’, defined 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, p. 91). The ‘rooted cosmopolitan’ appears, then, to be a move beyond the binary modernist logic of identity as *either* cosmopolitan *or* local, to a cosmopolitan identity 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), a person who has experience of two or more cultures but belongs to none of them, seems to be the embodiment of flexibility which the multinational corporation seeks. Zachary (2000), for instance, portrays the advantages of ‘hybrid’ identities for the global corporation in social, psychological, and aesthetic terms. The ‘hybrid/mongrel’, he argues, epitomizes a postmodern approach to identity which creates self out of an ‘identity toolbox’ (p. 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’ (p. 60).

We can describe a view of identity such as that described here by Zachary as 'postmodern' in the sense employed by Jameson (1991) under the heading of 'pastiche' or 'cultural schizophrenia'. Jameson describes the characteristic subjectivity under postmodernism as one in which 'the subject has lost its capacity ... to organize its past and future into coherent experience' resulting in a form of cultural production which is 'randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary' (p. 25). Whereas Jameson employs this diagnosis of postmodernism in a critical fashion, however, Zachary and other advocates of 'hybridity' as a model of 'flexible' identity in popular management literature, employ this in unambiguously positive terms, as being useful to the global corporation.

We can see further evidence of this positive valorization of the 'schizophrenia' of 'hybrid' identities and diaspora communities, in what Friedman (2000) calls 'cybertribes', which, he argues, provide a valuable resource for the corporation:

When you take ... a diaspora community spread out all over the world – such as overseas Chinese, Jews, Italians, Lebanese, Indians or Koreans – you have what I like to call a "cybertribe." These cybertribes combine speed, creativity, entrepreneurial talent and global networking in ways that can generate enormous wealth. (Friedman, 2000, p. 211)

We see here an interesting rhetorical transformation of the connotations of the term 'tribe'. While Kanter, in her characterization of 'locals' had used the semantic field of 'natives' and 'isolates' in a negative sense as those opposed to the progressive ideals of 'globalism', Friedman here employs this in a positive, but purely instrumental sense: 'cybertribes' are useful because not only do they provide a realization of the flexibility he deems necessary for 'creativity', but they also provide a valuable 'insider' knowledge of cultural peculiarities without the necessity, risk and expense of providing training for managers in how to 'manage' culture.

Turner (2000) has expressed the nature of such a postmodern 'hybrid' cosmopolitan identity, propagated by Friedman and Zachary as an ideal, 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, p. 141)

The postmodern 'hybrid' cosmopolitan, then, has a series of 'cool' loyalties, which are subject to constant 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' identity is the ability, through ironic distance, to see all commitments and loyalties as contingent

(Rorty, 1989; Turner, 2000). The hybrid 'corporate cosmopolitan' thus 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. (Simmel, 1950, p. 402)

The 'hybrid' cosmopolitan has sufficient cultural knowledge to understand cultural characteristics, but not so much that his/her loyalties become 'hot'.

An example of the type of skills which the 'hybrid' outsider is said to offer is given in the following sketches:

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, p. 69)

Unilever recently needed a man to supervise their marketing operations in South America. A Brazilian or Argentinian might have been resented in some of the smaller countries and certainly in each other's. They chose an Indian, who was given language and cross-cultural training. A keenly perceptive executive, not only did his nationality place him above inter-regional rivalry, but his Indian characteristics of people orientation, subtle negotiating skills and warmth made him someone Latin Americans would easily relate to. (Lewis, 1996, p. 92)

Significantly, the 'outsider' depicted in the first sketch possesses a certain kind of 'inside' knowledge of culture, at least as defined in the purposive/rational terms of market peculiarities which the corporation requires to mount a successful marketing campaign. In the second, the Indian in Latin America does not have the disadvantages (for the corporation) of 'hot' cultural identification with his/her 'own' culture which a Latin American would have.

The 'hybrid', who is an outsider or stranger but also an 'insider' in several cultures, then, seemingly fits perfectly the requirements of this instrumental logic of undermining the social and cultural structures of the nation state: the embodiment of what Gergen, employing this in a positive valorization, 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, p. 150)

Billig (1995) rightly sees such a perfectly manageable ‘pastiche personality’ as a fiction based on the 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, p. 138-9, Billig’s emphasis)

The ‘hybrid’ corporate cosmopolitan can in this sense perhaps be seen as a postmodern re-incarnation of Peer Gynt: the totally ‘flexible’ individual who in one sense has ‘no self’ but, in another sense, by virtue of this very lack can take on any self at will, and can be ‘Chinese’ today and ‘Turkish’ tomorrow. Just as Peer Gynt’s presentation of himself was an entirely superficial attempt to mask his lack of identity with fashionable attributes, so here ‘hybridity’ is presented with the rhetorical intent of suggesting that the corporation, in undermining cultures and national social structures, is doing this in the spirit of a multicultural ideal.

Conclusion

The discourse of ‘corporate cosmopolitanism’ in popular management texts can be seen to have various facets. The ideal of the detached ‘corporate cosmopolitan’ can be seen as a reflection of a moral imperative to bring about a transformation in the personality of the individual manager. However, although this discourse is often couched in the utopian 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. The manager is seen as under the obligation to transcend his/her ‘local’ identifications and solidarities and remain ‘flexible’ by means of the supposed ‘universal’ values of the global professional network. Such an identification with profession, however, is 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 development of the discourse of ‘corporate cosmopolitanism’ as flexibility can be seen in a recent ‘postmodern’ turn towards the ‘hybrid’ cosmopolitan, who, by virtue of ironic distance and of having multiple yet ‘cool’ loyalties towards different cultures, incorporates all the advantageous features of Simmel’s ‘stranger’, distance and nearness, indifference and involvement, albeit entirely subjugated to the instrumental logic of understanding market peculiarities without the disadvantages which too much ‘hot’ identification with a culture may bring.

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