



# Migration, Urbanity and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World

Catherine Lejeune, Delphine Pagès-El Karoui, Camille Schmoll, Hélène Thiollet

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Catherine Lejeune  
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# Migration, Urbanity and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World

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Catherine Lejeune • Delphine Pagès-El Karoui  
Camille Schmoll • Hélène Thiollet  
Editors

# Migration, Urbanity and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World

 Springer

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# Chapter 1

## Migration, Urbanity and Cosmopolitanism in a Globalized World: An Introduction



Catherine Lejeune, Delphine Pagès-El Karoui, Camille Schmoll,  
and Hélène Thiollet

Globalization and migration have generated acute and often contradictory changes: they have increased social diversity while inducing global homogenization; they have sharpened differentiation of spaces and statuses while accelerating and amplifying communication and circulations; they have induced more complex social stratification while enriching individual and collective identities. These changes happen to be strikingly visible in cities. Urban contexts, indeed, offer privileged sites of inquiry to understanding the social dynamics of globalization, informal belonging and local citizenships, transient and multi-layered identities, symbolic orders and exclusionary practices. But cities are also material sites and they create multisensorial scapes that shape experiences of globalization and social change. They operate through multiple scales, connecting horizontal extensions and vertical layers of the city with generic, landmark, interstitial and neglected places. Far from being mere contexts, cities are both changing and being changed by migration and globalization.

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This book chooses cosmopolitanism as a crucial notion to study migration and mobility in contemporary cities. Central to debates in the early 1990s to describe the changes induced by the second modernity, cosmopolitanism was later reframed, recast, and criticized for its ambivalence and political loading, for its Western centrism, uprootedness and theoretical biases. We claim that it is the very “thickness” of the notion that makes it useful. Cosmopolitanism is both a normative and empirical notion which is made up of layers of methodological and theoretical controversies. The discussion on cosmopolitanism took an empirical turn in the early 2010s with ethnographic studies of cosmopolitan encounters, identities, practices and sites, leading David Harvey to speak of a “proliferation of hyphenated-cosmopolitanisms” and “counter-cosmopolitanisms” (Harvey 2009: 1). Building upon these controversies, this book uses the lens of cosmopolitan as a way to explore and make sense of urban diversity and migrant belonging in the global era.

While engaging with renewed empirical debates about cosmopolitanism, this book takes another turn, the urban turn, as a way to further specify the notion of cosmopolitanism and ground the discussion. Building upon empirical research and qualitative methods, we take stock of the varieties of cosmopolitanisms and urbanities in a globalized world. We do so by combining cases from the Global North and Global South at a time when most research on cosmopolitan urbanism have only looked at Northern contexts (Binnie et al. 2006). By doing so, we address a gap in both urban and migration research: while the urban frame is the obvious context of cosmopolitanism and the *polis* its philosophical and political grounding, the articulation between the two has been overlooked. In the literature on cosmopolitanism, cities have been mostly considered as a *décor* of cosmopolitan interactions. Conversely, urban scholarship has merely used cosmopolitanism as one descriptive category among others in an attempt to refer to specific forms of urban diversity connected to international migrations. Authors in this book shed new light on core notions in urban studies (global cities and mid-size cities, social and spatial stratification, gentrification, segregation, urban politics, public spaces, city branding) as well as migration and mobility studies (diversity, class-based mobilities, local incorporation and ethnic businesses).

In this book we propose to conceptualize cosmopolitanism as a series of tensions:

- The tension between material or legal configurations *and* social change or agency. This tension is nailed at the macro and micro levels, looking at historical changes and also daily negotiations with order and authority in their pragmatic and concrete forms.
- The tension between social hierarchies (inequalities) *and* emancipation. This tension is observed in how migrants and non-migrants use cosmopolitan situations and contexts.
- The tension between differentiation/exclusion *and* inclusion/belonging. By broadening perspectives, cosmopolitanism can precisely address this tension, which anyway needs to be situated in specific enclaves or sites and at specific moments.

- The tension between conflict *and* cooperation. The “cosmopolitan coexistence” of migrants and non-migrants can therefore be studied through sets of conflictual and cooperative social interactions over time and space.

## 1.1 Cities and Urbanity

The city has long been central in the study of social interactions, cooperation and conflicts, as a site of social reproduction and change. Conceptualized by early sociological work (Simmel 1908; Wirth 1938), urban ways of life and “urbanism” should be understood as specific set of practices, skills and values (*urbanities*). Simmel, for instance, talked about the archetype of the Stranger as a trader with a specific function in the urban ecosystem, a particular position in urban society and a specific identity. The archetype embodies the city’s tension between distance and proximity, which is central to understanding cosmopolitanism and lived diversity (Schmoll forthcoming, Pagès-El Karoui forthcoming). Today, migrant traders and shopkeepers are still central figures in urban cosmopolitanism, as discussed in the chapters by Akoka et al. for shops in Nicosia (Cyprus) and Fournet Guérin for Maputo and Antananarivo. As Montesquieu already argued in the eighteenth century, commerce may act as an agent of pacification at the global level – and this liberal paradigm can also apply at the city level through interpersonal relations. Commercial relations function as symbolic exchanges between migrants and non-migrants and among migrants (Ma Mung 2006; Tarrius 2000). They induce new forms of cosmopolitanism as shown in the case of North African traders in the French city of Marseilles (Peraldi 2001) or Naples (Schmoll 2011).

Social geographers also characterize cities as places of density and diversity (Levy 1997). Richard Sennett explains that the sociological tradition of the Chicago School equates urbanity with cosmopolitanism, the urban condition being defined as a specific way to deal with alterity and diversity (Sennett 2002, 43). A recent debate was fueled notably by sociologist Saskia Sassen’s use of “cityness” to designate urban ways of life in a globalized world instead of “urbanity,” which, she argued, is charged with a Western sense of cosmopolitanism of what public space is or should be (Sassen 2005). Other work echoes the idea that urbanity is far too ethnocentric as a concept and anchored in Western contexts and histories (Parnell and Oldfield 2014). In turn, we argue that the term “urbanity” can be used in a critical and polycentric perspective as long as it is connected to empirical case studies that are positioned in various spaces and contexts. We adopt Julie-Anne Boudreau’s definition as she builds on a century of urban research from Wirth to Bourdieu: “urbanity is a historically situated and unevenly distributed condition which influences lifestyles, modes of interactions, and collective and individual logics of action, no matter where one lives” (Boudreau 2015). We focus on the complex entanglements between urbanity and circulation. *Urbanity* thus describes the

interplay between spatial configurations and social practices, identities and representations, an interplay which is geared towards circulation between worlds. It expands practices and representations beyond the city itself, notably through transnational networks. The *city*, on the one hand, is organized as a site of differentiation through architecture and socio-political regulations that separate classes, genders, races and ethnicities, etc. *Urbanity*, on the other hand, temporarily counterbalances social differentiation and distancing (Moraes Netto 2017; see Semi in this volume). Such definitions therefore address urbanity both as a condition and as an experience. As urbanity renewed urban research in early sociological work and provided a framework to rethink modernity in the twentieth century, we reckon that *cosmopolitanism as urbanity* generates a fruitful paradigm to understand contemporary world transformations at the global level.

## 1.2 Cosmopolitanisms

Cosmopolitanism stands out as a radical political project that travelled from political philosophy to social theory. Interest for the notion was renewed by the social, cultural, political and economic changes of the modern globalized era in the 1990s: cosmopolitanism was reframed as the normative project of a “second modernity” (Beck 1996, 2016). Recently, it has become an object of study in empirical research under the auspices of new anthropological research (Werbner 2008). Used, overused and misused across disciplines and times, its semantic trajectory has gone from fame to shame, summits to downfalls. More importantly, cosmopolitanism sometimes even eschews proper definition (Breckenridge et al. 2002, 1–14) and therefore fails to actually describe and characterize cosmopolitan subjects and contexts. Despite this blurriness, cosmopolitanism has generated a great wealth of social science literature and, alongside other key notions like nationalism, citizenship, and sovereignty, has shaped the sociological imagination of scholars. Research is strongly polarized between extremely theoretical endeavors (based on abstract and normative reasoning from philosophy to social theory) and empirically grounded studies focusing on one or several case studies. This polarization prevents us from thinking the complexity of cosmopolitanism in the making and processes of social changes in the global era.

From its Greek philosophical roots to social theory, cosmopolitanism has changed with time, spanning a multitude of meanings that may even be contradictory at times. Cosmopolitanism involves both normative concerns, pragmatic accounts of social interactions and empirical descriptions of spaces, sites and places. However, with its focus on militant concerns for democratic theory, it has sometimes lost sight of the lives, lifestyles, practices, interactions, tastes, places and spaces dwelled and claimed by “cosmopolitan subjects.” As a political project enshrining rights and duties, cosmopolitanism, it is fair to say, has failed to become a reference point for contemporary political systems or in national and international discourses still dominated by methodological nationalism and state sovereignty.

If cosmopolitanism was intensely discussed in the 1990s, it has now lost momentum in the research agendas, findings and rhetoric of contemporary empirical social science. It is absent from the discourse of political leaders and practitioners of social fields in a presumably cosmopolitan world made up of global cities, diasporic networks, transnational social fields, diverse neighborhoods. Indeed, Kant and the Enlightenment tradition equate cosmopolitanism with a “utopian horizon” of humanist values and tolerance opposing the narrow perspectives of nationally-based identities and rights. The international dimension of cosmopolitanism tends to be understood, by Beck, for instance, as a means to subvert the sovereign order and bind nation-states rather than as a ground for a perpetual peace in a hierarchical world order, as Kant foresaw it (Beck 2002; Brown 2009). This early tradition, however, remains quite foreign to the discussion on diversity within nation states or cities. Kant simply equates domestic cosmopolitanism with some sort of legal indifference to otherness (the rule of law applied to all regardless of their nationality/citizenship). As such, the cosmopolitan claim has been considered mostly as a move away from a state-centric perspective on social and political dynamics and a way to shun methodological nationalism (Beck 2007).

Cosmopolitanism in its plural forms is embedded within complex “geometries of power” (Massey 1999). In recent postcolonial and gender perspectives, cosmopolitanism acquired an ambivalent meaning, moving away from the moral projects of Enlightenment theorists and its political implementations. Cosmopolitanism bears a primarily cultural meaning (Pollock et al. 2002, Appadurai 1996), referring to hybrid cultures that emerge from colonial empires. It remains connected to relations of domination in colonial orders and their aftermath, and cosmopolitan cultures and practices are part and parcel of the postcolonial condition. Reminding researchers of the prevalence of power relations even within cosmopolitan contexts and situations certainly shatters the fantasy of a universalist morality. Postcolonial writers certainly changed the meaning of cosmopolitanism: dynamics of cultural hybridization and practices of mobility are always embedded in hierarchies of race, gender, class, etc.

Pnina Werbner has criticized the class bias of cosmopolitanism, its failure to address the diversity of classes, groups and hierarchies within cosmopolitan encounters and configurations (Werbner 1999; see also Calhoun 2002; Schiller et al. 2011; Vertovec and Cohen 2002). The *cosmopolis* of the “frequent traveler” and that of the transnational “helot” (Cohen 1988) are worlds apart. The spaces and characteristics of “their” cosmopolitan experience, their cosmopolitan subjectivity, cover radically diverse traits. Cosmopolitanism, we argue alongside these authors, should unveil and reflect upon the hierarchies and power relations of the globalized world, together with its hybridity and fluidity. Cosmopolitans are described along the class-based differentiation between mobile transnational elites (Ong 1999) or managerial elites enacting the *habitus* of a translocal (hyper)bourgeoisie and working-class migrants enacting their “working class or vernacular cosmopolitanisms” (Werbner 1999, 2006), forming the two “global” classes identified by Saskia Sassen (2001). The middle class, however, has received far less attention, and this book certainly fills a gap in this regard (see Lejeune, Pagès-El Karoui, Poulot, Semi in this volume). This



critique also applies for race, gender and generational differentiation in access to space, culture, recognition and identity, bringing intersectionality into the scientific and political debates.

This book questions the relationship between mobility and cosmopolitanization in times of increasing circulations. Beck pointed at travelers and migrants as major protagonists of processes of cosmopolitanization (2002). However, whether the intensification of mobility and circulation is producing more cosmopolitanism in cities still needs to be proven. In this book we show that the relationship between mobility and cosmopolitanism is ambivalent and complex. Exiles stranded in border cities (like the one described by Michel Agier, Chap. 13, in this volume) may be more cosmopolitan than the global elite circulating between generic places (as described by Jan Duyvendak and Melissa Ley-Cervantes) or city makers (as described by Semi).

Authors in this book vary in their use of the notion of cosmopolitanism: according to contexts and disciplines it can be loaded with political and normative dimensions or merely descriptive. It can refer solely to international migrants and asylum seekers (Agier, Thiollet and Assaf, Pagès el-Karoui, Schmoll Clochard Akoka and Polyzou, Fournet-Guérin), migrant youths and descendants of migrants (Lejeune) or also to internal migrants or non-migrants (Mermier, Chap. 5, Fouquet, Chap. 4, Poulot, Chap. 9, Fournet-Guérin, Chap. 7, in this book) and travelers (Semi, Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes). In some chapters, cosmopolitanism is an *etic* concept used by researchers and others, an *emic* category employed by actors such as urban planners and architects in Giovanni Semi's chapter. Some authors engage with the debates on the variety of cosmopolitanisms and the critiques of the concept, others use it with more caution and resort to other notions such as conviviality, diversity, belonging and acts of citizenship (Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes, Le Bail and Lieber, Semi, Lejeune). In the course of this book, the notion is therefore contested, challenged and put to the test of variegated empirical and epistemic contexts.

### 1.3 Situating Cosmopolitanisms

Although often mentioned, the spatial and/or local dimension of the “cosmopolitan situation” is often barely conceptualized or discussed as such. In the wake of David Harvey's call for the analysis of the conditions for the emergence of cosmopolitanisms in their historical and geographical contexts (Harvey 2009), some geographers have emphasized the eminently geographical dimension of cosmopolitanism (Yeoh 2004), a tendency used with greater frequency in recent years (see Poulot and Fournet-Guérin in this volume). Such a stance implies looking at specific local situations of encounters, such as coffee places and streets (see chapters from Akoka et al. and Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes). The book thus pays particular attention to the *sites* of interaction, the *canopies* theorized by Elijah Anderson (2012), to capture cosmopolitanism as a process (Beck 2016).

As such, this book investigates the role of the city in cosmopolitanism by documenting cosmopolitan practices in the city and focusing on *situated* versions of cosmopolitanisms. It interrogates what the city does to cosmopolitanism and what cosmopolitanism does to the city. Researching cosmopolitanism, then, requires investigating the meaning of places that are constantly negotiated, debated, questioned. Rather than branding some specific cities or sites as more cosmopolitan than others, our intent is to contextualize cosmopolitanism as urbanity in space and time.

Across space, the book thus offers comparisons between various scales and spatial levels: global cities and smaller towns, neighborhoods, streets, refugee camps, borders, and airports in various world regions (Africa, Europe, North America, Middle East), therefore overcoming the usual Western approach to cosmopolitanism. This approach breaks with the usual empirical divide between cities in the North and South (Robinson 2002). This comparative and descriptive approach echoes other studies that have engaged with diversity in specific contexts (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011).

Across time, the authors in this volume adopt a diachronic take on cosmopolitan interactions: they study daytime street life and the urban nightlife, workplaces and waiting spaces, hotels and coffee places in between travels, family life and the home, picnic areas and shopping malls, etc. The chapters also pay attention to the historical dynamics of urban settings, architecture, and the material configurations of urbanity. They consider the history of migration, citizenship and mobility regimes to embed the local variations of cosmopolitanism within historical contexts.

Urbanity can thus be conceptualized fully, not only as geographically and historically situated but also as a momentary experience of transcending differences: as such, urbanity urges us to look at moments of ordinary life, such as the differentiation between day and night (see Fouquet, Chap. 4, in this book), or at the making of temporary situations, such as urban interstices (see Akoka et al., Chap. 8, in this book).

By comparing spaces and moments, histories and sites, we contribute to theoretical debates opened up by urban ethnographers and migration researchers who have sought to characterize cosmopolitanism and diversity (Vertovec 2007; Wessendorf 2013). Several notions are used to analyze the cosmopolitan dynamics and practices, such as the cosmopolitan situation (Rinaudo and Hily 2003), rooted (Appiah 2006), circumstantial (Berthomière 2003), ordinary (Lamont and Aksartova 2002), everyday (Schmoll 2003), vernacular (Pollock et al. 2002, Werbner 1999), tactical cosmopolitanism, wounded (Rose 2015) and subaltern cosmopolitanism (Zeng 2014). Building upon these more specific notions, the various chapters explore the tensions mentioned above between structure and agency, hierarchies and emancipation, inclusion and exclusion, conflict and cooperation. They thus bring pluralistic views on a cosmopolitanism of practices and encounters embodied in contacts and trajectories, emotions and positions anchored in the spatial dimension of social and power relations of urban settings.

## 1.4 Migrants and (Urban) Change

Since the 2010s, border policies and migration controls have progressively toughened and the question of migrants' agency has become more stringent. Renewed nationalist discourses and identity politics are also contributing to the increased fragility of some migrants and foreign communities in the Global North and the Global South, both in liberal and illiberal contexts. Local policies, in turn, have a crucial role in the multiscale governance of migration. Migrant-friendly policies implemented on the local level include contemporary sanctuary cities which promote new forms of citizenship (Isin 2002) or cities of refuge (see Lejeune in this volume). At the other end of the spectrum, local policies may foster segregation and abjection. The positions of cities towards migrants may differ totally from national policies, as shown during the 2015 "refugee crisis" in Europe. Expanding upon the universalist claims of the right to cosmopolitanism formulated by Immanuel Kant, Jacques Derrida introduced the idea of "city of refuge," which enacts the principle of cosmopolitan hospitality in urban settings (Derrida 1997).<sup>1</sup> His call has been taken extremely seriously by scholars (see Agier, Chap. 13, in this book) and some European mayors – most notably Leoluca Orlando of Palermo in 2015 – who have declared their constituencies "cities of refuge" in the context of the refugee crisis. Cosmopolitan hospitality is thus opposed in the policy making arena to the current wake of nationalism and populism.

In this wider context, migrants are easily turned into objects of migration and integration policies, powerless victims of state policies. A strong trend of contemporary scholarship in migration studies, however, seeks to capture the contribution of migrants to urban and social change and the agency of mobile individuals, regardless of their status (Mainwaring 2016).

This book fits in this literature and acknowledges that migrants are actors in the process of cosmopolitanization or counter-cosmopolitanization (Glick Schiller 2015). It offers a novel take on the agency of migrants and mobile individuals. Their presence and circulation contribute to the production of meanings and feelings for both migrants and non-migrants. Nick Van Hear thus defends the idea that "taking account of migrants' agency, perceptions and aspirations" allows us to link micro-level understanding of migration to macro-level trends in development and globalisation (Van Hear 2010). We contend that despite structurally unequal settings, migrants and even refugees can contribute to social change, even if their methodological victimization often prevents us from seeing the transformative impact of their presence in both host, transit and origin countries. They do so through everyday and subtle forms of participation, production and even

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<sup>1</sup> The Kantian definition of hospitality as "a moral and legal relation which hold among individuals across bounded communities" (Benhabib 2004) was used as a way to limit "the law of world citizenship to conditions of universal hospitality." Kant's definition was, at the time, extremely narrow, as it concerned merely a right to be treated "neutrally" (not a right to residency or belonging), and it did not apply to groups and races considered unworthy of the ethical acknowledgement.

subversion in workplaces (Scheibelhofer 2019) and private and public places (see Thiollet and Assaf, Chap. 12, in this book).

Glick Schiller and Caglar (2011) also showed that migrants and mobile agents participate in the scaling and re-scaling of cities. They contribute to changing the image of the city towards the outside world via international ranking, reputation and branding (see Mermier, Chap. 5, Pagès-El Karoui, Chap. 6, Poulot, Chap. 9, and Semi, Chap. 3, in this book). They reshape representations of cities from within via gentrification or impoverishment, via multiculturalization or segregation (see Lebail and Lieber, Chap. 10, in this book). This perspective moves away from cities as segregated spaces where interactions are entirely controlled through spatial partitions, a view that needs rethinking given the fluidity of urban changes and the changing dynamics of differentiation. They also move away from the idea that cosmopolitanization and its correlate changes are necessarily framed as positive. The figure of the migrant inducing social change does not leave aside the structural social, political and economic domination migrants suffer under. It also does not underplay the complex feelings of otherness or differential belonging that migrant experiences carry and their subjective alienation in national and local contexts (as Michel Agier investigates in his chapter). In fact, at various scales, the access to rights, the limited agency and the systems of domination and exploitation of migrants co-exist with regimes of privileges, those of the highly mobile elites and transient bourgeoisies who benefit from unlimited access to spaces. Political and economic inequalities across classes, ethnicities, nationalities, gender and age shape urban interactions but also the feelings and experiences of place, as shown for bourgeois travelers (see the chapter by Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes) or for urban designers (see the chapter by Semi). Such unequal cosmopolitan conditions are embodied and play out in the urban field in a variety of ways, according to material, spatial, symbolic, bodily, and timely contexts.

To concretely illustrate this theoretical stance, this book pays particular attention to consumption practices both in their substantial, spatial and ideational dimension: what do migrants and non-migrants consume? how and where do they consume it? what narratives or feelings are attached to consumption? Consumption involves key experiences of belonging or alienation, integration, hybridization or differentiation. As such, it works as an entry point to investigating the role of migrants in city changes, illustrating, for instance, how cities of production have become cities of *consumption* (Germann Molz 2011; Zukin 1998). In globalization studies, consumption is often referred to as a key indicator in assessing theories of cultural convergence, differentiation or hybridization: consuming global goods and frequenting generic places mean greater cosmopolitan feelings or a greater willingness to engage with diversity and the other (Hannerz 1990). On the contrary, ethnic consumption (and ethnic economies) would lead to fragmentation of cultures, social practices and relations of production (Fischer and Massey 2000). In between, some see signs of global hybridization and mixing in consumption. This book does not adhere to clear-cut views on consumption but rather explores the varieties of meanings and processes it carries which induce incremental changes for interactions, representations and material spaces. As such, consumption seems to rather operate

as one of the many factors of social and urban change, intersecting with other processes such as gentrification, suburbanization, and *touristification*, which is thus combined with dynamics of intersectional differentiation. Such a view builds upon previous research that showed how business directed to ethnic groups radically change the landscape and *sensespaces* of cities (Rhys-Taylor 2013).

The chapters of this book thus engage with the complexity of consumption practices and the variety of meanings consumption can acquire for migrants and non-migrants. Shopping malls built around the world display an immense variety of goods and stage cosmopolitan consumption even when societies remain extremely segregated and exclusionary (see the chapters by Pagès-El Karoui and Thiollot and Assaf). For buyers, strategies of consumption reflect the ambiguities of individual and collective identities: integrating into globalization, maintaining ethnic distinction, claiming cultural roots, adhering to local tastes, etc. In Cyprus, Mozambique, Madagascar or Québec, street-level consumption reveals contradictory cultural and social dynamics (see Akoka et al., Chap. 8, and Fournet-Guérin, Chap. 7, in this book) which are instrumentalized by local authorities for city branding and propaganda (see Poulot, Chap. 9, in this book). Cosmopolitanism has also been used in the Middle East and the Gulf since the 2000s as a form of nation branding (see Mermier, Chap. 5, and Pages El Karoui, Chap. 6, in this book). The book looks at the plurality of contexts in which the term is in use and branded in link with consumption in order to question cosmopolitanization at a time when illiberal migration regimes enforce increasingly exclusionary regulations.

Beyond consumption, none of the practices we observe at the city level are devoid of political meaning even if they seem to be depoliticized. Some of the authors in this book find that these practices contribute to what we could call a moral economy of cosmopolitanism as urbanity (see Thiollot and Assaf, Chap. 12, in this book). Following Didier Fassin, we define moral economy as “the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space” (2009, 37). Everyday urban habits and policies jointly and iteratively define urban moral regimes, deciding who deserves to be empowered or attracted in/by the city, and, conversely, who does not deserve to have access to the city or some of its spaces (see Le Bail and Lieber, Chap. 10, Pagès el-Karoui, Chap. 6, in this book). They also rule on migrants’ visibility: who is entitled to be seen and who should remain invisible in public spaces like working class migrant men in the Gulf countries (see Pagès el-Karoui, Chap. 6, Thiollot and Assaf, Chap. 12, in this book) or chinese sex workers in Paris (Le Bail and Lieber, Chap. 10, in this book). Finally, they induce differential feelings and senses of self, of belonging or of alienation that translate into discourses and behaviors, as in the case of the global elite in Madrid (Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes, Chap. 2, in this book) or urban youth in Dakar at night (Fouquet in this volume). These feelings and practices delineate the moral boundaries of everyday life alongside legal and official prescriptions. The empirical descriptions provided in each chapter thus contribute to a rich discussion on cosmopolitanism that stems from everyday practices, material configurations and emotions at the city level.

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**Part I**  
**Making Cosmopolitan Places in a**  
**Globalized World**

# Chapter 2

## Generic Places, the Construction of Home and the Lived Experience of Cosmopolitanization



Jan Willem Duyvendak and Melissa Ley-Cervantes

### 2.1 Introduction

*Where is your home?*

My home is where I am. (Alejandro, Journalist)

In the soles of my feet. (Santiago, Journalist)

I carry my home on my back, like a snail. (Cristina, Physical therapist)

Home was my suitcase. (Sofía, Filmmaker)

The statements above seem to deeply resonate with the cosmopolitan ideal sparked by Diogenes who, as a *Cynic* philosopher, rejected tradition and local loyalties and found a sense of belonging to a much larger community – the *kosmopolis* – and was the first person to have stated that he was a “citizen of the world” (Appiah 2007; Warf 2015). Born in the fifth century before the Christian era, Diogenes’s cosmopolitanism has evolved through time and reached our days in the plural and complex form of cosmopolitanisms that in a broader sense refer to a sense of community and belonging across a multiplicity of identities and affiliations.

Cosmopolitanism becomes particularly pertinent in the context of the increased mobility of goods, people and ideas that characterizes modern life. In modern urban centers, people confront diversity on a daily basis and as such develop strategies to deal with difference and, ideally, embrace it (Warf 2015, 927). Nonetheless, there is chasm between the philosophical ideal of cosmopolitanism and the reality of people from a diverse array of backgrounds coexisting on a daily basis. Beck and Sznaider’s notion of cosmopolitanization is useful in examining how this everyday

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engagement with difference might work since it de-romanticizes the ideas resulting from normative cosmopolitanisms by drawing attention to “the fact that the becoming cosmopolitan in reality is also, and even primarily, a function of coerced choices or a side-effect of unconscious decisions” (2006, 7).

Hence, as immediate access to different cultures increases through direct contact with people from diverse backgrounds but also more commonly and “banally” through the consumption of food, sartorial choices, music, etc., cosmopolitan orientations might increase (Beck 2008, 30). Yet this can also be accompanied by “a profound sense of a loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of places” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

At the heart of the tension between immediate access to difference and a loss of distinctiveness of places is the proliferation of the so-called “generic places.” This is often cited as a prime example of the homogenizing tendencies that come along with globalization. Knox explains that as cities lose their particularities and distinctiveness, their inhabitants tend to seek “authenticity” through everyday consumption in “commercially constructed spaces and places whose invented traditions, sanitized and simplified symbolism and commercialized heritage all make for convergence rather than spatial identity” (2005, 4). Some generic places constitute, in the words of Ulrich Beck, “interfaces between spaces of globality and spaces of territoriality” (Beck 2008, 33), providing continuity and certain cognitive assurances through a set of standardized practices and settings in the context of mobility and work as “a semantic and spatial Esperanto, allowing foreigners to feel at home no matter where they are” (Delalex 2002, 108). In this sense generic places are a product of globalization, but are they also a by-product of this (forced) cosmopolitanization.

This chapter contrasts the ideal (normative) version of cosmopolitanism *versus* the actual existing cosmopolitanisms and how actors might deal with the diversity and plurality in contemporary urban settings by analyzing the home-making experiences of young Mexican professionals living in Madrid who also experienced a great deal of spatial mobility. As the statements at the beginning of the chapter show, their feelings of home seem to be rightly placed within a cosmopolitan ideal in theory, but their everyday strategies to feel at home under conditions of movement, temporality and a closer relationship with cultural and socioeconomic difference reveal some contradictory feelings and strategies. In order to feel at home in the city, they need to ensconce themselves into generic places that provide not only continuity and familiarity but also the possibility of connecting (virtually and physically) with people that seem close to them, ultimately opting out from interacting with the perceived urban “other.” Such generic places are important for cultivating feelings of home through specific processes of personalization enacted in urban environments by local and foreign middle and upper classes alike. These feelings are sustained by a communal belonging based not on a shared national identity but a class-based one.

The chapter is divided in five sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the way in which Madrid has been transformed in a very short period of time; section two untangles the relationship between place and home by analyzing the

former along the public-private and particular-generic axes to understand the ways in which different places might foster feelings of home; section three deals with data and methods while section four constitutes the empirical discussion and follows the ways in which this group of people found home in generic places. Finally, section five provides some conclusions.

## 2.2 Madrid: Building a Cosmopolitan Capital

Once described by the *New York Times* travel section as “POOR Madrid. Stuck in the middle of Spain, the city has long been perceived as the provincial, sleepy sister to Barcelona,” the capital city of Spain has been through a process of reformation and rebranding with the goal of positioning the city as a cosmopolitan interconnected capital (Wildman 2007).

This process was particularly visible between the incorporation of Spain into the European Union in 1994 and the start of the global financial crisis in 2008. The city started to attract multinational companies, got involved in an intensive infrastructure construction process and began to attract people from a myriad of places: Latin America, Northern Africa, Eastern Europe.

Madrid has changed utterly in a very short period of time. Since the nineteen eighties, a discourse in terms of competitive potential and globalisation has been clearly enunciated by politicians of every stripe who have succeeded one another in city and regional government. Their shared objective is to turn Madrid into an important element in the European system of cities. (Díaz-Orueta 2007, 186–7)

During the 1990s, several Spanish state-held companies – from banks to electricity, from oil to telecommunications – were privatized. Along with this process of privatization, Spain adopted the euro, a strong currency with a stable exchange rate that facilitated financial transactions at a global level. A great portion of these changes became territorialized in Madrid. By 2006, the city was hosting the corporate headquarters of seven out of the nine Spanish corporations included in Forbes’s Global 500 list. In terms of infrastructure, the face of the city changed completely. Just to give some examples: the metro system went from having 120 kilometers of track in 1995 to 322 kilometers in 2006 ([metromadrid.com](http://metromadrid.com)), while the extension of Barajas airport in 2006 meant that 30 % of the flights between Europe and Latin America land in Madrid ([promomadrid.com](http://promomadrid.com)). The demographic make-up of the city also changed radically; while in the late 1990s, only 1% of the city’s population was foreign, by 2007 foreigners constituted 16% of the population.

What the *New York Times* article was describing was a city that, like many others, was struggling between keeping the particularities and history of the local and an increasing interconnection to global capital, information, goods and people. Madrid’s positioning as a global city involved the development of infrastructure oriented towards the tourist industry and middle-class consumption: chain restaurants, shopping malls, hotels and a sanitized display of “Spanishness.” In doing so,

many spaces in the city became generic and its original occupants were displaced (Díaz-Orueta 2007).

### 2.3 Generic Places and the Construction of Home

Following such narratives, it is no wonder that much of the inquiry on generic places has been focused on urban re-structuring processes that, more often than not, displace disadvantaged populations from the places they call home and create *in lieu* generic urban landscapes.

But in order to fully explore the potentialities of such generic places, we need to keep in mind that they constitute the backbone of globalization and cosmopolitanization by representing the infrastructure that sustains the enhanced mobility of goods, people and information (Beck 2008, 33). Moreover, since such places are the product of a process of standardization that facilitates communication and movement across physical and cultural borders, they feel immediately familiar. Such generic qualities provide certain “cognitive assurances” that have the potential of fostering home-feelings, independently of their exact location (Delalex 2002; Kesserling 2014; Nadler 2016).

Nonetheless, in order to really feel like “home,” generic places have to become somewhat more personal. The potentiality of a generic place to foster feelings of home depends on the possibility of *personalizing* it, achieving some sense of control over space and imbuing it with meaning, that is to say, incorporating some elements that satisfy “personal” needs and preferences at a given point in time (see Duyvendak 2011; Ley-Cervantes and Duyvendak 2017). Since personalization of a space can function as a territorial marker that draws symbolic boundaries by displaying the identity of an individual or a group, such boundaries might have similar effects as an actual wall.

This does not mean that these places therefore become “particular”: while they are still predominantly generic and recognizable as such for others, people give them a “personal touch” in order to make them feel like home. *Particular* places are almost by definition “personal,” at least *private* ones. This is less true, though, for particular *public* spaces that can be rather un-homey for those who don’t align with the public collective identity. *Generic* public places are also more difficult to “personalize” – a condition of feeling at home – than private generic places.

The following table develops a general classification of *particular* and *generic places* and the way in which personalization works.

	Particular	Generic
Private	<p><b>Haven. Particular and private</b></p> <p>Generally we understand home as particular and private place. It is expected to reflect someone's identity and in this sense the personalization of such places is <i>encouraged</i>.</p>	<p><b>Harbor. Generic and private</b></p> <p>Such places (hotels, coffee shops, etc.) are made for people that either don't have their own place to particularize and make home or don't need a high level of particularization to feel at home and in contrast feel at home with little things. Personalization of such places is <i>allowed</i> to some degree.</p>
Public	<p><b>Heaven. Particular and public</b></p> <p>Such places tend to reflect the identity of a collectivity (nation, city, neighborhood). In this sense, monuments, parks, museums and buildings, etc., are designed to reflect a certain history and collective identity, and in so doing constitute part of a "collective home." Individual personalization is <i>prohibited</i> and, in some cases, penalized by law; collective "personalization" may be acceptable.</p>	<p><b>Hub. Generic and public</b></p> <p>Mostly comprised of transitional spaces that are supposed to be crossed or passed. Motor highways, metro stations and some public squares or streets come to mind. Personalization of such places is often <i>discouraged</i>, but temporary forms of personalization can occur and are exemplified by graffiti, flash mobs and alternative modalities of use (waiting, gathering, sleeping).</p>

## 2.4 Data and Methods

Our data come from interviews with young Mexican professionals about their home-making strategies in Madrid. These interviews took place between 2008 and 2011. Thirty-four young Mexican professionals were interviewed (17 females, 17 males). At the time of the study, the youngest was twenty-four years old and the oldest forty-five years old; the interview subjects had arrived in Spain between 1995 and 2007. The time of stay in Spain varied between five months and sixteen years. All of them had at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, with thirty-one having undertaken or completed a postgraduate degree. The interviewees were a mix of postgraduate students, IT professionals, journalists, academics and CEOs.

While some of them were re-settlers, many of them were temporary movers. Some others could be called "chronic movers," people whose lives are marked by constant movement because of their lifestyles and career paths. What these young, middle-class migrants had in common was international mobility as a strategy of class reproduction in a world where traditional means of distinction, such as secondary and tertiary education, are blurring (Scott 2006; Bourdieu 1989).

As part of the methodological design, the informants were asked to choose a place in the city where they felt comfortable and at home. To our surprise, and this only highlights the proclivity to link home to generic places, many of the informants chose places like Starbucks and other chain restaurants. As the research progressed, more of the so-called generic places (airports, parks, coffee shops) emerged as

significant places in home-making strategies while some other places, such as the neighborhoods where they lived or grew up, were identified as a source of alienation. This was particularly relevant for three scenarios: those who had recently arrived, those who were chronically mobile, and those who were recalling the earlier stages of re-settlement. All this begged the question: What is the role of generic places in the home-making strategies of this class of people?

## 2.5 From the Ideal Cosmopolitan Subject to the Lived Experience of Cosmopolitanization

These footloose Mexicans had incorporated constant mobility in their biographies mainly because of their profession. Such mobility soon became a lifestyle. Perhaps the person who best articulated this idea of the contemporary chronic mover was Amalia, a researcher whose professional life was constructed around a circuit of universities located in various cities in Spain, the UK and Mexico.

*Do you feel at home here?*

There is a beautiful book, the *I Ching*. Every time I look at it I get “The Walker” who is a person whose destiny is to be an outsider, he is always going from one place to another without a place to call home. I like it here because I find many walkers, people who share the feeling of not quite belonging to a place. (Amalia, Academic)

“The walker,” as Amalia explained, can go from one place to another without a (particular) place to call home and through this mobility is able to find a home. This fits the ideal of the cosmopolitan subject whose sense of belonging to the world trumps other affiliations (national, religious, cultural, etc.) (Beck and Sznaider 2006, 6). But what happens at the ground level, in the everyday experiences of those inhabiting cosmopolitan places? As mentioned before, for this group of people generic private places such as coffee shops, hotel rooms and shopping malls have become important tools in their ability to feel at home under conditions of difference, temporality and movement. For this group of chronic movers and for some of the recently arrived, home was found in generic places because they provided *connectivity*, *exclusivity* and *the possibility to move on*.

### 2.5.1 Place to Connect

Research on corporate employees’ personalizing habits in the work-place has shown that as a by-product of technological advances (cell phones, laptops) certain types of employees are now expected to work away from an established place of business (Duyvendak 2011, Tian and Belk 2005; Wells 2000). In this sense, the notion of home as a place for privacy, relaxation and intimacy begins to dissolve as remote technology allows the work sphere to intrude into the domestic sphere. In this

setting, *generic private places* such as Starbucks capitalize on the constant blurring between domestic, leisure and work-related spheres and provide a place specifically designed to host some of the intersecting activities that once were performed in separated spheres.

As the boundaries of home and work are becoming constantly blurred for a great part of the professionalized labor force all over the world, the boundaries between home and away have also become blurred for the small universe of the chronically mobile. In this sense, the standardized practices of *generic private places* such as hotels and rental apartments, where functionality prevails over any other quality, provide a familiar setting where the landing for the chronically mobile is as seamless as possible. What is looked for in these places is a strong Wi-Fi connection and access to certain goods depending on personal preferences: books, newspapers, international cinema, a variety of restaurants.

*Where is your home?*

For the time being my home is here, but for me home is not a physical space, it is more within yourself. That's why I try to remain unattached, because if you become attached it is more difficult to move.

*What do you need to feel at home?*

Well, I need social relationships, freedom, a space with certain conditions: a nice WiFi connection, books, newspapers ... good food and people who love me. (Carlos, NGO worker)

Home then, becomes the place which may not be particular but where, often with the aid of technology, multiple spheres connect and become territorialized and personalized by the interests, needs and affections of the dweller. What becomes really important in the home-making strategies of highly mobile people (and the not so highly-mobile) is the ability to remain connected.

### 2.5.2 *A Place to Opt Out*

When I move around, to be honest, I am only interested on being surrounded by the pretty things ... I just don't want to deal with the ugly, I know I could adapt to that ("the ugly"). Do I want to? NO. (Amalia, Researcher)

When asked about the things they disliked about Madrid, the people who had recently arrived in Madrid would refer to very specific things about the city. That the streets were "dirty and smelled like pee," that there were "junkies sitting on my doorsteps," that "pedestrians are rude." When asked if that did not happen in their hometowns in Mexico, the answer they generally gave was either an emphatic "no," a more nuanced "maybe, but I never noticed" and, finally, for the ones who concurred that such things happened from where they came, that it was not something they confronted on a daily basis.

They did not notice because the urban middle classes in Mexico construct their everyday lives in safe havens, this is to say *particular private places* (gated communities, sheltered leisure spaces). Their interactions in *generic public places* are



very limited and mediated through their access to private means of transportation. In a sense, difference in the public space is experienced through a car window.

Moving to Madrid changed things. The vast majority of the subjects of the study lived in central Madrid neighborhoods relatively close to their offices, businesses or universities. By walking or taking public transportation, they were confronted with difference not only in terms of national and ethnic background, but more importantly social class.

Their comfort zones were located in generic places such as chain restaurants or coffee shops in touristic areas of the city, which not only allowed them to opt out from interacting with “excluded others” but also from interacting under the terms set by the values, beliefs and practices of the city’s long-term residents. Generic businesses share similar characteristics and standardized procedures that somewhat dilute the particularities of the places where they are located. In the words of Marc Augé (1995), “solitary contractuality” was perceived as familiar and comforting to the recently relocated since it offered standardized practices and facilitated the interaction inside the locale.

### 2.5.3 *A Place to Move*

It would be inaccurate to say that the places we have described are completely de-territorialized. It is rather that the ways in which these places are territorialized respond to a need to constantly move, hence a permanent personalization of a place hinders one’s ability to feel at home while moving. The following example comes from a Mexican journalist who in 2007 became a target of Mexican organized crime and had to flee the country to work as a correspondent in Madrid:

*Where is your home?*

Among journalists there is a common phrase when you move: Are you going to unpack your bags? I already unpacked them. (But) If you look at my house you will surely think it is lacking, I don’t hang up pictures or anything and I think in that sense I have become very functional. Sometimes I have to travel 16 times a month, and just think my home is where I am. (Alejandro, Journalist)

Whereas the immobile withdraw to feel at home, the mobile rich have more options. Crucially, the rich and mobile can financially secure their feeling at home; they also have the option to move on. This exit option is in itself a form of security that only a few privileged movers have. In this sense, Madrid was seen as a “neuralgic point” that connected Mexican professionals and worked as an ebb and flow for those people and places important to their personal biographies:

*What do you like about the place where you live?*

I think Madrid is like a neuralgic point for those who come to Europe or live within Europe. It is easy to get here, or out of here depending on the mood. This is one of the things I like the most. (Santiago, Journalist)

While access to modern means of communication and travel have changed the way in which privileged movers relate to places and people, this does not mean that their homes are completely detached from particular places. Rather, their attachments are no longer “given” but purposefully constructed and maintained. In the words of Savage et al. (2005): “Belonging is not that of an individual to a fixed community rooted in place, but rather, one in which the place becomes valuable to the individual” (80) while “elective belonging involves choosing a place to live amongst your own kind, with the result that having local friends becomes an endorsement of one’s place of residence” (85). Because of their access to certain goods and means of communication, privileged movers can opt out from places that might not provide comfort or a homey feeling; they can also simply move elsewhere.

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the chasm between the idea(l) of cosmopolitanism and the actual practicalities of everyday life in the face of the cosmopolitanization of places and individual biographies, particularly when it comes to the resources to feel at home under such conditions. Although some migrants might be able to build homes in *particular and private places*, such homes involve a financial and, more importantly, time investment that many immigrants cannot or will not afford. Although more privileged migrants have resources to create and sustain private and particular places (individual homes or gated communities), sometimes the ways in which they particularize their homes and display their identity are not in tune with the dominant majority.

However, as we have shown, (some) privileged movers are able to “control” and therefore feel at home in generic places, particularly private ones (such as shopping malls, hotels) while avoiding un-homey *generic public places* that are difficult to “personalize” (except when they successfully “privatize” these public spaces, e.g., by going to private lounges at airports).

Thus, generic places are not all inherently un-homey. While their homogeneity and standardization might be the central reason to define them as void of meaning and as a threat to particular home-places, such standardization can provide familiarity and cognitive assurances for international movers and for many who move inside the city as well. The problem seems to be that while *generic private places* allow certain degrees of personalization and thus have the potential to engender feelings of home, *generic public places*, especially those for the resource poor, are becoming increasingly hostile towards any attempts at personalization. Without *particular and private places* or access to *generic private places*, many people are left without options to find ways to feel at home.

While the most mobile and the most immobile differ on the importance they attach to particular places, what makes them feel at home is the same. For both, *familiarity* is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition to feel at home. In the case of the privileged and highly mobile, familiarity is guaranteed in the *generic*

places described here. However, there is more to these places than just familiarity. These “footloose” spots are also standardized, secure, and often segregated. In this sense, the differences between the more and less mobile often run parallel with class; their divergent ways of feeling at home often have class-specific consequences. First, the spread of the generic places of the rich and mobile may threaten the poor, who may be displaced to create space for “generic development.” Second, it is not only generic goods for the rich and mobile (like hotel chains) that are spreading around the world. Starbucks and McDonald’s do so as well, catering to many less mobile inhabitants and, in the Spanish case, replacing the traditional (and often subsidized) businesses *de toda la vida*. Third, clashes between the more and less mobile are not always clashes between rich and poor. Next to inter-class relations, intra-class relations become tense as well. In cities and neighborhoods in their countries of arrival, migrants can unintentionally upset the jealously guarded places of the native population. Lastly, mobility in the form of migration of the poor tends to disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups in countries of arrival for, as we have shown, more privileged movers always have an exit strategy from unfavorable conditions.

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# Chapter 3

## Making Cosmopolitan Spaces: Urban Design, Ideology and Power



Giovanni Semi

### 3.1 Introduction

The diffusion of signature architecture, flagship projects and the making of a global architect stardom system indicates the relevance of place-making activities within contemporary urbanism (King 2004; Ponzini and Nastasi 2016; Alaily-Mattar et al. 2020). This reflects the transformations of capitalism, in its productive and spatial shape: on one hand, urbanization is the productive side of capitalism, a *real estate* of the world, and, on the other, the most attractive investment locations are nowadays found in China, the Arabian Peninsula and in the highest echelon of the urban hierarchy, global cities (Rossi 2017).

Mobile urbanisms and fast policy regimes are spreading and different professionals work beyond the (urban) scenes (McCann and Ward 2011; Peck and Theodore 2010, 2015). Beside the most obvious “place entrepreneurs” (developers, real estate agents, financial institutions, companies and public actors), there is a whole world of expertise that deserves closer scrutiny. This chapter is devoted to urban designers, one of the most relevant yet ambiguous professional groups within the urban realm (Schurch 1999), and the ways through which they apply cosmopolitan visions through their practices.

In this chapter I will argue that we are witnessing a growing interest for both the notion and production of public space, which is largely addressed by urban designers, who function as the key professionals in making cosmopolitan spaces (Madanipour 2006). The core of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of the field of urban design from qualitative data on the making of a global elite of urban professionals. These data are drawn from research on practitioners and academics carried out in different cities and contexts in the US (New York, Chicago, San Francisco)

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and Europe (London, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Berlin, Amsterdam, Delft, Haarlem, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Copenhagen and Stockholm).

## 3.2 Urban Design Meets the Public Space

The rise of signature buildings, flagship projects and “starchitecture” has boosted the visibility and commitment of urban design as a support for built environment interventions (Ponzini 2014; Ponzini and Nastasi 2016; Sklair 2005) within a frame of “cosmopolitan urbanism” (Binnie et al. 2006). This specific and growing demand for place-making activities has coalesced around a typical urban setting: the public space (Gospodini 2002; Madanipour 2006; Sorkin 2009). The development of urban design as a “way of thinking” (Marshall 2009, 55) between practice and theory, firms and academia, is thus related to the specific historical imprint to urban design offered by architects and their curriculum (Mumford 2009). At the same time, urban design has profited from the changed landscape of space production.

The primacy of urban design in the contemporary production of space is thus particularly evident in streets, squares, parks, waterfronts, as well as in masterplans, large-scale interventions and urban regeneration activities. We have chosen to focus on the relationship between urban design and the production of contemporary public spaces for two essential reasons: the quintessential urban nature of the latter as cosmopolitan places and their problematic and puzzling nature as open spaces.

### 3.2.1 *The Public and the Private*

Often viewed in opposition with private spaces, public spaces are highly regulated, precisely because of their challenging non-private essence. Rights of entry, entitlements, rules of proper behavior and the constant definition of order are at the basis of such spaces. Regulations are the rule, not the exception, and it follows that politics and conflicts are an essential part of the deal, framing the artificiality of the public space (Amin 2008).

As shown in the following graph, even though the Western world has a millennium-long experience and knowledge of public spaces, they are very recent urban objects of desire and inquiry (Bodnar 2015).



The growth in Anglo-American books on such spaces is telling. The golden age of public space discourse is thus very recent, starting mostly in the 1980s, when neoliberal policies were rapidly substituting postwar social contracts with the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare system (Jessop 1993). Moreover, the fact that this rise of consideration for public spaces has accompanied the growth of place-making interventions does not contradict the contemporaneous view eulogizing the end of the public space (Sorkin 1992). That view simply acknowledged the death of the romantic vision of urban life, *à la* Jacobs or Lefebvre, and longed for authentic encounters in the urban realm. Such places may be called *oppositional public places*, in contrast to what emerged from the 1980s onwards – *festive* public spaces, to follow Mitchell (2003, 138). Festive public places were highly promoted by neoliberal policies during the third and fourth waves of gentrification (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Lees et al. 2013; Semi 2015) and, in general, through most regeneration interventions in the deindustrialized Western urban landscape (Hubbard 1996; Harvey 2011; Moulaert et al. 2003). The elements of these new spaces are well-known: “Corporate and state planners have created environments that are based on a desire for security more than interaction, for entertainment more than (perhaps divisive) politics” (Mitchell 2003, 138; see also Hannigan 2005; Julier 2005; Zukin 1995). Beside the securitarian aspect, in which the technologies of CCTV and GPS have also contributed to reshaping the physical and spatial experience of gatherings (Graham and Marvin 2001), the most evident element of festive public places is in the transformed façade of the visible urban landscape: lighting, sidewalks, shop windows as well as the built environment as such.

The festive city, with its transformed rhythms, is a matter of capitals and political choices; urban design may be considered one of the multiple sites through which we may observe its making. The public space thus becomes the friendly and cosmopolitan milieu reassuring these generations of young, educated urban middle classes on their locational choices (Young et al. 2006). This public space is built on a striking paradox: it is designed and manufactured by sanitizing any kind of conflict in order to generate a disciplined sociability, apolitical and friendly, secure and vibrant.

Architecture, landscape architecture and urban design play a pivotal role here: they transform such political projects into urbanism or, to quote Michael Sorkin, “urban design became urban renewal with a human face” (2009, 166).

### 3.3 Desire and Design

In the last few decades, as we have seen, public space has gained a higher profile, and so too have those producing it. Who are the people involved in producing public space, and, more specifically, in producing the built urban environment that is “between the buildings” (Gehl 2011)? We may include within this group a large number of actors: architects, urban designers, planners, academics, local authorities and, of course, residents and city-users.

A mainly qualitative approach has been chosen to investigate these issues. A number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with two different sets of actors: (1) people working in firms that produce projects or visions of urban design for public or private clients, and (2) people involved in university programs that teach or carry out research within urban design, and therefore produce knowledge across the field and train the next generation of urban designers (see also Semi and Bolzoni 2020). The sample was built on an international basis, including cases from Europe and the USA.<sup>1</sup> Among the many results stemming from the interviews, an important one concerns the contradiction between the design of a public space often thought of as a cosmopolitan, democratic urban device and the hard fact of working in non-democratic environments or, to say the least, under critical conditions.

The first element of the survey dealt with the geography of urban design practice, from the sites of elaboration and innovation to those of implementation and application. In accord with the historical making of the field of urban design, the geography as well as the approaches surveyed are significantly dependent on both national and local contexts.<sup>1</sup> Schools reproduce themselves, so programs that developed early, such as GSD at Harvard or the equivalent at Bartlett-UCL, TU-Delft or ETH-Zurich, have provided cohorts of skilled professionals that have had a serious impact on both the public and private sector. Not only does there appear to be a scholarly path-dependence with a somewhat clear geography, but there is also an urban

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<sup>1</sup> To build the sample of the University programs, we started from the work by Palazzo on the pedagogical traditions of urban design (2011), which we updated through a web inquiry and an experts inquiry carried out by the jiscmail devoted to urban design. We specifically focused on University programs on urban design. To build the sample of firms we started by analyzing the winners of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards, section of urban design, of the last 5 years and few directories partly or entirely devoted to urban design, such as *archdaily*, *laud8*, *urban design group*, *designer*. We also adopted a snowball sample strategy, asking all the firms and academics contacted to signal up to five firms that have been carrying out interesting and/or influential works in the last couple of years. On this basis we contacted more than 29 academics and 62 firms. The result of this first stage of research is a body of 39 recorded interviews carried out in May 2014 and between April and May 2015.



path-dependence. Beside the few gigantic global firms such as SOM, ARUP or HOK (some of which were interviewed) that run offices worldwide and hire thousands of skilled architects and urban designers, most middle to low-size firms are locally embedded in a city in which they get the majority of their commissions and in which they foster their social capital through meetings, conferences and events (Tiesdell and Adams 2011). In a similar way to what was shown by Fainstein on local developers, urban design firms, even when they “go global,” have to keep their local roots (2001).

The nexus between globalism and localism is precisely represented by cosmopolitanism, a professional and cultural marker that most of the interviewees pointed to as the crucial element in defining themselves. The architects and designers interviewed all had one point in common, whether they were working in a multinational firm based in New York or a small practice in Stockholm: they were trained in different universities and cities, had multiple professional experiences in several countries, and worked in a culturally diverse and cosmopolitan working environment.

Even though the geography of universities has its own hierarchy, as pointed above, circulation nonetheless defined the working life of each professional we got in touch with:

The language in the office is English because we have a lot of different nationalities, there are Danish people, there are American people, there are Italian people, there are Spanish people...yeah, I think that's it right now. But we have had a lot of different nationalities here...Swedes, Germans...from all over Europe, which I also think is a great strength to getting different kinds of perspective on what they think, or what they know is working where they're from, and how it could work here and also why they think something's not going to work here in that sense. And that's also why I'm so interested in this, because what we do here and the way we work here and the way we try to influence the way that the public space is being developed and how it's being designed, I would really try to share that with different cities and municipalities, try to guide them to how they could sort of do the same kinds of spaces that we do here in Denmark. (Founder, mid-size firm, Copenhagen)

Almost every interview brought out information about internships and the educational, ethnic and national backgrounds of the interviewees, but also attitudes towards travels, open-mindedness and cultural sensitivity that highlighted the quality of a professional cosmopolitan. While we might assume that this cosmopolitan ethos is a common trait for most professionals dealing in a globalized environment (lawyers, managers, doctors, etc.) or for high-skilled people working in global cities, one specificity for architects and urban designers is the role played by field trips.

### ***3.3.1 Fieldtrips: The Nexus Between Models and Inspiration***

All the interviewees from architecture and urban design firms shared the habit of traveling to other cities and territories to learn from other practices and to visit projects under construction or see finished ones. These activities were part of the professional group activity called the field trip.

Fieldtrips and relationships among firms contribute to crystallizing views and models, especially in relation to public space design, but also to fostering the sense of being a community of professionals, forging the identity of the global architect and designer.

The issue of models is crucial to understanding contemporary place-making by architects and urban designers. First of all, there is longstanding tradition of “contextualism” in urbanism and architecture, defined by such figures as Camillo Sitte, Colin Rowe, and Aldo Rossi. Under this perspective, which owes a significant debt to studies carried out by Sitte in nineteenth-century Italy to identify the perfect *piazza* (*Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* was published in 1889), squares were considered the prototypes of qualitative superior urban life. The contextual tradition is renewed constantly through professional fieldtrips, and places like Italy, for instance, play a role as a site of continuous inquiry and learning.

Field trips might also be considered as a professional tourism activity. In the case of Italy, this tourism is informed by a historical context in which aristocrats and nobles scrutinized Southern Europe during the Grand Tour and afterwards (Hom 2015):

We spent the most time in *Rome*, I really like Rome, and then *Lucca*, when we were on that trip we were in Lucca for six weeks, and then stopped outside of *Pienza*, we actually stayed on a farm for a week, just a week, but it was...[...] and so that was really influential, and then to be ... in terms of inspiration, it's kind of, yeah, in the background, *that's the kind of place I'd go to be intellectually inspired*. (Founder, middle-size firm, San Francisco; emphasis supplied)

While there is no socio-political understanding of the contemporary urban condition of Italian cities and squares, a subterranean Orientalism keeps orienting these fieldtrips. In several interviews Southern Europe emerged as a place for cosmopolitan inspiration, while the Global North acted more as a place for cosmopolitan creation and development.

The geography of inspiration may produce moral labels among urban designers that are consistent with an ordering and deciphering activity necessary to foster a cosmopolitan perspective on public spaces. If medieval and Renaissance Italy can act as a place to get “intellectually inspired,” one might also consider the other side of the spectrum, namely “shitty places”:

And I think you should also go and visit some shitty places, there's so much to visit in Dublin, and see how it looks there, like, places where it's not nice, and I think it would be good to, it would be interesting, [...] but I think places that are, like, like Turkey or India or whatever, that are at the edge of ...China also ...that are not like super-poor countries but how they think public space. (Partner, mid-size firm, Copenhagen)

This differentiation among field trip destinations between “intellectually inspiring” and “shitty” places led Moscow and Berlin to be identified, like Rome, Siena, Ravenna, and Lucca, as interesting starting places, while generally speaking the Global South is more on the “shitty” side.

While the landscape of inspiration follows a Global North/Global South divide, it is also clear that the geography of production goes eastward. The Arabian

Peninsula, South Korea and, at a higher level, China are the places to go to apply what's being re-learned in Europe and elaborated throughout the Global North:

[in China] I mean, I hate to use this word, but it is a lot more totalitarian, you know, "there are ... some villages here, but we're going to move the people, so don't worry about it" [...] it was almost like there were no limits, you can design what you wanted to design as long as you could get the developer (Partner, multinational firm, New York office).

As a vast country providing territories, possibilities and chances (Ren 2011), China acts as a dreamland for engineers, architects and urban designers. Cosmopolitan landscapes develop quickly here and with ambiguous effects (Söderström 2006). For some urban designers China acts as an elevator-space to get a project done, acquire visibility and develop an international reputation and standing which can be leveraged in the highly competitive urban design field back home (Kennedy 2005). For others, the Far East is a fascinating terrain, though for dubious moral aspects:

Life is easy for China, you know, they just can allocate funds, like... Singapore, I mean, that's fantastic, I mean, who can't do things in Singapore, with an undemocratic city-state? (Partner, multinational firm, Chicago office)

In several interviews, discussing projects in China or the Emirates paved the way for a sort of Western complicity among gentlemen (from an intersectional standpoint: a white (often) male, upper-class, cosmopolitan complicity) which admitted that something nasty was at stake when an eco-friendly, resilient and smart design of a waterfront was developed in a country that did not give women the right to vote or denied basic human rights to foreign workers.

This moral ambiguity has always been a critical aspect of architecture. It has also been part of the history of urban design, if one considers the modernist masterplan of La Havana designed by Luis Sert under Batista's dictatorship in 1955 Cuba (Hyde 2008). What is somewhat new is the global scope and diffusion of urban design today (Punter 2007). As a senior associate in a global-size firm declared:

you know we're building new cities, so urban design *is* the city, outside of what the specific architecture is; other than opportunities like that, it is still kind of hard to define what it is when you engage in a city that is already built or is a little bit of improvement here and there and is not a tabula rasa like starting from scratch greenfield city-building exercise. (Senior associate, firm with 24 offices worldwide and 1900 worldwide employees; emphasis supplied)

Moral boundary-making is a well-recognized feature of professional cultures (Lamont and Molnar 2002). There are different directions of boundary-making: an external as well as an internal one. The external is devoted in setting the difference between urban design and other fields and professions, namely architecture, landscape architecture and planning. It is a fundamental strategy in order to gain respectability and autonomy towards commissioners and the public, but a very slippery one given the uncertain status of this discipline and the heavy dependence on formal training and education in architecture. Many respondents, for instance, defined themselves as "architects" during presentations or declared that they mostly presented themselves as architects with clients. The second direction of

boundary-making is an internal one: given the close relationship between urban design and the public space, setting the moral stage for further interventions is a crucial step. While in the academic literature on urban design there is a general confusion with regards to place-making, when we interrogated scholars, we gathered mixed reactions, and some of them were harsh:

I really don't use the word place-making, I think it's retrograde, conservative, nationalist. ... I think place-making is too easy ... it's trivial and suspect...I mean Disney makes places. [...] urban design is the means in which social and cultural transformations are made physically, making manifest in public space. (Academic and practitioner, New York)

Contradictions between the “trivial” aspect of working in the production of serial projects (“Disney makes places”) and the craftsman-like or quasi-demiurgical role advocated by the aristocracy of urban designers is a common element of the interviews. Other levels of mismatch between the professional progressive ethos and the mundane working arrangements may be found in the attitude towards communities and community-led design (or participatory-led design) and in the adoption of catchy adjectives such as “resilient” or “smart,” which many respondents felt were mostly fashionable buzzwords but nonetheless used them during the interview as well as in their daily practice.

Gentrification, for instance, is clearly an ambivalent outcome to deal with. Some interviewees clearly rejected or adopted a critical perspective towards it, delving in the tradition of community-based participatory design:

I don't think anybody's really solved the displacement or the ...I don't know that it's solvable... the gentrification issue, unfortunately, but I think it's always something at the top of mind for us, and just thinking about what impact the changes we're proposing in for a neighborhood are going to have on the people who are living there, so it's a really important part of [our job]. (Founder, middle-size firm, San Francisco)

Others, more interestingly, adhered to the vision of gentrification as a means of urban regeneration, part of which was linked to urban design:

I don't think there's a specifically Dutch public space, I think they actually do start it now, like Rotterdam when I was there, actually, there was shit in the streets and so many drug dealers *and now it's been, again, gentrified* and much more focus on like how you treat the ground floor of buildings, *that you have some kind of public control, or like, like with a public space, like, and that you get some kind of interaction of the buildings with the public space*, also this Jan Gehl kind of dogma, and so ...I think, I actually think right now that a lot, a lot of focus on Denmark, it has to do with very successful architects and like a generation of architects that have been kind of successful doing interesting stuff, it has to do with the municipality being kind of proactive, both in Copenhagen and in Aarhus and in other cities[...] and I always think it's interesting what's going on in Switzerland, also very clean and very nice always that, but still good. *And also always with a substantial amount of money there.* (Partner, middle-size firm, Rotterdam)

### 3.4 Conclusion

Urban design is a relatively recent breed in the urbanism tradition with a sharp growth of activities at a global scale. One of the main reasons for that is the rising attention to the issue of public space. While there is no clear definition whatsoever of the concept, public space emerged as a key spatial form in neoliberal urbanism. While cities long for international visibility through cultural regeneration processes, their citizens ask for cosmopolitan, livable and festive environments. Urban design provides this stage. It does so by adopting abstract models of public life settings, such as the Italian piazza, or by accepting the spatial and behavioral determinism of early pioneers such as W. H. Whyte or Jan Gehl. Nonetheless, the voices of these urban designers tell a story of progressive crystallization of a professional field around the idea of a city centered on its public spaces. Urban designers act, among other professionals, as “conveyors of cosmopolitan taste,” as Ole Söderström has put it (2006). This is especially true with the kind of urbanity that is under construction in the Far East and Arabian Peninsula, two regions of the world in which cosmopolitan forms are applied in authoritarian cultural and political contexts. This contradiction lies at the heart of the urbanization process and asks for broader investigation and discussion.

Cosmopolitanism, as it emerged from the voices of urban designers, is embedded in both their professional identity (education and career) and their perspective towards their own activities. Living in an international milieu, longing for international careers, urban designers apply models and visions that are cosmopolitan in meaning and scope. When asked about the risk of homogenization that the application of models at various scales implied, a practitioner and scholar responded with a remarkably reflexive account:

yes, there is homogenization, and the homogenization is not necessarily because there is a center of these ideas, where these ideas come from, maybe. But the homogenization comes from, to my mind and having really talked to people from across the world and, you know, in the last twenty-five years traveling a lot and, you know, and teaching and so on and so forth, the homogenization comes out of a desire to take part in a particular type of civilization, right? which is global. And for many people across the world that attempt has a type of esthetic appeal that they believe is a result of design, right? (Academic and practitioner, New York)

If the former reflection stands, then we have a hypothesis for further research agendas: is cosmopolitanism an aesthetics rather than an ethics? Maybe we are not talking anymore about just or unjust societies, but only wondering whether the global order we are producing is beautiful or not (Berleant 2018). Aesthetics as a social and moral category may then become the new frontier of urban inequality and cosmopolitanism its vehicle.

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# Chapter 4

## Dakar by Night: Engaging with a Cosmopolitanism by Contrast



Thomas Fouquet

### 4.1 Introduction

This study aims to bring to light some ways of being-in-town that organize desires for being-in-the-world. Drawing on 20 years of anthropological fieldwork in Dakar, it relies on a simple yet substantial premise: a very large number of urban Senegalese youths express a strong desire to move North, or West, while only a small minority will be able to do so. My questioning focuses on those who stay but whose modes of sticking around are deeply influenced by their longing for a larger world (Fouquet 2008). Ethnographically, and in view of contemporary expressions of “cityness” (Sassen 2010), this can be made visible by peculiar uses of the city with social and cultural mobilities tending to compensate for an unreachable geographical one. More broadly, such configurations can be understood in terms of the concrete urban cosmopolitan experiences they convey – that is, a cosmopolitanism that emerges in the wake of constant non-travelers’ paths into the city as compared to the ability of “frequent travelers” to move around the world (Calhoun 2002). This can seem counterintuitive as the individual potential for mobility has long been positioned as the most important criterion in defining (admittedly in its elitist version) the cosmopolitan condition. In my work in Dakar, mobility remains a key issue, but rather on the level of an intentionality closely mediated by a “globalization of dreams” (Geschiere and Rowlands 1996), thus introducing a discussion of the cultural and socioeconomical perimeters of cosmopolitanism itself. My ambition here is to define cosmopolitanism not so much as the convenient reflection of (privileged) social status but rather in inherently relational terms – that is, “being cosmopolitanism rather than,” “citizen of the world rather than,” “member of the world society rather than,” “well aware of global cultural trends rather than,” and so on.

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Under such conditions, this contrasting understanding of cosmopolitanism can only be a constructive one, strongly rooted in an empirical framework (in this case, the urban temporalities of young Senegalese women). Indeed, my main ethnographical scene is Dakar by night, which I address both as a tangible, infrastructural entity and as a moral region where some kind of subjective external projection, cultural renegotiation and, on the whole, a change of scenery at home seem accessible or at least possible. The urban night appears as a “time of the world” (Diouf 2013), in contrast to the diurnal city which remains tinged with negative judgements of localism among interlocutors. The particular ambiance, cultural styles (music, clothing, dancing, etc.) and attitudes, as well as the fact that some nocturnal environments are highly internationalized and bring together people who do not cross paths the rest of the time, play an important role in the “cosmopolitan sense” that my interlocutors subjectively associate with the urban night. However, far beyond the potentially “objective cosmopolitan status” of the nocturnal city, what I want to suggest here is that what makes the night “cosmopolitan” is first and foremost the discontent, frustration, and sometimes despair that are contrastively associated with daytime. While the city by night is related to the idea of a widening scope of possibilities, the diurnal one is somehow a depository of popular grievances, especially that one of, to put it roughly, feeling stuck (both socially and geographically).

We find here the first indications of the (urban) night cosmopolitics that are at the core of this chapter. The alleged “openness” of nightlife often makes it suspect by association with a fear for social, cultural and moral perdition. In Dakar, evidence of this can be found in the plethora of sensationalist press articles or the offensives brought by moral entrepreneurs, especially in the religious sphere, against a number of practices that Dakar-by-night is reputed to host or promote: drinking, sexual intimacy (possibly priced), accoutrements and dances considered, if not outrageous, as “not virtuous.” This nocturnal stigma is actually very common worldwide, as the urban night is commonly considered a time-space of weakened social and moral control. However, in the Senegalese context, these denunciations may support a much broader critique addressed to foreign (not to say Western) models that are supposed to negatively impact Senegalese youth. So beyond the sociopolitical influence of “traditional” or “religious” moral ethics, Dakar-at-night also raises questions related to “postcoloniality.” Be it ways of clothing or speaking, usages of the body and sexuality, modes of behaving and performing oneself publicly, the Dakar urban night is seen as a hotspot for “imported” styles and practices that are appropriated locally and thus the target of judgments concerning cultural illegitimacy or moral danger. This nocturnal stigma applies with greater force to women, as is well shown by the popular Wolof expression *jiggeen yu gën guddi*, which can be literally translated as “girls who go out at night.” This phrase conveys a presupposition of debauchery, even working as a parabolic (d)enunciation of prostitution: seeking the “good life” in the nocturnal world can expose women frontally to “low life” judgments. More generally, the social postures adopted at night are frequently assimilated to cultural *impostures*. Following this vulgate of “the loss,” the fact of culturally “sleeping” with Western worlds raises the risk of being cutting off from a certain idea of social and cultural authenticity, with all the supposedly harmful and perverse

consequences that this conveys (Mbembe 2006). It should be added that these configurations appear exacerbated for the urban night, so the social judgments that the nocturnal city engenders reactivate and locate in a more global horizon the classical binary of “tradition versus modernity.” This is further evidence of the cosmopolitical dynamics that “inhabit,” cross or impregnate the nocturnal city.

At the same time, according to many of my interlocutors in Dakar, the attraction of nightlife is closely linked to the opportunities it provides for reaching something broader than a “here and now” very commonly experienced as social frustration and geographical blocking. In this view, Dakar by night appears as a window open to the world, especially in a context where the heightened desire for migration and mobility goes hand in hand with the difficulties or even impossibility of realizing them for those excluded from global movement.

In the cases sketched here of dangerous nights versus nocturnal opportunities and openness, the urban night is conceived as an emblematic site of circulation and domestication of globalized trends. From this point of view, the nocturnal city takes shape and meaning on a terrain of confrontation articulating different visions of the place one occupies or *should* occupy in world processes. While this tension between “cosmopolitans and locals” (Hannerz 1990) might appear trivial, it still needs to be considered empirically, in particular regarding its tangible urban translations. This chapter engages with grassroots cosmopolitical expressions that unfold in the social and temporal margins of Dakar, where indocility and critical postures are interwoven with hopes for a better future. The problem is thus how to deal with the making of a *cosmopolitanism by contrast* organized between the Here and the (imagined) Elsewhere, the Self and the Other, the actual and the potential. My broader concern is to show that night cosmopolitics and its very concrete urban translations are not isolated phenomena but echo some major aspects of the politics of Dakar’s residents.

## 4.2 The “Night Adventurers” in Dakar: Toward a Nocturnal Change of Scenery at Home

The main empirical evidence used in this study derives from my long-lasting ethnography among young Senegalese women who frequent nocturnal Dakar, “the night adventurers” as I have called them. I need to briefly explain how I came to deal with such questions, and more broadly with nocturnal issues.

I started fieldwork in Yeumbeul, a very popular neighborhood in the suburbs of Dakar, in 2000. The research agenda initially concerned unemployed young men. I was interested in how they elaborate their own path into the city whilst being largely politically and economically excluded from it. I observed that most of them were literally *not going anywhere*: with no financial resources to move at a larger scale in the city, they spent all day and night sticking around in their under-served neighborhood. To put it simply: these young men were caught in social and spatial stagnation. In the meantime, their conversations invariably converged to the issue of

migration: how to leave Senegal, and to go where? The important thing was to leave; departure was considered the only option. There was a heuristic tension between this strongly desired *mobility* and the forced or unwilling *immobility* these individuals found themselves in.

I was struck by another thing in these months spent living in the suburbs of Dakar. I observed that the gendered constructions of youth status were highly contrasted when it came to mobility. Young men were free to move at will, meaning that they were socially legitimate to go where they wanted to go, even if, as I just mentioned, they were generally not going anywhere. For most young suburban women, though, the legitimate perimeter of circulation was, basically, the domestic one. However, every evening, I could notice that a significant number of young suburban women, all made up and perfumed and dressed in revealing and trendy clothes, were “taking off” to downtown Dakar. The term “taking off” is intentional: all this actually looked like the departure on a trip, even if it was repeated night after night on the small scale of a journey of a few kilometers to the city center.

My ambition was not to focus on urban marginality or on “deviant” behaviors such as prostitution but rather on the tension between mobility and immobility. In that respect, these “night-girls” seem emblematic. They engage nightly with nightclubs and bars through social practices in which sexuality, seduction and their economic extensions are closely linked. However, what they actually do and seek out during their night activities cannot be confined to economic-sexual issues. While the resources provided by male partners are pivotal, they are far from being exclusive. Gains in autonomy and symbolic struggles are also central (Fouquet 2014a), even if they are often forgotten or overlooked due to the “unconventional” sexual materiality of these configurations and the moralistic or miserabilist judgements they polarize. In that respect, I could discern at least three main topics crossing the practices and trajectories of these women. First, the problem is to break with some of the constraints imposed by social seniors to emancipate oneself from the status of social junior. Frequenting nightlife, the financial earnings deriving from that activity, as well as the rupture that doing so organizes towards the banality of everyday life, are means of asserting social autonomy and taking distance from the feeling of dependency and submission toward parents and relatives. Second, in a more gendered perspective, frequenting nightlife is about departing from models of femininity that my interlocutors strongly reject, the social roles of daughter and wife that are seen as synonymous with subordination and constraint. Finally, and probably most importantly, nightlife is a means of asserting oneself as a modern and cosmopolitan individual through clothing, dancing, talking and, more broadly, taking the stage. Simply put, instead of reaching the faraway places they long for (Europe and North America, basically), these young women circulate, in a “broadminded” [*esprit du large*] manner (Mbembe 2006, 2), in moral regions inside the nocturnal city. This is also one of the main reasons that led me to use the notions of adventure (*l’aventure*) and adventurers (*les aventurières*) for the interpretation of these female trajectories. Indeed, over the last few decades, the concept of adventure has been increasingly used to define and describe a particular type of migrant departing on the road to exile (Bredeloup 2014). What is at stake in my usage of adventure is to engage with

social mobilities at a local, rather than an international, scale and by women rather than men, who have up to now been the main objects of study for adventure in the context of migration.

The night adventure appears first and foremost as an intimate and transformative experience:

During the night, I see what other people will never see or even imagine... What I see is another world that's opening up. This world is real, and it doesn't exist at the same time. It is in my head [*samay xalat*, my thoughts] or in my body when I get dressed to go out, when I dance, when men look at me with desire ... It is a world of the night that disappears during the day. But here, in my head and in my body, that's where it still exists in some ways. In any case, it is this world that I prefer, because I tell myself that it is a good life that can be found here or that seems reachable. Even if, for real, it slips away from me, again and again and again ... But I keep on running after it! (25-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2016).<sup>1</sup>

This is a good illustration of how the urban night is addressed among the night adventurers. The sexual transactions in which they are involved often mask the complexity of their trajectories. In fact, my interlocutors all evoke the urban night as the place where the tension between the feeling of insignificance and social incapacity felt by many young Senegalese and the desire to access a “good life” (Feldman 2002) inspired by a certain idea of autonomy, self-realization, and material modernity is resolved. However, this fundamental opposition follows a clear line of fracture between daytime and nighttime that these young women redraw in practices and discourses night after night. In other words, frequenting Dakar nightlife makes it possible to approach certain conceptions of a desirable existence while adopting *de facto* critical postures vis-à-vis the local living conditions. Another interlocutor put it this way:

[Going out at night] well, to me, it is not really a problem of escaping. But simply ... I prefer the nighttime. It's cooler, you know. Dakar during the day, it's a real mess: traffic jams, heat, noise ... And what is there to do during the day? Going to the market? No thank you! [...] At night, you see, everyone is well dressed, you meet people you don't know ... Nobody monitors nobody, you do what you like. You don't get bothered and you don't feel ashamed to do what you want! [...] And then, you tell your own story, that's the big time, you know... you can never predict how far it will lead you! (22-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2016)

In line with this nocturnal indeterminacy and its inner “productivity” (Cooper and Pratten 2015), frequenting the city by night also gives rise to a sensation of self-transformation or self-invention. In that respect, the uses of the body and, more broadly, of style become crucial arguments for the making of such self-narrations.

Making oneself beautiful [before going out at night] is a way to respect oneself, I think. When you go out, it's not to show your problems. You enjoy the nightlife and then you want to show something else. There are things you can do at night, I mean the way you dress, where you go ... things that make you feel like someone else. [...] When I go out at night, I

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<sup>1</sup>Quotations will be sourced by the gender and the age of the interlocutor, the type of interaction (informal discussion, ethnographic interview), the language(s) used, the place, the year.

want everyone to look at me, like: this girl, she has something, she really is someone... Not just “somebody,” I mean. (24-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2004)

This work on appearance does more than support “fictitious upward mobility” (Mitchell 1996 [1956], 18). It is also at the very basis of the making of a “stylistic space of cosmopolitanism” (Ferguson 1999, 107) where references to a transnational blackness (Fouquet 2014b) are highly pervasive:

Man, you should have seen that, I was on top, classy, really stylish! We went to *Le Dolce* [a Dakar night club], there were too many people there! Pam! I stepped in [imitating a model on a podium], there was that sound of Rihanna that I like too much ... [...] I was wearing my pink Kangol cap ... *Teu teu teu*, do you know New York?! I made it the real American way, boy! (23-year-old female, informal discussion in Wolof, Dakar, 2007)

In this context, the particular attention night adventurers pay to appearance goes beyond seduction strategies or eroticization of the body. It can be understood as a way to affirm their social (though fragile) power and, more broadly, their presence in the world: not really from “here” but not actually “elsewhere,” they are, rather, in a crafty, critical and stylized cosmopolitan “middle.” This assertion could resonate with Michel Foucault’s notion of “utopian bodies.” Following Foucault, the makeup and dress codes are “operations by which the body is torn away from its proper space and projected into another space” (2009, 16).

These feelings of being somewhere else and maybe being someone else are made possible and strengthened by participating in nightlife, not only synchronically but also diachronically, that is, when considering “night careers” (*carrières de la nuit*). I thus refer to a social and cultural (l)earning process – by definition practical – that unfolds over the long term. The social skills and savoir-faire that these young women progressively acquire whilst attending the internationalized nocturnal milieus of Dakar allow them to pursue and enforce distinctive practices. This allows the young women to distance themselves from what they label as the “real prostitute/hooker” (*caga* in Wolof). In fact, the crucial factor in determining who is the “real hooker” is primarily based on judgments of ignorance, as mentioned by this interlocutor:

Personally, if I see a real *caga* [hooker], I tell myself that it’s a girl who just knows nothing, a real ignorant! Here in Senegal, we say it goes like this: *bala ngay xam, xamadi rey la* [proverb: until you know, ignorance will kill you], it is a way to express that this thing, ignorance, is not good at all. You need to think a lot, you need to understand the situation to be very crafty, otherwise you’re going to be the loser. (25-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2004)

More broadly, the problem is to distance themselves from what they see as the typical young Senegalese “who know nothing,” are “not openminded enough” or even “under-developed” (*pas assez évolués*). These subaltern cosmopolitan experiences of the city thus appear, to borrow the terms of Deleuze and Guattari (1975), “immediately-political” (*immédiat-politique*), especially in how they display resistance or at least indocility toward local mainstreams and socially assigned positions.

### 4.3 Urban Night Cosmopolitics

The social practices and self-narrations depicted above also have concrete translations in Dakar's nocturnal geography. They support a singular mode of being in town characterized mostly by movement. In fact, my interlocutors maintain that they want things to be in motion and, even more, "to go fast":

Well, to me, nightlife provides the opportunity not to be stuck in a slow life... I mean, here in Dakar things are so slowwwwly coming! If you look at most of Dakar girls, well, they stay at their father's house quietly and shyly... After that, they stay at their husband's house... If they happen to find a guy who can marry them, indeed...

And what will they have seen in their lifetime, aside from the house of Others?! Do they even know this town in which they are born and they grew up, except those interior domestic places I mean? You, you know Dakar far better than them! [...] And are they living their own life, or the life of somebody else?! Personally, I want things to go fast, I want things that give me the feeling of moving forward! One day, if you happen to see me walking in the streets of NYC, baby, just don't be surprised! (26-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2015)

This quotation raises several issues. First, it is significant that past, present and future biographical times are critically related to urban references – near or faraway, closed or opened, actual or potential. These patterns testify not only to the entanglement of imaginaries of time and space in the production of urbanites but allow for the urban night to be considered a "potential space" (Fouquet 2017). According to Donald W. Winnicott, this notion evokes an intermediate zone of experience situated between the inner life of the subject and the surrounding reality. This intermediate zone of experience centers on the question of creativity through which everyone interacts with their social, cultural and material environment by linking it to their intimate world. For Winnicott, creativity consists of a general posture towards existence, "a colouring of the whole attitude to external reality [...] that makes the individual feel that life is worth living." He adds: "Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance: the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation" (2005 [1971], 87). Investigating the urban night as a cosmopolitan "potential space" implies identifying some local spots that, nightly, take the shape and meaning of a "social elsewhere." The detailed and concrete observation of these very specific "heterotopias" (Foucault 2009) – both urban and nocturnal, and admitting the wide range of issues and forms they condense in various local contexts – can richly contribute to the debate on cosmopolitanism and its "empirical [urban] turn".

The issue of "slowness" in the quotation is also significant in how it refers, in a contrasting way, to the different rhythms of the city. According to most of my interlocutors, the nocturnal city is related to a certain idea of social velocity and cultural fertility. Daytime, on the other hand, is associated with collective inertia, a time of restriction. Such representations are widely shared by young people in West Africa who often contrast the rapid pace of globalization with the slowness of their own societies. If this is a common way of criticizing the alleged "backwardness" of



Africa in the world system, the problem here is not to evaluate whether this “backwardness” is valid or not but rather to understand the “politics of contrasts” that such a valuation reflects.

This clearly resonates with what I have observed in Dakar. Using a biographical approach, I have been able to gauge how much social mobility was at the core of “night careers.” From the very stigmatized small bars up to the trendiest nightclubs, this upward mobility is underpinned by the “cosmopolitan skills” the young women gradually acquire whilst frequenting the internationalized milieus of the Dakar nightscape. What is interesting here is that performing such a cosmopolitan self is, in many respects, a way to challenge social and moral mainstreams that are seen as too “local” and “outdated.” The assertion of global cultural abilities provides leverage for critical postures towards the local living conditions.

More broadly, night adventurers assert themselves as modern and cosmopolitan urban subjects by occupying unconventional places and times in the city. This is, paradoxically, how they gain the feeling of really being part of the city and of living an authentic urban experience, even if it is one *always already* linked to a desired elsewhere. For most of my interlocutors, going out nightly is a way of reaching a larger world – even by proxy. This is the case, in particular, with trendy, cosmopolitan nightclubs. As an interlocutor, Zeyna, once told me:

When I see the new nightclubs, I tell myself that Senegal is on its way to development. It is in those places that you really see the changes ... not when staying at home, I mean. You see everything that is new: the sounds, design, clothing, dance ... Everything. And then you feel that Senegal is up-to-date. It makes me proud, in a way. [...] In some places, I feel ... I don't know ... like I am a tourist visiting unknown places. [Laughter] You know, in Senegal, we have this proverb: “*Ku du toxu doo xam fu dëkk neexe*” [who never moves can't know where it's good to live] ... That means ... you must be curious in life, you must travel, whatever. (24-year-old female, interview in Wolof and French, Dakar, 2008)

All this occurs in a wider context of a large number of Senegalese youths expressing the desire to migrate. Traveling abroad is a crucial issue; migration appears as a major, if not unique, social lever of self-improvement for young Africans largely stuck in “waithood” (Honwana 2012). In this respect, we can also rely on Zygmunt Bauman's idea that “mobility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values – and freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times. [...] Being local in a globalized world is a sign of social deprivation and degradation” (1998, 2). In line with this “culture of migration,” so-called “subaltern” and “ordinary cosmopolitanisms” (Zeng 2014; Lamont and Aksartova 2002) in many African contexts can be viewed as describing the condition of non-mobile individuals – that is, those (the vast majority, in fact) who are incapable of traveling abroad despite intense desires to do so.

In this respect, the usages of the nocturnal city provide an image of a cosmopolitanism that unfolds both *temporarily* and *by contrast*, that is, relating in both cases to a time marker which underlies deep urban reconfigurations. This idea is to be understood in different and yet complementary ways. One might immediately refer to the contrasting temporalities of the city (alternating day and night time). But this

somehow “natural” boundary articulates strong social, cultural and even political issues. Indeed, the urban night scenes bring together a mix of individuals from highly diverse social, economic, and geographical origins: local populations, migrants or visitors from other African countries, as well as Europeans, Asians, North-Americans and so on. In these places, moreover, gender barriers, while not disappearing, are reorganized. We can acknowledge that this temporary cosmopolitanism depends on urban nocturnal transformations and thus sets itself against the stricter social segmentation of the diurnal city. In other words, while the night lays a veil of globality and “cosmopolity” on the experiences of the city, it mirrors critical assessments toward the diurnal city and, by extension, against the local living conditions that are seen and often lived under a sensation of closure and hindrance. One thus gets a sense that the very idea of a cosmopolitanism *by contrast* is inherently political, or at least that it contains strong critical effects.

What may be described here in general terms as “grassroots cosmopolitics” (Fouquet 2018) raises the question of resistance and its infrapolitical lineaments. It seems quite obvious that the social trajectories of night adventurers are not, in the strictest sense, political. For sure, these young women do not seek to transform systemic local and global domination; they also do not display any kind of formal politicization. Yet this difficult question raises several issues. The first concerns the social judgments and moral denunciations that these female trajectories focus in Senegal. I would argue that these social and moral controversies have a cosmopolitical significance. The “night girls” are generally presented as emblematic of the disorders of modernity and, more precisely, embodiments of the culturally deleterious effects of globalization. The dominant social discourse in Senegal denounces these young women for being Westernized, thus suffering from some kind of inferiority complex – the “complex of the post-colonized.” They are seen as shameful and pale copies of Westerners, allegedly made visible by “*fason Toubab*” (“behaving like a European/White person”). More generally, their attitudes, their manner of dressing and talking, the places they frequent and people they meet are brought out to argue that these “night girls” lack any kind of reflexivity or critical understanding of the foreign cultural models they seem to adore. These social judgments claim that the “night girls” are caught in a cultural gap which is also a moral trap. These views rely on a certain historical understanding rooted in the colonial experience and in the nationalist meta-narratives emerging from the struggle for independence. As such, these narratives organize a prescriptive moral framework with regard to such contested terms as “Africanity” and “modernity.”

I would argue that the night adventurers in Dakar are *de facto* involved in debates on modernity and Africanity. This is not to assert an essentialized “African” or “Senegalese modernity.” Rather, I wish to emphasize the need to consider modernity, as well as cosmopolitanism, in the light of socially and materially rooted narratives. These terms should also be regarded as terrains of contestation: as repertoires through which one can take a distance from certain types of social assignments whilst asserting one’s own version of what is or should be a good life, the best way to manage one’s present and future. As it concerns my interlocutors in Dakar, the lack of power that they can rely on means that the use of their bodies, of seduction



and sexuality, as well as the ubiquitous concern with personal style, appear as conditions of possibility for repositioning themselves in power relations by mobilizing the arguments of cosmopolitanism in contrast to an allegedly “backward” local context. Once again, it is about “being cosmopolitan rather than...”.

In this manner, these concrete experiences of cosmopolitanism delimitate first and foremost a space of resistance and/or indocility. They thus cannot be confined to a simplistic diagnostic of shameful Westernization, mimicry, self-depreciation and so on. These are all clues to understanding how young women get involved in contradictory debates on modernity and Africanity and, in particular, how “style” is used far beyond the simple desire to be fashionable. This is another argument in favor of a cosmopolitical analysis of the urban night: it is constructed as a potential space, a time space where the dual register of the “real” and of the “possible” is, in some ways, redesigned. The “real,” on the one hand, refers to the finiteness of what has actually happened. In turn, the “possible” situates this reality in a much broader horizon of past, present and future potentialities. This discussion is closely linked to Arjun Appadurai’s proposition about the importance of the work of imagination: “lives today are as much acts of projection and imagination as they are enactments of known scripts or predictable outcomes” (1996, 61).

We now can get to what can be considered the main feature of the nighttime: the fact that it participates in a strengthening of the role of imagination. It is, in a way, the work of the imagination is the real “*plus*”, thus following Henri Bergson’s (1938) analysis of the relationship between the “real and the possible”.<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, the fundamental virtue of the night is to bring along a regime of indeterminacy and unpredictability. This can be understood notably from a very intimate point of view as the sensory experience of the nocturnal is characterized by deep transformations in our ways of seeing, touching, smelling, feeling, etc. In fact, the nocturnal city, along with its specific infrastructures and ambiances, reshapes our relationship to “reality.” But nighttime also carries out a kind of social, moral and political indeterminacy, as the dominant norms are altered or at least reconfigured. And, on the whole, all of this situates the nocturnal experiments within the realm of the potential, whereas daytime is seen as something basically predictable.

Moreover, according to my interlocutors in Dakar, daytime reality is assimilated to a subtraction: it refers neither to what is actually happening nor to what is probably going to happen. In fact, reality is above and before all what seems to be pre-excluded, or excluded a priori, from the realm of possibilities. In this respect, the construction of the urban night as a potential space refers to the idea of seeking an alternative mode of experimentation and personal achievement. The problem is surely not to infer an ability to totally avoid or eliminate constraints; rather, it is, in my mind, a matter of finding a way to negotiate difficulties and dealing creatively with them. In this sense, night potentialities somehow challenge what is seen as

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<sup>2</sup>Bergson (1938) notably suggests that the possible is more than the real as it superimposes an act of the mind over the reality. In other words, the possible is the real “plus” an act of the mind (“une opération de la pensée”).

daytime finiteness and predictability. Participation in nightlife thus appears as a way of negotiating uncertainty by exploring its “productivity” (Cooper and Pratten 2015).

#### 4.4 Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism as a Posture, the City as Accomplice

It seems quite obvious that participating in (and composing) a cosmopolitan lifestyle has an economic and social cost that not everyone can afford. Hence, the problem must be considered upstream, according to the meaning ascribed to the notion of cosmopolitanism itself. If we consider it primarily as a *condition*, according to some criteria viewed as representative of a kind of minimum program (global mobility, possession of certain property/wealth and access to certain social spheres), then it remains largely exclusive. Cosmopolitanism points, broadly, to a small elite, remaining inseparable from the possession of capital, not only economical but also cultural and social.

But on the other hand, if we look at cosmopolitanism as a *posture*, the question becomes at once more complex, less clear-cut, but perhaps more heuristic. By cosmopolitan as a posture, I mean a way of being in the world and in society, a way to formulate aspirations and to express commitment to certain images and ideas of the good life, success and prestige. This is a way to define the value of things and individuals, to prioritize some ways of being and behaving. In this respect, the question arises as to which “jury” evaluates one’s cosmopolitan credibility and social value. In line with some analyses presented in this chapter, it should be emphasized that the value (whether that of an object or an individual) does not exist in itself but is always negotiated in and through relationships: there are only *politics* of value (Appadurai 1986). On an ethnographic level, there is still room for studies on the tricks deployed by “subordinates” to capture “the exteriority upon which the dominant base their power” (Bayart 1999), and on the alternative ways “subordinates” assert their membership in “world society” (Ferguson 2002) as actors, rather than powerless spectators. Indeed, one can well imagine that an individual may not be socially recognized or identified as “cosmopolitan” (due to not possessing both the material and symbolical arguments that constitute such a “condition”) but still conceive him or herself as such, organizing his or her according to what is perceived as modern and cosmopolitan. The consequences induced by these self-identifications are by no means negligible, and there is no reason why we should not grant them real attention insofar as they mirror the desires of individuals and underlie specific processes of subjectivation. In any case, these cosmopolitan aspirants, or “wannabes,” can be regarded as an integral part of the current discussions on cosmopolitanism. At this point, it is of interest to remember what Georg Simmel said about the “fashionable person” and put in its place the “cosmopolitan individual”:

The *cosmopolitan individual* [fashionable person] is regarded with mingled feelings of approval and envy; we envy him as an individual but approve of him as a member of a set

or group. Yet even this envy has a peculiar coloring. There is a shade of envy which includes a species of ideal participation in the envied object itself. [...] The moment we envy an object or a person, we are no longer absolutely excluded from it. (Simmel 1989 [1904], 133)

Following this idea of envy as an ideational or embryonic expression of ownership and belonging, it can be argued that the paradigm of “lèche vitrine” – the frustrated spectator who is unable to go through the mirror or to acquire what she or he longs – supports a fundamentally simplistic interpretation of the “arts of being global” (Ong and Roy 2011) of African youth. Of course, individual expressions or postures that assert themselves as cosmopolitan are not all identical to “the” cosmopolitanism that serves as a title of nobility for transnationalized elites. This does not invalidate these individual expressions or postures but rather is an invitation to highlight the plurality and heterogeneity of cosmopolitanism as a field of study.

It seems quite clear that the alternative social trajectories led by the “night adventurers” in Dakar constitute solid examples of crafty and fundamentally vitalized cosmopolitan experiences. These young women surely demonstrate an art of being-in-town that is at the same time an art of being-in-the-world, the body, the city and the imaginary as accomplices. Moreover, they encourage us to follow the (sometimes harsh) small and winding paths paved with the fictions of the self and the multiple opportunities the city offers, rather than the comfortable ballads suggested by the meta-narratives of modernity (Englund and Leach 2000). The metropolis, and perhaps especially at night, is full of these small arteries that no map mentions.

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# Chapter 5

## Urban Cosmopolitanisms in the Arab World: Contributing to Theoretical Debates from the Middle East



Franck Mermier

### 5.1 Introduction

A positive re-evaluation of the idea of cosmopolitanism has taken place in recent years, particularly in the field of anthropology. As Michel Agier has shown in *La Condition cosmopolite* (2013), cosmopolitanism is a way of revising notions of identity and national borders. Yet the shared experience of the “cosmopolitan condition as the fact of living in the here and now (locally), but with an imagined wider world as both the condition of that life and a way beyond it” (97) described by Agier is no longer restricted to a small, internationally mobile elite associated with globalization. Pnina Werbner supports this assertion when stating that a vernacular, historically and spatially situated version of cosmopolitanism must be put at the core of anthropology. In her view, cosmopolitan spaces “are trans-ethnic, collectively emergent ‘worlds,’ shared discourses that transcend cultural boundaries and parochial lifestyles. According to this definition, a cosmopolitan is a person who actively belongs to, participates in and contributes to the creation of such trans-ethnic cultural and ideological worlds” (2008, 50).<sup>1</sup>

City-based cosmopolitanism has other connotations related to the ethnic, religious or cultural diversity of the urban environment. Whether considered diachronically or synchronically, this type of cosmopolitanism has existed in various forms, covering communities that are open or segregated from one another to a greater or lesser extent. These various forms of urban cosmopolitanism are often seen as determining or altering the urban character of the cities concerned, functioning as a differentiating factor.

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<sup>1</sup> See also her introduction to that volume.

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This chapter is situated in a broader discussion on cosmopolitanism and cities in the Arab Middle East. It echoes the recent scientific interest for cities in the Arab world which reflects the urban turn that has taken place in anthropology and the social sciences in general. The urban turn has had extremely positive effects by bringing fruitful comparisons within the Arab world and across regions, leading to new perspectives for the study of cosmopolitanism. Cities in the Arab Middle East form an interurban constellation of contrasting contexts. They are interconnected and complementary. Looking into urban settings in the Arab world leads to various sociological, anthropological, and geographic questions: what are the concrete forms of social identification in Arab cities? How do social interactions unfold in such contexts? How are gender, class or ethnic relations shaped in urban environments? As the combined relevance of social roles and spaces translate into different modes across contexts, this chapter will particularly focus on the case of Aden (Yemen) under British occupation. If much has been written on the cosmopolitanism of Mediterranean cities, few analytic endeavours have been undertaken to study the urban cosmopolitanism in the pre-oil era Arabian Peninsula (Fuccaro 2009). The case of Aden is particularly well-suited to highlighting an example of segregated cosmopolitanism which engendered a new urban identity based upon exclusive citizenship. This has led to violent struggles in and for the city between rival political groups. Aden also exemplifies the power of nostalgia through the selective remembrance of an idealized cosmopolitanism.

## 5.2 The End of Colonial Cosmopolitanism

For Arab cities, marketplaces have often been seen as public spaces *par excellence* by exhibiting forms of ethnic and religious diversity that are held together by commerce (Mermier 2011). The figure of the merchant as a nodal point in networks of urban space is also familiar from the cosmopolitanism of Mediterranean cities during the Ottoman era.<sup>2</sup> Much research, mostly marked by a nostalgia for a period believed to have been a model of community co-existence, has been carried out on these spaces. Such city cosmopolitanism has been described as

a complex urban system open to universal values and the outside world and bringing together different communities that were termed ethnicities, peoples, or nations, according to the places concerned and the vocabulary of the time. The cosmopolitan city offers a variegated social and cultural landscape, which entails a way of living the city and of living in the city. (Escallier 2003)

The inhabitants of the Near East were supposed to embody this condition of “urban cosmopolitanism” thanks to their remarkable adaptive capacity.

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<sup>2</sup>For criticisms of this idea and of seeing entire cities in terms of cosmopolitanism, when strictly speaking the term should only apply to individuals, see Gekas 2009, 104.

Today, this “Mediterranean of cities” has disappeared as a result of the growth of nation-states and nationalism, the marginalization of former urban elites, and the movement of rural populations to cities. In the eastern Mediterranean, this was a form of life most often associated with the countries of the Levant, including not only Lebanon and Syria but also Jordan, Palestine, parts of Turkey, and, for some, certain cities like Alexandria and Smyrna (Mansel 2010). This “Levantine society” only finally disappeared with the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, which Robert Ilbert called “the end of an urban order” (1991). Writing of Alexandria’s cosmopolitanism at this time, Ilbert adds that the “coexistence of communities having different languages, cultures and religions living in the same space” (1992, 171) contributed to a “community of interest imposed by a Levantine bourgeoisie of fluid national links underpinned by a communitarian system that reserved the most important place to notables” (1992, 185).

The anthropologist Jean Métral employed this idea of “urban order” in an article on public space in the cities of the Levant, particularly Aleppo and Beirut, in order to identify three types of cities that could be seen to characterize the period between the early nineteenth century and the end of the Second World War. These cities included Mediterranean ports such as Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Smyrna, Beirut and Alexandria “in which there flourished a particular form of cosmopolitanism”; cities of the interior such as Ankara, Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo “where nationalism grew and was consolidated”; and, finally, desert trading centres that served as the “home of tribal patrimonialism” (1995, 263). The cosmopolitanism of the port cities was rooted in a form of urban life that depended on community belonging, but this did not mean that any one community dominated others. It was a cosmopolitanism based on exchange, a shared urban culture and belonging, and centered on the *souq*, the public space *par excellence* of the city.

For Sami Zubaida, cosmopolitanism is not so much a matter of cultures and nationalities mixing (as often happens in big cities) but instead certain ways of living and thinking. As Zubaida puts it, such styles of life are “deracinated from communities and cultures of origin, from conventional living, from family and home-centredness, and have developed into a culturally promiscuous life, drawing on diverse ideas, traditions and innovations” (1999, 15–16).

The idea of cosmopolitanism as a mosaic of communities living side by side can once again be traced back to the traditional elitist model of communities led by notables. It plays down the forms of exclusion that may have contributed to the growth of nationalistic feeling or the outbreak of civil war, as took place in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, even if it could be argued in the case of Beirut that the civil war that incontestably reduced the presence of foreign communities in the city pushed Lebanon as a whole “into the avant-garde of a new wave of globalization ... As a result, Lebanon paradoxically emerged from the civil war with a notably efficient networked economy that was connected to the ‘global village’ that the world economy had in the meantime become” (Corm 1998, 16–17).

Zubaida rightly remarks that nostalgia for this type of cosmopolitanism fails to link it with the European imperialism of the time and the forms of segregation that prevented the “natives” from going into certain social spaces (1999, 26). However,



two cities of the interior, Aleppo and Cairo, experienced significant forms of cosmopolitanism at this time. Though partially characterized by the presence of Europeans, both cities also saw the coexistence of other communities from the region. The Syrian-Lebanese community in Cairo, for example, or the Turkmens and Kurds in Aleppo, still make up a significant proportion of the populations of these cities. What was until recently the mixed composition of the population in Baghdad is another case in point (see Bader 2014).

Yet the idea of an “oriental cosmopolitanism” linked to the ports of the Levant is too narrow to be used analytically except as a way of fleshing out the familiar idea of Mediterranean cities as exhibiting values of openness and tolerance that were opposed to nationalist attempts at closure. This stereotypical opposition between city and nation holds, even today, a strong ideological charge.

Questions have been raised regarding the extent to which social practices in these cities conformed to this conceptually problematic notion of cosmopolitanism. Henk Driessen, for example, has rightly pointed out that the idea of cosmopolitanism has been used to describe a huge variety of historical situations from ancient Greece to today’s post-modern “multicultural” metropolises. At the very least, he says, the use of the idea as an anthropological concept runs up against certain epistemological obstacles, its ambiguity coming from the attempt to “reconcile difference with equality and universal with pluralism” (Driessen 2005, 137). Cosmopolitanism has also had a close relationship with power, having been used at different times by various elites to entrench their cultural domination. It has existed in different forms in different historical epochs, closely associated with the notion of tolerance, with all the ambiguities that this implies (Driessen 2005).

Will Hanley, a historian of Alexandria, has also drawn attention to the fact that research on the cosmopolitanism of the “Middle East” has in general been reluctant to draw on theoretical work. As a result, he writes in an incisive article (2008), research on cosmopolitanism has just as often been used to obscure reality as to illuminate it, having the effect of hiding reality behind a thick cloak of nostalgia. The recognition that cosmopolitanism comes in many forms as well as taking into account popular cosmopolitan practices would, Hanley continues, allow much of the research carried out in this “cultural area” to rid itself of the elitist prism through which reality is often viewed and strip away obsessions with identity. The historian Edhem Eldem has also made a convincing case for seeing the Ottoman cosmopolitanism that developed from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards as a sort of Levantine cosmopolitanism. This was above all a form of “social praxis” characterized by the spread of a particular French cultural model into certain districts of Istanbul and by a particular capacity to move between different social and cultural worlds (Eldem 2013).

The upshot of such considerations is that ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity are not sufficient for labelling the cosmopolitan character of a city without taking into consideration how diversity is constituted and experienced. The big cities of the Arabian Peninsula today, characterized as they are by pronounced ethnic and spatial segregation, should not be seen in the same way as the port cities of the Mediterranean during the Ottoman period or twenty-first century Beirut or Cairo.



The cosmopolitanism seen in Manama in Bahrain, for example, is built on a spatial segregation that applies to all the communities in the city, whether native or foreign, and is a model that characterizes all the cities of the Gulf (Gardner 2010). The type of cosmopolitanism that characterizes the Gulf, in fact, is a version of the “communitarian cosmopolitanism” identified by Francesca Trivellato in her study of community relations in sixteenth-century Livorno (2009).<sup>3</sup> The cosmopolitan of contemporary Gulf cities emphasizes segregation because, having been built on a system of ethnic stratification based on nationality, it intends to maintain the superior status of “nationals” over immigrants.

However, ethnic stratification has had different characteristics in different societies, these being a function as much of the individual history of the society concerned as of the methods used to “manage” difference and openness to globalization. The position of each city in the region to which it belongs is also important – the Gulf cities, for example, are part of regional circulation systems like the Arabian Peninsula and the wider Arab world. This regional positioning affects social spaces and forms of sociability as well as professional, cultural and leisure activities in different ways, which means that these cities are part of a larger inter-urban space where local differences support and complement each other.

Moreover, the nostalgia for colonial cosmopolitanism can also serve to reinforce pretensions of cultural superiority when the loss of the political status of a city in a larger national unit has led to political or economic marginalization. This has been the case in Yemen, where Aden has lost out to the capital, Sanaa. The memory of the Antonin Besse family, forced to leave South Yemen after the nationalizations in 1969, is still alive today among Aden’s intellectual elite, for example. This elite has reacted to the marginalization of Aden by mourning the loss of its former cultural and political dynamism, which was paradoxically linked to the British occupation. By contrast, the nostalgia felt by some residents of Alexandria for the cosmopolitan vestiges of the past does not have the same political content; instead, it is kept alive by rivalry with Cairo, where the country’s political power and cultural institutions are located. The intellectuals around the magazine *Amkina* (Places) in Alexandria are far removed from their Aden counterparts, who gather around the newspapers *Al-Ayyam* and *Aden al-Ghad*. While they may not have heard of one another, these intellectuals are linked by a shared desire to rehabilitate a cosmopolitan past. This is all the more attractive in the case of Aden as a way of fighting against the marginalization of the city and its former elite.

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<sup>3</sup>There are various types of “communitarian cosmopolitanism” that can be used to describe different forms of multiculturalism. For an example of the notion in the context of a Mediterranean city, see Trivellato 2009. For a political science definition from contemporary Europe, see Bellamy and Castiglione 1998.

### 5.3 Aden: Colonial Cosmopolitanism

Aden under British rule (1839–1967) represented a singular version of a colonial “communitarian cosmopolitan” that differed immensely from all the other cities of today’s Yemen. The birth of a new urban society was thus directly linked to the colonial presence and functions of the British in the city, which reconfigured the relationships with the local and far-away environment. A cosmopolitan city, Aden became a bridge between Arabia, Europe, Africa, and Asia, reproducing in its spatial configurations and its division of labor the social and ethnic hierarchies of the British Empire and mercantile capitalism.

While mosques, churches, synagogues, and Hindu and Parsi temples showcased the main faiths of its inhabitants, different rites and different ethnic and cultural identities were superimposed on these religious divisions. The descendants of several hundred Muslim residents of Aden in 1839 progressively mixed with the families of immigrants coming from North Yemen and the southern protectorates, as well as Indian Muslims, to form the social group of Aden residents.<sup>4</sup> A separate category emerged in the heart of the population that was differentiated from Yemenis from the North and Arabs from the sultanates under British protection.

The British colonial project to install in Aden a coal depot and a military post on the maritime route to India, as well as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, led to a rapid development of the city’s economy. Aden’s maritime traffic increased so that by 1958 its port was the second-most heavily utilized in the world, after New York (Stookey 1982). After 1960, Aden replaced Cyprus as the military headquarters of the British command in the Middle East, which led to a major increase in the number of military officers and their families. During the British period, the city was almost better connected with the rest of the world than with the rest of Yemen not only because of its developed economy but also its extra-territorial political status.

Aden was placed under the direct control of the Government of Bombay before becoming, in 1937, a Crown colony. The rest of the territory of south Yemen was divided into two protectorates, that of the east, containing the sultanates of Hadhramaut and Wahidi, and that of the west, containing the regions of Yafi, Awlawi, and Radfan. The British powers decided to progressively introduce a dose of “home-rule” or local representation in the government, even going so far as to organize elections in December 1955 for the legislative council. In September 1962, while a military coup put an end to the regime of the Imam of Sanaa, Aden joined the Federation of the Arab Emirates of the South which brought together 15 small states (excepting Hadhramaut).

Modern educational institutions, associations, cultural clubs, unions and political parties were created in Aden during the colonial period. An independent Arabic-language press emerged. At the same time, the influence of British culture profoundly marked Aden’s elites. In the 1950s, Aden was also strongly influenced

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<sup>4</sup>In 1839 the city had only 1289 inhabitants – 617 Arabs, 574 Jews, 63 Somalis, and 35 Indians. See Gavin 1975, 445.

by Indian culture, not only when it came to music and fashion but also language. The different categories of Aden society, hailing from old trading families to employees or migrants from the southern part of North Yemen, all shared a negative perception of the rest of Yemen as they developed a strong feeling of belonging in the city proper (Lackner 1985, 20).

The British colonial order thus gave rise to a gradual ethnic status system that reproduced the regional and ethnic divisions of the professional world. Europeans were at the top of the hierarchy, followed by Indians, Jews, Arabs, and Somalis – even if the Arabs saw themselves after the Europeans and put Muslim Indians ahead of Jews, Hindus and Somalis (Bujra 1971, 196–7). The stratification of group status that characterized Yemeni society, with its regional variations, was reinforced by the ethnic hierarchy unique to a colonial society.<sup>5</sup> This led to new categorizations, like Aden residents themselves who were differentiated based on this two-pronged ladder of status (see Dahlgren 2010, 76–8).

Aden's ancient colonial cosmopolitanism has become fictionalized in the works of several contemporary Yemeni writers. The novels of Ali Al-Muqri (2014) and Ahmad Zayn (2015) embed their novelistic texture within a specific place, Aden, a city rendered through multiple intersecting story lines. These works express a certain nostalgia for the city's colonial cosmopolitanism, modernity, and openness. These two authors recreate, through fiction, another historical story where the colonizer and the colonized did not so much oppose each other but instead interpenetrated each other – so the deadly combats of the different nationalist movements reach their end point through the suppression of a cosmopolitan polyphony that these novels aim to rediscover.

## 5.4 The Cosmopolitan Capital: Forms of Social and Urban Differentiation

Drawing on criticisms of how the darker sides of violence, exclusion and social hierarchy are left out of the nostalgic vision of a cosmopolitan past, Diane Singerman and Paul Amar have identified various types of cosmopolitanism in contemporary Cairo (2006, 30). These range from nostalgia for a former multiculturalism and particular understanding of the city's heritage to the model represented today by the cities of the Gulf, though understood in specifically Egyptian terms. While Singerman and Amar admit that cosmopolitanism has often been the prisoner of transnational, normative, universalist or imperialist discourses, they argue that it can

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<sup>5</sup>The traditional social hierarchy in Yemen, with its regional variations, was composed of status groups graded in the hierarchical system according to certain criteria, the most important of which are ancestry (*asl*) and professional activity. The descendants of the Prophet took their place at the top of the hierarchy. The other status groups were tribesmen, city dwellers of tribal origin, and at the bottom of the social order were those without tribal origin who held occupations considered dirty or vile. See Mermier 2001, 276–7.

carry an alternative, liberating ethic that is far removed from narrow conceptions of nationalism or identity politics when critically employed (4). However, any illuminating value that the term has does not appear to be much advanced by extending the concept, in the shape of “cosmopolitanism from below,” to a whole collection of heterogeneous practices associated with very different groups and actors on the grounds that all these seem to contest dominant nationalist narratives from vantage points in separate public spheres.

Examples chosen to illustrate this notion of cosmopolitanism go from the emergence of a new understanding of regional identity among returnees from the Arabian Peninsula living in Upper Egypt to activities to help preserve the heritage of Egypt’s historic city-centres and rehabilitate the architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also include contemporary Nubian cultural practices, Sufi pilgrimages, and new forms of popular music. As a result, the concept of “cosmopolitanism from below” appears too much like an ideological attempt to rescue popular practices – it is hard to be entirely free from the suspicion that its proponents have been carried away by their own rhetoric. In the context of Cairo, Asef Bayat proposes the notion of “everyday cosmopolitanism,” which means “the idea and practice of transcending self – at the various levels of individual, family, tribe, religion, ethnicity, community, and nation – to associate with agonistic others in everyday life” (2010, 187). However, this concept’s scope seems to be restricted to the inter-sectarian relationship between Copts and Muslims and praising the role of the modern city which “severely undermines the traditional pattern of immediate, local, interpersonal, and territorial ethno-religious communities” (2010).

Mark Allen Peterson separates himself from these conceptions of cosmopolitanism in his study of cosmopolitanism in Cairo when writing of

those practices, especially the practices of consumption, through which the Egyptian upper classes and those with upwardly mobile aspirations construct themselves as transnational elites whose unequal control over Egypt’s economic and political resources is justified by their modernity, and whose modernity is in turn revealed by their cosmopolitanism: their Western educations, their easy movement across transnational borders, their consumption of transnational goods, and the general display of tastes in music, literature, film, clothing, and technologies that distinguishes them from the masses. (2011, 23)

“Cosmopolitan capital” thus becomes an important marker of class differentiation for the urban elite, particularly in Cairo, and perhaps even the most important one as it consists of “forms of cultural capital that are marked by familiarity with and mastery of globally dominant cultural codes” (de Koning 2009, 9). This system of class differentiation includes the use of English and of a dialect of Arabic sprinkled with English, a Western education, the mixing of the sexes, certain styles of clothing and forms of consumption and leisure, and the choice of places to live and socialize. These things function as social and cultural markers for a section of Cairo’s upper classes, distinguishing them from places and practices considered to be popular. The latter include the theatres and cinemas of the downtown area once associated with the upper classes but today belonging to young people from the popular classes (Singerman and Amar 2006, 32).

The spatial and social segregation of Cairo today is in large part linked to the political and economic choices that were made during the watershed of the so-called *Infitah* (opening) in the Sadat period (see Vignal and Denis 2006). However, in reality, this segregation also owes much to the existing class system. Cairo-style cosmopolitanism does not look far beyond the national context, including a strong element of Egyptianess that is obliged to rub along as best it can with transnational dimensions of identity (Peterson 2011, 13). In fact, these transnational identities only take on a meaning in relation to “particular worlds and places” and the (hierarchical) relations that structure them (Friedman and Rabau 2000, 200). What this local Cairo version of “consumerist cosmopolitanism” most reveals, if it were thought necessary to point this out, is that the spread of “consumerist cosmopolitanism” on a global scale requires less the homogenization of tastes and practices than an ongoing and hierarchical reconfiguration of these by local strategies of distinction (Calhoun 2002, 105).

## 5.5 Cosmopolitanism Beyond Arab Cities

From particular forms of sociability located in particular times and places to urban imaginaries, each form of city living is unique because each manifests ways of living and forms of social relationships that relate to particular and transitory social spaces.<sup>6</sup> In a particularly illuminating article, Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier have set out further perspectives suggesting ways forward for research on urban living: “the idea and the reality of the separation public/private are not the same everywhere. More specifically, there are not the same things which are hidden, shown, or which we are going to see outside” (Lefebvre and Régulier 1986, 10).

In the Arab world, the city often acts as a cultural reference point, carrying with it a whole set of values and representations linked to social position and struggles for social status in different societies. Whereas Lyn Lofland found that spatial ordering replaced “apparential” ordering in Western urban contexts, it seems that both forms of social identification coexist and intersect in Arab cities (1973, 27). The city, a disputed space, even a space for conquest, as well as a geopolitical space, may thus seem to be caught in the crossfire between, on the one hand, the domination of particular communities and, on the other, the individual or collective fault lines that aim to subvert them. Perhaps in the final analysis it is this dialectical relationship between the public and the private (the personal and the social) that lies at the root of urban life and determines both its cultural specificities and universalist dimensions. This tension, felt to a greater or a lesser extent depending on the individual city, is a cultural factor that has a different weight depending on the society concerned. However, it determines, though necessarily in different ways, the uses

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<sup>6</sup>See the conception of social space developed by Henri Lefebvre in *La production de l'espace* (2000).

that are made of public space, the forms of anonymity and sociability that can be observed, and the various forms of cosmopolitanism, including “discrepant cosmopolitanism,” in each Arab city.

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**Part II**  
**Urbanity and Everyday Cosmopolitanism**  
**in Ordinary Places**



# Chapter 6

## Cosmopolitan Dubai: Consumption and Segregation in a Global City



Delphine Pagès-El Karoui

### 6.1 Introduction

The tremendous rise of Dubai has been based upon aggressive strategies of post-oil diversification. To gain world recognition, Dubai has also played the card of the global city. The “corporate city” has deployed a spectacular urbanism and developed globalized landscapes to promote a new model of urbanity for an ultra-consumerist, leisure society (Kanna 2011; Davidson 2008). This rapid economic development has turned Dubai in a major hub for commerce, finance, real estate and tourism, attracting people from all over the world. Among other amazing records (largest mall, biggest airport, most luxurious hotel), Dubai now detains the one as the most cosmopolitan city, with 91% of its residents being foreign.

Interesting enough, despite the cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences (Delanty 2009), research on cosmopolitanism applied to Dubai remains underdeveloped (Bayat 2008; Masad 2008; Pagès-El Karoui 2018) when compared to the wealth of literature about other Middle East cities (see Mermier in this book) and cosmopolitan colonial Alexandria. Cosmopolitanism in Dubai is necessarily paradoxical because non-integrative: its extremely diverse society (more than 200 nationalities coexisting together) is highly marked by strong social and racial hierarchies and an intense segregation. In this Gulf monarchy ruled as an ethnocracy (Longva 2005), Emirati nationals are a small minority. The non-integrative context of migration policies (see Assaf and Thiollot in this book) sets a profound divide between nationals, who benefit from the redistribution of wealth and the welfare state, and foreigners, who are deliberately excluded from state largesse and live in a precarious and transient status (Elsheshtawy 2019; Khalaf et al. 2014). They remain “impossible

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citizens” (Vora 2013) who can be deported at any time, whatever the length of their stay in Dubai.

Although Dubai and the UAE are increasingly promoting “tolerance” policies (Pagès-El Karoui, forthcoming 2021b), they are far from offering a real cosmopolitan political project which would imply, for instance, more integrative policies for foreigners. In such a context, the use of cosmopolitanism may be problematic when considering its normative dimension. In this case, Dubai seems to embody a superficial or pseudo-“cosmopolitanism” “which focuses only on the use of the lifestyle of other cultures to enrich one’s material life without normative engagement” (Delanty 2009, 220). This idea is applied to the case of Dubai by the French geographer Denis Retaillé in his book on the places of globalization. He speaks of Dubai in terms of a “*cosmopolitisme de décor*” [surface cosmopolitanism] (2012, 16). He opposes Dubai’s current “fake” cosmopolitanism with the more “authentic” and inclusive cosmopolitanism in the pre-oil period that arose out of trade and commerce around the Indian Ocean. In doing so, Retaillé reproduces both the traditional debate between “superficial” and “authentic” cosmopolitanism (Molz 2011) and the common account of contemporary Dubai as ostentatious and soulless.

Provocatively, I argue that even if we reject the normative stance of traditional notions of cosmopolitanism, it is still an important heuristic concept, provided that it is empirically grounded, for thinking about diversity in multicultural cities (Pagès-El Karoui, forthcoming 2021a). Contributions to the theory of cosmopolitanism can emerge from non-normative approaches of the concept. Instead of discarding cosmopolitan as fake and superficial, how could we describe its specificities in the Gulf context? So, the real question is not whether Dubai is a cosmopolitan city but, rather, what kind of cosmopolitanism does Dubai embody?

There are two different ways of defining a cosmopolitan city. First, in a sense closely linked to cultural globalization (echoing the idea that cosmopolitanism is a cultural orientation towards globalization), a cosmopolitan city is a place open to the world, where inhabitants’ practices and landscapes are strongly influenced by lifestyles, ideas, and products coming from elsewhere. This is how, in a context totally disconnected from migration, Latham (2006) has described Auckland, sharply contrasting the emergence of new bars, restaurants and cafés inspired by France or Italy to local pubs. Second, a cosmopolitan city may refer to a place people of diverse origins and backgrounds live and coexist, whatever the degree of interaction between them (although some scholars would restrict its use only to strong interactions, which is not my case). This plurality may be either the result of past or current migrations or of an internal ethnic diversity.

Dubai embodies perfectly this double meaning of the cosmopolitan city with its cosmopolitan landscapes (for instance, its bars and restaurants offering food and drinks from all over the world) and the hyper diversity of its population. To characterize Dubai’s cosmopolitanism, we need to articulate it with three core concepts, consumption, segregation and globalization (which serves as a backdrop to the first two terms). In the first part of this chapter, I explore cosmopolitanism in Dubai through this nexus between consumption, segregation, and globalization. Then, through two case studies, I illustrate how the state and its corporations shape some

cosmopolitan spaces in order to achieve the status of global city, playing with the idea of Dubai as a *cosmo-polis*, i.e., a city where you can encounter (and buy) the world at a local scale. I will show also how these spaces are perceived, experienced and practiced by their users, be they customers or residents. Inspired by Yasser Elsheshtawy's approach to see "behind the urban spectacle" (2013), I will analyze Dubai cosmopolitan urbanism by two ordinary spaces: Global Village and International City.<sup>1</sup> Although they are less glittering, luxurious and visible places than the iconic architectural productions which have made Dubai famous as a global city, they both, as their names indicate, express a strong desire for globalization. Global Village is an outdoor entertainment park where you can buy products from all over the world. International City is one of the rare urban housing projects for low and middle-class foreign residents. In these two ordinary spaces, frequented mainly by non-Westerners, a kind of cosmopolitanism from below emerges, although one not exempt from tensions and contradictions as the inclusive logics of consumption coexist with the exclusive logics of segregation.

## 6.2 A Consumerist and Segregated Cosmopolitanism in Global Dubai

Cosmopolitanism in Dubai is firmly anchored in a rampant globalization. Dubai has appeared in various rankings as a global city. This chapter is less interested in the various criteria positioning Dubai in different positions of the economic hierarchies of global cities but more in how Dubai's government and companies seek to produce cosmopolitan landscapes in order to contribute to its celebrity as a global city.<sup>2</sup> With few oil reserves, Dubai early on chose to become a hub, drawing its main resources from outside its small territory. The objective is thus to attract and retain the global middle and upper classes, as well as tourists and investors who will contribute to the city's economic prosperity. One of its challenges is to offer global landscapes for those who are eager to consume diversity. In line with the general theory of cosmopolitanism, consumption is one of the striking features of cosmopolitanism in Dubai. The other feature, segregation, is less self-evidently associated with the concept of cosmopolitanism since it seems to be in direct contradiction to term's normative dimension. Segregation, though, is an integral part of Dubai's definition of cosmopolitan, a dimension of its spatial translation also found in other non-Western cities, such as Singapore (Yeoh 2004).

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<sup>1</sup>The notion of « ordinary spaces » is influenced by Robinson (2013) works on « ordinary cities », and Lamont and Aksartova (2002) on « ordinary cosmopolitanism ».

<sup>2</sup>For example, Dubai was listed in 2018, by GaWc world city index, the famous ranking of global cities, as an Alfa+ city, the second category after Alfa++ city (New York and London). Source: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2018t.html>

### 6.2.1 *Cosmopolitanism as a Form of Global Consumption*

“Cities capitalize on cultural diversity to transform themselves into globalized spaces of consumption.”

(Molz 2011, 38)

As a concept, cosmopolitanism is closely linked with consumption. Many scholars (Nava 2002; Binnie et al. 2006; Molz 2011) have explained how cosmopolitan encounters with difference and diversity are channeled in daily life by commodities and the process of commodification. According to Beck, “cosmopolitanism has itself become a commodity” (2004, 150). There are two ways to study the articulation between consumption and cosmopolitanism. The first, from above, examines how cosmopolitanism is often associated with urban spaces which are branded and planned as cosmopolitan. The second approach, from below, looks at how these places are experienced by consumers in their everyday practices. Here, I focus on “the spatialization of specific forms of ‘cosmopolitan consumption’ involving new arrangements of people, objects and performances by consumers who can conform to and engage with this particular vision of a ‘cosmopolitan lifestyle’” (Binnie et al. 2006). Instead of dismissing these spaces as superficial, I argue that these spaces are crucial elements to understanding Dubai’s development and cosmopolitanism.

Since Dubai is not a major oil producer (compared to Abu Dhabi), its incredible growth is mainly due to an aggressive post-oil strategy of diversification centered on trade, finance, real estate and tourism.<sup>3</sup> Its population has grown rapidly, from 10,000 inhabitants in 1900 to 862,000 in the early 2000s; by 2017, its population had reached three million. The growth of the last two decades was partly due to massive construction projects – like Burj al Arab, Burj Khalifa, the Palms and the World Islands – which have contributed to making Dubai famous around the world and building up its image as a global city. Backed by major real estate development groups controlled by the Dubai government, like Nakheel, Emaar or Meraas, these iconic projects have spurred the emergence of a spectacular “new Dubai” along the Shaykh Zayed inter-city highway, which contrasts sharply with the older neighborhoods.

Dubai has never been an industrial city: it has jumped directly from a small port to a global service city based on leisure and consumption. It now epitomizes the archetypal city of consumer capitalism where consumption and leisure are central activities, playing a major role in the construction of individual and group identity.

Based upon on its history as a colonial trading port between the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, Dubai’s strategy has been to develop transport infrastructures to foster commerce. Its global city position was first achieved by becoming a regional hub for air and maritime transport with gigantic ports and airports. Its famous national company, Emirates, was founded in 1985. Two years before, the first duty-free store was opened in Dubai Airport. As part of destination branding, the Dubai

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<sup>3</sup>Dubai ranked as the seventh-most touristic city in the world with 16,7 million visitors, putting it after Paris (16,8) but ahead of New York (12,3).

Shopping Festival was created in 1996 to stimulate tourism and the retail sector. Since the opening of its first mall in 1981, al-Ghurair center in Deira, malls have flourished in Dubai. They are usually the most visited sites by tourists (among them, Dubai Mall) and act as the main gathering place on the weekends in the Emirates (Assaf 2017). Having transformed Dubai into the new mecca for shopping, malls embody the consumer culture which plays a key role in Dubai's success.

Providing world-class consumption and cultural infrastructure that facilitates global lifestyles (organic markets, yoga classes, cycle paths, etc.) is a way for Dubai to prove its standing as a global city. Parks, beaches, and restaurants offering international cuisine help to make people from around the world feel at home in Dubai. They also express the city's urbanity as a microcosm of the world. Labeling everything as "number one" or "world class" is a response to the tension between the need for generic places (see Duyvendak and Ley-Cervantes in this book) with homogenized global standards, on the one hand, and, on the other, the attempt to create special features that ensure that these places are worth visiting. This contradiction expresses the consumer logic of late capitalism, which takes advantage of difference and markets it, and, in so doing, eradicates it (Binnie et al. 2006).

As for other global metropolises, diversity has become an asset to promote the city at an international scale. For instance, on its official tourism platform, Dubai advertises itself as a "global culinary scene" with the slogan "Find the world in your plate." Here Dubai seems to be a perfect illustration of what has been called by Beck "culinary cosmopolitanism" (2003, 37). Branding Dubai as cosmopolitan, without using the word itself, is part of a strategy of promoting it as a global city and fostering its economy as a site for practices of global consumption. If this consumerist face of cosmopolitanism has been internalized by the government, the other face of cosmopolitanism, segregation, is not overtly acknowledged, even though it is deeply embedded in the local urban order.

## 6.2.2 *Segregation as a Response to Cosmopolitanism?*

Segregation, usually presented as a key feature of Gulf Cities, is thought to be a way for citizens reduced to a demographic minority (except in Saudi Arabia and Oman) to keep foreigners out and preserve a cohesive national cultural identity (Gardner 2011; Khalaf 2006). In Dubai different types of segregation coexist. As a city with extremely fragmented urban planning, designed for the private car and with few public spaces, Dubai is marked by very high residential segregation. Segregation in Dubai is often analyzed through its most extreme urban forms: labor camps and gated communities (Kathiravelu 2016). The camps, mainly consigned to the outskirts of the city, are not open to the public. Despite this ban, photographers and journalists have regularly presented documentary evidence to denounce the miserable and insalubrious living conditions of the poorest foreigners, who are paid pitiful wages (from 600 to 1500 dirhams per month, 150–350 euros). Sonapur is one such camp. North of the city near the border with the neighboring emirate of

Sharjah, Sonapur is hemmed in by the airport, the al Qusais industrial zone, a massive dump, and a cemetery. Although it is the most populated sector of the city with approximately 163,000 inhabitants, less than 100 women live there and there are no Emirati residents. At the other extreme, over forty gated communities occupy 7% of the built urban area (Elsheshtawy 2015). In the extremely luxurious Emirates Hill, built around a golf course, a contemporary villa with eight bedrooms and a pool costs 85 million dirhams (about 20 million euros).

These two urban forms must not overshadow other kinds of housing, however. With other colleagues, I have unpacked elsewhere the complex patterns of segregation in Dubai (Elsheshtawy et al. 2018), where extreme forms of segregations coexist with more mixed housing types. Low and mid-level wage earners commonly share accommodations. The numerous postings adorning walls and poles in some areas of Dubai are clear indicators that housing units are measured either by the room, partition, or bed space.<sup>4</sup> They generally state preferences with regard to nationality, or even religion or regional origin, for future roommates. There are many such shared accommodations in the four or five-story 1970s-era buildings in the Bur Dubai and Deira neighborhoods. Another option is to seek out lower rents in less pricey neighboring emirates like Sharjah or Ajman, but at the cost of tiring commutes and heavy traffic jams.

The upper-middle classes often live in high-rise buildings in neighborhoods like the highly sought-after Marina. These high-rises often function as autonomous units with their own gyms and roof-top pools. While much more ethnically mixed, the residents are more socially homogeneous. In these high-rises and gated communities, income level is more determinative than national background. Segregation in Dubai among foreigners is thus more social than racial; for their part, nationals tend to relocate to peripheral neighborhoods built especially for them.

Another type of segregation present in Dubai is gender segregation. Initially developed as a component of a tribal Arab Muslim society, this practice concerns mostly the Emirati (or Gulf) population. Gender segregation seems to be declining for two reasons. Firstly, the dominant values of the Dubai cosmopolitan population favor more gender mixing. Second, the desire to modernize Emirati society through education and “Emiratize” the workforce to reduce dependence upon migrants requires the presence of Emirati women outside the home and interacting with men in the workplace.

Public (and some private) schools and universities usually segregate male and female students, but a recent law in 2018 introduced mixed-classes in public schools from grades 1 to 4 but kept separate classes beyond. Some restaurants have corners reserved for families that are off-limits to men dining alone. Some spaces (club, parks, beach) may be also reserved for use by women, temporarily (one day a week) or on a regular basis.

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<sup>4</sup>A partition is a subdivision of a room in several tiny blind spaces with just enough space for a bed or bunk bed and a cupboard.

After having focused on the nexus between consumption, segregation, and globalization its spatial translation can be understood by analyzing two cosmopolitan peripheral spaces, Global Village and International City. These two case studies help refine the analysis of cosmopolitanism by delving, at a local scale, into the interactions between globalization and consumption (Global Village) and between globalization and segregation (International City).

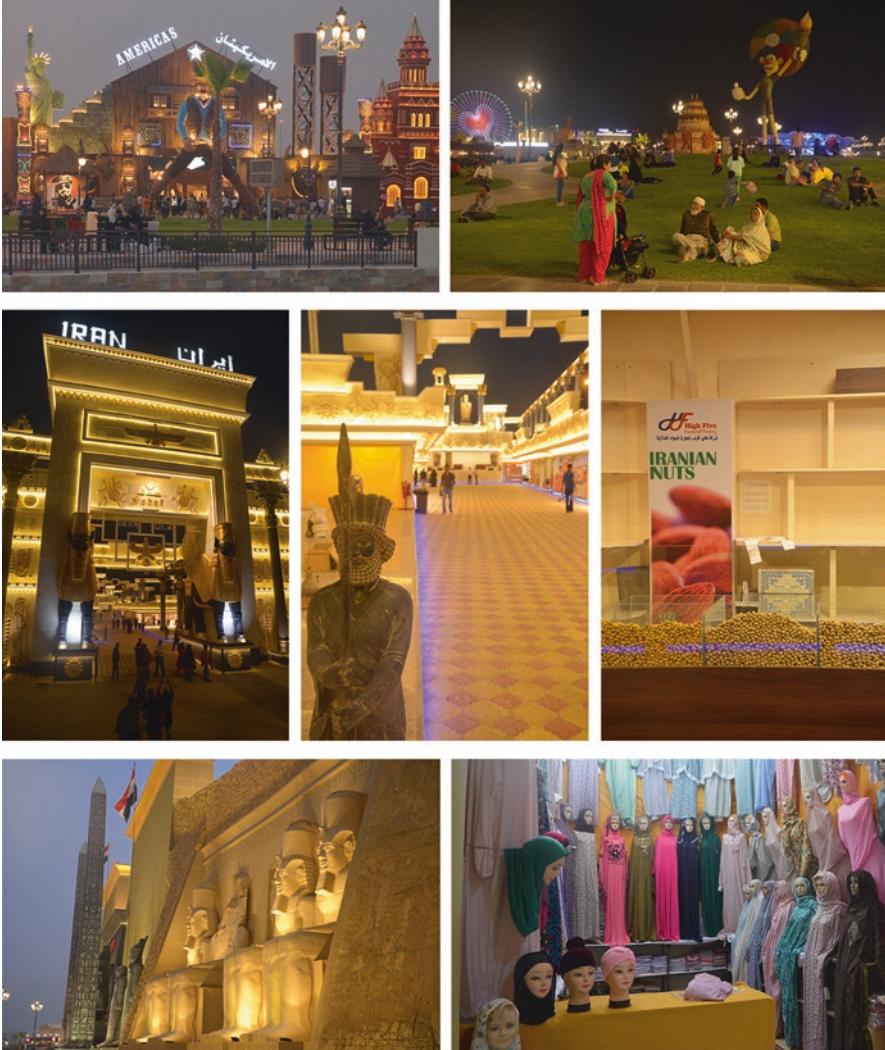
### 6.3 Consuming and Experiencing the Diversity of the World in Global Village

Shopping malls are places *par excellence* of cosmopolitan consumption. Far from the exuberant luxury of Dubai Mall, Global Village is a perfect expression of a “cheap” version of consumer cosmopolitanism, illustrating a real taste for “consuming” foreign places. Global Village is not necessarily found in traditional print tourist guides, but it appears as the fifth highest-rated destination on TripAdvisor. Open from November to April, Global Village is an outdoor “world-leading multicultural festival park,” providing, as its website puts it, “world class cultural and family entertainment, along with a *cosmopolitan* and diverse shopping experience.” Like many other places in Dubai, one day a week (in its case, Mondays) is reserved for families and women. In 2017–2018, Global Village’s 10,000 exhibitors welcomed 5.6 million visitors, attracting as many tourists as residents and nationals. Besides a typical entertainment park (circus, carnival, Ferris wheel, shows), Global Village contains massive country and regional pavilions (Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa) representing about 75 countries. Each national pavilion features a fairly shoddy replica of an iconic monument; the Abu Simbel Temple, for instance, represents Egypt (Fig. 6.1). The world as represented in Global Village is not centered on the West but rather on the Middle East and Asia, which represented 15 and 7 of the 27 pavilions, respectively, for 2018–2019.

Each pavilion is supposed to sell products and food from the country it represents. Global Village is in reality a gigantic mall barely disguised by the effort to introduce visitors to world cultures. It offers low-quality, attractively priced goods, generally made in China, with sometimes little or no connection to the country in whose pavilion they are sold, especially in the case of the European countries. In the evening, a musical narrates the adventures of “Globo,” the park’s mascot, who has a giant head of multicolored hair symbolizing diversity. The park also hosts around twenty free concerts a year geared toward middle-class expats; in November 2018, there were concerts featuring the Moroccan-Egyptian singer Samira Saïd, the Yemeni Fouad Abdel Wahed, the Indian pop stars Neha Kakkar and Ankit Tiwari and the Filipina star Mayward.

The history of Global Village tells much about the history of the city, revealing two types of actors. First, it is closely linked with the launching of Dubai Shopping Festival in 1996 by Sheikh Mohammed al-Maktoum. Global Village belongs to





**Fig. 6.1** Cosmopolitan landscapes in Global Village. (Source: Pagès-El Karoui, 1 November 2016)

Dubai Holding, property of the ruling emir. Global Village was started in 1996 from some kiosks located on Creek side, opposite Dubai Municipality, in the historical core of the city. It then moved to a more pericentral location, Oud Metha Area, near Wafi center, for five years. Since 2005, it has been in its current location on the outskirts of the city, with one of the biggest parking lots in Dubai (18,300 parking bays).

Global Village also reflects the prominent role played by the Indian community in the fabric of the global metropolis. The fate of Sunil Bhatia, a self-made man who arrived from Bombay in 1976 and worked first as a foreman and is now the owner



of an entertainment company, is closely intertwined with the story of Global Village.<sup>5</sup> He claims that the largest pavilion is the 11,000-square meter Indian one; it was also the first one erected, in 1996, with 20 stalls sponsored by the Indian government. While involved in the Dubai Indian Association, Bhatia played a major role in the Indian pavilion's organization. He then started to run it by himself, organizing for vendors from India to come for the five months of the year that Global Village is open. He has since extended his business by running the China and Europe pavilions. Indian products are sold mainly to Arabs and other tourists, but not to Indians who find them too expensive compared to what they can buy at home.

As to Global Village's customers, there are two things to mention. First, the Dh15 entrance ticket (each entertainment attraction inside costs extra) makes Global Village one of the few cheap places to go in Dubai, a city where each entertainment hot spot is very expensive, out of reach of the majority of residents. It is interesting to note that, in Global Village, the marketing of Dubai's diversity targets lower or middle classes. This is a far cry from a cosmopolitanism exclusive to an elite using it as a marker of distinction. Rather, Global Village represents a vernacular cosmopolitanism, as described by Pnina Webner (2006). Second, unlike most public spaces, Global Village is one of the few places in Dubai where visitors cross paths with many nationals, who are highly visible. Several newspaper narratives, spotlighting how Global Village epitomizes an inclusive place, emphasize the dissolution of social hierarchies:

There are people there of all nationalities, from all walks of life, representing the full gamut of Dubai's multicultural make-up; all of the city's perceived hierarchies seem to melt away. Literally and metaphorically, it is the common ground that is so often lacking in the UAE.

According to interviewees and Google reviews, visitors generally appreciate Global Village. Someone defining himself as a "white westerner" declares, "This is a very culturally diverse place (white westerners are < 5%) and seems to be where everyone else in Dubai goes." Others write that "[the] World is here," speak of "a truly global experience," or indicate "having a lot of fun with my children. Surely visit again to explore more countries without Visa :)." The last quotation comes from an Indian man who appreciated his visit as a way to escape otherwise restricted mobilities in the world due to his passport. His experience in the theme park fulfills a desire to acquire worldliness and be modern by being a consumer of other cultures and places. This imagined cosmopolitanism conveys a desire to participate in global consumer culture, even if this participation is only symbolic. It is a perfect illustration of what Beck (2006) calls "banal cosmopolitanism."

Of course, some visitors are more skeptical: "It is a fraud program. U can't get experience and taste of different countries. It is full of business." These observations are in line with Molz's observation: "Cosmopolitanism often entails fantasies of

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<sup>5</sup>Riyasbabu, "From Mumbai to Dubai in 1976", *Khaleej Times*, March 18, 2006. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/general/from-mumbai-to-dubai-in-1976>. Anjana Kumarn, "Global Village: Trip down memory lane", *Gulf News*, February 04, 2015. <https://gulfnews.com/going-out/society/global-village-trip-down-memory-lane-1.1451826>

transcending cultural differences, but consumerist ideology tends to reproduce the very social divisions cosmopolitanism claims to dissolve” (2011, 39).

These cosmopolitan landscapes, which may appear as “superficial” to critical eyes, are appropriated by many residents and tourists to fulfill cosmopolitan aspirations of being part of modern world society without necessarily being fooled by its artificial character. Global Village is a rare example of global consumption available to almost everybody (although the prices are not really cheap) in a city where practices of consumption are designed mostly for wealthy people. The same goes for accommodation. In another margin of the city lies an interesting area, Dubai International City, one of the few spaces designed for housing low and middle-class foreigners.

## 6.4 Cosmopolitanism and Segregation in International City

International City offers an original case-study for exploring the nexus between globalization and segregation in Dubai. Like Global Village, International City is part of a globalized imaginary that is reflected in its architecture with its desire to represent the diversity of the world. But it also expresses, with the emergence of the figure of the “bachelor” in Gulf cities, the extension of logics of segregation from national family to foreign family, from core areas to peripheral areas.

### 6.4.1 *A Cosmopolitan Suburban Community for Low- and Middle-Class Foreign Residents*

Dubai International City (DIC) is located in the outskirts of the city (one hour by bus from Deira, the historic center, or Burj Khalifa, the new center), between Al-Khor Industrial Area and a sewage treatment plant. Built by Nakheel and opened in 2007, it represents an interesting cosmopolitan landscape.<sup>6</sup> It is one of the few real estate projects in Dubai designed from the outset to house foreigners with moderate incomes – most real estate projects in Dubai focus on upscale and luxury apartments and villas. The project blends studio and one-bedroom apartments in low-rise neighborhoods; it sits on one of the freehold areas where foreigners can buy land and property. International City has the lowest rents in Dubai (Elsheshtawy 2015): 600–700 AED for a bed space (lower beds are more expensive) and 1050 AED for a partition. While planned to house 60,000 persons, in 2018 it had 97,000 inhabitants, leading to serious problems with overcrowding. From the outside, the

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<sup>6</sup>Funded in 2000, Nakheel is one the main real estate company belonging to Dubai Government, i.e., to the ruler. Its most famous realizations include artificial islands (the Palms, The World) and huge malls (Ibn Battuta, Dragon Mart).

area has a bad reputation: weak infrastructure (incessantly overflowing sewers) and shoddy maintenance, pestilential odors from the neighboring sewage treatment plant, endemic prostitution, difficult access at peak hours and impossible parking day and night.

As elsewhere in Dubai, International City was designed as an enclave with little thought to its interactions within a larger environment. The design of the area may be surprising, as there are no street names, with buildings identified by letter and numbers (see Fig. 6.3). As a result, people constantly get lost and keep asking for directions. From the inside, though, International City may function for some residents as a real neighborhood, although many of them think of it as a bedroom community with minimal social interactions with one's neighbors. It is also one of the few places in Dubai, a city domination by cars, where people walk or bike (see Fig. 6.3).

The district is divided into ten clusters which bear country names: Greece, Italy, Spain, France, England, Russia, Morocco, Emirates, Persia, China (Fig. 6.2). Each cluster is supposed to reproduce the architectural styles emblematic of the eponymous country. Unlike Global Village, the world of International City is marked by a strong European tropism: six countries are European, three Middle Eastern and one Asian.

Some archetypal decorative elements are easily identifiable: the dome of Florence, Orientalizing domes for Persia, the Gothic windows with ogival arches for Venice (see Fig. 6.3). However, the distinctions are generally not very visible from one cluster to another and are sometimes limited to changes in the color of the building (grey for Russia, ochre for England). The composition of the population rarely coincides with the name of the district. There are almost no Westerners or Emirati living in International City.<sup>7</sup> Its inhabitants are mainly Indians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, Chinese or Arabs.

The Chinese cluster is the only one where the country's name matches, partly, its population or shops. It has become a hub for the Chinese community in Dubai. One reason for its success is its location near Dragon Mart (opened in 2004, also by Nakheel), a huge cheap mall for wholesale and retail products from China. As the largest hub of Chinese products outside China, it has the reputation of having everything one could desire. Dragon Mart has a clientele from all the Emirates and even all of the Gulf (in the parking lot there are cars from Saudi Arabia or Oman). As proof of its popularity, an extension, Dragon Mart 2, was recently opened, and other expansions are under construction.

In the China Cluster, and more generally in International City, there are numerous stores and facilities displaying large signboards with Chinese characters: Chinese restaurants, clinics and a huge and busy supermarket, called Wenzhou, which offers a wide range of Chinese products, fresh fruit and vegetables, and even

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<sup>7</sup> 150 Emiratis lived in DIC in 2010, according to Dubai Statistics Center.

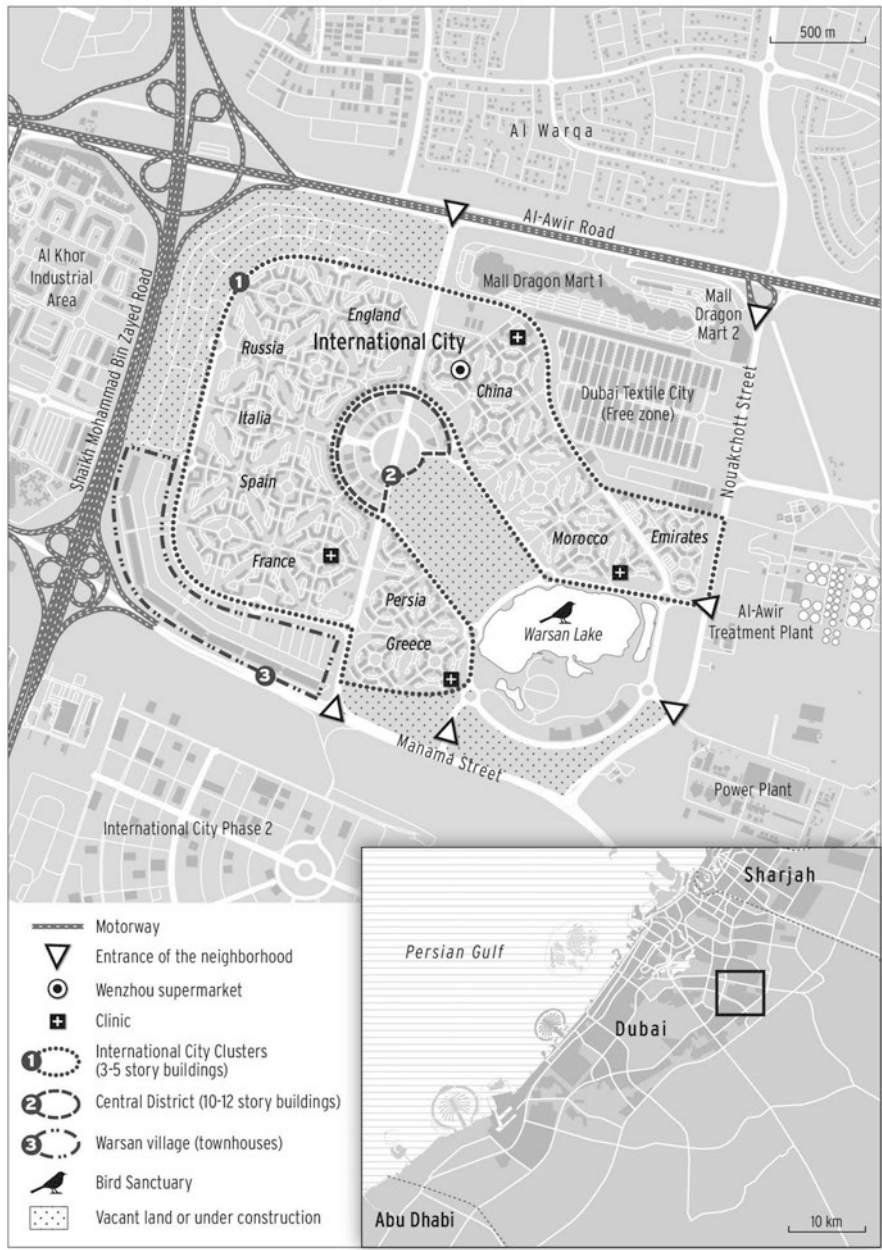


Fig. 6.2 Map of Dubai International City



**Fig. 6.3** Views of International City (2018). Legend: (a) Chinese pharmacy and medical center in China cluster; (b) Russia (left) and England (right) clusters; (c) Italian cluster; (d, e, f) Chinese/Thai & Filipino/Indian restaurants; (g) DIC CBD with high rise buildings and underground parking garages; (h) DIC is one of the rare areas of Dubai where bikes are widely used; (i) illegal hanging of laundry on balconies in the Italian cluster. (D. Pagès-El Karoui, October 2018)

pork (whose sale is very restricted in the UAE).<sup>8</sup> Some customers complain about the fact that the labels are not in English. And indeed, someone can survive in the Chinese cluster without speaking English. If the Chinese cluster has become a hub for middle-class Chinese, it is still far from the model of an American Chinatown, having not yet become a tourist attraction.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Totally banned in Sharjah, pork can be bought in Dubai in several supermarkets in special sections dedicated to non-Muslims.

<sup>9</sup>Dubai won't stay long without a Chinatown since Emaar has announced in July 2018, during the visit of President Xi Jinping, its project to build a Chinatown inside the Dubai Creek Harbour Project.



International City is usually presented in the Emirati press as cosmopolitan: “It is a world in one city in which people from an array of cultures and nationalities feel right at home”. If a very limited cosmopolitanism emerges from its planned landscapes, a more tangible form emerges from the great diversity of its inhabitants. Due to its modest architecture and infrastructures and the low or middle income of its population, DIC epitomizes a kind of intermediary space, rare in Dubai, between the extreme forms of segregation found in labor camps and the luxurious environment of gated communities. But, like other parts of Dubai, even such ordinary spaces are worked over by processes of segregation, symbolized by the emergence of the intermediary figure of the “bachelor.”

#### 6.4.2 *The Extension of the “Bachelor” Threat or the “Ethos of Non-Mixing” in International City*

The category of the “bachelor,” which is widespread in the Gulf urban imaginary, expresses the feeling that single male unskilled workers unaccompanied by their families (be they married or not) constitute a moral threat to the urban order.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the citizenry calls for their eviction from neighborhoods described as being restricted to families and asks that “bachelors” be segregated in a “bachelors accommodation” (Gardner 2011; Sarmadi 2013; Osella and Bristol-Rhys 2016). This public discourse, frequently disseminated in the media, is rooted in the over-masculinization existing in Gulf cities as a result of migration policies. With Doha in Qatar, Dubai holds another world record: its population is 70% male.<sup>11</sup> This demographic imbalance is the result of how migratory flows are structured (a majority of men migrate alone to work in jobs, especially in construction, requiring few qualifications) and of policies restricting family reunification based on income. This over-masculinization is not evenly spatially distributed. Twenty-some neighborhoods have male residency rates over 90% while five neighborhoods do not have a single registered female inhabitant (Elsheshtawy et al. 2018). These neighborhoods are peripheral spaces that host camps of poorly qualified workers, primarily from South Asia, who live in extremely impoverished conditions.

The social type of the bachelor incarnates the “dangerous class” *par excellence*, threatening the urban order with unhealthy practices and intrinsic violence. The two main stereotypes see bachelors as threats to cleanliness and safety (especially for women and children). This discourse using a rhetoric of “invasion” is widespread

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<sup>10</sup> This categorization, marked by a strong gender bias, entirely obscures the class dimension, and is furthermore inappropriate because many of these lone men are married but had to leave their wives back home.

<sup>11</sup> This imbalance was even stronger in 2010, when women represented only 22% of the population. The city is thus in the process of re-feminizing with the arrival of many foreign women working as domestic help or in the service sector.

worldwide among populations rejecting immigration. If the “bachelor” appears as an intermediary figure in the Emirates, it is because this category is mobilized when there is a risk of proximity between national families and working class-migrants. It applies to those unaccompanied male migrants living in the city, close to Emiratis, who work in service and technical jobs (Bristol-Rhys 2010). The migrants living in the labor camps appear less threatening because they are already segregated (Sarmadi 2013; Osella and Bristol-Rhys 2016).

According to Osella and Bristol-Rhys (2016), there is no “bachelor panic” in the Emirates (or at least in Abu Dhabi) because bachelors are not perceived as real men: they have been neutralized sexually and are therefore not regarded as socially dangerous. Without getting into a complex debate, I rather follow Sarmadi (2013) who has analyzed the various discourses in Dubai on the connections between “overcrowding” and “bachelor accommodation” that has proliferated since the early 2000s in the English-language Emirati press. An increasing number of Emiratis have been leaving the city’s old neighborhoods to move to “new Dubai,” freeing up lodgings, apartments, and houses that are in turn be rented by migrants sharing the accommodation, a process reminiscent of the suburbanization, white-flight, and ghettoization of American inner cities. The neighborhoods of old Dubai (Deira, Bur Dubai, and Karama), for instance, are becoming majority Asian and are now perceived by Emiratis and middle to upper-class “expats” as densely packed and seedy.

Developing under the control of big groups, New Dubai has gotten away from the influence of the municipality, which intends to keep control over the oldest parts of the city. In 2008 the municipality launched an inspection campaign entitled “One villa, one family” to survey lodgings that have been divided up to maximize rental income and house a large number of foreign workers. Heavy fines are imposed on delinquent owners and water and electric services are cut until they comply. These evictions are conducted under the pretext of health and safety in order to preserve the (Emirati) “families” remaining in the neighborhood. International City was built in this context with the purpose of offering affordable accommodation to low-income migrants who were forced to share apartments or villas in the inner city.

The scholarly literature seems to limit these antagonisms between bachelors and families to the inner city and national households (Gardner 2011; Sarmadi 2013; Osella and Bristol-Rhys 2016). But similar campaigns were repeated a few years later in desert neighborhoods on the edges of the city and also in International City, by Trakhees, the regulatory authority for freehold areas. Rents in the neighborhood had plummeted by 80% after the 2008 financial crisis, when Dubai was saved in extremis from near bankruptcy by Abu Dhabi. These drop-in rents attracted workers who preferred to live 6–10 people per studio rather than a labor camp. At the same time, the lower rents also spurred families to move elsewhere, so this now unoccupied housing was rented out to “bachelors.” Meanwhile, the Nakheel company was also going through rough times, which made it less attentive to the neighborhood and infrastructure maintenance. The growing density caused by accommodation sharing leads to significant parking and access problems, depletes the local environment, and leads longer-term residents to decry the “invasion of bachelors,” whom

they accuse of being dirty, noisy, and threatening the neighborhood peace (women and children are said to no longer dare go into the street).

Following a news article presenting International City as a “squalor township,” an Internet debate emerged about evicting bachelors from the area. Some residents proclaimed that unless something is done, International City will become “another Sonapur,” a “bachelor city,” a “shantytown city,” or a “city of crime”: “If they do not segregate bachelors from families, this place will become a total labour camp.”<sup>12</sup> These inhabitants, who were upset to not have received any answers to their complaints to Nakheel, clearly present an “ethos of non-mixing.”<sup>13</sup> They have assimilated Dubai’s segregated urban order which distinguishes between areas for families and areas for “bachelors.” Other readers, who seem to belong to a higher class and do not live in DIC (“living in Dubai Marina like you and me”<sup>14</sup>), defend the laborers and shift the discussion to the lack of cheap accommodation available to workers.

So the novelty brought by the case of International City is two-fold. First, the category of “bachelors,” which initially developed as a threat to Emirati families, has become a threat to foreign middle-class residents; second, the eviction of bachelors, which initially concerned the inner city, has been extended to the peripheries. The fear of “bachelors” and the claim for more segregation thus becomes an anxiety shared by middle and upper classes beyond national differences. Should this be seen as a sign of integration into a common local urban culture in a country which denies assimilation?

## 6.5 Conclusion: Thinking Cosmopolitanism Empirically from Dubai Ordinary Spaces

One of the challenges of this book is to think cosmopolitanism outside the framework of normativity and to unravel how cosmopolitanism is grounded in specific times and urban spaces. This chapter has tried to show how Dubai, analyzed through two ordinary spaces, may be a valuable case study by broadening the base of cosmopolitanism to the low and middle-classes and to non-Western cities. Dubai embodies multiple meanings of cosmopolitanism in terms of both a cultural dimension of globalization and the coexistence of a heterogeneous population. Its cosmopolitanism, in a deeply unequal society, intertwines three main features: consumption, segregation, and globalization. In its quest for global visibility and status, the Dubai

<sup>12</sup>All these quotations are found in the readers’ comments following the paper « International City: Squalor township », by Jay B. Hilotin, 24 Feb. 2011, Gulfnews, <https://gulfnews.com/business/property/international-city-squalor-township-1.766738>

<sup>13</sup>I’m building this expression, inspired by Susanne Wessendorf (2013)’s work on Hackney, a super-diverse area in London. She uses “ethos of mixing” to describe residents’ positive attitudes towards diversity and the difficulties they have to understand people who do not want to mix.

<sup>14</sup>Dubai Marina is a expansive area when a lot of wealthy expats live, near the beach in high rise buildings, viewing a marina.



government promotes a friendly and positive image of diversity. It encourages, through its own real estate companies, the construction of cosmopolitan landscapes that cater to a global taste for consuming foreign places. But this extreme consumer society is only accessible to its richest residents. Similarly, urban space is highly segregated. This does not exclude pockets of high mixing of nationalities who generally belong to the same social milieu.

To unpack Dubai's complexity and to de-exceptionalize its glamorous image, I have chosen to present two ordinary spaces which have not yet been studied and are far less famous than Dubai's iconic spaces. For both Global Village and International City, their names convey an image of worldliness and their built environment plays on the representation of global diversity. They represent two forms of Dubai's cosmopolitan urbanism, built at its peripheries and frequented mainly by non-Westerners. Global Village, the gigantic open-air park and mall selling products from all over the world, epitomizes the commodification of difference, where cosmopolitanism is performed as a form of global consumption and where *logics of inclusion* prevail. International City is one of the few housing developments on the freehold area accessible to low and middle-income immigrants in a city in desperate need of cheap housing. When rents fall and infrastructure and physical environments deteriorate, fears rise among "families" and state agencies about "bachelors" invading the neighborhood, leading to overcrowding, filth and insecurity. This bachelor/family divide is a common feature of segregation in Gulf cities, but the novelty is the extension of the *logics of exclusion* from Emirati families to middle-class foreign residents, from inner city to peripheral areas.

In light of these two ordinary spaces, Dubai embodies a new urban formulation of cosmopolitanism with all its contradictions, the *concomitant logics of inclusion and exclusion*. While certainly far from its original normative dimension, this complex form of cosmopolitanism is very enlightening to understanding the future logics of the new global urban order.

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# Chapter 7

## Everyday Cosmopolitanism in African Cities: Places of Leisure and Consumption in Antananarivo and Maputo



Catherine Fournet-Guérin

### 7.1 Introduction: “Everyday Cosmopolitanism” and Africa

African cities are oftentimes not considered to be fully part of the world, treated instead as if they are “off the map” (Robinson 2002) or underdeveloped peripheries playing no role in cultural globalization (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004). Seen from Europe, their populations are also thought to be uniformly “black,” obscuring an important ethnic diversity. But especially since the 1990s, African cities have taken in many foreigners from all over the world, including people from China, India, Brazil, and Arab and European countries, not to mention elsewhere in Africa. The high number of migrants from countries of the Global South is a new phenomenon, and they will be the focus of this chapter, approached from the perspective of urban society as a whole. This is one of the major rapid changes experienced in African urban societies, but thus far it has received much less academic attention than similar issues in Europe and North America (Cohen and Vertovec 2002). Seen from other parts of the world, “Africa” and “cosmopolitan” are too often considered as opposites, and Africa has only recently started to be mentioned in academic literature on cosmopolitanism. In this context, I will analyze the southern African metropolises and capital cities of Maputo (in Mozambique) and Antananarivo (in Madagascar, in the Indian Ocean).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The materials used in this chapter were gathered during several field research trips to each of these cities, each lasting several weeks, since 2006 for Antananarivo and 2015 for Maputo. I use qualitative methods based on observation, semi-structured interviews with foreign- and native-born residents, and analysis of the discourse and representations of city residents from foreign backgrounds that are made by the media and in all manner of artistic expression. The cities were chosen with the idea of studying and shedding light on two comparably sized capitals of very poor countries in geographical proximity, the sole metropolitan city of each country but practically unknown internationally.

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Although the metropolitan areas of Maputo and Antananarivo have populations of two to three million, they rarely figure in studies of Africa or among cities thought to incarnate modernity and globalization. In the media as in the world of academic research, they are considered to be secondary cities, provincial on the continental scale, despite the fact that they contain numerous foreigners who are either passing through or living there permanently (Fournet-Guérin 2019). Although national statistical data is lacking and often unreliable, researchers agree that the number of non-African people living in Africa in the 2000s adds up to several million (Flahaux and de Haas 2016) and that the figure is rising, a fact highlighted in a 2018 report from CNUCED estimating that there were 5.5 million people living in Africa who were not originally from the continent. To give but one example, estimates of the presence of people from China living in Africa vary from several hundred thousand to over a million.

Since the early 2000s, a body of social science research has applied the notion of cosmopolitanism to the Global South, not only demonstrating that it is possible but that one could legitimately consider the interactions between foreigners and “nationals” in places that are economically, politically, and socially dominated on the global scale – in other words, the Global South (Fouquet 2018) – to be cosmopolitan. The literature has also developed a broader acceptance of what is termed “vernacular” cosmopolitanism (Diouf 2000) or “working class cosmopolitanism,” developed by Werbner (1999) to span the diversity of empirical situations existing in the Global North and South alike.

Moreover, comparisons between cities of the Global North and South are now widespread, leading to a renewal of analytical paradigms of the urban (Edensor and Jayne 2012; Myers 2011; Robinson 2006) and the inclusion of everyday life in many analyses of cities in particular (beginning with Appadurai 1996). Since the early 2000s, a large and flourishing body of work has also developed in another thematic field, that of the little-known cosmopolitan character of African cities (Brachet 2009; Boesen and Marfaing 2007; Malaquais 2005). These two fields have very little overlap, however, or at least in Africa: few studies are devoted to cosmopolitanism from a very local, micro, and everyday perspective, based on the experience of residents and the frequentation of certain places. A few such studies exist, such as Amandine Spire’s research on foreigners in Lomé and Accra (2011), Thomas Fouquet’s work on nocturnal places and practices (2018),<sup>2</sup> Ola Söderström’s work comparing Hanoi and Ougadougou (2013), and Bunkenborg’s work on the daily life of Chinese migrants settled in Maputo (2014). This chapter pursues and further contributes to this line of work that has emerged in recent years (Fournet-Guérin 2017).

The question is whether or not cosmopolitan interactions develop in everyday settings such as neighborhoods, or even at the micro-level, in places like corner grocery stores or hair salons. I approach the issue through places: their architecture and décor, what makes them lively, and who frequents them (Fourchard et al. 2009).

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<sup>2</sup>This nocturnal approach is not included here.

This work falls within the field of social geography, which examines how social differences manifest in space, and in the field of the sociology of everyday life (Goffman 1963). The cosmopolitan places visited in this chapter include modest places frequented by the residents of working-class neighborhoods and more socially selective places that are often, but not always, geographically central in the city. The chapter explores the extent to which one can speak of “places of cosmopolitan sociability” in these everyday spaces.<sup>3</sup> Cosmopolitanism is taken to mean the deliberate search for the foreign character of a place or a group of people by others. The hypothesis is that people frequent places of cosmopolitan sociability and consumption precisely because they present a clear connection with someplace else (a foreign owner, clientele, décor, cuisine, etc.) and that the people involved consider the interactions that occur there, in a peaceful and calm setting of co-presence, to be pleasant. Both foreign migrants and nationals living in the city think that such interactions are beneficial to local urbanity.<sup>4</sup>

## 7.2 New Places of Cosmopolitan Sociability in African Cities

The appearances of Maputo and Antananarivo have changed since the early 2000s, especially due to the creation of many places of sociability related to the presence of foreigners (mostly from the Global South) and international influences that local entrepreneurs seized upon in a search for novelty. They are places devoted to leisure and/or consumption that reflect either the local incorporation of foreign models or the presence of new foreign groups in the city. This means allowing two meanings for cosmopolitanism, one based on migrants’ own practices and representations in connection with the host society (a consequence of new international circulations and migrations), the other referring to the globalization of models that circulate in the world, be they related to culture, architecture, food, or more general consumption styles (Appadurai 1996; Söderström 2013; Fouquet 2018; Choplin and Pliez 2018).

First of all, some places of consumption and leisure are directly imported from standardized international models and constitute what Jacques Lévy (1997) calls “generic places” (see the chapters by Jan Willem Duyvendak and Melissa Ley-Cervantes in this volume). These are big chain hotels, restaurants, spas, shopping

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<sup>3</sup>Not all kinds of place of sociability are studied here – only privately-owned ones relating to consumption and leisure practices.

<sup>4</sup>According to Ulf Hannerz, the classic definition of cosmopolitanism is expressed by positive interactions: “Cosmopolitanism ... includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the co-existence of cultures in the individual experience. A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the other. It entails an intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity” (1990, 239). This is the definition of cosmopolitanism used in the limited scope of this chapter, although I recognize the importance of relations of hostility and indifference between foreigners and natives.

centers – places that are identical in any city of the world. Even if these generic places are less present and numerous than in other African metropolises, there is a Radisson Blu hotel in Maputo and both cities have malls with architecture, layout, and décor identical to others worldwide. Indeed, shopping centers are a new type of place of sociability developed according to foreign models (Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009). Like other major East African cities, the forms currently in style in Antananarivo and Maputo are borrowed more from South Africa, the Gulf countries, and emergent countries in Asia and Latin America than from Europe or North America. These generic places are expressions of an international circulation of models of urban forms representing an international culture, and it is through local practices and the representations made of such places that they become distinctive in each particular locale.

A second type of place of sociability consists of reconstructed or locally created places of global inspiration. They are places inspired by models that circulate internationally, often within more limited cultural contexts (such as the Arab-Muslim or Chinese worlds), but with local roots that ensure that they are original and non-standardized. Their particularity lies in how they transform generic models locally, either by foreigners importing foreign models or by nationals tapping into them. These include casinos, billiard halls, Chinese and other trendy restaurants (sometimes in regional or national chains, like La Gastronomie Pizza in Madagascar), and independent hotels and private guestroom rentals. For instance, La Gastronomie Pizza was founded by nationals in Antananarivo in the 2000s and features a “drive-in” service (the site is itself accessible by mini-bus) where employees deliver orders in the unpaved parking lot, an attention-grabbing décor (dominated by the color red, neon lights, eye-catching posters) intended to look “Western,” and an active Facebook page. Numerous elements that made fast-food chains internationally successful in Europe and North America are borrowed and adapted to the local setting: certainly, the prices are high for most of the population, but they are cheaper than restaurants downtown.

Hotels advertised as “boutique hotels” also illustrate this type of place. They are inspired by international codes while also claiming to be unique and rooted in their cultural environment and local architecture. The owner of the Hotel du Louvre in Antananarivo is a Madagascar-born descendent of a French colonist family, and he described the marketing concept of the boutique hotel as “feeling at home and being able to possess the decorative objects you see there” (interview, July 2011). His reference for the décor of the hotel, opened in 2009, was the Hotel Urban in Madrid, whose website presents it as “a meeting place so different and cosmopolitan.” Initially, however, designers of this kind of hotel intended to promote a style that was unique and rooted in its local environment, in stark contrast to international chain hotels. Although each boutique hotel may indeed be unique, the global model presiding over the design of all of them nonetheless leads to repetition the world over. So such hotels, considered unique reflections of a particular city, are subject to uses making them territories of the world economy and revelatory of an international

urban culture that has emerged and spread worldwide since the late nineteenth century. Moreover, boutique hotels first emerged in North American cities like New York: their spread illustrates how permeable African capitals are to the latest international influences emanating from the most symbolic of Euro-American metropolises. Regardless, in their very design combined with their rootedness in a unique local urban space, boutique hotels are indeed places of local translation and reconfiguration of a globally circulating model, which makes them cosmopolitan.

Lastly, places of cosmopolitan sociability can be neo-colonial places, meaning recently created or re-created based on colonial-era models and presented as such. They are based on the colonial imaginary and play on the nostalgia that they promote through their décor, name, and/or location – often in the colonial center of the city. They may be cinemas, bars, restaurants, old train stations converted into shopping centers, jazz clubs, or sporting clubs hosting a range of festive events. Such sites include the Africa Cinema and the seaside Naval Club in Maputo or the Café de la Gare in Antananarivo, which opened in 2009 and was modeled after the colonial-era Buffet de la Gare, a mythic place for the cultural and economic elite. Its owners use this colonial nostalgia to successfully attract a local and international clientele. Such places are recreated, restored, or even built new by foreign investors and are frequented by a very diverse local and foreign clientele attracted to the temporal exoticism of their appealing colonial setting.

### **7.3 Users of Cosmopolitan Places: Diverse and Changing Profiles**

In the first approach, these new places of sociability are frequented by the clientele for which they were designed and to which they appeal directly. In the newest Chinese restaurants of the two capitals, a significant proportion of the customers are people originally from China who have settled there permanently since the late 1990s (Park 2006; Ma Mung 2008; Chichava and Duran 2014). We can thus speak of so-called “ethnic” places, meaning that they are both well-known for a specific foreign group and well identified as such by residents from local backgrounds; that being the case, there is nothing original about them. Many residents of Maputo and Antananarivo could easily indicate places frequented by the Chinese, Indians, and other Africans – usually downtown hotels and restaurants, upscale or more working-class, serving as everyday meeting places and sites for community sociability. For instance, members of the Guinean diaspora in Maputo use the centrally located Hotel 2001 due to the lack of pleasant public places or associative clubs for this purpose.

In such new places of sociability, one can find businessmen from Mozambique/Madagascar and foreign countries alongside employees of foreign companies and international organizations on mission for a few weeks as well as tourists and evangelical missionaries from Africa or the Americas (Brazil, the United States).



The Chinese tend to frequent hotels owned by fellow Chinese, like the New Century in Antananarivo and the Moderna Guest House in Maputo, just as the Congolese and Indians have their own favored addresses. A whole collection of community-specific addresses can be found on the Internet, especially on social networks in the language of each community.

The most interesting part of studying the phenomenon of new places of sociability is that they are also frequented by people from Madagascar or Mozambique, often to the point of being a majority. It is thus possible to speak of genuine cosmopolitan places since these places created by and for foreigners come to be frequented by nationals as well, which can lead to these groups meeting and conversing.

Places opened by foreigners are highly sought after by Malagasies in Antananarivo. The habit developed among the elites in the colonial era. In the 1990s the phenomenon expanded into new places, a sign of international circulations reactivated by the openness resulting from liberalization and the development of air links to Asia. Mozambique developed similarly, according to the same timeframe. Foreign-run places of sociability, especially Chinese ones, have been adopted immediately in recent years, so Malagasies are a significant share of the clientele of Chinese establishments of all kinds built since 2000 – restaurants, billiard halls, massage parlors, and bars. The downtown Chinese hotel New Century has a vast hall with several billiards tables that are mostly used by Malagasy students, who use it as a spacious, centrally located, and accessible place to meet up and relax while enjoying a leisure activity that is central to student sociability. Residents of Antananarivo also enjoy the newly opened Chinese restaurants, which are popular for festive family events like weddings, birthdays and baptisms. Revealingly, in newly-opened foreign restaurants, the menus are written in the country's dominant European language (French or Portuguese) in addition to Mandarin (for example) and contain photographs of the dishes in order to reach the widest number of people possible. The same is true in Maputo, where Chinese-owned groceries and working-class neighborhood bars are thronged with Mozambicans coming to have a drink, play and bet on a board or card game, or watch a subscription satellite channel broadcast in the establishment. A little grocery owned by a Chinese couple in Catembe, a leisure neighborhood, has a few slot machines used by neighborhood residents, making it another place of sociability for all.

The mixing of nationals and foreigners can also be observed in generic places, leading to a change in how they are used as clients develop local practices that modify and reconfigure their standardized international dimension. One example found widely in southern African cities is the American fast-food chain KFC: as in other cities, the KFC in Maputo is very popular with native-born Maputo residents as well as with foreigners, all seeking a globally standardized setting and flavor.<sup>5</sup> This is also true for the uses of spaces of sociability in grand hotels, which are frequented by the business bourgeoisie as well as the upper middle classes who hold

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<sup>5</sup> KFC opened its very first restaurant in Antananarivo in November 2019. A study of the clientele has yet to be made.

family celebrations there in a practice of conspicuous consumption. Those frequenting these places of generic sociability thus do so for different reasons, according to their social and geographical background, transforming these places through their practices and prompting encounters between very different people in a shared and peaceful setting. People interviewed in such places (in 2011, 2015, 2017) mention the pleasure of being there in the company of foreigners. These generic places are often characterized as deterritorialized, but they are actually appropriated and reconfigured locally by a very wide range of people who contribute to making them unique through their practices in the space. Starting with the real experience of the place, the people frequenting it, and what they hope to find and do there enriches analysis of places of sociability of any kind (Tuan 1977).

If many of the previously mentioned places are centrally located and frequented by a rather well-off, or even wealthy, clientele, they should not be reduced to this socially elite dimension alone (Hiebert 2002; Werbner 1999). The well-off clientele is a good illustration of the development of a local bourgeoisie, newly emerged since the 2000s, that takes advantage of the opening of international exchange and consumes heavily in the city where it resides, just like many affluent foreigners whose presence in the city is expressed in a lifestyle of ostentatious consumption.<sup>6</sup> It is readily observable in Maputo and Antananarivo, capitals of countries whose low human development indicators demonstrate an otherwise extremely poor population and considerable social and spatial inequalities, especially between the capital and the rest of the country, but also between city residents themselves.

Beyond that, it should be mentioned that there are other places with more working-class kinds of sociability that are frequented by people of modest means: cheap Chinese restaurants and casinos, bars, neighborhood groceries owned by Chinese or foreign African immigrants (the latter only in Maputo: Fournet-Guérin 2019), churches run by foreign evangelical Christian groups (mainly from Congo, South Africa or Brazil), and supermarkets, which are a walking destination for city residents who cannot afford to treat themselves but who are drawn to the place, its scale, its lights, or the abundance of goods on display. In both cities, Chinese-owned supermarkets mainly selling products imported from China are also frequented by nationals, who are drawn by the novelty and exoticism of the goods as well as the décor, musical ambiance, spaciousness, and low prices. In both Maputo and Antananarivo, there is an observable development of such places of local consumption that also serve as places of sociability predominantly frequented by nationals; foreigners open these varied and modest shops in peripheral and often working-class neighborhoods, and the shops become fully integrated in everyday neighborhood life.

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<sup>6</sup>This is a well-known phenomenon that was aptly recounted in Adichie's novel *Americanah* (2013), set in Lagos.

## 7.4 Cosmopolitan Imaginations: Why Are These Places Successful with Nationals?

In academic literature, generic places are sometimes described as being standardized (see, for example, Cauna 2002 on the Caudan Waterfront in Mauritius) and thus supposedly soulless, devoid of local ties, and with no affective dimension for people frequenting it. Behind these value judgments may hide an intellectual social position essentially decrying places touched by international and commercial capitalism. But to do so is to ignore what the people using them actually think and how they actually experience the place, through their practices and representations.

### 7.4.1 *Participating in a Desired International Modernity*

Cosmopolitan places combine exogenous models and local practices and representations: developed by foreigners, in many cases for their own use, they are rapidly appropriated by nationals and come to be used by both population types. In that, they incarnate new forms of sociability. It furthermore means, contrary to what is regularly asserted, that city residents frequent and appreciate new generic places of sociability not by default but for what they are – as places incarnating a standardized international modernity. Frequenting these new places allows them to take part in life as it is lived around the world, even though they live at the world's periphery and may be bitter about that, if only for the many restrictions on their ability to travel abroad due to their low incomes relative to international standards and the difficulty for citizens of Mozambique or Madagascar to obtain visas to many countries.<sup>7</sup> The desire for modernity, standardized consumption, and not feeling like you are on the fringe of the world are all powerful motivations that cannot be denied to residents of African cities. Perhaps deploring such practices in the name of the supposed cultural poverty and standardization of these places is a way for Euro-American observers to stick an obsolete image onto societies of the Global South, out of a desire to restrict them to supposedly “authentic” and “traditional” practices? My position is that residents of African cities have the same rights as other urbanites worldwide to frequent generic places, seek the mundane there and try to imitate others, all practices putting them in line with a universal urban experience (for this phenomenon in other settings, see Roy and Ong 2011; Söderström 2013; Myers 2011).

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<sup>7</sup>As Thomas Fouquet notes, cosmopolitan practices in Africa are first and foremost those of people who cannot travel, “non-mobile individuals” (2018, 6).

### 7.4.2 *The Quest for a New and Not Exclusively Euro-American Exoticism*

While some places of sociability are sought after because they offer access to globalized practices in a standardized setting, others are in demand for their exotic character, associated with a fantasized imaginary of someplace else.<sup>8</sup> This can be found in décor, cuisine, a kind of activity, or an image of modernity. This is the case for the newly opened Chinese restaurants of Antananarivo, Maputo, and elsewhere in Africa: you eat a locally unknown cuisine in a colorful and busy décor (for example, a profusion of photographs and/or paintings of stereotypical Chinese landscapes on the walls), greatly appreciated by Africans, and in a bright, modern setting that contrasts with many local restaurants, which often have a dim and dreary ambiance. The attraction is clearly exoticism through novelty, escapism, and the consumption of elsewhere. In this sense, the residents of these cities can be said to develop cosmopolitan imaginaries of new places of sociability, meaning that they are sought out for their foreignness. At La City, Antananarivo's most upscale shopping center opened in the early 2010s, the food court has several restaurants offering foreign cuisines. One of them has a menu presenting certain cuisines as exotic in how they are named, such as "yassa" for Senegalese dishes and "caris" or "dishes with coconut" for Creole and Indian dishes. Until recently, in fact, the only foreign cuisines in the capital of Madagascar were French and Chinese, or rather, Cantonese in the version that spread around the world since the late nineteenth century. At Khana Razana, an upscale Indian-Chinese restaurant in downtown Maputo, the owner – an Indian man from Bombay – speaks English with his customers rather than Portuguese (the local *lingua franca*). The restaurant is very popular with city elites, Mozambicans of Indian descent,<sup>9</sup> Chinese, and Europeans. Today it is possible to dine on the cuisines of northern Indian Muslims, northern China, Arab countries, Thailand, Vietnam, and beyond.

This goes to show that African city-dwellers do seek exoticism, according to the same criteria identified in Euro-American consumers. Frequenting places that artificially recreate someplace else in a commercial logic is just as desirable for Africans as it is for Europeans and all city people of the world.

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<sup>8</sup>In French, "exoticism" was first defined from an ethnocentric point of view, as illustrated by the definition in the Petit Robert dictionary (1984): "that which does not belong to our Occidental civilizations, that which comes from far-off countries." But the "Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé" (Digital Treasury of the French Language; <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/exotisme>) takes a neutral approach: "that which relates or belongs to a foreign country, generally far-off or little known" – meaning that exoticism is conceivable anywhere in the world. It is this second definition that I use here.

<sup>9</sup>By Malagasies/Mozambicans "of Indian descent" or "with Indian roots" I mean the descendants of late-nineteenth century emigrants from the British Indian empire who settled in Africa and on islands in the western Indian Ocean. Their descendants have formed well-identified communities that are often disliked by nationals of African origin. They are quite visibly present in the city and they play a significant role in the national economy.

The frequentation of African urbanites of such pastiche settings signals both a new and expanded imaginary and the local appropriation and adoption of models in global circulation. La Casbah, a “shisha lounge bar restaurant” in Antananarivo, provides an excellent example of this phenomenon. Opened in a neighborhood on the edge of downtown in the 2010s by a Madagascar-born man with Indian roots, its name and décor draw upon an aesthetic that is simultaneously part Arab cultural world, part global standardization: “shisha,” “la casbah,” and the Arab-Moorish décor are explicit references to an imagined Arab universe that even makes a nod to French colonialism, while the term “lounge” refers to a kind of comfortable setting more associated with English-speaking countries, but in a very internationalized and deterritorialized form. Nothing in the décor or name connects it to Antananarivo or Africa; it could be located anywhere in the world. The space can be understood as an incarnation of a “feature of modernity” based on renewed Orientalism (Dittgen 2017). Clients appreciate the exotic character of the place, its eclectic décor combining several foreign influences, and the presence of socially and ethnically diverse people, even if their gaze is filtered through folklore. The composite décor and cuisine served there are exactly what they are looking for. J.-L. Amselle (2009) has critically examined the idealization of such hybridized places whose clienteles have no interest in the actual “elsewhere” they evoke, concluding that the fashion for cultural mixing in Euro-American cities is empty artifice. Regardless, this trend is becoming apparent in every city of the world, including cities that are considered dominated in international representations (Ye 2019) that no one wants to protect from marketed exoticism. In Antananarivo as in Paris and Shanghai, some residents love nothing more than going to places of sociability that they see as cosmopolitan for a dose of the Other and cultural mixing. This could certainly be seen and denounced as a cultural variation of the domination of capitalism, but it can also be seen as providing groups that are symbolically dominated on the global scale access to a kind of freedom of consumption and expression of desire for other places (Appadurai 1996).

## 7.5 Conclusion

In recent decades, the residents of the two African cities studied here have developed new imaginaries and a new sense of exoticism looking to the entire world, no longer just Euro-American references. Their consumption practices, frequentation of generic places, and activities have led them to develop a kind of sociability motivated by yearning for a change of scene. Invested with cosmopolitan representations, these places express the diffusion of globalization and the circulation of standardized international ideas and practices, which some consider artificial. Far from being limited to an elite, this movement expressing openness toward others concerns a wide swathe of society, but not the entire population. Cosmopolitanism is thus far from marginal in Africa, as the wide-ranging spaces described in this chapter all embody the globalization of imaginaries and references and serve as eloquent illustrations of contemporary transformations in cosmopolitan practices and spaces.

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# Chapter 8

## What's in a Street? Exploring Suspended Cosmopolitanism in Trikoupi, Nicosia



Karen Akoka, Olivier Clochard, Iris Polyzou, and Camille Schmoll

### 8.1 A Street-Level Approach to Urban Cosmopolitanism

The island of Cyprus is an appealing and yet under-researched case of a highly diverse setting. Located at the intersection of three continents, Cyprus has historically been a multicultural, multilinguistic and multi-confessional space, with an ethnically diverse population originating from the Mediterranean region composed of Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians (many arriving in the aftermath of the 1917 Genocide), Egyptians, Syrians, Palestinians (many arriving after the creation of the State of Israel), Turks, Greeks from Turkey (who left after the population exchange following the First World War), as well as Greeks from Egypt (who left after 1956, with the Suez Crisis and Nasser's regime).

Cyprus remains one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the EU (Eurostat 2019). According to the latest census (2011), foreigners comprise 21% of the overall population, 62% of whom originate from an EU country. Services, agriculture and domestic work are the primary economic sectors for the migrant population. The principal countries of origin are Romania, Bulgaria, the Philippines, Vietnam,

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Sri Lanka and Russia. International migration to Cyprus is strongly feminized, with 122 female migrants for every 100 male migrants. This chapter explores the issue of cosmopolitanism in Cyprus, drawing on fieldwork undertaken in the capital city, Nicosia, where one-third of the non-Cypriot population currently lives (Cystat 2015).

Recent research has witnessed an increasing interest in street-level approaches in migration and urban studies (Hall 2013). Important works such as Glick-Schiller and Caglar's "Locating Migration" (2011) have shown that the investigation of local situations enables for a better understanding of the complexities and entanglements of the multiple scales at work in shaping the situation of international migrants. In short, a local glance does not mean falling into the trap of "localism." Following such trends in urban studies and migration research, this chapter looks at the street as a compelling lens to understand less-documented forms of cohabitation, contested citizenship, and power relations.

We conducted a collective *in situ* observation in Trikoupi Street, a main thoroughfare in the southern part of the old city. Trikoupi Street makes an interesting case study because it has undergone contradictory processes of urban change and heavy migration inflows in a context of restrictive asylum and migration policies. These factors make it a good case study for investigating cohabitations and tensions in a context of social and political change.

We asked people about their trajectories, looked at the way they inhabited the street and listened to how they described their environs. We paid attention to shared and contested stories in order to grasp common as well as contrasting neighborhood practices and to situate the multivocality of the street's history.<sup>1</sup> Very importantly, we collected information both from "locals" – that is, Cypriot nationals – as well as from international migrants.

## 8.2 Locating Vulnerability: International Migration in Nicosia's City Center

Looking at Trikoupi Street through the prism of its inhabitants' eyes and practices allows for an exploration of a number of complex spatial and temporal connections. Urban change in Trikoupi Street has been embedded within multi-layered spaces and temporalities, including the daily rhythm of street-level interactions, the historically generated features of urban history, and the accelerations/decelerations of urban redevelopment programs. As an urban palimpsest, the street retains traces of significant conflictual episodes (Amin and Thrift 2002). In Trikoupi Street's recent history, generations of internal and international migrants and refugees and

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<sup>1</sup>We triangulate sometimes divergent oral accounts with accounts given by the local media and interviews with various key informants such as public servants, NGO members involved in migration issues and institutional actors (municipality, asylum services, UNHCR, Ombudsman). This not only allows us to check on the information provided but also addresses the interpretative conflicts which are part of city making.

generations of traders, artisans and small-scale industrial activities have followed one after another. Many diverse kinds of people on the move – asylum seekers, refugees, students, permanent and temporary foreign workers – live, work, and consume in Trikoupi Street. A simple look at the storefronts gives an idea of the ethnically diverse atmosphere of the neighborhood: halal butcheries and groceries as well as Middle Eastern restaurants and barber shops cohabit with Filipino and Eastern European second-hand shops; Asian food shops are next money transfer services; Internet boutiques and shipping services cross stores selling African hair locks and beauty products.

Most of the migrants we met in Trikoupi – with the exception of EU citizens, who are allowed to stay and work – were clearly in a precarious legal and financial situation. Their vulnerability is closely connected to migration policy: although Cyprus has progressively adopted a number of EU directives since 2004 and even composed its first Action Plan for the integration of markets in 2011, the overall policy approach remains restrictive in terms of access to social protection and participation.

Three main issues are important to consider when it comes to non-EU migrants in Cyprus. First, the island has witnessed an increasing influx of refugees from the Middle East and Africa. Asylum seekers remain in a state of vulnerability because they receive only limited social and economic support and overall rejection rates remain high (AIDA-ECRE 2018; UNHCR Cyprus 2018; Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) 2019). Second, Cyprus, and especially Nicosia, hosts a large number of international students which tend to abandon their studies in order to seek employment (24h.com 2017). Third, most international migrants to Cyprus are defined as “migrant workers.” The Cypriot legal framework for migration promotes the model of a temporary presence, proposing short-term work visas linked to a specific employer and limited to a number of predetermined economic sectors – the domestic work visa, for instance, is strictly limited to a six-year stay (Trimikliniotis 2016). As scholars point out, Cyprus’s labor migration regime, linked as it is to the country’s economic growth during the last few decades which created a huge demand for low-paid workers, is an authoritarian one. After three decades of heavy migratory movements flows, third-country nationals are still seen as a flexible and low-paid workforce. Since many of these migrant workers overstay their visas, they find themselves in an irregular situation and, as such, particularly vulnerable.

For these vulnerable groups, the Trikoupi area was an attractive location due to its affordable accommodation. The recent history of Nicosia city center helps explain this state of affairs. The city has not yet undergone processes of gentrification similar to those that have occurred in many European cities (Carmenos and Sabrié 2017). This is firstly due to the conflict opposing the northern and southern parts of the island: following the occupation of the northern part of the island by Turkey in 1974 the city was divided and experienced a slow and steady process of desertification. The conflict, whose scars remain visible in Nicosia’s urban landscape, led to many vacancies in the residential and commercial building stock in the southern part of the city. As an immediate result of the conflict, the Turkish-Cypriot

population abandoned their properties, which amounted to around 30% of the city's buildings – most of these abandoned properties remain vacant today.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, desertification was reinforced during the 1980s and 1990s by the progressive suburbanization of the Greek-Cypriot population. Most Greek-Cypriot households prefer to settle in the periphery of the city, which has actually become its economic and commercial center. However, the desertification of the downtown has been progressively altered through urban policies. This process started in the early 1980s within the framework of the bi-communal project “Nicosia Master Plan” (NMP). The NMP aimed to revitalize the area and attract new residents in under-populated sections on both sides of the city center. This redevelopment plan grew even stronger by the addition of new actors after Cyprus's integration in the EU and a warming of relations between the two sides of the divided island. The range of actors currently involved in the rehabilitation project is therefore very wide: local and national actors (municipalities), regional actors (the EU) and transnational/supranational actors (UNESCO and the UN). Trikoupi Street has thus in recent years undergone a process of urban change, attracting a new population of foreign investors and Cypriots who see it as a centrally-located, historically charming area with significant economic potential. Only a few parts of Nicosia, however, can be described as “gentrified,” since very few Greek-Cypriots settle in the old city center – the overwhelming majority prefer to live in the modern residential outskirts of the city. Other limited forms of gentrification appear connected to practices of consumption. The middle and upper-class Greek-Cypriot population started to meet in bars and cafés. They shopped in trendy stores and international clothing chains with recently opened stores in Nicosia center (in Ledras Street, in particular). Moreover, tourists, who tended to disregard the city as a possible attraction, have recently started taking day trips to downtown Nicosia.

The old city center remains, though, partially abandoned and the redevelopment process has been left unfinished.<sup>3</sup> Downtown Nicosia somehow stands in a sort of limbo between an apparent but very low and limited gentrification process and an urban sprawl process that eventually decelerated. For these diverse reasons, the area has since the 1990s been an affordable place for foreign residents. The large number of vacant apartments, the low rental prices, the centrality of the area and its proximity to the main bus station all proved to be important factors that led to the settlement of migrants in the available housing stock of a number of areas close to Trikoupi, Rigenis and Arsinois Streets. As mentioned above, the vulnerable and

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<sup>2</sup>The Turkish Cypriot Properties Department of the Ministry of Interior is responsible for managing those properties. Mainly, they can be lent to Greek Cypriots for housing or commercial activities. The rent and conditions for utilizing such properties are based on a contract between the occupant and the Department. The management of these properties has been controversial since, in many cases, the rental price is quite low and a number of Greek Cypriot entrepreneurs who occupy them make considerable profits. The mismanagement of Turkish Cypriot properties is a topic fully covered in the daily Greek Cypriot press. See <https://politis.com.cy/article/to-megalo-parti-ton-periousion>

<sup>3</sup>The development of the centrally located Eleftherias square and the new municipal building are the two main projects under construction.

transitory social status of international migrants led to the search of affordable housing solutions. As a result, multiple forms of cohabitation, of shared apartments and precarious ways of living, emerged.

### 8.3 Inhabiting Trikoupi

Dina Vaiou (2007) define urban interstices as temporary situations in which pieces of the city become accessible to the most vulnerable and disempowered, most often for a relatively short period of time, before strong processes of urban change appear. The notion of “spatial interstice,” in particular, refers to abandoned, neglected, or marginal spaces underutilized by the locals: gardens, roundabouts, sidewalks, spaces at the margins of urban regeneration operations, wastelands undergoing regeneration, or planning operations that have failed. For vulnerable migrants and refugees, Trikoupi Street clearly is this kind of place: a place where they can find cheap rentals and even work opportunities.

But what kind of people inhabit Trikoupi today? How do they inhabit it? We use the term “inhabit” in a very broad sense, not limited to residents, in order to point to how the street has become a crossroad of different usages and practices. Such usages, as we shall see, are profoundly interconnected. Trikoupi is a place to settle, to shop, to work, to search for work. It is a place to settle since many immigrants, students and asylum seekers have their residence in the neighborhood. It is a place to shop, as goods from all over the world are sold. It is a crossroad, as migrants scattered across Cyprus congregate here on Sundays in order to meet friends, have drinks, get a haircut, buy food, or do deals. It is a meeting place for finding work: at the roundabout at the end of the street, male migrants assemble in the morning, waiting for employers to take them to work in the fields or in urban services. It is a workplace for shop owners and employees, as well as for the Turkophone Bulgarian sex workers who occupy the street's sidewalks. It is an ambiguous “emotional labour” place, a blurred zone between sex work and flirting, as migrant domestic workers rent flats to host boyfriends and clients during their free days. Finally, it is a religious place, since Trikoupi street is located near the Omerye mosque where Muslim residents and visitors come and pray.

Mass-media representations of the street's diversity tend to be negative. Some newspaper articles see Trikoupi as a “dangerous” area associated with criminality, ghettoization and prostitution – but other press articles see a symbol of Cyprus's positive multicultural identity. The articles adopting a negative view of Trikoupi's diversity tend to depict migrants as directly or indirectly responsible for the urban and social decay of the area, which is called a “ghetto of migrants”: “during the night you won't see any Greek-Cypriot, only migrants on the streets of the abandoned buildings” (“Three Problems” 2013). A documentary produced by a local TV channel, entitled “The Broken Shopfront of the Capital” (2015), underlined the point that the concentration of stores run by or for migrants went hand in hand with “dirt,” alcohol and the desertification of the area. At the same time, a very different

approach towards migrants in the city center is promulgated by alternative or more socially-oriented media. The life stories of migrants who have established themselves in the city in the prior decade are a mirror into the everyday life of “other” inhabitants for the Greek-Cypriot residents of Nicosia:

In one or two neighborhoods they are gathered in an unplanned way, creating their own Babel, making or inheriting their own Nicosia. Even if they had to overcome several misfortunes, they created their own lives and they continued to shop, walk, get a haircut, have fun and live. Everyday stories of how the migrants of our capital live. Welcome to old Nicosia.

A similar approach appears in a documentary produced from the Home of Cooperation – its central slogan is “Cyprus always was and continues to be multicultural.”<sup>4</sup>

International migrants we met in Trikoupi describe the street and area as a resourceful place, a place to recover, in contrast to other segregated and punishing places in the country. For instance, many asylum seekers live in camps and isolated homes like Kofinou, an asylum seeker and refugee residence center with strict rules and conditions. Kofinou is isolated in the middle of the fields, rooms are in containers and shared by a large number of people, there is a curfew and a series of restrictions for residents (no cooking, no unauthorized visits, etc.). In this context, Trikoupi Street appears safer, a place of relief, a resourceful place where Kofinou residents can meet with friends, have drinks, chat or enjoy the street. The barber shop run by Cédric near Trikoupi is one of those meeting places: African asylum seekers originating from Congo, Cameroon or Ivory Coast meet there, not only to get a haircut but also to talk. The asylum speakers speak about the situation in Cyprus and their countries of origin but also more generally about politics, family life, and their current travails. The owner of the shop, who is married to a Cypriot national, states that he feels bad about his privileged situation, but admits to being worried about his co-nationals stuck in Kofinou with pending asylum claims that he is powerless to impact.

The same antithesis between Trikoupi and other places inhabited by migrants holds true for the case of women domestic workers. Mainly originating from Southeast Asia and especially the Philippines, Sri Lanka and India, they work and live in their employers’ homes. The living and working conditions of domestic workers in Cyprus are quite poor; the wages are low, the workers have limited access to housing, and they are exposed to violence from their employers. For many of these women, the domestic space is a space of subjugation, without intimacy but with great vulnerability. Trikoupi appears as the antithesis of such a segregated and disempowering place. In this specific area, domestic workers find a temporary housing space on weekends and holidays – so-called “Sunday flats.” These flats respond to the need for an affordable private space within the city on weekends when the

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<sup>4</sup>“Another world in the heart of Nicosia” (24 October 2010, in Greek), <http://www.sigmalive.com/archive/simerini/news/social/318212>; “A video that celebrates the multiculturalism of Cyprus” (in Greek), at <http://parathyro.com/2017/05/το-βίντεο-που-γιορτάζει-την-πολυπολιτ/>

domestic workers do not have to work or stay with their employer. In a number of apartment building entrances, the advertisement “room for Sunday girls” is common. This flexible model of living in the city underlines the precarious and transitory social presence of this population and the active role in shaping that precarity by the country’s restrictive migration policies. In their flats Filipino women socialize with fellow nationals, exercise their religious habits and even engage in small businesses like second-hand clothes (which are sent to the Philippines in containers). For these women meeting other women, these Sunday flats on Tripouki Street are places for relaxation and sociability in a safe context.

#### **8.4 Working-Class Partnerships, Work Relations, Moral Orders: Between Tensions and Cooperation**

The most striking thing about the stores on Trikoupi Street is the diversity of origins of the migrants and traders. Most of the businesses are based on arrangements and unions – be they circumstantial or long-standing – that encompass different ethnicities and nationalities.

There are two common forms of partnerships. The first corresponds to what Pnina Werbner calls “working class cosmopolitanism”: some alliances are set on the basis of the common belonging to the working class. Nikolas, for instance, is a Cypriot citizen. While working in a fish factory in the 1990s, he befriended Rakib, a refugee from Bangladesh. In 2002 they decided to open a DVD shop. They later opened a supermarket/halal butcher. At the time there were very few butcher shops, so the business was very profitable, but over time there was more competition. Nikolas finally split with his Bangladeshi business partner. Today he owns a money transfer business in the same street. He has hired a Pakistani employee to facilitate business with Asian customers. He says he has many female clients from the Philippines: “life is difficult for them,” he says with empathy. On Trikoupi Street there are many stories like this, made up of a mix of friendship and curiosity towards the other in a context of limited resources. These stories speak to the capacity to engage with the other - which is commonplace in trade interactions - but also the fragility of partnerships.

Another type of cross-national alliance in Trikoupi is marriage between a citizen of Cyprus and a non-citizen or between a non-EU citizen and an EU citizen. The extent of intermarriage was seen by observing that most of the shops on the street are owned or managed by binational couples. How can this high rate of intermarriage be explained? For sure, the institutional context and the legal constraints imposed on foreigners wishing to establish a business have a strong responsibility: the impossibility of setting up a business if not Cypriot as well as the risk of deportation for many migrants contribute to an environment encouraging circumstantial marriages and alliances. However there seems to be also, in some of these marriages, something about a taste, an attraction towards a different other. These unions



refer to very concrete, sensual and embodied forms of cosmopolitanism. Fared, for instance, is a Syrian citizen born in Cyprus in 1985. Though he did not need to marry an EU citizen for administrative purposes, he says he “likes Eastern women.” He has divorced his Polish wife but now has three different Ukrainian girlfriends.

It can be said that the type of cosmopolitanism described here is compelled and shaped by the unevenness of the situation. In other words, although Trikoupí is a resourceful place where people may like or empathize with one another, it is not yet a place where inequalities and subalternity are cancelled or suspended. Neighborhood life has an underlying rhythm of tensions and conflicts connected to different kinds of hierarchies intersecting in the neighborhood: legal/illegal, ethnic/non-ethnic, insider/outsider, business owner/keeper, etc. There is an important social distance between more established residents and newcomers, between the old waves of immigration that came to the neighborhood decades ago and the newly arrived refugees and migrants. This is particularly striking when it comes to the Arab community of Nicosia. On Trikoupí Street, eight shops are owned by an established and wealthy Syrian family of Turko-Cypriot origins. According to various talks with members of this family, they are descended from a Turko-Cypriot woman from a rural area who married a Syrian merchant who traveled to then-British-ruled Cyprus for business. In the mid-1960s the couple, spurred by the conflict in the island, moved to Kuwait. Their children and grandchildren settled in different cities in the Middle East but also Europe. Due to the Gulf War and the unstable situation in the Middle East, some of those who had settled in the region moved “back” to Nicosia where they acquired, thanks to their mixed origins, Cypriot citizenship and thus the right to own shops in Trikoupí. The family continues to build on these transnational ties and networks for the development of its shops and businesses. As an established family in business they hire newcomers such as Palestinians fleeing the Israeli occupation or Syrians fleeing the ongoing conflict to help and work in their shops. They also serve as a support for newly arrived refugees. In this way, the generation of arrival in Cyprus is very important for understanding the neighborhood’s hierarchies.

Other tensions that have emerged between groups are connected to the various usages of the street in terms of different “moral orders.” The neighborhood is a place for divergent and competing morals. For instance, drug sellers or sex workers are accused by local business owners of contributing to the area’s bad reputation. The owners of halal shops make distinctions between halal practices versus the haram. Others point to the difference between nightlife and daytime in Trikoupí. Politics is another source of tension. We have been told that some shopkeepers side with the racist-nationalist Cypriot ELAM supporters while others are much more tolerant and empathetic toward foreigners. The issue of migration, however, is strongly felt in the public debate and is also connected to debates on gentrification. Even when they are sympathetic towards migrants, though, shop tenants are ambivalent when it comes to personal relationships with immigrants. The changes in the neighborhood have had an objective impact on their situation and brought them to marginalized positions. They stand as a minority group in a street where the majority of the customers no longer want the goods they sell (such as souvlaki, a Greek-Cypriot food). This partly explains the nostalgic tone of some of them when talking about the area

in the past. But these shopkeepers are not necessarily angry at immigrants. As one shopkeeper puts it:

Trikoupi was full of shops; now it is full of foreigners. We were selling at least 300 souvlaki a day. There were shoemakers, industries, businesses. All Trikoupi was full of 'our' shops. Christofias (former president of Cyprus) was having lunch here everyday. Same for Hasikos (another political personality) or Eleni Mavrou (former mayor). Now it is just a foreigners' area.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The street is a crossroads for many kinds of different populations, the vast majority of which belong to working class and subaltern groups. Unlike upper-class groups, they did not choose and valorize their type of life. Some even complain about it, viewing the presence of other national groups as damaging the neighborhood. Thus, the kind of cosmopolitanism we describe here is of an everyday, banalised, vernacular and circumstantial kind. It is also a suspended cosmopolitanism, embedded in the city's spatial and temporal interstices. Linked to the history of conflict of the old city of Nicosia, the specific status of Trikoupi Street is also connected with the cycle of urban development and may change abruptly if there is an acceleration of the process of urban regeneration. This temporary and banal cosmopolitanism is also embedded within uneven/hierarchized citizenship regimes. As such, it is, a form of subaltern and fragile cosmopolitanism. The case of Trikoupi Street shows how looking at street-level cosmopolitanism helps to better situate broader processes of domination, politics of propinquity (Amin 2002) and the way micro-geographies of power are enacted at the local scale (Massey 1999). It also reveals how cosmopolitanism from below, like upper-class cosmopolitanism, is connected to domination and inequality and embedded in a specific moment. The question that remains is about generalization. Is cosmopolitanism from below inherently stratified and connected to power relations? In the context of global urbanization and capitalism is it meant to stay temporary; is cosmopolitanism from below just a specific moment?

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# Chapter 9

## Branding Cosmopolitanism and Place Making in Saint Laurent Boulevard, Montreal



Marie-Laure Poulot

### 9.1 Introduction

As a social and subjective construction, cosmopolitanism can take many forms since there is no consensus around its definition: for some authors, “it is a sort of ‘empty signifier’ to be filled with specific and often rather different contents in differently situated cultural worlds” (Vanolo 2017, 8; see also Binnie et al. 2006; Söderström 2006). Even if expressions other than cosmopolitanism are used in Montreal such as multiculturalism, interculturalism (for Quebec, in contradistinction to the rest of Canada<sup>1</sup>) or cultural diversity, I have chosen to use the concept of cosmopolitanism exactly for its multiple significations. Following David Hollinger (1995), I prefer cosmopolitanism rather than multiculturalism, which tends to divide society into homogenous and closed cultural communities, where each individual should identify with one single group. Cosmopolitanism values individuality and a non-exclusive affiliation to a plurality of groups that are constantly evolving (Hollinger 1995). In Montreal, the empirical realities observed on the ground reflect the four main dimensions of cosmopolitanism. There is a diverse population linked to the rise of international migration in a globalized world. There is a political cosmopolitanism which questions “Montrealness” between openness to alterity and Quebec nationalism (Létourneau 2003) as well as a commodified cosmopolitanism or “consumerist cosmopolitanism” (Calhoun 2002) which is used as a tool to branding the city (Hemelryk et al. 2009; Kavaratzis and Ashworth 2005). Finally, there is everyday cosmopolitanism. A growing literature has framed

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<sup>1</sup>Quebec province proclaims its specificity with its intercultural policy to distance itself from the wider Canadian policy of multiculturalism established to hush up claims for Quebec sovereignty and to merge French-Canadian identity into a Canadian one (Kymlicka 1998).

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cosmopolitanism as an everyday experience or an “ordinary cosmopolitanism” that “emerges from interactions in encounters between individuals” (Plage et al. 2017: 4) and “urban alchemy” (Müller 2011). I use this concept to analyze the space of Saint Lawrence Boulevard in Montréal, also called the Main in reference to Main Street.

Saint-Lawrence Boulevard is a landmarker for Montreal, cutting the isle from the south to the north in two halves, and the place where address numbers start. It manifests the gap between “two solitudes” (MacLennan 1945) – the French-speaking eastern part of the city and the English-speaking areas in the western part. It is also a bond, a passage and a melting place, where immigrants settled throughout the twentieth century. The street serves as a real backbone through several neighborhoods it runs through: Little Italy in the north, Portuguese and Jewish communities in the central sector and Chinatown in the south (see Fig. 9.1). The names of these streets and neighborhoods once symbolized poverty, marginalized communities or ghettos. And in many narratives of Montreal’s social geography, “this ‘immigrant’ or ‘ethnic corridor’ was seen as a world apart, a buffer zone between the French and the English. This space, unlike the supposedly homogeneous English and French blocs, was recognized as a cosmopolitan milieu” (Germain and Rose 2000, 215). These neighborhoods are not enclaves but instead show changing boundaries in their exchanges and overlapping. Thus, there is not a strong partition between communities; instead, it is their co-presence that creates cosmopolitanism.

By the early 20th century the Main had become a cosmopolitan highway, a “third city,” neither French, nor English, along which each ethnic group passed. Some rested there only briefly, others for a longer time. There was a constant ebb and flow, one group replacing another as soon as a vacuum formed. (Gubbay 1989, 57)

But these neighborhoods have been undergoing processes of both social and urban change as well as gentrification. Cosmopolitanism has spread throughout the city and is no longer reduced to the Main: migrants are now present everywhere in the city as well as in the suburbs. But still, in many scholarly or popular narratives, the boulevard is described as cosmopolitan and as a unique place in the city.

This article is based on my doctoral thesis on the geography of cosmopolitanism through narratives, practices and representations. I conducted fieldwork between 2011 and 2013 and used qualitative methodology, based on interviews, observation on the street at different times of the day (and during special events), analyses of official documentation and literature (novels and plays).

I focus on cosmopolitanism as a way to promote the urban space. Why does this image of a cosmopolitan place still define Saint-Lawrence/St-Laurent Boulevard? How is cosmopolitan branding produced and by whom? What impact does it have on representations of pedestrians and inhabitants? After showing that cosmopolitanism is used as a brand for the city of Montreal as a whole, I focus on Saint Lawrence Boulevard, which has been designated as a national heritage site for its very cosmopolitanism. Then I study different approaches of branding cosmopolitanism put into practice by commercial stakeholders in two different sections of the boulevard. Finally, I question the reactions of the inhabitants toward these branding strategies.

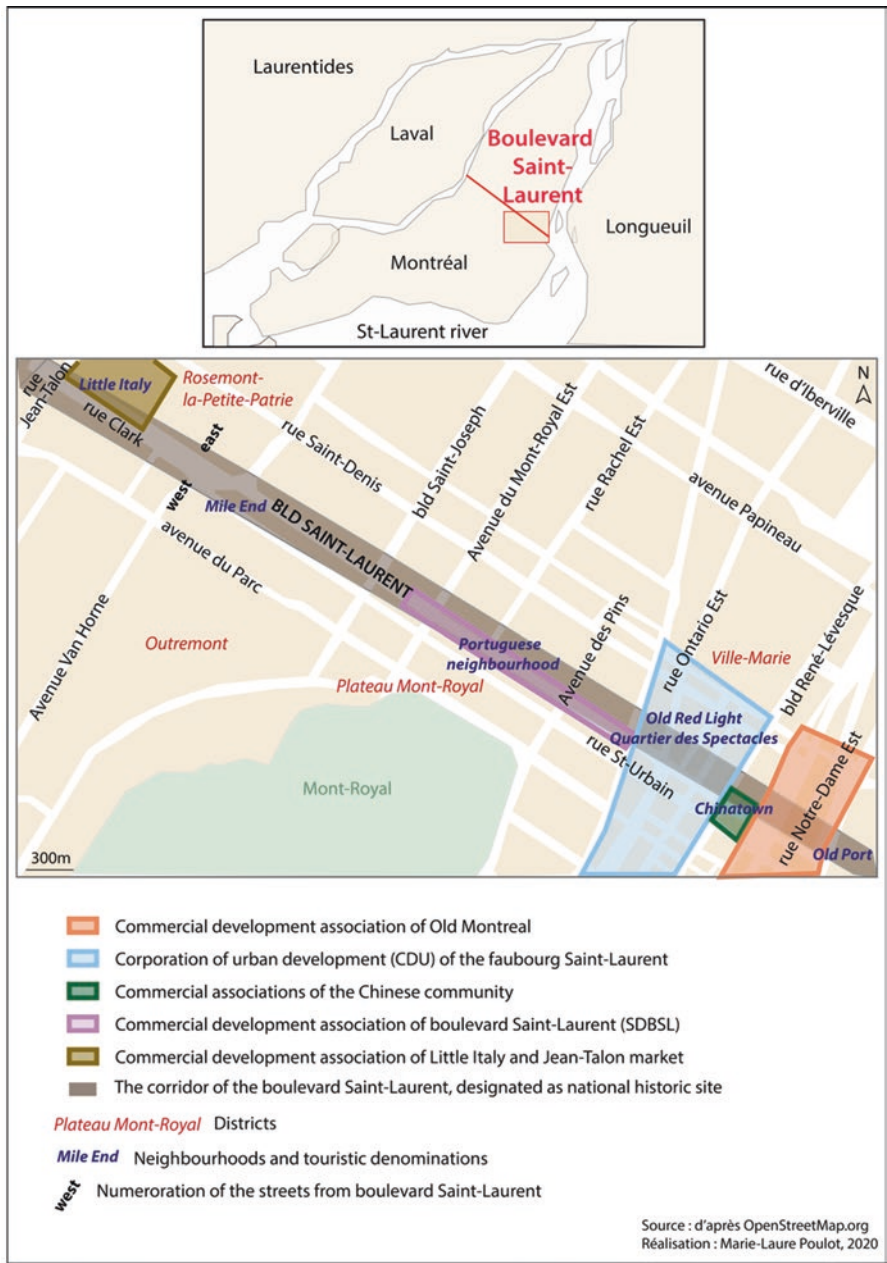


Fig. 9.1 Saint Laurent Boulevard in Montreal

## 9.2 City Branding in Montreal: Cosmopolitanism of the Saint-Laurent Boulevard

If cosmopolitanism is often mobilized in city branding, it is especially so in Montreal, where institutional documents, tourist guides and the media all emphasize “the cosmopolitan city’s vaunted bilingualism” (Bilefsky 2017) and claim that “Montreal’s cosmopolitan charm [that] still seduces travelers” (Zach 2017). “Welcoming and cosmopolitan, Montréal embraces people from all over the world, who make up 20% of the city’s population” (Ville de Montréal 2017). Place branding can be defined as a

concept in policymaking that draws together a number of strategies and practices carried out primarily by local governments. The objective of place branding is to attract mobile resources to a certain place, commonly in the form of social, economic or cultural capital, in response to the apprehension of increasing competition between places. (Andersson 2015, 17)

In order to be attractive for the creative class, a city has to be cosmopolitan (Florida 2002, 227) and this idea is used by politicians and economic stakeholders, notably in branding places, where “marketing and consumption have a significant role in giving economic value to difference” (Vanolo 2017, 9).

In Montreal, the cosmopolitan urban imaginary is used for both economic and political purposes to develop and attract investors, tourists and new dwellers and to present the metropolis differently from the rest of Canada and the United States. Branding cosmopolitanism in Montreal tends to mix both the brand image destined to foreigners and the urban imaginary shaped by and for inhabitants. These discourses come from different stakeholders, such as economic agents, the advertising and tourist sector or even the City<sup>2</sup> (and the districts). The Main and its “ethnic neighborhoods,” which have been officially recognized by the municipality (Chinatown, Little Italy and the central section with Jewish, Portuguese and Spanish communities), are present in tourist guides for Montrealers and international tourists. The City has also baptized some of the places along the boulevard with toponyms linked to the old immigration, such as park of Portugal or Açores Park in the Portuguese sector.

In this cosmopolitan branding and recognition of the city, the boulevard is one of the most important places since it concentrates the old ethnic neighborhoods. I thus focused on the scale of the street to study cosmopolitanism (Hall 2012). The scale of the street brings together several scales: local ones – the street, the neighborhood, the block, public places and squares and shops and businesses – but also provincial and federal ones as the boulevard Saint-Laurent was designated a national heritage

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<sup>2</sup>There are also political directives and documents which assert the cosmopolitan vision of the city. See, for example, Montreal Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Inclusion (2004), at [http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CHARTRE\\_MTL\\_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/Declaration\\_diversite\\_inclusion\\_2004\\_en.pdf](http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CHARTRE_MTL_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/Declaration_diversite_inclusion_2004_en.pdf)



site by The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1996 (Fulton and Vermette 1996).

### 9.3 Narrating an Idealized Cosmopolitanism as Heritage

History and also literary fiction are used by Park Canada<sup>3</sup> to describe boulevard Saint-Laurent as a place that shows several waves of immigration. The commemorative plaques at both ends of the street (in the old port and Little Italy) describe the boulevard's heritage site status in the following terms:

Along this strong sinewy backbone of Montréal, in a kaleidoscope of neighborhoods such as Chinatown, the Jewish and Portuguese quarters, and Little Italy, a vibrant, cosmopolitan heart for the city has been forged.

Literary fiction, both English-language and French-language, has contributed to the conception of the Main as a symbolic cosmopolitan place in the urban imagination of Montreal and as a national heritage. The boulevard holds an important place in the works of renowned authors like Mordecai Richler or Michel Tremblay as well as in more recent novels and plays. These narratives – fictions but also non-fictions – tend to convey the image of a small-scale neighborhood landscape with close social ties and a multiethnic history. Even though many immigrant communities left to settle elsewhere in the city, contemporary narratives plough back into old ones: it is this very period of waves of immigration which is passed on in the collective memory as one of tolerance, brotherhood and belonging. These narratives create a nostalgic image of the whole street and of some surrounding neighborhoods.

One of the neighborhoods of the boulevard, Mile End, is often described as the personification of cosmopolitanism, a “plural and hybrid social reality” (Simon 1999, 23) or “the crystallization of an emerging montrealness” (Olazabal 2006, 8). For example, the official touristic presentation of Mile End says,

Like any neighborhood with flavor, it's the cultural layers that have made Mile End what it is today. Living side by side is an engaging mix of communities: Hassidic Jewish, Greek, Italian, anglophone and others who have given it its special brand of energy and kick. Expect kosher stores and bakeries and little boys with traditional side curls zipping by on scooters. (Tourism Montreal, official site)

This sector of Mile End represents the “cosmopolitan turn” (Germain 2011) of Montreal: there are no longer just ethnic neighborhoods of Italians, East European Jews, Greeks and Portuguese as in the beginning of the twentieth century but rather multiethnic neighborhoods since the diversification of immigration in the 1970s. The neighborhood is now gentrified, but an important Hassidic community still resides in Mile End and old shops still stand. The coexistence of gentrifiers with an ethnically and socio-economically diverse body of older-established residents has

<sup>3</sup>Parks Canada is a federal agency created in 1911 with a mandate to protect representative examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

created a shared discourse and pride in the neighborhood's cosmopolitanism (Germain and Rose 2000). But the narrative's theme of multicultural harmony and close neighborly relations denies the near total disappearance of its minority communities (Greeks and Italians mostly). It also ignores the tensions due to the presence of several religious and immigrant communities (see Bouchard and Taylor 2008) that I've been able to observe in the neighborhood's current social segregation: mostly of class, but also of origin and of religion with the Hassidic community or tensions related to language. There is indeed a selective nostalgic image of the Mile End, described for the "sweetness of belonging." Alberto Vanolo (2017, 15–16) uses the metaphor of ghosts as "echoes of things that once were visible," reflections and reverberations of an absent past" to describe city branding strategies: "some undesired elements are transformed into ghosts, and some ghosts (such as old identities, old buildings, old stories, old stereotypes or memories) are evoked and transformed into visible presences such as images, stories, slogans, tourist sites, etc.". In the narrative of Montreal – and Saint Lawrence Boulevard – some traces of communities and places are turned into visible marks while some past stories are not shown or even erased. Elements of the past are repositioned in the present and used in city branding and place making. Beyond the political branding and heritage, the street also shows a commodified cosmopolitanism for tourist and economic purposes.

## 9.4 Branding Cosmopolitanism: Commercial Stakeholders in Ethnic and Touristic Neighborhoods

"Ethnic" and "multiethnic" neighborhoods along the boulevard clearly highlight the assets of cosmopolitanism through food, shops, associations or symbols such as colors, flags or decorations. Marks of the old immigrant presence are visible along the boulevard: immigrant groups and ethnic entrepreneurs have been building particular landscapes, "ethnoscapes" (Appadurai, 1990), from façades to shop and restaurant interiors. Public and private actors produce these neighborhoods through urban planning, marketing strategies and events (celebrations, festivals and urban tours). But how is cosmopolitanism "produced and sustained through different forms of urban governance, and in particular the production of distinct cosmopolitan quarters and sectors through policy and planning" (Binnie et al. 2006, 14)? And who is behind this construction of landscape?

On top of city officials (through public recognition and toponyms) and Park Canada (through the federal designation) who promote the boulevard as a cosmopolitan place, the other really important actors are commercial development associations (SDC), the equivalent of Business Improvement districts (BID) in the United States or Business Improvement areas (BIA) in the rest of Canada. This model of "self-imposed financing mechanisms implemented by businesses and property owners for local improvements, specifically the enhancement of public

services” (Hoyt 2004, 367) are present in many states. In each case, shopkeepers (and landowners in BIA) decide to organize themselves in associations to develop and promote the street or the neighborhood.

From the south to the north of the boulevard, five different associations exist and organize several actions in order to promote the street and/or the neighborhood depending on their perimeter: Old Montreal, the historic district of the city, Chinatown, Quartier des Spectacles, Saint-Lawrence boulevard (SDBSL) and Little Italy (see Fig. 9.1). These branding initiatives (logos, slogans, advertising campaigns, etc.) promote a different narrative of the concerned space: a mono-ethnic one in Little Italy, a more diverse one in the central section.

### 9.4.1 *Little Italy: Italianity as a Brand for the Boulevard and the Neighborhood*

In the north of the boulevard, the commercial development association of Little Italy has oriented its branding toward a certain vision of Italy with arches, green-white-red flags, Italian connotations (Rome Antics, Café Italia, Corneli, Galleria della Sposa, etc.) for the names of shops, and decorations with the name of the neighborhood (see Fig. 9.2).<sup>4</sup> The SDC has also appointed the Toronto advertising company OPEN to set up a new branding strategy for the neighborhood. A logo and the slogan “vivere Emozione” have been created to let Little Italy stand out from the other neighborhoods (see Fig. 9.2). The letter V is supposed to be the symbol gathering different textures that refers to the urban multilayered neighborhood and identifies the three commercial components of Little Italy: gastronomy, sport and culture. The new official guide describes Little Italy with all the Italian references and clichés:



**Fig. 9.2** Little Italy with colors of the Italian flag, arch on the boulevard and banner with the new slogan “Vivere Emozione.” (ML Poulot, 2013, 2015)

<sup>4</sup>A first informal Association for the promotion of the Little Italy was created in the 1970s, but the SDC has officially existed since 2009, bringing together 240 merchants.

Imagine the soft sound of bocce being played on the sand field, the lovers enjoying an outdoor movie night under a pergola and the children eating a pizza or an ice cream on the grass. This is the Dante Park.

Imagine enjoying the creamy taste of an espresso while participating in a debate on Italian soccer during Little Italy's street festivities. This is Vivere Emozione.

This new identity is the synthesis of a Little Italy that “does not imagine, but lives through the mixture of its multi-generational urban habitat” (Montréal Little Italy 2016).

This new identity is the synthesis of a Little Italy that “does not imagine, but lives through the mixture of its multi-generational urban habitat” (Montréal Little Italy 2016). The director of the OPEN Agency explains that “neighborhoods of large cities now enjoy a similar reputation to the major cities that house them. By force of circumstances, the competition and the importance of outstanding become a necessity” (Infopresse 2014).

Lastly, the branding is now specialized and professionalized. A few years ago, it was the association itself who did the branding, asking only for an advertising agency to help with the design of the logo. The marketing strategy is now externalized, performed by marketing and advertising professionals. The same phenomenon can be seen in several SDC in Montreal.

This is then a strategy that pertains to multiculturalism with one single identity put forward. Just as Little Italy's “corporate multiculturalism” “necessarily limits intercultural communication and understanding, and tries to protect community boundaries and traditional identities” (Bianchini 2004, 4), so too for Chinatown. On the contrary, in the central section of the street, different communities and origins are represented and highlighted.

#### ***9.4.2 The Central Section of the Boulevard: Toward a More Inclusive and Cosmopolitan Image***

In the central section of the boulevard, between Sherbrooke Street and Laurier Street, the SDC of the boulevard (SDBSL) is trying to embrace several waves of immigration (from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, East European Jews).<sup>5</sup> Different marks and initiatives are visible throughout the street.

A group of Portuguese residents and an elected representative of the community have, for example, imagined a special project of marking. They did not put entrance doors, like in Little Italy or Chinatown, but instead benches on both sides of the sidewalks. These “benches of stone and words” are made of *azulejos* (Portuguese mosaic) and urban dwellers can read inscribed quotes from Portuguese novelists

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<sup>5</sup>The association of merchants was created in 1978 as “the international village Boulevard Saint-Laurent.” Its perimeter has expanded and the association was officially transformed into a SDC in 2000. It now counts more than 700 businesses, organisms and companies.



**Fig. 9.3** The “benches of stone and words” and the shop “La Vieille Europe” on Saint-Laurent Boulevard (ML Poulot, 2012, 2013)

and writers (see Fig. 9.3). They are supposed to represent the Portuguese community, a bridge between Anglophone and Francophone and other communities. One of the members of the Portuguese community, who is also involved in the SDBSL, explains that they want to do something different than the Business Improvement Area in Toronto called Little Portugal that has existed since 2007:

It’s been a while since we are working for the official creation of the Portuguese neighborhood. Because nowadays, everybody knows where it is. In Toronto, they created “The little Portugal.” I respect that, that’s what people wanted on Dundas street, with the Portuguese flag. But I find it very ghetto-like. And the Portuguese community of Montreal has never been a ghetto-community, never! (Interview, August 2013)

Other SDBSL initiatives exist, such as *Dia Das Montra*, which picks up a tradition from the Azores and extends it to every storefront (shop owners decorate their store windows and the best one receives a prize). The SDBSL website also underlines the importance of other communities by highlighting stores like La Vieille Europe or L’española (an old Spanish bookstore that sells lots of other Spanish and Latino goods, objects, food or drinks) [see Fig. 9.3]. It also indicates different route suggestions in order to put forward the identity and the history of the Main, linked to the old Jewish presence along the street.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the SDBSL still promotes the cosmopolitan history of the boulevard, its recent actions have been about building a more artistic and creative identity less linked to the historic waves of immigration.<sup>7</sup> The new street art festival MURAL created in 2013, for example, tends to put Montreal on national and international map of street art by creating a successful event whose artworks do not necessarily address the cosmopolitan past of the street.

<sup>6</sup>These initiatives are linked to the Museum of Jewish Montreal (<http://imjm.ca/>) “that collects maps, and shares the history and experiences of the Montreal Jewish community online and through walking tours, exhibits, and other public programming.”

<sup>7</sup>See this project to commemorate three businesses that have been created by the Jewish immigrants: <http://boulevardsaintlaurent.com/en/nouvelle/le-main-personnage/>

## 9.5 Representations of the Boulevard by the Inhabitants: Authenticity or Artifice?

What public is targeted by these branding strategies and what are their representations? These branding strategies are, of course, destined for the different communities who seek public recognition. But they are also destined for different users, like tourists, dwellers, new inhabitants, investors, new shopkeepers, etc. These actions are meant to create a dynamic neighborhood, to boost economic renewal, to promote shops and businesses, and, finally, to attract tourists, both domestic and international. Visits and walking tours are organized by several associations in the different districts of the boulevard for both Montreal residents and international tourists to show off urban cosmopolitanism, the diverse food and culture available and to commemorate the heritage of the street. These visits also bring in students from all over the province of Quebec in order to celebrate traces of immigration and the different religions present in Montreal. These visits thus contain an educational purpose in challenging received ideas and prejudices, even if in these branded places, “the imagery projected to visitors may reconfirm rather than challenge stereotypes” (Shaw et al. 2004).

As for city dwellers, both reactions exist: some denounce the commodification of space, whereas others see these neighborhoods as authentic. This is particularly true for the central section of the boulevard, which most inhabitants see as an authentic space (Zukin 2010). These dwellers link authenticity to cosmopolitanism: the fact that several languages can be heard on the street, that businesses are owned by immigrants or descendants of immigrants, that the goods sold are specific to one country or one region other than Quebec or Canada. As one of the shopkeepers says, “the boulevard has always had its own identity, which is still the same today: a historic street, a nonconformist one and an authentic one” (interview, May 2013). But in my interviews with city-dwellers and users, there is a paradoxical way of seeing those spaces: authenticity is sought but some inhabitants regret that Chinatown or Little Italy are artificial neighborhoods created for tourists, resuming the traditional debate between “superficial” and “authentic” cosmopolitanism (Molz 2011). One resident who had lived in the Portuguese neighborhood in the 1980s says that “it’s a shame to line up some districts toward tourism, it’s artificial” (interview, December 2011). Another dweller even talks about fake recreation:

In fact, it’s a bit propaganda for the boulevard: they try to make a myth of it. I used to stroll on the boulevard with my children, to show them the turmoil of the street. It wasn’t a rich street, it was a street of ethnic and mom and pop shops that served a local population. But now, it’s not anymore [...] It’s a memory. [...] In fact, we are in a generalised marketing and communication strategy nowadays. You don’t get the experience they’re selling, you don’t get what the federal designation [the national heritage site] is telling. (Interview, May 2013)

Residents from immigrant backgrounds and their descendants no longer live on the street or are a minority if they do. The old shops held by those immigrants are supposed to embody cosmopolitanism by representing the remains of the cosmopolitan past of the street. The commercial development associations are therefore the



guardians of this cosmopolitan image and carry on its representation and recreate it, as one of the residents explains:

The people who have nostalgia for the most part didn't live it [the boulevard]. Yeah, sure we have nostalgia, but we didn't live here, it's romanticized. [...] And the young people who are trying to recreate something, they are trying to reinvent something. (Interview, May 2013)

But cosmopolitanism put forward on the boulevard is described by some inhabitants as a merchandise built by the branding strategies of the municipality and the commercial development associations in order to attract investors and new dwellers.

## 9.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that branding “is both a generalised label to describe emergent social and economic spatial formations and a narrative trope that makes one part of the city analytically visible” (Keith 2005, 117). Branding selects neighborhoods and places that are potentially interesting in attracting people and capital but at the expense of other places and neighborhoods which may be cosmopolitan but are not branded as such. The narratives around Saint Lawrence Boulevard return back to old ones; several buildings have changed their earlier function and shops have adapted their commercial offer to new residents. This consumerism of difference tends to a commodification of otherness and is often reduced to the “easy faces of cosmopolitanism.” These branding initiatives are received in different ways by inhabitants; some only see them as “consumerist cosmopolitanism” (Calhoun 2002) while others link them to the daily experiences of the hustle and bustle of cultural communities. The boulevard thus constitutes a useful space to understanding narratives on this historic cosmopolitanism, the actions of different public and private stakeholders and its consequences on space and representational orders for dwellers. Nowadays, cosmopolitanism is more and more covered up by a creative and cultural identity, notably in Mile End and the central section of the boulevard, while Chinatown and Little Italy are sticking to their single ethnic branding in a tourist strategy similar to one found in other North American cities such as New York, Toronto or Boston. Processes of gentrification, new art galleries, businesses, festivals and activities are “branding neighborhoods in terms of distinctive cultural identities” (Zukin 2010, 3) with a hint of cosmopolitanism in order to shape an authentic identity responsive to the demands of social preservationists (Brown-Saracino 2009) as proximity and as a community experience.



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**Part III**  
**Migrant Cosmopolitanism: Fragile**  
**Belongings and Contested Citizenships**

# Chapter 10

## Sweeping the Streets, Cleaning Morals: Chinese Sex Workers in Paris Claiming Their Belonging to the Cosmopolitan City



Hélène Le Bail and Marylène Lieber

### 10.1 Introduction

Since 2016 hundreds of Chinese migrants selling sexual services in Paris have been the target of systematic control operations by the police, whose clear objective is to “sweep” prostitution out of migrant neighborhoods in Paris’s 13th and 19th arrondissements. In reaction to these measures, a group of Chinese sex workers organized the collective “The Steel Roses” [*Les Roses d’Acier*] and petitioned the local government to focus on preventing violence against sex workers rather than fighting sex workers. The Steel Roses is an attempt to embody political agency by demanding the local government for sex workers to be included as part of “local diversity” and to be considered legitimate users of the city. One of the collective’s key initiatives was to sweep the streets in order to engage in dialogue with neighbors. As the collective put it in a public speech: “By sweeping the ground here, we take our responsibility. We live here. We laugh here, we cry here, we work here. We want to show that we are part of this neighborhood.” In the context of local gentrification, where diversity is presented as an important characteristic of multicultural neighborhoods, this mobilization by migrant sex workers underlines the ongoing controversy around the definition of “diversity” as well as the controversy over who can legitimately claim to be part of the urban symbolic order.

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“Diversity” is a key word in the local political arena of contemporary France. It is used to promote a new image for districts and cities characterized by the presence of many migrants and their descendants. Discourses on urban diversity can be framed within academic debates on the “cosmopolitan city,” in which cosmopolitanism is not understood as an individual way of life or philosophy (i.e., being a global citizen) but as an (collective) attitude, a form of openness to differences and diversity (Binnie et al. 2006), a tendency to value and promote diversity. Taking the case of Manchester city center, Young et al. (2006) describe how urban regeneration policies (often linked to gentrification processes) are based on cosmopolitan discourses, which in turn produce definitions of what is acceptable and not acceptable in terms of difference. They underline how narratives contribute to the framing of acceptable diversity: “The questions of what is ‘acceptable’ difference, who decides this and what impacts this has on diversity in cities highlight the inherently political nature of so-called cosmopolitan strategies” (Young et al. 2006, 1689). The controversy launched by the Chinese sex workers in some districts of Paris is another case study of how political power relations contribute to the definition of diversity and who belongs to a city defined in terms of cosmopolitanism.

Based on interviews with different actors (Chinese migrant women, elected representatives, NGOs and other supporters), the analysis of local debates (observation of local committees, minutes of city council meetings), and data on violence suffered by Chinese sex workers in Paris, this article questions the contingent place of migrant sex workers in official cosmopolitan narratives and documents their quest for recognition and belonging. A paradoxical definition of gender violence contributes to deny Chinese sex workers the right to be political agents and to be considered legitimate users of the city. We discuss the (hardly visible) contribution of migrant women in the discourse of cosmopolitan policies through the *contested definitions* of *diversity*, on the one hand, and of *gender violence*, *safety* and *autonomy*, on the other hand. In the context of “soft” gentrification, where various policies contribute to the eviction of “undesirable” populations or the suppression of “unacceptable” differences (not directly, but by encouraging the lifestyles of the privileged categories of population; see Young et al. 2006; Clerval and Fleury 2009), we argue that the hegemonic definition of gender violence contributes to the silencing and exclusion of migrant women sex workers. While the right to protection from gendered violence allows new claims and regulations protecting (white) women in public places and contributes to the process of gentrification targeting racialized masculinities (Lieber 2018), this same right is also mobilized to construct sex workers as heteronomous victims with no agency or as criminals, thus denying them the same protection from violence in public spaces and excluding them from equal participation in the constitution of cosmopolitan areas. In this article, we study how the double circumstances of a denied claim for local participation and a new abolitionist approach tend to further exclude sex workers from the cosmopolitan narratives on local diversity and the implementation of inclusive policies.

## 10.2 The Context: Chinese Prostitution in Gentrifying Districts of Paris

In the early 2000s, a few Chinese migrant women started to sell sexual services around the red-light district of Paris, near Rue Saint-Denis. While some of them still work in this area along with “traditional” French sex workers and other migrant women, other spots of street work have appeared in districts of Paris not known for prostitution, such as Belleville and Triangle de Choisy.

Belleville has a long history of mixed populations. During the last century it was a gathering and settling place for many new immigrants. The Armenian, Greek, and Polish Jewish communities which developed there before the Second World War were largely replaced after the war, and running alongside the decolonization process, by Sephardic Jews from Tunisia (Simon and Tapia 1998) and Algerian migrant workers who found cheap hostels in the neighborhood. The area, which is close to one of the oldest places of residence for Chinese immigrants (Arts et Métiers) and remained relatively cheap until the beginning of the 2000s, was also a “way of entry” (“sas” in French) from the 1970s to the early 2000s for new Chinese migrants, especially ones from the Wenzhou community (Kloeckner 2017). Today the area is considered one of Paris’s Chinatowns, with a Chinese population cohabiting with lively North African communities. Belleville is considered a cosmopolitan area of Paris. If a certain form of gentrification started decades ago with the arrival of artists who settled in Belleville because they could find cheap studios, the cosmopolitan and popular atmosphere of the district was accelerated in the early 2000s by the arrival of upper middle-class residents attracted by cheaper rents (Clerval 2017).

The case of the 13th district, and especially what is called the “Choisy Triangle” (Guillon and Taboada-Léonetti 1986), is quite different. Except for European immigrants during the first half of the twentieth century, the area has no history of hosting migrant communities. It was only when refugees from the former colonies of Indochina arrived in the 1970s and 1980s that a visible foreign community became established and that ethnic businesses developed. The Triangle de Choisy is now considered the main Asian district in Paris. It is the first area in which the council sought out dialogue with Asian residents and where Asian representatives were elected. The image of the district that is promoted is that of a middle-class, family-friendly, safe area. The well-established Asian communities are largely gentrified. They defend this identity, which tends to exclude more popular or irregular use of public space.

In both of these districts, local councils are ruled by leftist parties (until recently, the Socialist Party) which value the cosmopolitan diversity of these areas. However, the current mayors of the 13th and 19th arrondissements espouse conservative security discourse, especially when it comes to public spaces and the presence of Chinese sex workers in their districts.

According to both official and NGO estimates, Chinese sex workers constitute one of the main groups of sex workers in Paris (the other main areas of origin are

Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and South America).<sup>1</sup> They are visible and concentrated in areas where very few or no other sex workers go, such as the 13th and 19th arrondissements. Chinese migrant sex workers are marginalized both within the host society in general and within Chinese migrant communities. Like many other migrant sex workers, they tend to have an irregular legal status, precarious finances (having often arrived indebted) and unstable housing situations. They do not speak French or English, and their activity – sex work – is stigmatized. In addition, they are also often marginalized within existing Chinese networks that may facilitate access to housing and the job market. In fact, none of them are part of the main group of Chinese migrants in France, who come from the area of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province. They come from “new” places of emigration in China, places with no tradition of migration (Cattelain et al. 2005). Most of these women migrated outside of networks or just with the contact of a relative or some acquaintances. They engage in sex work because, as they put it, they cannot find a job within the “Chinese job market” in Paris or because the kind of jobs they can find as undocumented workers are very exploitative (Lévy and Lieber 2009; Lévy 2012; Le Bail 2017).

Besides their precarious and stigmatized situation as migrant sex workers, the ubiquity of violence in everyday life needs to be described to understand why these women mobilized themselves. Two different aspects of violence concurred in pushing their claims for recognition. First, like most migrant street sex workers, they are overexposed to all kinds of violence, and in particular physical and sexual violence, as reported in a 2010–11 survey by the NGO Doctors of the World.<sup>2</sup> But like other sex workers, the violence they face does not only come from clients or from their activity (Mathieu 2002). The same survey also highlighted the fact that Chinese women were targeted by police operations under the law (between 2003 and 2016) criminalizing solicitation in public spaces.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, they continued to be targeted by the police even after a new law passed in 2016 which decriminalized solicitation and criminalized clients.

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<sup>1</sup>Most publications and actors in the field of sex work use the same sources: estimates by the OCRTEH which are based on police data on pimp affairs and arrests for soliciting. See also Mainsant 2014. According to the NGO Doctors of the World, who launched a reach-out program with translation services in 2004 targeting Chinese sex workers, the number of women they met through their actions in Paris increased from about 300–400 in 2005 to more than 600 in 2010 and then to more than 1000 in 2015 (Médecins du Monde, Activity Report of the *Lotus Bus* mission, 2005–2015, unpublished).

<sup>2</sup>Among the interviewees, 38% had been victims of rape since they started working in France, 23% victims of sequestration, and 17% of death threats. 86% answered that they had been victims of at least one form of violence. Médecins du Monde, “Travailleuses du sexe chinoises à Paris face aux violences,” December 2012. The method was a mix of closed questions and semi-directive questions answered by 86 individuals.

<sup>3</sup>Médecins du Monde, “Travailleuses du sexe chinoises à Paris face aux violences,” December 2012.



In 2003 the “Loi de sécurité intérieure” extended the criminalization of solicitation to include passive solicitation (in other words, waiting for clients in a public space). However, the justice system tended to not support prosecutions of this extension and very few sex workers were prosecuted (Mainsant 2013). The offense of solicitation was mainly used by local authorities to regulate sex work in their localities, depending on the willingness of elected officials to respond to local neighborhood pressure. While police operations may have decreased in many places after the law changed in 2016, in the 13th and 19th arrondissements, where the number of Chinese sex workers increased in the 2010s, more police operations were launched on the demand of local authorities (Commission nationale Citoyens-Justice-Police 2013).

While many street sex workers hoped that the passage of the 2016 law would lead to loosened police control, other modes of control immediately replaced arrests for solicitation. In one area, the police began to carry out regular identity controls under the requisition by the public prosecutor of Paris. Even though such control operations are not supposed to target a specific population group, many Chinese sex workers have given evidence of being targeted. Some abusive practices by the police, such as verbal threats and depriving women of cash earnings, have also been reported. According to the general secretary of the *syndicat de la magistrature* [Magistrates Union], the collected statements could prove police harassment of Chinese sex workers in order to force them to move their places of work to another district. Another way to push sex workers out of an area is through operations targeting pimping. These operations target people renting rooms out for sex work, a practice forbidden in France. If these operations mainly target apartment owners and end in working apartments being shut down, in other instances police operations seem to target apartments where the Chinese women live, not work (as was the case in a 2013 operation). Among the tens of people arrested in that operation, almost all of them were rapidly released and not even considered as victims of pimping (Le Bail 2015). Such a police operation could be considered as a way to intimidate the Chinese women from working in a particular area.

Along with sex workers’ unions and NGOs supporting Chinese sex workers considering these police operations as a form of violence, as well as a source of further stigmatization, precarity, and increased exposure to all forms of violence, migrant women started to voice their concerns in order to reverse the prevailing political logic of suppression and control (Le Bail 2015). This experience of violence alongside dialogue with various local activists allowed the Chinese migrant sex workers to have new perceptions and expectations. They began to defend their local belonging, asking for more security and for being considered as legitimate users of public spaces.

### 10.3 Cosmopolitanism from Below: A (Failed) Attempt to Redefine Local Diversity

At the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, a group of Chinese sex workers created the collective *Roses d'Acier* (Roses d'Acier 2016; Le Bail 2015, 2017). One of its objectives was to find a way to communicate with residents to promote mutual understanding and reduce the complaints that are used by local authorities to instigate police operations. More or less at the same time, one of Belleville's district mayors (Belleville is under the governance of four different district councils) decided to increase police pressure in order to displace sex work from the area. At a public meeting in May 2015 focusing on prostitution the district mayor stated that "[p]rostitution jeopardizes the beautiful diversity of Belleville's neighborhood" (field notes). He considered this activity incompatible with Belleville as a district full of families. While implying that "beautiful diversity" (*belle diversité*) – both social diversity and the cultural heritage of different waves of immigrants – was the area's identity, he also indicated that this diversity was a challenge – and so prostitution was a danger to the kind of balance local authorities wished to create. Indeed, as prostitution is not part of the history of this area, sex workers were not invited to the public meeting and were not considered potential participants or contributors to this "rich diversity" or as constituting a form of "acceptable" difference.

For local governments, the priority is not to protect sex workers as local residents but to eradicate prostitution from their neighborhood. The discourse on "diversity" in gentrifying areas often tends to put forward the interests of some residents (often the wealthiest and the newcomers) while sidelining others (young people, the homeless, sex workers) who are often categorized as disturbances (in the case of Belleville, see Clerval and Fleury 2009). The aforementioned public meeting was organized for the mayor to officially announce a special action to address the expectations of residents – terms that excluded resident Chinese sex workers. A few days later the police control operations around solicitation described above were launched. As a response, the Chinese sex workers' collective tried to start a dialogue with neighbors based on the idea that residents can influence local policy. At a meeting of over 60 sex workers, it was decided, with a certain humor, that since they were considered as undesirables who should be swept out of the area, they would, in response, literally sweep the pavements. This action also played with the meaning of the area's name: "What is Belleville [ND: "beautiful city" in French] the name of? They told us that because of us, Belleville is not beautiful anymore" (Roses d'Acier 2016). To re-embellish the area, they would sweep its streets:

We started in June, since at the end of May the police intensified control operations targeting the Chinese sex workers in Belleville area. We swept the streets again in July and September. ...

Sex work is a job that is very visible in the public space. It is not easy to be so visible and we know that some inhabitants are irritated. But we also have our families, and we do not want to annoy other families. Going once more in the streets and *sweeping the ground is an opportunity to enter in dialogue with our neighbors.*

By sweeping the ground here, we take our responsibilities. We live here. We laugh here, we cry here, we work here, do the shopping here, and take the sun here. Some of us here are married, have children, form families. *We want to show that we are part of this neighborhood.*

What is Belleville (beautiful city) the name of? They told us that because of us, Belleville is not beautiful anymore, because we are ugly, we are dirty, and we are ignoble. But who are they to judge us? Are they more beautiful than us, cleaner than us, nobler than us? Solving social issues with violence is trying to humiliate us, insult us. To ignore our voice is to ignore our existence, to ignore our lives. (Roses d'Acier 2016, emphasis added)

By sweeping the streets, the collective tried to question the limits of abstract discourses on the “beauty” of the area – its “beautiful diversity.” The Chinese migrant sex workers presented themselves as city users with families, as good mothers, not illegitimate users of the area. As we emphasized above, they claimed their right to be considered part of this diversity, part of the “neighborhood”; they claimed their right to the city and to local belonging in many speeches between 2014 and 2016. Since they were not invited to public meetings or local street events and were often refused appointments with local representatives, the collective created its own dialogue with other residents. During the sweeping operation (which was repeated three times in summer 2015), they asked supporters to distribute flyers in French and explain to passers-by their willingness to open up a dialogue. They also participated in a local street music festival in which anyone can perform without permission by singing Chinese songs and distributing flyers about the collective.

One year later, the decriminalization of solicitation had not stopped police harassment. The collective decided to organize a public meeting on prostitution in June 2016. With support from neighbors and other associations, other residents were invited to take part in this event in order to open a dialogue to find ways of coexistence. Central to the discussion was the issue of morality – i.e., the issue of “diversity of values” – and, most importantly, tranquility and security (with the usual assumption that sex workers attract noisy and violent people in their buildings and in the area in general). This question of security was also the core of the Chinese sex workers’ arguments. They argued that measures to suppress prostitution create a vicious circle in which stigmatized sex workers tend to feel less legitimate in reporting violence to the police and that violent offenders may feel emboldened in their use of violence, resulting in greater insecurity and new demands from residents to repress sex work. This “vicious circle” (Roses d’Acier 2016) was meant to highlight the fact that Chinese sex workers were very much the victims rather than the cause of violence in public spaces.

## 10.4 Disorder, Moral and Diversity: (Failed) Redefinition of Gender Violence

Two years later, in the Triangle de Choisy, also known for its Chinese-origin residents, Roses d'Acier also tried to reverse the logic of security measures after a video posted by the district mayor on his Facebook page described Chinese sex workers as a major menace to the quality of life and security of "families" and as a threat to public safety. Again, Chinese sex workers were constituted as illegitimate residents. The following is a transcription of the district mayor's speech, which was shot on a hidden camera on a street where Chinese women were working in the background:

What you will see in this video is obvious: illegal street peddling, clandestine gaming tables, and prostitutes in front of a school. [...] One cannot bear this situation any longer. It is the everyday life of families living in the district that is *severely deteriorated*, in spite of all the initiatives we have taken to ameliorate people's wellbeing. The many investments done in the area are jeopardized by the *mafia drift*. And, when saying mafia drift, I still measure my words [...] I send a call to the Minister of Interior Affairs, Mr. Collomb. "Mr. Minister, like myself you have been a mayor before, like myself you know that *the priority is to guarantee security and quality of life for residents*, like myself, you understand how difficult a mission it is. I ask you to put all *the necessary means to secure prevention, intelligence service and repression*." (Fieldwork document, emphasis supplied)

The Chinese sex workers' collective organized a meeting after the video was released. With the help of a supporting NGO, Les Roses d'Acier wrote a letter that was sent to all the elected representatives of the district and other association actors. Expressing their desire to open a dialogue, they reminded the mayor that they also belonged to the area and should be considered as residents of "our district":

Mayor, we are the sex workers of the 13th district of Paris. We write to you today in order to express our anger regarding the video you posted on your Facebook page on 11 July 2017 dealing with security and the need to repress street "mafia drift." *We rather would like to open a well-reasoned dialogue with the city hall and residents in the aim of finding solutions for better security and wellbeing in our district.* Until today, the video had gathered more than 4600 views, and was passed on by [leparisien.fr](http://leparisien.fr) on July 12th. It sparked many reactions and discussions and turned the Chinese sex workers, an already vulnerable group of population, into scapegoats. (Fieldwork document, emphasis supplied)

Among various arguments, they questioned the mayor's manner of framing the issue of insecurity: "While we are the first victims of insecurity in the 13th district, you *point to us as the source of insecurity*" (Ibid.).

Besides the fact that the sex workers are not recognized as legitimate residents to be considered under the rubric of "diversity," these different cases also underline the difficulty in being recognized as targets of violence. The presence of sex workers in urban and residential areas has always created moral anxiety over protecting "family" spaces and fears of neighborhood decline; these anxieties have led to "strategies of spatial containment" (Hubbard 2011). The political priority of urban tranquility, which insists on streets being cleared of any potential source of disorder, may partly explain why targeted local measures are not taken to address the risks of violence faced by sex workers. But another determinant factor is the revival of a

prohibitionist, or neo-abolitionist, approach in the French political sphere which tends to exclude sex workers, as a sexual minority, from acceptable diversity. Paris is one city supporting such an approach (Mathieu 2014). The concrete impact of such an ideological approach is that the solution for sex workers is not to fight against the violence they are victims of in the public space but to help them “leave the street” – to push them to stop sex work and pressing for them to be invisible in the public space (Jakšić 2016). While the neo-abolitionists argue that they are trying to protect women from violence, the approach inevitably implies that sex workers cannot be part of the acceptable diversity of lifestyle, acceptable diversity of values. Although based on different ideas, tranquility policies and neo-abolitionists yield the same result: excluding sex workers from so-called “inclusive” narratives about migrant and socially mixed neighborhoods like the 13th and 19th arrondissements.

After the 2015 “sweeping operation,” the *Groupe Ecologie de Paris* engaged in a dialogue and answered the request of the Chinese sex workers asking for more protection from the State. These representatives presented a resolution at four local councils (10, 11, 19 and 20th districts of Paris) and a few weeks later, at the council of Paris (gathering the 20 districts), which sparked a large debate. Their request was for better prevention against violence suffered by sex workers rather than fighting against sex workers themselves.<sup>4</sup>

- We ask the Prefect to re-assign police forces to the fight against violence targeting sex workers, in particular to networks of human trafficking, instead of fighting against sex workers themselves (...)
- We propose the constitution of a citizen panel in order to work on solutions through the consultation of all the actors, including representatives of prostitutes themselves.<sup>5</sup>

The council members from the Socialist, Communist, and right-wing “Les Républicains” parties voted against re-assigning police operations from targeting sex workers to preventing violence against them on the grounds that doing so would lead to the “institutionalization of prostitution,” which was defined as “one of the most violent expressions of patriarchy.” The arguments related to tranquility and those supporting neo-abolitionism (which was then under discussion in the French Parliament) were presented as intimately linked to each other:

We are mobilized in the aim of putting an end to the prostitution stage. Our approach conciliates the willful fight against networks [the councilor implies that the arrests of sex workers would be done in the objective of fighting against exploitive criminal networks], *a supporting program to help victim women* get access to their rights, to health prevention and to stop prostitution, and finally *the possibility in the short term to free the public space*.<sup>6</sup> (Socialist councilor, emphasis supplied)

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of local councils: Municipality of the tenth arrondissement of Paris, 15 June 2015, 63; Municipality of the 20th arrondissement of Paris, 18 June 2015, 43.

<sup>5</sup>“Conseil Municipal et départemental des lundi 29, mardi 30 juin, mercredi 1er et jeudi 2 juillet 2015,” 23 September 2015, at [www.paris.fr](http://www.paris.fr)

<sup>6</sup>“Conseil Municipal et départemental des 29–30 juin et 2 juillet 2015,” 23 September 2015, 436.

In this quote, sex workers are depicted as victims of trafficking whose rights as women are incumbent upon their stopping engaging as prostitutes, which in turn is considered a way to “free the public space.” In this blurring of categories, victimhood and being a burden to the public space are connected. A large majority rejected the idea that sex workers should be protected, like other residents, by classic police operations. For prostitutes the only solution would be to stop working and “free up the public space.” In other words, the legitimate violence to fight against is prostitution per se, pimping and trafficking, but not the other forms of violence that sex workers face. This case study of the ongoing controversy around the definition of gender violence and safety in the public space is a grounded example of how discourse on diversity is constructed and negotiated and how legitimate users of the city are defined along views of acceptable activities and morality.

## 10.5 Conclusion

While discourse on gender violence does not target the notion of diversity per se, the acceptability of sex work, like other forms of sexual minority practices and identities, is clearly one controversial aspect of diversity and a test of how tolerant and open to difference a city is (Hubbard 2000; Papayanis 2000). By not acknowledging the political agency of migrant sex workers and denying them a voice, local authorities reinforce a classist interpretation of what local diversity should be and deny migrant sex workers the right to participate in the everyday life of these areas. Analyzing this demand for local belonging by migrant sex workers and examining the contested definition of gender violence allow for a further development of the critique of the narrow use of cosmopolitanism by highlighting the definition of who can or should embody diversity in such narratives. This analysis shows that a radical distinction made in defining legitimate victims of gender violence leads to some women, in this case, migrant sex workers, as being perceived as problems for the public space. The blurring of victimhood and criminality contributes to the perception that sex workers are undesirable and unacceptable others, even in areas where narratives on diversity and cosmopolitanism are valued. All this underlines the normative and moral dimension of the notion of *diversity*, and by extension the classist definition of cosmopolitanism, in these areas of Paris.

Beyond questions about the city’s physical attractiveness, gentrification, diversity and social mixing, the management of prostitution through a moral lens further excludes sex workers from the public space and from the local identity of areas with significant numbers of residents with a migrant background. The case of this collective action by Chinese migrant sex workers in Paris is a creative attempt to challenge an official discourse on diversity that appears to be exclusive; it also challenges discourses surrounding policies against gendered violence in public space end up excluding some women. The case study shows how the dichotomic approach of sex work – as violence per se and as a source of social disorder – allows political representatives to exclude sex workers from local processes of inclusion, depending on

the context. As a source of social disorder, they are undesirable and excluded from discourses on diversity by not being considered as part of the neighborhood. As “victims of prostitution” (when prostitution is considered as a form of violence per se), they are excluded from measures to fight against gendered violence in public space, since the solution is to protect the sex workers by removing them from the public space. As such, multiple logics contribute to denying their attempt to speak, to be heard, and to use their political agency. Despite the failure of the initiatives of some Chinese migrant women in Paris, their claims highlight the constant redefinition of local urban identities. This example shows how even vulnerable city dwellers participate from below in constructing the city’s cosmopolitan identity and image.

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# Chapter 11

## Cosmopolitanism in US Sanctuary Cities: Dreamers Claiming Urban Citizenship



Catherine Lejeune

### 11.1 Introduction

“The rise of sanctuary cities signals the ability of cities to contest the exclusionary nature of national citizenship and redefine the contours of citizenship in a more inclusive manner” (Lambert and Swerts 2019, 91). I will use this statement as a starting point to discussing contemporary US sanctuary policies and practices, and their relationship to the undocumented population in cities, with a focus on migrant youth activism.

Revisiting sanctuary cities seems appropriate as references to the US designation are made more and more frequently at a moment when Western countries face large arrivals of populations seeking refuge, asylum or an immigration status. Since 2015 the scholarly literature on the “migration crisis” in Europe has consistently referred to sanctuary as a possible model for cities willing to host and accommodate the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. The emergence of sanctuary policies in Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Chile and Australia indicates that the concept has been used, adapted, and refashioned. Meanwhile, the city-sanctuary movement is expanding in the US with cities renewing their status and others seeking to obtain it in order to counter the Trump administration, making it all the more necessary to carry the investigation further.

Sanctuary is far from being a clear-cut concept; it takes on different forms and concerns different groups depending on socio-spatial contexts around the world. Yet what unifies city policies worldwide is that they have all emerged in the same context of harsh national and international treatment of migrants and asylum seekers (Dauvergne 2016; Squire and Bagelman 2012). The phenomenon is not new and has already received much attention from scholars, NGOs, political actors, and the civil society: the increasing illegalization of migrants and refugees through restrictive

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national migration policies in Western countries since the 1990s has prompted cities to offer sanctuary to vulnerable populations (Bauder 2016).

In this chapter, I do not intend to examine how both the term and the concept travel. Compelling comparative studies by urban geographers (Bauder 2017; Lippert and Rehaag 2013) illustrate the need for a detour into different national contexts to make sense of sanctuary. Drawing on their theoretical and empirical work and on the sizeable body of literature in the field (Bauder 2016, 2017; Bauder and Gonzales 2018; Bauder and Darling 2019; Darling 2017; Ridgley 2008; Lippert and Rehaag 2013; Varsanyi 2006; Lasch et al. 2018), I intend to unpack the concept to demonstrate how US sanctuary cities produce new forms of urban citizenship to undocumented migrants, thus contributing to the debate on sanctuary and the need to conceptualize it. As I examine some of these policies and practices, I will introduce the concept of cosmopolitanism to discuss migrants' acts of citizenship.

## 11.2 Sanctuary Cities Foster Urban Citizenship

What are sanctuary cities offering that has garnered so much attention? In European countries, in the UK for example, sanctuary supports a culture of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees based on “ideals of responsibility and hospitality” (Darling 2010, 2017; Squire 2011). In North America, sanctuary tends to focus on municipal policing practices aiming at protecting illegalized/undocumented migrants, and one of its rationales is to promote diversity and inclusiveness (Lasch et al. 2018).<sup>1</sup> Unsurprisingly, sanctuary initiatives fuel the animosity of the current US president who has long used a nationalistic rhetoric that further criminalizes immigration.<sup>2</sup>

How does a city receive sanctuary status? There are different types of procedures. One consists in implementing policies for public safety and immigration enforcement; another, in creating municipal identification cards. Such policies may be enacted in small or large cities, they may vary in form and content, some being more proactive than others (and in a few cases, they may not even be labeled as part of a strategy to make the city a “sanctuary”). Typically, cities enact policies of non-cooperation with the federal agency in charge of immigration enforcement (ICE). Such policies, referred to as DADTs – *Don't ask, Don't tell* – enable all residents to access city services without revealing their legal status.

Scholars agree that legislating for access to municipal services regardless of status and protecting residents by refusing to cooperate with immigration authorities constitutes a form of urban citizenship (Ridgley 2008; Darling 2017). But this form of citizenship does not necessarily come with inscribed rights for unauthorized

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<sup>1</sup> Bauder refers to migrants without immigration status as “illegalized,” focusing on the responsibility of national authorities in the production of illegalization. The scholarly literature in the field often uses the term “undocumented.” I favor this designation and use it throughout the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The criminalization of US migration dates back to the 1990s when several restrictive and punitive laws were passed in Congress.

migrants (Varsanyi 2006). Rather, the ordinances enacted by cities can be seen as “means to maintain informality.”<sup>3</sup>

Because they are both protective and inclusive, sanctuary initiatives challenge the criminalization of migrants, somehow disrupting the state’s monopoly over migration policy. Undocumented migrants can still be subjected to deportation orders, and the number of deportations has continued to rise in the Trump era, even in sanctuary cities, which means they do not cancel illegality *per se*; however, by facilitating migrants’ everyday lives, they are supporting alternative visions of citizenship.

City identification cards are a good illustration of how sanctuary policies and practices circumvent the national prerogative to issue membership status by, as Lebuhr puts it, “inventing” local membership (quoted in Bauder and Gonzalez 2018). Global cities like New York, as well as smaller cities like New Haven, Connecticut, have issued local identification cards that can be obtained through proving residency.<sup>4</sup> These city IDs facilitate opening bank accounts, applying for city programs, enrolling in local schools, etc. While they are designed for all city residents, identification cards clearly address the needs of the undocumented living within the city area.

By affirming their commitment to accommodating migrants who do not possess full federal status, such initiatives are challenging. The power to confer legal citizenship remains in the hands of the federal government, but citizenship encompasses factors that go far beyond legal status, including rights, inclusion and political participation (Torres 2017).

Such programs explicitly put forward the inclusionary impact on all city residents, whether migrants or not. The case of the New York city ID program (IDNYC), introduced by Mayor Bill de Blasio in 2014, is interesting for that matter. With its campaign including language access programs, a city council allocation towards DACA outreach and the municipal identification program, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs intends to facilitate inclusion for undocumented residents. While it may be argued that the weakness of the campaign lies in its lack of leverage to legalize this population, it is nevertheless admitted that the campaign has developed a relatively stable social life for undocumented residents “showing evidence of certain spaces of inclusion outside of formal national citizenship” (Ruszczky 2018, 6).

Besides, a 2016 survey conducted by the city showed that many non-migrants have adopted the ID card in support of the program, expressing a desire to show solidarity with other residents.<sup>5</sup> This can be explained in part by the traditional

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<sup>3</sup> See Darling (2017) for a detailed discussion of informality and presence in the city.

<sup>4</sup> Municipal ID cards for undocumented immigrants were first created in San Francisco in 2009; the measure was later adopted in NYC and Los Angeles, among other cities.

<sup>5</sup> The New York Mayors’ Office for Immigrant Affairs publicizes its IDNYC as “the largest municipal ID program in the country.” Its objective is to make it “as effective and inclusive as possible.” IDNYC benefits every New York City community, including the most vulnerable communities, such as undocumented immigrants, the homeless, youth, the elderly, formerly incarcerated individuals and others who have difficulty obtaining a government-issued ID” (see <https://www1.nyc.gov>).

public support of immigrants in New York city. It can also be explained by the message of generalized urban inclusion contained in the message sent by resident cards programs.

In her study of sanctuary as a process in the US (2019), Serin Houston demonstrates how the motivations of sanctuary in San Francisco and Richmond, California – based on assumptions that reduced crime, greater access to services and resources and the positive benefits of legitimate personal identification are good for all residents – show such policies are not only about noncitizens. The process does not just include the benefits of a municipal ID, she explains. It also reveals how sanctuary “exceeds a mere locality designation,” positively influencing everyday encounters for and between residents.

Scholars agree to say that sanctuary is transforming urban society and claim that sanctuary initiatives are changing the discourse of migration and belonging, by reimagining the city as an inclusive space. In this way, sanctuary cities are reframing the meaning of belonging and membership at the urban, rather than national, scale. In the UK, sanctuary cities do not focus so much on policing or non-cooperation with national authorities but they do send an important symbolic message concerning the inclusion of refugees in particular (Bauder 2018). Whether they are more action-oriented, as in the US, or more discourse-oriented, as in the UK, these cities change the imagination of the city as a place of welcome and in so doing, they shape the manner in which residents interact with each other (Darling 2010; Darling and Squire 2013; Squire and Bagelman 2012).<sup>6</sup>

Sanctuary policies do not only promote the social inclusion of unauthorized migrants. They also increase the opportunities of daily interactions and foster urban sociabilities as the following discussion on migrant activism highlights it.

### 11.3 Undocumented Migrant Activism

Since the turn of the century, urban theorists have consistently presented cities as pivotal sites with an insurgent potential, offering possibilities for protest. Geographers in particular have come to understand the city as a space where the substance of citizenship is given form, as mentioned earlier (Ridgley 2008; Sassen 2005; Isin 2002; Robinson 2002). Therefore cities, with their “activist” potential, are places where migrants engage in protest practices of citizenship. Some scholars

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[gov/site/immigrants/index.page](http://gov/site/immigrants/index.page)). IDNYC can be presented as proof of identification for interaction with the police and is an accepted form of ID for opening a bank account at select financial institutions. It is currently held by 1.3 million people (1 in 8 of the population) and has been taken up by about half a million undocumented migrants. See European Council Policy Brief, *Urban Citizenship and Undocumented Migration*, February 2019, and [www1.nyc.gov/site/idnyc/about/about.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/idnyc/about/about.page)

<sup>6</sup>See Bauder (2018) for a detailed analysis of the aspects that define sanctuary in the US, Canada and the UK.

have investigated the relation between undocumented activism and the city. Swerts's study in particular illustrates how undocumented migrants rely on urban space for their struggles over citizenship (Swerts 2017). Sanctuary cities are key as they produce safe spaces where performing acts of protest (against exclusion from the national) and acts of appropriation (of and through urban space) can be deployed in a relatively open way. They are trustworthy spaces where the in-betweenness of migrants can be best observed and understood.

Let us consider the 1.5 generation in the US – a term that refers to foreign-born immigrant youths who came to the US with their parents as children. Though they were raised and educated in the US, they are subjected on a daily basis, along with other non-status migrants, to vulnerability and fear of deportation. As such, they illustrate the ultimate case of in-betweenness.

The absence of formal status makes them “illegal” under the law and at risk of deportation in the same way as the overall unauthorized population of the US. At the same time, because of their education and long-time US residence, they constitute a specific category of immigrants. In the last 10–15 years, scholars have growingly studied this estimated population of about 800,000 youths nationwide, focusing on the existing contradiction between their education, which the law authorizes, and their transition to adulthood when they become aware of the impossibility to be formally included in US society because they cannot be further educated or work legally (Gonzales 2016; Nicholls 2013).<sup>7</sup>

Conferring legal status on undocumented migrant youth brought to the U.S. as children – a group referred to as DREAMers – has been the subject of legislation in the US Congress since 2001 but has failed to reach a consensus. In 2012 the Obama administration launched the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* initiative (DACA) to provide temporary relief from deportation and work authorizations to those who qualified under the program, with the following requirements: having been in the US since 2007, being under the age of 16 at the time of arrival and under the age of 31 as of 2012; they also had to be enrolled in school and have a high school diploma or equivalent.<sup>8</sup>

The initiative has embroiled all three branches of US government since its creation, with each branch hoping the other would bail it out of a politically sensitive issue like how to address the fate of a population widely seen as sympathetic across the partisan divide. DACA was in effect until September 2017, when the Trump administration announced its intention to terminate the program and end work authorization and protection from deportation for DACA recipients. Since then, several federal courts have blocked the administration, somehow keeping the program alive for people who currently have or have held DACA status without being

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<sup>7</sup>They have the right to be schooled from kindergarten through grade 12, the last year of high school. This right was enacted by the Supreme Court ruling *Plyler v. Doe* 457 U.S. 202 (1982).

<sup>8</sup>This was undertaken through an executive action: presidents can legally take such decisions but they rarely do so as in the US, immigration policy is typically the responsibility of Congress. Barack Obama took this action in the absence of congressional action.

effective in completely preventing deportations orders. This is where the situation stands at the time of writing this essay.

President Trump has threatened to strip federal funding from sanctuary jurisdictions if they do not share citizenship or immigration status information with the federal government. Some cities capitulate; others, significantly, resist and challenge the federal action in court. The city (and county) of San Francisco did just that: they sued the federal government and won the case. The US Circuit Court of Appeals struck down president Trump's executive order of 2017 to end federal grant funding to sanctuary cities.<sup>9</sup> The lawsuit challenged the order on the claims that it was unconstitutional because only Congress can impose conditions for federal grant appropriations.<sup>10</sup> The *San Francisco v. Trump* injunction was a notable victory for cities (Kwon and Roy 2018). This lawsuit is one of many against the Trump administration concerning executive orders against sanctuaries. Interestingly, so far courts have ruled in favor of cities.

Not only have cities renewed their commitment to sanctuary in response to the measures outlined in Trump's executive action but, as a sign of protest against his antagonism and anti-immigrant rhetoric, they tend to make more explicit statements about the safe spaces they provide for the vulnerable, be they refugees or non-status migrants.

DREAMers have used those safe spaces to engage in migrant activism as the DACA program results largely from their struggles. Not all of it occurs in cities, and the rebirth of sanctuaries since the presidential election has been observed in churches, campuses, counties, and even at state level. But undocumented activism has been decisive in cities, particularly in sanctuary cities where migrant youth have been able to deploy their actions in an environment that is not hostile. Starting in 2010, they learned how to identify public arenas (online and on campuses, for instance) where they could build their cases and express their claims, "plan and undertake high risk protests, and lobby public officials to support bills recognizing their rights and the rights of other undocumented immigrants in the country" (Nicholls 2013, 8).

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<sup>9</sup>Executive Order 13768 (25 January 2017) is entitled "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the US."

<sup>10</sup>The opinion summary of court decision N17-17478 (2018):

Under the principle of Separation of Powers and in consideration of the Spending Clause, which vests exclusive power to Congress to impose conditions on federal grants, the Executive Branch may not refuse to disperse federal grants to sanctuary cities and counties without congressional authorization. President Trump issued Executive Order 13,768 (Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States'') with the purpose of directing executive departments and agencies to employ all lawful means to enforce immigration laws. The Executive Order's primary concern was sanctuary jurisdictions, which the President viewed as willfully violating Federal law in an attempt to shield aliens from removal from the country. (2 August 2018, at JURIST, <http://jurist.org>)



This advocacy emerged from a loose network of undocumented students who chose to use their personal stories to attract attention. The DREAMer narrative relied on the figure of the undocumented youth portrayed as an integrated person (who grew up in the US, speaks fluent English and feels American), innocent (brought to the country as a child) and hard-working as much as successful – hence, the very embodiment of a “deserving” student. Their strategy was frequently criticized for its exclusionary effects in the first years of the movement as it implied that other immigrants were not as deserving as they were.<sup>11</sup> The movement started to fracture as students stopped using arguments. Irreconcilable tensions became salient with the intersectionality of those who wanted to include gender and racial identities in their stories and the refusal of others to blame their parents for bringing them to the US. Nonetheless, the movement was successful in positioning the personal stories of undocumented childhood arrivals in order to influence policymaking (see Carney et al. 2017).

The transformation of the movement since 2011 has been analyzed as “contentious politics” that challenges the previous focus on students (immigration reform, citizenship status); it also has the potential to emerge as a counter-hegemonic project in that it rejects discourses that reproduce the criminalization of unauthorized migrants. In recent years, the movement has been more inclusive of different subjectivities within undocumented communities (queer, uneducated people or ones with a criminal record), thus redefining notions of citizenship. The focus shifted back to a more explicit fight against criminalisation and no longer in the direction of “legislation that would never pass.” As such, its participants can be seen as activist citizens – to quote Engin Isin – constituting themselves as citizens regardless of status (Isin and Nielsen 2008).

The strategy used by undocumented youths as the movement transformed is known as “Shout is out” or “Coming out of the shadows.” They would hold meetings and organize rallies where they normalized the act of stating out loud that they were undocumented. The practice started to empower them while portraying the diversity of the undocumented population at large. It also changed their status from a private matter to a public issue. They made the responsibility for their situation, which some initially felt was individual, a social question, by appearing as undocumented in public transforming the internalized shame attached to their illegalized status and their fear of being deported into some sort of “defiant pride”: not only naming their status but creating a political subjectivity (Butler 1997). The experiences of these immigrant youth were articulated in a common discourse that associated being undocumented with being also unafraid and unapologetic – a way of politicizing their experiences. The individual story-telling that unfolded during those “Coming out of the shadows” events allowed for a much broader and inclusive narrative, introducing an open communicative method.

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<sup>11</sup> Noam Chomsky, among others, voiced his critique in *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* (Boson: Beacon Press, 2014).

### 11.3.1 *On Activism in High School*

Schools, typically, are supposed to be safe spaces. Recent studies based on theory and ethnographic observation, investigate undocumented activism (Kuge 2019; Schwiertz 2016; Gonzales 2016; Swerts 2017) but more work needs to be done across the disciplines. Empirical studies would help scholars make sense of in-between statuses, and schools are perfect places to carry them out.

I was able to attend a few sessions organized by a DREAMers' team in a New York City public school in 2013 and again in 2014, at a time when expectations were high and activism was invigorated by the recently-passed DACA measure.

I first met 16-year-old Naflan in a rally on DACA organized by the *New York Immigration Coalition*, a prominent advocacy group in New York City. He suggested I attended the meetings of the "DREAMers Club" at his school (Curtis High School, Staten Island). I attended several gatherings after that with the help of the school advisor. During the meetings, I was able to observe the interactions between students (aged from 14 to 17) as they openly spoke about their status with the group. While the majority was undocumented, a minority of students was not. Some were in the process of applying for DACA; a few had already qualified for DACA status but insisted on sharing their experience and being with the group. Others remained mostly silent but were present at each of the following sessions.

As they shared their experience of undocumented status with me, their advisor and the other students, I was struck by the diversity of the participants' countries of origin, very much a reflection of the heterogeneous foreign-born population in some parts of the city. I was amazed at how little attention was paid to where they were from, and how much to why they were here. The focus was on telling their story and deciding which action should be taken next: they were activists in the making. Their solid involvement in the movement, sustained over a period of several months, gave them a sense of purpose, a way to reach out and help others with the practicalities of applying for DACA status. Working as a local team supported by several of their teachers gave them a sense of belonging, a shared identity through humanistic dialogue while fighting against the criminalization which had relegated them (and their parents) to an outsider status. "Our common ground is: 'not having status,'" one student said. "It is not a matter of ethnicity, it's about papers. We all don't have papers." He highlighted the commonalities that drew them to one another and which generated the collective will to act.

Emotion was part of the experience. Sociologist Roberto Gonzales describes the shock that many students experience when they "discover" their undocumented status between the age of 16 and 18 as they transition from public education into adulthood, which for them brings about a whole host of limitations, like not being able to apply for a driver's licence for lack of documentation, not being eligible for any financial aid for college, indeed no possibility to attend college at all. In one of the meetings I sat at, Naflan used the following words to describe how he learnt about his immigration status through his father: "My dad just told me one day: 'we're not supposed to be here.' I wanted to prove him wrong."

As they voiced their frustration and pain publicly, a relation of trust grew among the students at the school, and I was able to observe that the repeated interactions were consolidated into deeper relations after a few weeks. Obviously, they had been able to build strategies that helped them go beyond their differences (whether social, cultural, ethnic or religious). In the safe and supportive space of the school, their shared vision of how to act fostered commonalities and developed ways of being together.

In 2017, a collective of scholars wrote a text in the form of a manifesto advocating for a global sanctuary movement. They argue that sanctuary not only gives undocumented migrants a sense of belonging to the city where they reside because what matters is where they live and not where they were born, but it also impacts their relationships with others. In fact, sanctuary fosters relationships between people, and between people and institutions (Carney et al. 2017). This is a collaborative practice, one that has the capacity to produce connections between individuals and institutions committed to the same values.

For Isin, the struggles led by undocumented migrants are typically acts of citizenship. It is common practice among undocumented youth who use the protective environment of schools to share their story (Gonzales 2016; Swerts 2017); this is also what I witnessed during the high school meetings I attended, which perfectly illustrated the principle of “shout it out” based on the “coming out of the shadows” strategy.<sup>12</sup> Such acts, Swerts justly notes, are highly transformative events for undocumented youth that represent a first step in the formation of their political subjectivities. His comparative study of activism in Brussels and Chicago stresses the important role of schools and universities in offering a supportive environment for the initial self-organization of undocumented youth.

## 11.4 Concluding Remarks: Migrant Acts and Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism, geographer Barney Warf notes, “seeks to overcome the dichotomous fixation on ‘we’ and ‘them’, citizens and immigrants, the local and the global. In this view, there is no such thing as an illegal immigrant, for no ‘human being is illegal’” (Warf 2015, 932).<sup>13</sup> The divide Warf refers to explains why, I believe, the cosmopolitan approach is absent from the scholarly literature on migration in the US, unlike in France for example.<sup>14</sup> In the United States, the image of the migrant

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<sup>12</sup>This was inspired by Harvey Milk and the Gay Rights Movement’s “coming out” strategy (see Swerts 2017).

<sup>13</sup>Warf here makes a reference to the Noone Is Illegal (NOII) migrant justice group in Toronto, which has launched a solidarity city network. NOII calls for the regularization of all non-status persons.

<sup>14</sup>Other English-speaking countries use the cosmopolitan approach in migration studies, most notably Australia.

has historically been constructed as that of the “other”. The undocumented migrant, in particular, has long been categorized by law as the illegal alien seen as a persistent threat to US society.<sup>15</sup>

Unsurprisingly, to adopt the language of tolerance and empathy for those who have been consistently portrayed as negatively different throughout history and to celebrate the hyper diversity of cities in a country with such a “dichotomous fixation” is not an easy task, but it has been undertaken.

The now classic study by Lamont and Aksartova (2002) which documents the cosmopolitan imagination (and strategies) used by “ordinary” people to counteract racism demonstrates that the bridging of boundaries does exist in the US. Elijah Anderson’s *Cosmopolitan Canopy* (2012) is another fine example of ethnographic studies examining moments of conviviality shared between people of different backgrounds at a Philadelphia market (a segregated city where social mixing is otherwise unlikely).

Empirical research using cosmopolitan tropes is needed as it can possibly reveal more about the way people informally interact with others in sanctuary cities; it can also show to what extent acts of citizenship performed by undocumented migrants are, indeed, cosmopolitan acts. An emerging radical literature in the field of political theory advocates the migrant as the key figure of cosmopolitanism “from below” (Nail 2015; Caraus 2018; Sager 2018). Migrants’ acts of citizenship are inherently cosmopolitan, Caraus argues, because they challenge the prerogatives of the nation state and they imagine new ways of being in the world.

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<sup>15</sup> See the work of historian Mae Ngai (2004) for a study of the production of migrant illegality by US law.

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# Chapter 12

## Migrant Cosmopolitanism in Emirati and Saudi Cities: Practices and Belonging in Exclusionary Contexts



Hélène Thiollet and Laure Assaf

### 12.1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the oil era, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, have experienced a massive increase in regional and international immigration, which translated into some of the highest ratio of foreign residents worldwide. Arab, Asian and European migrants have brought their skills but also their social, gender, cultural, religious and political identities to sparsely populated countries like Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and to larger societies like Oman and Saudi Arabia. In Qatar and the UAE, migrants have come to represent up to 90% of the population and 98% of the workforce. At the same time, the legal and political context of the Gulf severely limits the formal incorporation of these foreign residents within host societies. In all GCC countries, citizenship regimes are based on ethnicity and autochthony; in practice, access to citizenship was prevented or heavily restricted from the late 1970s on (Beaugrand 2018; Khalaf et al. 2014; Partrick 2012; Okruhlik 1999; Vora 2013). Regardless of the duration of their residence, foreigners are considered to be “temporary labor” and kept “in check” (Longva 1999) through both formal regulations and informal or semi-formal practices which enforce exclusion and segmentation. Among them, the system of sponsorship

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named *kafâla* binds each migrant worker to a citizen *kafil* (sponsor), who is usually the employer.

In the 2000s, migration policies have changed. On the one hand, in parallel with a new “migration boom” in the region in the early 2000s, migration policies have become geared towards heavier control and discrimination (Thiollet 2019). In the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings and, more recently, the diplomatic conflict between Saudi Arabia and the UAE and Qatar as well as the war in Yemen, Gulf monarchies have turned to more repressive modes of governance, which go together with a tighter grip on migration flows (Lori 2019; Thiollet 2015). On the other hand, the diversification of oil economies has boosted Gulf countries’ ambitions to secure high-profile membership in the international community through the organization of mega events in the sectors of sports and culture, economic investments abroad, military intervention and cooperation, and humanitarian aid. At the same time as it developed global tourism, the UAE has targeted highly skilled immigrants by offering “golden visas” or relatively long-term residence to real-estate investors, businesspeople and “innovators.”<sup>1</sup>

While enforcing more stringently exclusionary policies towards lower- and middle-class migrants, countries like the UAE and Saudi Arabia have thus framed the diversity of their populations within an official rhetoric that lays claim to the countries’ cosmopolitanism and openness to the world.<sup>2</sup> In Saudi Arabia, diversity is often framed as part and parcel of Islamic universalism, linked to Islamic pilgrimages and the mobility of pilgrims within and to Mecca and Medina.<sup>3</sup> In the UAE, diversity is framed as a marketable asset within processes of city-branding – a form of “commodified cosmopolitanism” (Assaf 2017b).<sup>4</sup> More recently, the cosmopolitan theme has been reshaped into a national project around the notion of tolerance – portraying the UAE as a beacon of peaceful coexistence in the Muslim world (Thiollet and Assaf 2018). These discourses have concrete effects on migrants

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<sup>1</sup>Gulf governments seek to maintain high immigration in order to sustain their labor markets (Khalaf et al. 2014). Such discriminatory practices are aligned with the “global race for talents” (Shachar 2006) in liberal democracies, widening inequalities between migrants and citizens but also between migrants, creating hierarchical differences in residence and citizenship based on class, ethnicity, religion and gender (Mau 2010; Thiollet 2019).

<sup>2</sup>It has to be noted that in other Gulf countries, the turn towards economic diversification has been accompanied by a very different rhetoric. Kuwait, for example, has witnessed a rise in xenophobic discourses, including among prominent MPs, which resulted in further exclusionary politics towards all foreign residents.

<sup>3</sup>Both pilgrimages – Hajj, happening every year during one specific month, and the Umrah, or small pilgrimage, which can happen any time – involve unparalleled internal, international and domestic mass mobility: for the 2019 Hajj, 1.8 million Muslims came to Saudi Arabia during the month of Ramadan and more than half of the 600,000 “internal” pilgrims came from all over the kingdom. The 2018 Umrah attracted 11.5 million internal pilgrims and 6.7 million external ones, according to the General Authority for Statistics for Hajj.

<sup>4</sup>See the chapter by Pagès el Karoui in this book for another detailed analysis of cosmopolitanism as commodification in Dubai.

and non-migrants as they inform policies and thus affect everyday lives, producing contradictory beliefs and aspirations, behaviors, and informal or self-regulations.

In this context, talking about cosmopolitanism in the Gulf can sound like a contradiction. Beyond diversity, scholarly definitions of cosmopolitanism are usually loaded with normative expectations that appear at odds with the Gulf's "exclusionary contexts" (Parreñas et al. 2018; Pilati 2016). In this chapter, we argue that cosmopolitan encounters observed in Emirati and Saudi cities embody much broader tensions at work in contemporary cosmopolitan situations – tensions between hierarchies and sympathies, exclusion and incorporation, segregation and circulation, conflicts and transactions, structural constraints and local emancipation.

This article fits in recent debates around subaltern or "working-class" (Werbner 1999) or "discrepant" cosmopolitanism (Clifford 1992) that have promoted a less normative approach to cosmopolitan conditions, understood as the default condition of the majority of the world population in a global era (Beck 2006). The Gulf urban contexts, marked both by their "superdiverse" populations (Vertovec 2007) and their exclusionary politics, constitute a valuable lens to explore the paradoxical condition of cast out, discarded, and rejected cosmopolitans (De Genova and Peutz 2010). Although the scholarly literature and activist expertise on migration in the Gulf often denounces illiberal policies and the mis-treatment of migrant workers (Gardner et al. 2013; Human Rights Watch 2014), recent works have addressed the alternative and informal forms of belonging developed by foreign residents in these contexts (Assaf 2017a; Beaugrand 2018; Lori 2019; Thiollet 2010; Vora 2013; Walsh 2014).

Building upon this line of research, and in line with discussions on situated, plural, abject and subaltern cosmopolitanisms (Nyers 2003; Schiller and Irving 2015; Zeng 2014), we seek to explore cosmopolitan practices and encounters in the Gulf at the city level. Scholarship in urban studies has brought forward the intense spatial segregation in the major cities of the Gulf region, which reflects the transient and precarious status of many foreign residents (Dresch 2006; Elsheshtawy 2019; Khalaf 2006). Segregation operates between citizens and non-citizens, but also across the category of citizens and among immigrant communities along the lines of class, gender, and ethnicity. At the same time, urban space is where these diverse populations cross paths, meet and sometimes mix. Migrants have been and remain central to Gulf urban development – both as city-builders (in the construction and service sector) and as city-dwellers. In this hyper-urbanized region, observing everyday lives at the city level offers an ideal vantage point to grasp the ambiguities and complexities of immigrants' cosmopolitan practices in segregated contexts.<sup>5</sup> How does cosmopolitanism operate within the discourses and practices of foreigners? How do cosmopolitan encounters actually happen in segregated urban environments? Furthermore, what does the Gulf tell us about the contradictions and paradoxes of cosmopolitanism in general?

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<sup>5</sup> Cities contain about 88% of the population in Saudi Arabia and 86% in the Emirates.

We use ethnographic evidence collected at the city level to show how everyday encounters and interactions between city-dwellers display individual and collective dispositions for diversity. Through a comparison between Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, we look at internal tensions produced by cosmopolitan situations in Gulf contexts. We first explore the ambivalence of self-presentation in public spaces, through the example of dress codes. While the injunction for citizens to wear the “national dress” in public can appear as an extension of the spatial segregation between citizens and non-citizens, we show how city-dwellers may also use dress codes to circumvent established boundaries between citizens and foreigners, as well as between genders and ethnic groups. We then focus on the paradoxes of cosmopolitan encounters in segregated urban contexts, exploring social practices and interactions in two emblematic sites of urban diversity: modern marketplaces, such as shopping malls, and streets. Looking at the modes of inclusion and exclusion in these spaces, we argue that they become the sites of a “segregated cosmopolitanism” (Mermier 2015): they allow and even foster encounters with the city’s urban diversity, in particular through consumption practices. The spatial boundaries and temporariness of these cosmopolitan interactions is precisely what allows them to take place. At the same time, they cannot be easily dismissed, as they contribute to shape city-dwellers’ subjectivities – their tastes, attitudes, and aspirations.

This research draws upon ethnographies and qualitative discourse analysis in three urban contexts: Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Jeddah. While Dubai is often considered as the epitome of the “super-diverse” city, these three cities display similar levels of diversity. We compare case studies that both converge and diverge at the national and urban scale. The UAE and Saudi Arabia stand at both ends of the GCC demographic spectrum. Saudi Arabia, the largest country with 33.5 million inhabitants, has the largest immigrant population in sheer numbers (around 11 million) but the smallest when considered as a share of the total population (30%). The UAE (total population 9.4 million) has, along with Qatar, the largest proportion of immigrants in the population (89%) and thus a relatively small total number of nationals. Both countries enjoy high levels of urbanization: 86.5% for the UAE and 83.8% for Saudi Arabia (UNDESA-Population Division 2017).

For the UAE, fieldwork conducted in the capital Abu Dhabi from 2010 to 2016 focused on young Emirati nationals and Arab foreign residents (Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinian, Jordanians, Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, and other GCC nationalities) who grew up in the city. For Saudi Arabia, fieldwork was conducted in Riyadh and Jeddah (2006, 2013–2015) on Eritrean, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Yemeni and Pakistani immigrants. We rely on both individual and institutional discourses in their contexts and system of references and on the participant observation of social interactions, spaces and practices.

## 12.2 Residential Segregations, Dress Codes and Cosmopolitan Modes of Identification

In spite of national and local variations, residential segregation is a structuring feature of Gulf cities since nationals receive land and/or housing that tends to confine them to specific districts. While poorer migrants – who live in labor camps outside the city’s limits or, in the case of domestic workers, in their employers’ homes – are excluded from access to urban space, wealthy expatriates generally live in exclusive gated communities. But for the intermediate classes which comprise the majority of the population, the diverse populations inhabiting the urban space constitute an important dimension of daily life. This is true even if spatial configurations and urban settings can vary, as exemplified by our two case studies.

In Saudi Arabia, middle-class migrants tend to live in multicultural neighborhoods close to city centers or in medium-income suburban areas. Low-income migrants live in peripheral areas of informal urban growth. The Saudi situation, however, is not uniform. In the eastern oil-town, urbanization is spatially segregated (Seccombe and Lawless 1986) while Riyadh has both impoverished neighborhoods in the city center and in suburban areas where both migrants and poor nationals reside (Ménoret 2018); and Jeddah displays historical features of cosmopolitan mixing of socio-ethnic groups linked to the mobilities of pilgrims (Yamani 2009). In the UAE, many low-income migrants are relegated to labor camps on the urban outskirts (Gardner et al. 2013), but patterns of segregation vary according to each emirate. While Dubai can be described as an urban sprawl along the Gulf, in Abu Dhabi, the high density of the main island has led to a relative mixing of middle-class and lower middle-class populations in an “emerging global city” (Elshehtawy 2010). Segregation occurs at a more micro-scale: at the level of districts or even within the same block or building (Dresch 2006; Khalaf 2006). Recent developments, by extending the city towards the neighboring islands and the mainland, have brought about more segregated residential areas according to nationality and social class.

Vernacular dress codes can appear as a prolongation, in public spaces, of the residential segregations described above. But they are also subjected to reinterpretations by foreign residents and locals alike, which question the boundaries between nationals and foreigners. Beyond residence, everyday practices in urban spaces thus offer crucial insights into cosmopolitan encounters. In both countries, status groups are recognizable through specific “regimes of visibility” (Lussault 2013) manifested by differentiated dress codes. “National” dress codes ensure that citizens stand out and do not risk being confused with non-citizens. Even if they might wear “Western” garments in more informal contexts, Saudi or Emirati citizens indeed tend to wear mainstream “national” dress in public and work places: the *‘abāya* (black cloak) and a head cover (of various shapes) for women and the white dress named *kandūra* (UAE) or *thawb* (Saudi Arabia), the *shmagh* (chequered headscarf), the *guthra* (white scarf), and the *‘iqāl* (black cord around the scarf) for men. The historical construction of these national dresses across the region closely follows processes of

nation-building (Akinci 2019; Thiollet 2010). They took on a heightened importance from the 1980s on, along with emerging anxieties among the citizen population regarding the demographic importance of foreigners and their potential impact on local society. Foreign residents are generally not expected to wear national outfits and, in some cases, can face social sanctions for doing. Daily dresses for most of them are thus related to the workplace, following corporate dress codes; other ethnic or national dresses are usually worn on weekends and holidays.

However, the apparent consolidation of the citizens/non-citizens divide through dress codes is subject to many variations and subtle differences which come to undermine, and at times to blur, this very distinction. Gender hierarchies can take precedence over the need for national distinction. This is the case of the female dress code in Saudi Arabia: until 2019, all women were required by law to wear the *'abâya* in public spaces.<sup>6</sup> More subtle differences, however, operated: foreign women would forego wearing a veil while strong variations in fashion among Arab and Muslim foreign women would correspond to positions in a class and race-based hierarchy, among Saudis as well as across nationalities (Le Renard 2014).

To some extent, this common dress code, while constraining, allowed migrant women to blend in. Young Eritrean Christian girls interviewed in Riyadh claimed to wear the veil and sometimes cover their face with a *niqab* so as to move around in public spaces without being noticed. Far from these diversionary strategies, clothing can also amount to a subversive claim: wearing a proper Saudi outfit is a demonstration of an individual partaking in an Islamic mode of belonging which is framed as strongly "Saudi." During an interview in Riyadh, a young Jeddah-born Pakistani lawyer educated in the United States framed the fact that she was wearing the *'abâya* and the veil, speaking perfect Arabic (both dialect and standard) as part of her claim of a strong attachment to Saudi Arabia, Islam and to Jeddah, where her parents still lived and where she grew up. In her discourse, belonging to Jeddah was entrenched with a consciously idealized definition of "Saudi-ness" linked to Islam and a pious life. She notably contrasted Saudi Arabia, where she could wear "her" veil and "her" *'abâya*, to the USA, where her dress as a religious marker was constantly under attack. She described herself as "completely integrated" yet frustrated with not "being" Saudi. After studying at elite universities in the United States, she "returned home" and expected some sort of recognition. In the interview, she lamented her outsider status while often repeating that she "fitted in" perfectly.

Foreign men in Saudi Arabia also sometimes wear the *thawb* in specific circumstances or as a carefully negotiated understanding of their belonging. Various factors distinguish foreigners who "can" wear the *thawb* and those who cannot. An Eritrean immigrant in his late forties wearing the *thawb*, *shmagh* and *'iqâl* was interviewed at his workplace in Jeddah. He had arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1982 and immediately settled in Jeddah and learned Arabic. Considering himself a

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<sup>6</sup>In Saudi Arabia, the black *'abâya* was an official obligation for women in public spaces, migrant and non-migrant alike and in late 2017 coloured *'abâyât* started to be tolerated in urban areas. The dress code for women was all together suppressed in 2019 in the context of the country's opening to tourism.

well-integrated citizen of Jeddah, he works as a doorman at a private folklore museum in the city center. His comments on the artifacts exposed in the museum showed his knowledge and fondness for Hijazi folk culture. When asked if he wore the Saudi attire for his work, he responded that it was clearly important to look Saudi but that he also wore the outfit at home. He underlined the closeness of Southwestern Arabian traditions with those of eastern Eritrea and Sudan, claiming that it was only natural that he should fit in and dress like a Hejazi. In Jeddah, other Yemeni, Sudanese and Ethiopian interviewees also confirmed that they regularly wore the *thob*, especially for Friday prayers at the mosque or when meeting friends in public.

In the UAE, while foreigners wearing the national dress is generally frowned upon, similar practices exist among young adults who attended public schools, where a majority of pupils are Emirati citizens. Many young Arab men met in Abu Dhabi – of Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian or Iraqi origin – had attended these schools and kept close friendship ties with Emirati classmates. They thus tended to wear the *dishdasha* in social outings with their Emirati friends, as did young women with the *'abâya* when invited to Emirati weddings. Outside of these social settings, however, the majority of the foreign youths tend to adopt dress codes that neutralize the signs of national or ethnic status, such as jeans, t-shirts and sneakers – while following more generational norms of taste and trend. These outfits are also at times adopted by Emirati youths, as a way to blend in with the diverse population of Emirati cities. Many young citizens interviewed in Abu Dhabi explained how they sometimes decided to wear jeans instead of the national dress, and to speak English in public spaces, so that they would escape temporarily the injunctions and norms related to their national status.

These various cases reflect the nuances that already exist within the most visible modes of segregation and the possibility of negotiating belonging according to personal and incidental circumstances linked to various characteristics of the individual migrant but also the duration of presence in the city, cultural capital and social networks.

## 12.3 Segregated Cosmopolitanisms in Shopping Malls

Shopping malls are symbolic of the large-scale projects that illustrate the economic diversification of Gulf economies in the early 2000s. While these spaces have often been studied as icons of modernity standardizing consumer culture and identity (Zukin 1998), an extensive body of scholarship looks at malls as examples of the variety of urban contexts and cultures (Abaza 2001; Assaf and Camelin 2017). We argue here that, by excluding certain categories of the population, shopping malls in the Gulf allow the rest of the residents, migrants and citizens alike, to perform certain forms of “consumer cosmopolitanism” whose practices and meanings go beyond mere consumption (Riefler 2015). Malls thus appear as representative of the specific type of segregated cosmopolitanism at play in the public spaces of Gulf



cities: our research suggests, indeed, that while shopping malls offer a place where hierarchies of nationality, gender and class are certainly enforced, they also represent venues for cosmopolitan interactions and encounters, either through consumerist practices or simply taking a stroll.

While Gulf urbanism is largely car-oriented with high temperatures especially in the summer, shopping malls constitute in many ways a public space by default. They have often been described as a “semi-public” space (Le Renard 2014) to underline, on the one hand, their private ownership and restricted access enforced by security guards. On the other hand, the variety of possible uses of these places and the heterogeneity of populations who frequent them assimilates them to sociological definitions of urban public space (Sennett 1992).

Access to the mall varies according to perceived categories of customers, and is based on intersectional hierarchies, crossing nationality with age, gender, race, and class. The moral geography of stratified spaces of social interaction also varies across the different days of the week (weekend or working days), hours of the day, and according to specific sites. In particular, whether through explicit selection or implicit exclusion, the access to shopping malls in both countries tends to be restricted for lower-class men. In Saudi Arabia, “bachelors” – migrant men- and young single Saudi men are explicitly barred from entering some shopping malls on week-ends as groups of young men are perceived as a potential threat to the moral order of the place. A combination of racial and class stigma also often prevents low-skilled workers or dark-skinned male immigrants to access some malls. While such rules can be officially pronounced – like the family restriction on week-ends- (on a board with the mall’s rules), others rely on *perceived* class, income and race. Access is thus restricted according to intersectional hierarchies of class, gender and race as well as nationality. As observed during fieldwork in Riyadh and Jeddah, a “well-dressed” Indian couple or family or a group of Filipino women is more likely to enter a mall than a group of young Saudi men dressed in poor quality *thawb* or Western outfits. In the UAE, while no explicit policy officially bans single men from entering malls, such restrictions are occasionally implemented. In 2009, a few months after Al Bawadi mall opened in Al-Ain, the second largest city in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, access to laborers was prohibited because women visitors complained about “stares.” This policy was then justified on the basis that these workers did not wear “appropriate clothing” or display “appropriate behavior” in the mall – they were, for example, sleeping on benches (Al Ghalib 2009; Assaf 2017b). At the same time, shopping malls in the UAE are probably one of the most diverse public spaces – where one can encounter both wealthy patrons buying expensive jewellery in the upscale galleries, middle class families shopping for clothes or groceries, or low-skilled employees such as nannies gathering in the food courts during their day off.

The ordinary practices of mall visitors and their social and cultural consequences can disrupt at times the social and spatial segregations at play in Gulf cities. Indeed, malls in the Gulf cannot simply be considered as places of consumption: regular shopping tends to occur mainly in supermarkets and popular markets (*suq sha’bī*).



Malls rather constitute social scenes, where specific lifestyles are performed and embodied by foreigners and nationals alike.

Navigating the malls indeed implies having access to a degree of “cosmopolitan capital” (Abaza 2001; Peterson 2011). In many Gulf cities, the ethnic and national division of labor implies that one needs at least a few words of English to benefit from all the services provided by foreign, and often non-Arabic speaking, employees: this holds true from placing an order in an international coffee shop, moving around in recreational spaces or even getting one’s car repaired. This required cosmopolitan capital can thus work as a principle of exclusion for poor laborers for whom it is an additional barrier to access commercial spaces, but also for some citizens, especially those who grew up in more rural areas and did not have access to a good education in English.

Conversely, for those who master the codes and subtleties required to navigate the malls, this cosmopolitan capital becomes the basis of strategies of distinction. Such competence is associated with lifestyles and modes of consumption endowed with a global dimension. The ability to be at ease in these globalized commercial spaces appeared central to the social practices of young adults in the UAE. They took pleasure in exhibiting their familiarity with a café’s menu, their ease in ordering in English, and their cosmopolitan tastes. Embodying these consumerist lifestyles was not only a mark of distinction but a way to take part in the commodified cosmopolitanism mentioned before and, in a way, to appropriate the city’s global ambitions.

Shopping malls thus host ambivalent experiences of leisure for city-dwellers, between the exclusion of the poorer categories of the population and the inclusion of their visitors in global lifestyles that go beyond the scale of the city. Through real and symbolic social transactions, immigrants appear as part of a modernized consumer society connected to global trends but also deeply local. If malls are broader spaces of encounters on the main streets and arteries of the city where people from various neighborhoods convene, small convenience stores also function as catalysts of social interactions in the urban space. But in the perception of self and others, shopping malls have a particular function as shared “places” conveying a sense of belonging to Gulf modernity (Thiollet 2010).

## **12.4 Cosmopolitan Streets: The Moral Geography of Coexistence and Encounters**

While residential segregations tend to be aligned with ethnic communities, street-level observations show how ethnic economies and in-group consumption practices are connected to the wider urban crowd and intercultural interactions. The streets of popular neighborhoods in Abu Dhabi, Riyadh or Jeddah show signs of an infinite cultural variety to the onlooker: Indonesian restaurants, Eritrean grocery stores, Chinese hardware, McDonald’s and KFC, European clothing stores and Middle

Eastern supermarket chains. Inexpensive ethnic restaurants (Chinese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Filipino and Indian) are ubiquitous, banal and more “familiar” in working-class neighborhoods than American fast food chains. This landscape reproduces the ethnic diversity of the population. Based on our observations, the consumption practices are not strictly tied to one’s identity or the demographic composition of the surrounding area. Beyond ethnic economies and globalized cuisine (like Japanese sushi), citizens and non-citizens in Gulf cities have become familiar with the cuisines of other ethnic groups and daily consume Lebanese, Pakistani or Indian food; in many cases, the availability of these diverse cuisines stirs curiosity for others.

Although Gulf cities with their large, orthogonal avenues are mainly meant for cars, things change as soon as one enters smaller neighborhoods. In Dubai or Abu Dhabi, there is a stark contrast between the main roads with up to eight lanes of speeding traffic and the inside of neighborhood blocks where traffic grinds to a halt behind double-parked cars honking in front of a shawarma shop as children play cricket in the parking lot or football on the little square surrounding the local mosque. The experience of the urban neighborhood is often associated with that of the ethnic diversity of urban society. Just like the omnipresent *karak* (tea with milk) consumed by almost all residents and which has come to be considered an intrinsically “local” drink in the UAE despite its South Asian origin, neighborhood blocks are bustling with small shops displaying a diversity of foods and consumer goods from all over the world. Other public spaces across Abu Dhabi display similar forms of gathering, while maintaining a separation between the groups: several communities gather, cross paths or coexist without necessarily mixing (Elshehtawy 2019). At dawn or at dusk, the ethnographer taking a stroll on the Abu Dhabi corniche or along the Al-Bateen beach can cross paths with joggers who take advantage of the fresher temperatures. They span many different age categories (between 20 and 50-years old), social classes (unlike gyms, which tend to be separated according to income), and nationalities (from North American to South Asian, Middle Eastern or European) (Assaf 2013a). The end of afternoon is also a time when picnickers start gathering along the corniche or in the public parks. Multi-generational groups of mostly Arab women meet around tea, coffee and biscuits prepared at home while young children are left to play in the playgrounds. Later on, families settle on the grass for elaborate picnics which include barbecues and narghiles. On weekends, these picnics, which in Abu Dhabi are mainly characteristic of the *ahl al-shâm*, the Levantine families, often take place next to groups of Filipino friends celebrating a birthday party or other families strolling around. While these gatherings maintain a separation between the different groups, they can be considered as “intimacies in the open air” (Assaf 2013b), with each family creating its own space delimited by symbolic rather than physical boundaries. The spectacle of urban diversity thus becomes an integral part of the attraction of these spaces.

Similar distinctions can be observed in neighborhood blocks in Saudi Arabia, notably in middle and working-class neighborhoods of Um al Hamam or Ma’ather in central Riyadh where Saudis mix with various communities of migrants. Jeddah’s city center (Al Balad), labelled a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 2014, is surrounded by unplanned settlements hosting middle and working-class populations of

Saudi internal migrants and foreign residents from extremely diverse backgrounds, with a large Yemeni community. In Jeddah, the corniche is also a site of social encounters. Families walk after dinner on Thursdays and Fridays: kin groups or friends from middle-class migrant and non-migrant backgrounds stride the corniche eating ice creams or sweets. In Riyadh, wealthier migrant families and groups take weekend outings to historical sites and picnics in the nearby desert, whereas working class migrants remain confined to their neighborhoods.

Leisure time spent in these more informal, daily spaces is cosmopolitan by nature, in the sense that it brings together the various communities which compose these urban societies while maintaining boundaries between them. Just like in shopping malls, in this case, the commonality between urban users is located at the very local scale. Incidentally, this is also the scale that is most threatened by recent urban development aiming to create more enclaves and segregation (Elshehtawy 2019). Constraints upon these practices can be enforced by the municipal police (*baladiyya*) and certainly there is some degree of social control within migrant communities and across groups. In the UAE, some of the parks and most public beaches now have a paying access, and for some of them are reserved to “families”, thus excluding lower-class foreign men who have migrated alone. In Saudi Arabia, gender segregation is strictly enforced notably due to the looming presence of the religious police: the *mutawwa'in* of the *hay'a* (“committee” in Arabic, the colloquial term for the religious police, the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice). The *hay'a* was empowered during a conservative turn in the 1980s and staffed with men armed with a stick who had the power to police the streets for a wide range of minor infractions. In 2016, they lost their right to directly intervene in public spaces, and new decency laws passed in 2019 transferring their policing role to public authorities. But until 2016, the *hay'a* functioned as a “moral militia” in urban spaces constraining individual and collective behaviors in a gendered, age-sensitive and, to a certain extent, ethnic-based way. Young girls would not dare sit outside of the “family section” of coffee places and restaurants, and young men would not dare enter the family section. This moral policing applied to both Saudi and non-Saudi youth and enforced a gendered and racialized moral urban geography. The risk of being “caught” was far greater for migrants, as it went along with the risk of deportation.

## 12.5 Conclusion

Since the 2000s, while cosmopolitan claims made their way into official rhetoric and diplomacy, Saudi Arabia and the UAE paradoxically adopted more restrictive immigration policies. In Saudi Arabia, brutal controls and mass deportations occurred (Thiollet 2019). In the UAE, policies have favored highly skilled Western migrants while many long-term foreign residents find their visas not renewed for both political and economic reasons. In both countries, increasingly securitized modes of urban governance (Lori 2011) have made communities and daily lives

more fragile for the low-skilled working classes. While laws preventing the long-term settlement of immigrants are more strictly enforced, wealthier expatriates get access to long-term residency rights, mimicking the global divide in access to residency that can be seen in Western contexts (Shachar and Hirschl 2014).

Cosmopolitanism in denial and the paradoxes of cosmopolitan practices observed in Gulf cities are distinct from mainstream understandings of cosmopolitanism in the West as a “willingness to become involved with the Other, and the concern with achieving competence in cultures” (Hannerz 1990, 239). Cosmopolitan moments and places studied in this chapter are more fragile but not intrinsically opposed to those studied in liberal contexts. As Elijah Anderson (2011) observed in the case of a marketplace in Philadelphia, some places offer temporary enclaves for civility in urban contexts otherwise highly segregated according to class, gender and racial hierarchies. These “cosmopolitan canopies” make way for pacified interactions and encounters between groups that are usually defiant of each other, or whose relationships can be marked by conflict and violence in other contexts. Anderson is careful to underline that the cosmopolitan canopy only operates temporarily, for limited moments; and his proposition has been criticized for referring to elite commercial spaces. But these moments of conviviality are an integral part of city-dwellers’ experiences, and influence their subjectivities and their aspirations. They seem all the more important to highlight in Gulf cities as research on the Gulf has mostly studied the impact of *emigration* on sending countries, while the impact of *immigration* in Gulf contexts needs to be further documented. As such, it can inform broader discussions on migration and diversity as a vector of social change in host countries (Castles 2001; Portes 2010; Vertovec 2007). It finally amounts to mainstreaming the Gulf in the discussion on “varieties of cosmopolitanisms,” to borrow a phrase about capitalism (Hall and Soskice 2001), and considering the importance of ongoing changes despite the difficulty of fully capturing them.

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# Chapter 13

## Figures of the Cosmopolitan Condition: The Wanderer, the Outcast, the Foreigner



Michel Agier

### 13.1 Introduction

Ethnographies of globalization and borderlands have led me to rethink the cosmopolitan condition through various figures of “border dwellers.” These are the *wanderer*, the outcast or the *pariah*, the *foreigner* or “*métèque*”<sup>1</sup> and the one philosopher Michel Serres, in his meditation on learning and difference, calls the “*tiers instruit*” (Serres 1994, 1998). I will describe each figure by relating their social condition and their story to the places where they are found. Beyond each particular case, the stories of borderlands dwellers fuel the hypothesis of a wide “borderscape” that can be located anywhere inside the city, as much as “on” the border or in camps.<sup>2</sup>

The *wanderers* in this chapter are African or Afghan, seeking somewhere around the Mediterranean an entry into Europe; the borders are the desert, the sea and the ports, where they are sometimes found in makeshift encampments.

The figure of the *pariah* is associated with the site of the camp that works as a border. Different places – encampments, squats, camps – are perceived to be

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<sup>1</sup> The French term “*métèque*,” translated here by alien, refers to the foreigner in ancient Greece with specific but limited residence rights (the “*metic*” [μέτοικος]) but also has a derogatory meaning in French, a wog. (note of the editor)

<sup>2</sup> On these “border landscapes” or “borderscapes,” see Puig and Bontemps 2014; Wilson and Donnan 2012. (Puig and Bontemps 2014; Wilson and Donnan 2012)

This chapter is partly adapted from Chapter 3 (“Border Dwellers and Borderlands: Studies of Banal Cosmopolitanism”) of my book *Borderlands: Towards an Anthropology of the Cosmopolitan Condition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016) with the help of Hélène Thiollet.

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temporary or precarious settlements even though they represent a form of stability in border situations.

For the Sudanese, Eritrean or Sri Lankan *aliens* working without documents in Beirut, the whole city is a border. They logically find their place in clandestine occupations; squatted buildings can then become their regular place of existence.

And finally, the *tiers instruit* relates to the historical figure of the educated refugee (a scholar) from Europe to the United States in the mid-twentieth century. This allows for a reflection on education as a vector of hybrid identity.

In each of these situations, individuals discover their relative foreignness in the gaze of others. These “others” consist not only of those who live in the cities to which they themselves have only limited access but also those who live in the same borderlands.<sup>3</sup> From this experience each takes a certain distance from their own supposedly “original” identity and gains a certain comprehension of the “global.” The exploration of borderlands and their inhabitants leads to investigating the existence of everyday or ordinary cosmopolitanism in specific sites.

### 13.2 Wandering as Adventure and Border Encampment

Let us start with Mamadou, a so-called *sans-papier* in Paris. He left Guinea for Dakar in 1997, at the age of seventeen, to become a bookkeeper. He wanted to study in the United States or France but did not manage to do so. Having returned to Conakry, he used a false passport to board a plane to France. Arrested and placed in the waiting zone at Roissy, he was then released by the police at midnight in the unknown city of Paris. He slept in a bus shelter, then in a squat, later in a Red Cross centre and then in a house in Nanterre (a shelter for homeless persons). Subsequently he went to Germany and Holland, looking up friends and trying to find ways of become legal. Mamadou was also travelling “to give it a try.” He arrived in Brussels, where he worked *au noir* (illegally). He also worked illegally in Paris: “It’s day to day. I wash dishes, I clean, I do deliveries, it works by contacts.” He had been back in Paris for six months when he told his story to a documentary film-making team in 2003. As he reflected: “We are in the border” (Collectif Précipité 2011).

He was then twenty-two years old, staying in the Emmaüs building on the rue des Pyrénées in the 20th arrondissement. As this “emergency shelter” was closed from eight a.m. to six-thirty p.m., it was just a place to spend the evening and sleep. It allowed for a two-week stay, renewable once. The film-makers wanted to learn the singular experiences of the shelter’s occupants that began with their departure from

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<sup>3</sup>So long as a relationship is not established, it is indeterminate and imagined, abstract and absolute; then it becomes relative, in a particular situation, and the alterity that was “absolute” or “radical” (in the sense that my way of being and thinking is described by others as “radically” other) tends to reduce, if not disappear, since the discovery of singularities now becomes possible. There are different degrees of foreignness depending on the border situation and the moment in the situation.

home. Their stories sketch a “subjective geography that does not coincide with state borders,” a “long wandering of body, emotions, identity.” (Collectif Précipité 2011) But these stories were also “something very concrete: the need to hide in a boat or a lorry, to be constantly changing place” (ibid.). The shelter is an extension of each person’s trajectory: “the same indefinite waiting, the same confinement, the same wandering continues in this shelter, which in the end resembles many other places where they have stopped” (ibid.). But it is also a miniature “observatory of the world.”

The vagabond or wanderer is an old figure who in other times or other places is relatively easy to conceptualize. Fairly close to the peddler or nomad, he is a foreigner who never gives up the freedom to come and go. Arriving today, he can leave tomorrow. Or he could stay. He does not have a fixed dwelling, possibly temporarily “homeless” rather than “undocumented” – which he is too, but this has relatively less importance than his mobility. The acknowledgement of his clandestine status is by chance and almost secondary.

The theoretical notion of wandering has today become something wider and more complex. It does not denote a particular person or a typological category, but rather a moment lived by many displaced persons, including those we call migrants when they cross or try to cross a national border.<sup>4</sup> A survey of the borders around Europe gives the impression of a contemporary world made up of wandering. Starting in the east, at Patras in Greece among Afghan migrants met at crossing points on the border, wandering is the most visible way of being foreign. These people represent a new figure of the vagabond with no ‘indigeneity’ to claim; even if they have Afghan parents, most of them were born in camps in Pakistan or in Iran. Nor do they have a definite place of arrival, being in this way already more global than many adventurous lives that are proclaimed and presented as global in the discourse and branding of globalization. On the other side of the Mediterranean, in the Andalusian province of Almería, border crossing from Morocco by the strait of Gibraltar or the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla places the migrant in a situation of relative “vulnerability” and uncertainty. The moment that follows border-crossing is a time of latency and search for solutions (see Carnet 2011). Between the actual journey and the prolonged stationing at the border, a whole world of “clandestinized” migration is formed.

Across the Mediterranean in the Moroccan city of Rabat and in the woods around Ceuta and Melilla, *foyers* (collective urban lodgings) or encampments (in the forest) have become places of social regulation, providing a certain “stability in instability” (Pian 2009). The social organization of these sites and the relationship to identities of origin (national or otherwise) are important topics for the migrants, raising practical questions that have to be resolved. Each encampment or ghetto (a term used by the migrants themselves) is a little cosmopolitan world, like the Emmaüs shelter in Paris.

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<sup>4</sup>We should also bear in mind, so as to measure the scale of this condition, that the number of so-called “illegal” immigrants is far larger. According to the PNUD, two-thirds of the world’s population is unable to move freely (Wihtol de Wenden 2010).

In the Sahara a bit further east, the trajectories of migrants who cross from Niger to Libya or Algeria forms what Julien Brachet calls a “delocalized territory” (Brachet 2009; Streiff-Fenart and Kabwe-Segatti 2012). A mode of existence (and waiting) is stabilized in the Dirkou oasis, which serves as a regional transit center, and in the lorries crossing the desert in which communities are formed. According to Brachet, a “real migratory field” from the Sahel to Africa’s Mediterranean shores shapes up along these networks and routes, giving rise to a “cosmopolitan desert” (Brachet 2009, 285). These migrants show little *a priori* interest in the transit region or its population; they stay in ghettos (as the migrants put it), where they rub shoulders with migrants expelled from Algeria and prepare to attempt new migrations.

Whether in Africa, America or Asia, wanderers are never sure of reaching the end of the journey they have embarked upon, which is reconfigured as an ‘adventure’ in their imagination. Of course, the imaginary of the “adventurer” (see the Chap. 4 by Fouquet in this book) cannot be separated from the conditions in which, against the background of deeply inequalitarian North-South relations, the clandestine migrant seeks to control his or her wandering. Desires or strategies are interrupted, diverted, constantly reformulated. In the attempt to provide control that characterizes the adventurer lies the energy of men and women who cannot say exactly where their journey will lead them but who adapt to this wandering by making it the context of their social organization and subjectivity. What we have here is *une pensée du mouvement* – a way to think mobility and to think on the move. This helps people imagine the possibility of going forward in a completely hostile context. “At the moment, I’m not living,” says Mamadou in the Emmaüs shelter. “I’m blocked at this point, and time is getting on for me. The battle I’ve started is sleeping but not dead... At this point I’m in a weak position, I’m retreating. As soon as I have the strength, I’ll be able to continue” (Collectif Précipité 2011). Everything indicates that adventure is one of the languages of uncertainty, giving the wandering subject the capacity to think about their life project and to act in dangerous contexts. The transit country and border spaces become in-between spaces, places for adventurers. Wanderers find it hard to leave these spaces as the perspective of the journey remains present so long as they remain in this place, on the border.

Between 1997 and 2009, the Patras encampment in Greece was home to between 500 and 2000 persons. The Calais encampment in France on the shore of the Channel existed from 2002 to 2009 and sometimes sheltered up to 600 people. Other encampments have developed in major “bottlenecks” close to borders, such as those in the woods around the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco or along the border separating Mexico from the United States (Agier and Prestianni 2011).

When new migrants arrive at Patras, they first go to the squat buildings along the huts of the Afghan encampment (a few years ago, Kurds were living there). They look for a room in the shelters and if one is not available, or if there are new arrivals, the migrants build a house. When Yassir, an Afghan Hazara, arrived, he found someone who came from his “hometown” – a town in Pakistan, actually. This person invited Yassir to share his room. A fellow Hazara from the same town in Pakistan was welcomed to share the room a few months later. Despite not knowing one

another, they have people in common, “so I said to him, ‘Come here!’” (Agier and Prestianni 2011, 39).

Mahmoud is presented as the “leader” of the encampment. He is a social worker by training, but here in the migrant community he moves between Patras and Athens. He keeps one of the encampment’s small shops. “Patras is an outlaw town,” he says (Agier and Prestianni 2011, 45).

After twelve years of existence, the Patras encampment has become a fixed point on migration routes. Patras is known to all those who take these routes. Like Zahedan (on the border between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan) or Calais, these places have become cosmopolitan crossroads of a peculiar kind: they are staging posts on a worldwide journey, one that is always risky and unpredictable, which runs from Afghanistan (or Pakistan, or Iran) to Europe. The boundaries of exile constantly change for African, Middle Eastern and Asian exiles who head for Europe as well for South and Central Americans heading towards the U.S. or Canada.

### 13.3 Becoming a Pariah: The Experience of Refugee Camps

Let us turn to Bobo N’K, a refugee from Liberia. He was twenty-nine when I met him in the Boreah refugee camp in Guinea in 2003. He had two children with him, aged seven and nine. His wife fell ill after the birth in 1996 of their second child in the refugee camp of Jui in Sierra Leone and subsequently died. He also had with him three younger brothers (who went to school in the Boreah camp) and a sister with two children of her own. Bobo managed to sustain this family of nine through the “incentive” from the Belgian section of Médecins Sans Frontières (he worked to register sick people who came to the camp’s clinic) and thanks to the rations provided by the World Food Programme.<sup>5</sup> One day in September 1990, he explains, “at four in the morning, the forces of Charles Taylor’s NPFL [National Patriotic Front of Liberia] arrived in the town; they dug in there, people heard gunfire and fled.” Between surprise attacks by the Liberian army or the rebel forces, then from the Sierra Leonean army, violence and arrests in Guinea, crossing the forests, and several times the borders of all three countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea), he went through a whole network of camps, becoming so used to them that they became part of his ordinary life. After twelve years of this rather peculiar wandering, both controlled and forced, Boreah was the ninth camp in which he had lived.<sup>6</sup>

Bobo is very nervous and has difficulty continuing a long conversation, a difficulty that is expressed by nervous tics, disturbed looks, hands that hide his face or rub it vigorously, as if he were washing himself after every sentence. He fears for his safety. Like several hundred other people living in this camp, he has made a

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<sup>5</sup> Refugees are not allowed otherwise to work in the host country.

<sup>6</sup> This story and that of other refugee itineraries is presented and analyzed at greater length in Agier 2011, 87–115.

request to the UN High Commission for Refugees for “resettlement in a third country.”<sup>7</sup> But the UNHCR agent told him that he had to produce a “recommendation” from a humanitarian NGO. This strategy aims to discharge the UN agency from the responsibility of screening thousands of refugees to select the more “deserving,” the more vulnerable, pushing the victimization of refugee identity to a paroxysm. These unfortunate lucky ones would then be able to leave the camps for another life that many still idealize, free and in peace in the “First World.” The delegation of screening to humanitarian NGOs enhances the victimization of refugees and leads international organisations and refugees themselves to perceive their lives in the camp as extraterritorial and undesirable.

Not all the refugees live in camps, but the camp is today the ideal-typical figure of distancing. A total of some 75 million people across the world find themselves in a situation of so-called “forced displacement” – refugees, internally displaced, displacement by natural disasters. 15.9 million refugees (representing 78 per cent of all refugees in 2018) are in protracted situations. They spend protracted time in places separated off – camps, encampments, detention centres, waiting zones or zones of temporary reception. In other people’s eyes their radical foreignness is not a function of their nationality or ethnic identity; rather, it is a product of their refugee status, their statelessness and the place they live in. The absence of rights and distancing from the human community casts them into the ‘human superfluity’ described by Hannah Arendt. With encampment, whether temporary or durable, the distancing characterizes the condition of the foreigner as pariah. Extraterritoriality is the first illusion of this type of foreigner: what grounds his radical foreignness is a biopolitical alterity, produced by the technical and spatial government of migrants and refugees as a separate category of population. Walls and barriers increasingly hard to cross impose radical otherness. Such otherness is primarily manifested in relational terms, rather than cultural differences which are not always experienced concretely. The “pariah” is voiceless and faceless from the standpoint of otherness. How can I get on (or not) with an Afghan migrant if he is placed in a detention center? How can I know whether Bobo N’K is Malinké or Mendé, and in what way this is important or not for him, if he remains inaccessible to me, “enclosed outside” for years?

The experience of encampment (whether extended or not) brings about a rapid cultural change for those who live through it due to the contact made with refugees from other regions or countries. Such meetings would not have been possible without this particular violence. There is also contact with a humanitarian system that is both global and localized. Some refugees learn other languages (including basic international English) and other ways of life, whether in terms of clothes or food. Above all, they learn to “get by” and survive in the humanitarian system: to register multiple times with different administrations to get bigger plots to settle, to duplicate residency (in camp and town), to work informally, to buy (or resale)

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<sup>7</sup>The United States, Australia and northern Europe are the main destinations of these UNHCR resettlements.

supplementary food ration cards, etc. If the refugee camp is indeed the hardened form of a spatial and temporal “border” between citizenships and localities that have been lost and are not yet redeemed, it is also a test for a little cosmopolitan world. The encamped adapt to it, by necessity, as they are not sure of finding elsewhere such a feeling of locality and such a relation of citizenship.

### 13.4 Four Foreigners, and the Squat as Border

Let us now turn to a couple of emigrants in Beirut, Hashani and Peter, with their two small children. She is Sri Lankan, he is Sudanese. They met in Beirut in 2005 where they attended the same Catholic church, a “church for foreigners,” they told me in 2012. At certain times of day, at the morning masses for foreigners and in the afternoons for recreational activities, Sudanese, Sri Lankans and Filipinos meet up, sometimes joined by Lebanese husbands of foreign women.

Hashani arrived in Beirut in 2001 with a contract covering travel and work that an agency had provided before she left Sri Lanka. She started her job as a domestic worker for the household which the agency had set her up with as soon as she arrived. Like many foreign women in her situation, she nevertheless went a whole year without wages (to “repay the air ticket,” she was told). Like many others, also, she slept on the balcony of her employers’ apartment, with a rent deducted from her pay. As official sponsors of her stay in Lebanon, her employers had taken her passport when she arrived to make sure that she wouldn’t run away, she says; she had no other documents, not even a resident card. After two years of this “slave’s life,” as she called it, she left the household but was unable to recover her passport, the “madame” asking for \$1700 for it to be returned. She now works by the hour with various part-time employers. She seems at ease, “controlling” her existence and actually receiving her wages (\$4 per hour). Yet even if she has found her “freedom,” she is in a completely illegal situation.

Peter, forty years old in 2012, also arrived in Beirut in 2001. He left South Sudan at the age of seven. He went to his uncle who lived in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the outskirts of Khartoum that was run by the Sudanese council of churches. Then at twenty-three he became a “volunteer teacher,” working in Khartoum from 1995 to 2000. He requested and obtained admission to a college in Romania, as well as a visa, but did not have the money for the journey. He got to Syria, where he hoped to earn enough money to be able to continue on to Romania. He worked hard as a cleaner in a restaurant but earned too little. There were many Sudanese in Syria at this time, and some were returned to Sudan. “No way out, I gave up,” he says, but in fact he did not give up completely. Ready to go anywhere, the easiest country was neighbouring Lebanon. He entered illegally, as all Sudanese from Syria do. Many Sudanese workers, from both South and North, settle in Beirut for short periods (six months or a year), often living in extremely precarious conditions (ten or twelve single men in a two-room apartment) and working as caretakers,



garbage collectors or watchmen. Some end up remaining there, without really having planned it.

Without documents, and thus at the mercy of his employers, Peter first worked in a petrol station, then as a hotel cleaner and for the last five years as a cleaner in a nightclub (he is paid \$350 per month). Several hundred other Sudanese from Beirut (mostly from the South) have gained a relative stability in Beirut, keeping an eye on their home country. They sometimes even receive visits from relatives. But the prospect of return becomes more distant with time, just like Peter's plan to go to Romania. For Hashani, the prospect of returning to Sri Lanka also dwindles, even if return is stipulated or at least presupposed in the contracts that bring workers from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Madagascar, Bangladesh or Ethiopia to Beirut. Acquiring residence papers is expensive, they explain. One needs to consider both the official and "unofficial" cost of regularization, which amounts to \$3500 for each person plus an initial \$1000 sponsorship and a further \$1000 annually for a year's renewal. These amounts are not acknowledged by government administrations or NGOs but migrants know them, and the high cost dissuades them from trying to "become legal."

Peter and Hashani are among those persons referred to in Beirut as *bidoun* ("without"), a term of foreignness that denotes lack of papers but also lack of rights in general, despite the jobs they hold that make a stable existence possible. Peter is often insulted in the street because of the colour of his skin: "Black people are called *Shaytan* [Satan]," he explains, "and some people make the sign of the cross when they see us." He helps to run a Christian association of South Sudanese in Beirut, which plays an important role in assisting newcomers, establishing relations with part of the local population (religious leaders or Lebanese husbands of foreign wives), and providing some sort of space for peaceable sociability.

Through these dynamics of exclusion/inclusion, Peter and Hashani's family left me with a nuanced impression: inclusion through work, exclusion by almost everything else; strong individualization of everyday life, occasional "communitarian" gathering on Sunday mornings. This ambiguity corresponds to another old figure of relative foreignness, that of the ancient Greek *metoikos*. These "residents without city rights" lived *in* the city, providing an indispensable subaltern labour-force (Greek democracy needed the excluded in order to subsist), but alienated from social, political and property rights. Unlike pariahs, their presence was not forbidden. Unlike slaves, they enjoyed relative liberty. But they were also, like Peter and Hashani (and their two children) in Beirut, sustainably settled in an *in-between* which they "occupy" and "inhabit" with relative success.

The squat is a characteristic form of urban residence of these illegal presences in the city, of the condition of residents without civic rights. The so-called "Gaza Hospital" squat in the Sabra district of Beirut allows us to approach this reality via two recently-arrived undocumented migrant workers. Gaza Hospital is the name of an eleven-story building in which close to 500 people live in a precarious situation. Built in the 1970s by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) when it had its headquarters in the Sabra district, the hospital was gradually abandoned after the eviction of the PLO in 1982. It was partially destroyed that same year by the Israeli army when it invaded Beirut (leading to the massacres at Sabra and Chatila). It

burned at the time of the “war of the camps” and the “internal war” between 1986 and 1987, at which point it was finally abandoned for medical purposes.<sup>8</sup> According to stories collected in 2012, the Gaza Hospital squat was founded in 1987 by three Palestinian women wandering the streets of Sabra with their children in search of shelter after fleeing violence from the neighboring Chatila camp.<sup>9</sup> They entered the building which had been completely deserted after a fire that had damaged several floors. The Syrian army which then occupied the Sabra zone allowed them to enter and settle in the partly ruined building. “Then in three days, people arrived and it was full,” one of the squat’s three founders explains. Other Palestinian refugees from Chatila joined them, then others again from other Beirut camps or other parts of the city.

Controlled today by two Palestinian families who have invested a great deal in transforming the building, Gaza Hospital is home to Palestinian and Lebanese-Palestinian families, Syrian families who have long been settled there, Syrian migrant workers and many Syrian refugees, Egyptian and Sudanese migrants, and, more recently, Bangladeshi women migrants. The latter rent rooms in the basement, which were built by a son of one of the two leading families. At the end of 2012 there were a total of 127 dwellings of various size (most often one or two rooms, with very few apartments of three or four rooms) and some 500 inhabitants.

The squat counted eight floors when it opened. It now counts ten, and an eleventh was under construction in 2012. No one has property rights, but a distinction is made without real conflict between an owner, who is housed for free, and a tenant. For a few, at least, the squat has become an object of investment (construction) and profit (renting), even if the overall impression is that of a “vertical favela,” extremely precarious in terms of hygiene, water and electricity supply, waste collection and waste water management. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an NGO supported by the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission, intervened in 2008 to improve health conditions in the building.

The people who have remained in the Gaza Hospital squat are the least legitimate and most fragile inhabitants from Chatila. They did not take part in the resettlement process that was organised under the aegis of UNRWA after the end of the “war of the camps,” when Chatila camp was rebuilt. They are illegitimate either because they lived in unofficial zones of Chatila outside the camp boundary or because they were housed or sublet without an occupancy title in the camp itself. In many respects, therefore, Gaza Hospital is an extension of the Chatila camp. It is under this rubric that the NRC, from its office in the Chatila camp, intervened. Family and friendship ties with Chatila inhabitants remain strong. The few hundred meters between one place and the other are crossed on a daily basis. But the squat,

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<sup>8</sup>On the political and urban history of the Chatila camp, some 500 m from the Gaza Hospital squat in the Sabra district, see Abou Zaki 2014.

<sup>9</sup>The Chatila camp is a densely-populated urban neighborhood set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1949 as a space of refuge for Palestinian refugees. It witnessed mass massacres during the Lebanese civil war in September 1982 and since 2011 has hosted Syrian-Palestinian refugees.

occupying a space that is entirely Lebanese and Beirut, does not enjoy the exceptional legal and political status of the camp. On top of their illegitimate status vis-à-vis Chatila, the Gaza Hospital inhabitants face the illegality of their settlement in the Sabra district. There is, in fact, a legal void about the status and future of the property of the Palestinian Authority after its departure from Beirut. Added to this is a bad reputation bound up with the insalubrious nature of the place and rumors of arms traffickers – as if a Palestinian “contagion” spread from the camps to the city through Gaza Hospital.

How has the establishment and survival of this place been possible? How was it transformed and stabilized, to the point of becoming, twenty-six years after its opening, a place of enduring urban presence for several generations of refugees and migrants in a precarious situation, with a possible insertion (even if marginal) in the city? Gaza Hospital is, in fact, the culmination of several histories. A Palestinian history, of course, as we have briefly mentioned. But also a history of conflicts and displacements in the region, including the latest Syrian episode which has had substantial economic and social effects on the life of the squat. Many Syrian refugees (potential new tenants), in fact, are adding to the Syrian families and workers who have long been present. It is also a history of migrant workers coming from the region and beyond – mostly construction workers and domestic workers from Syria, Egypt, North and South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia – whose mobility and precarious living conditions in Beirut lead them to the squat as a way to access the city. Finally, an urban history, that of the city of Beirut, which has made Sabra a contemporary moral space, different from the “Palestinian grouping” that it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Commentators in Beirut now describe Sabra as a “zone of cosmopolitan misery,” most completely embodied by Gaza Hospital. The squat brings together several generations, several waves and types of migrants and refugees, and it has become a site of a renewed urban otherness as well as a site of mobility.

### 13.5 The “Tiers-Instruit” in His Labyrinth

Finally, let us turn the case of a forty-year-old Austrian-Jewish emigrant who settled in the United States in 1939 with his wife and children, dying there twenty years later. He was a sociologist and would soon be employed at the New School of Social Research in New York, which in the years of the Second World War became a place of refuge for Jewish European researchers and teachers in the social sciences and philosophy who were persecuted and threatened on account of their religious origins.

Alfred Schuetz, an emigrant sociologist, drew upon his experience to reflect on the experience of adjustment, interpretation and apprenticeship that is the lot of the foreigner everywhere. He was interested in the way that cultural models intersect and overlap, generating new “thinking as usual” that are singular and syncretic. The stranger “starts to interpret his new social environment in terms of his “thinking as

usual" ... with in the scheme of reference brought from his home groups, but this soon proves inadequate as he has to orient himself in a new cultural world (language, customs, laws, folklore, fashions, etc.). "In other words, the cultural pattern of the approached group is not a shelter but a field of adventure" (Schuetz 1944, 506). It is even, he added, a "labyrinth in which he has lost all sense of his bearings" (Schuetz 1944, 507). From this test the foreigner draws two fundamental characteristics: on the one hand, objectivity and "intelligence of the world" (he has discovered that "the normal way of living is far from being as assured as it seemed" [507]) and, on the other, an "ambiguous loyalty" (507), or a reticent or incapability of entirely replacing one cultural model with another. The foreigner is thus made into "a cultural hybrid on the verge of two different patterns of group life, not knowing to which of them he belongs" (Schuetz 1944, 507).

A number of more recent publications have sought to describe and understand this ambivalent "border" position in which the emigrant/immigrant finds himself, a condition of double absence.<sup>10</sup> The European immigrant in the United States in the mid-twentieth century and his cultural labyrinth prefigure an increasingly ordinary condition in the coming cosmopolitan world. The profusion of new walls and the toughening of border policies since the 1990s paradoxically create border spaces - where foreigners tend to spend an increasingly long time - and processes that are increasingly cosmopolitan. Wanderers, pariahs or alien become themselves sites for a new cosmopolitanism.

### 13.6 A New Cosmopolitan Condition

The wandering of the vagabond traces a path with no return, contrary to Odysseus's journeying, in which Ithaca is both the first and final staging-post. The "pariah" is set aside in a confined place for the undesirable on a border between societies and nation-states, a liveable "in-between" from which it is hard to escape. Aliens are submitted to unlimited exploitation and they live in urban spaces without real access to the "city," without rights, socially undesirably yet economically useful. They squat, they camp, they live in the interstices of urban life. They all experience, with greater or lesser social and economic comfort, a cultural "labyrinth" in which their sense of belonging to the world grows while they move away from inherited identities.

The brief portraits of persons and places I have presented offer a sketch of various social figures that seeks a more general meaning. These persons help us understand the condition of the foreigner today. They are not exhaustive: individual "portraits" retain their singular character. The experience of anthropologists, in fact, is always marked by such singular encounters, often well hidden behind the

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<sup>10</sup>Abdelmalek Sayad (1977) describes these two absences (of a home country and a receiving country) combined in a single person.

“informant,” through which the scholar has found a real friend and often a fine connoisseur of the society that he has come to study. The figures proposed here illustrate the social possibilities of relative foreignness in which the dimensions of work, residence, personal and family itinerary are essential, as well as the contexts in which they each live their foreignness and cultural transformation. The wanderer, the pariah, the alien, and the *tiers-instruit* seek to be historical and relational, thus universal in their foundation and their processes, rather than ethnically specific and particularistic. These figures do not embody social categories but rather illustrate ways of being foreign or a condition of foreignness. They are present to a greater or lesser extent in every person in the process of living a border situation, representing a moment of uncertainty and relative foreignness.

The figures of “border dwellers” presented above thus lead us to extend the investigation and reconsider the cosmopolitan condition today as a whole. This presupposes de-nationalizing as much as de-ethnicizing the way of thinking the foreigner (Beck 2007). How do we become foreigners, and how do we cease to be so? By multiplying borders while the means of mobility have spread across the planet, is globalization making the condition of foreigner disappear? Or is it, on the contrary, making it the most widely shared condition in the world, despite inherited identities? Border dwellers lead us to borderlands of various kinds where one can experience cosmopolitan life as both specific and universal, ordinary and anticipatory.

The displaced or the people on the move that I have written about are remote from the mobile global class who travel in sealed aseptic bubbles. They are different from these usual champions of world citizenship whose paths they sometimes cross. Their cosmopolitanism derives from the fact that they necessarily have the world in their head, even if they did not chose to do so, even without a personal theory about it. We find here the basic principle of the cosmopolitan *realism* of Immanuel Kant: we have to understand one another “because the earth is round.” In a *negative* sense, as Étienne Balibar notes, we probably do live in “a single world, in the sense that it is no longer in anyone’s power to escape the effects of the actions of others, and in particular from their destructive effects” (Balibar 2010, 41). Being in a world wider than local or even national boundaries can be a painful and dangerous experience, but it also brings expectations and hopes, projections into a distant future of “home,” that are built in a *de facto* multilocality.<sup>11</sup> The spirit of adventure and the perception of a cultural labyrinth are clear expressions of a cosmopolitan consciousness. The feeling of being “of the world” but undesirable in the world, or at least less desirable than others, is also a form of cosmopolitan consciousness, that of the alien, the wanderer or the pariah. The world imposes itself onto them in relation to others and this cosmopolitanism is both pragmatic and relational. Being in the world at the border forces one to deal with the organization of everyday life and the definition of one’s place in society. Ordinary cosmopolitanism arises from the concrete everyday

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<sup>11</sup> I use the term “multilocality” in preference to “trans-” or “supralocality” in order to keep the concrete reference to places and multiple anchoring rather than to uprooting.

experience of the border, denoting a condition that is not *substantially* bound to particular social categories or impoverished classes of migrants, even if it is largely on these that my reflections are based. It seems to me that we can draw from these migrant experiences a decentred perspective on the world. Building upon Edward Said's reflections on exile (2002), philosopher Seloua Luste Boulbina situates the most clearly "decolonized" thought, emancipated from any assignment of identity, in what she calls "between-worlds": those "between" worlds that are formed by experience and the "science of the concrete" – the experience of migrants on their travels (Luste Boulbina 2013; Said 2002).

This knowing-how-to-be in the world is strengthened by the duration and repetition of the border position for those women and men who move around and thus live more than others the encounter between different local worlds. With the spatial and temporal widening of borders, this condition is potentially generalizable, anticipating a culture of borders as a global culture in the process of becoming. This is a cosmopolitanism both wider and more universal, more genuine and authentic, than the elite cosmopolitans often opposed to the locals (Bauman 2001). It is also different from the abstract cosmopolitan "consciousness" of Ulrich Beck (2006) or the *cosmopolitics* of transnational activists (Agier 2020; Tassin 2003). The three most common usages of the "cosmopolitan" word and idea (global class, cosmopolitan consciousness, cosmopolitics) do not describe the cosmopolitan *condition* in the sense of a lived experience, the everyday and ordinary experience of sharing the world, no matter how inequalitarian and violent it may be. My different conception of cosmopolitanism is drawn rather from the experience of border situations, in the broad sense in which I have used the term. The monopolization of the cosmopolitan idea by the global media class, by the cosmopolitanism of world citizens, or by globalized events, shows that cosmopolitanism, just like global mobility, is marked by multiple inequalities, and that its definition is an object of conflict.

It is crucial in this context to say from where and of whom one is speaking when talking about cosmopolitanism: "whose cosmopolitanism?" is the essential question. It is also important to conclude with the most accurate possible description of cosmopolitanism: to answer the question "which cosmopolitanism?"

In a context of identity-based enclosure – nationalist, urban, neo-local or neo-tribal – which highlights the difficulty of understanding and living these border situations, the everyday and ordinary cosmopolitan condition cannot simply be reduced to its sociological component: the circulation of the poor, a "popular," "transnational" or "migratory" cosmopolitanism. In anthropological terms, it is formed by the experience of the border, which globalization is generalizing, and with which we have to learn to live.

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