

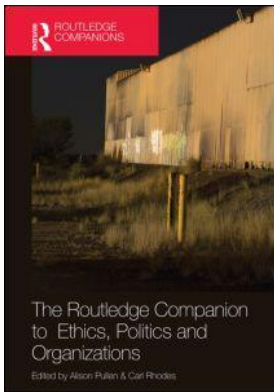
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Part 2

Postcolonial, globalized and cosmopolitan ethics

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Positioning the plural ethos of cosmopolitanism in global organizations

Maddy Janssens and Chris Steyaert

Introduction

“How many more must die for Qatar’s World Cup?” asked *The Guardian* in its article on the abuse and death of several migrant workers involved in the construction of future football stadiums (Cohen, 2013). While mortal casualties have been common during industrial and even post-industrial activity, the globalization of organizational life brings along new imbalances and inequalities, which Rosi Braidotti (2013: 9) called “perverse planetary effects”. New ethical considerations are required whether we consider labour relations of complex global undertakings like the World Cup or the Olympic Games (Müller and Steyaert, 2013), zoom in on the global coordination of aid-relief after environmental catastrophes such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans or Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (Lalonde, 2007) or reflect on the physical and mental health conditions due to the neo-Tayloristic working conditions at Amazon as revealed in undercover journalism (Cadwalladr, 2013; Dixon, 2013; O’Connor, 2013) and the child labour and precarious working conditions in the Bangladeshi textile sector (Rahman, 2014).

Under the condition of globalization and its transnational governance challenges, a critical analysis of the role of multinational companies (MNCs) in global organizational assemblages is needed. This discussion is starting, as can be observed by the recent interest, in moving corporate social responsibility (CSR) into a political CSR (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007). Here, the main argument is that many MNCs take up a political role, filling the institutional void of global governance concerning responsible business practices. Along with the nation-state’s decreasing role as regulator, MNCs – sometimes under public pressure – are engaging in activities that traditionally are regarded as governmental responsibilities such as labour standards, human rights, natural environment, public health or social security. Under the motto of sustainable management or CSR, they – or through private self-regulatory institutions – set codes of conduct, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations to establish legitimacy for their self-regulatory behaviour (Doh et al., 2010; Gould, 2010; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). This discussion on the political role of MNCs has only just begun (Mäkinen and Kourula, 2012; Whelan, 2012) and we believe that also international business and organizational scholars will start engaging with ethico-political questions of what it means to operate in a global world. Whereas in the past, the study of international business (IB) has tended to ignore questions of ethics or restricted

its ethical understanding to the phenomenon of corruption (Doh et al., 2010; Egri and Ralston, 2008), the current condition of globalization with its resurgence of exclusion and inequalities – and the increasing societal attention to sustainability – is likely to create ethical awareness and bring ethical questions to the foreground.

In this chapter, we would like to contribute to this emerging awareness of ethics in IB by turning to cosmopolitan theory and exploring how the thinking on cosmopolitanism offers us possibilities to develop different ethical stances and political positions of global organizations. If, as Clegg and Rhodes (2006: 176) write, “[e]thical questions are at the core of what modern organizations offer the world, in their modes of organizing”, we suggest that a cosmopolitan framework can assist in the analysis of the ethics and politics of global organizing. Cosmopolitanism is increasingly recognized as a plural, theoretical framework that scholars from different disciplines have interpreted as a new ethos, suitable for twenty-first-century global life (Featherstone, 2002). It is an identifiable intellectual movement united by the recognition that the process of global transformation is irreversibly converting the very nature of the social world, self–other relations, and the place of states within that world. As Delanty and Inglis (2011: 1) state: “Having begun as a sense of non-national affiliation – declaring oneself to be a ‘citizen of the world’. . . – it now encompasses a much wider range of issues, all of which are to do with how to think and act in ways that systematically take account of living at a time of wide-ranging and deep-seated global connectivity among all people in the planet”.

Within the multiple understandings of cosmopolitanism (Delanty and Inglis, 2011; Featherstone, 2002; Pollock et al., 2000), in this chapter we distinguish three main perspectives: political, cultural and social (Janssens and Steyaert, 2012). The first, a political perspective, refers to world citizenship as the essential harmony of human kind, suggesting a normative stance of universal virtues. The second, cultural perspective, zooms in on the otherness of cultures, emphasizing appreciation for the other but also claiming the impossibility of knowing the other. The third, social perspective, focuses on everyday practices in which the self meets the global other, emphasizing moments of openness and transformation. Discussing these three perspectives, we aim to show multiple ethico-political positionings of global organizations and MNCs in particular, each being characterized by different power-related assumptions and main ethical tensions.

However, in understanding the ethics of global organizing, cosmopolitanism is considered simultaneously the ‘description’, the ‘solution’ and the ‘problem’, not in the least since cosmopolitanism is often considered an ally of global capitalism rather than its remedy (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015; Braidotti, 2013). For instance, Kurasawa (2004: 251) argues that “the concatenation of an unbridled neoliberalism, a hardening of ethno-religious conflicts and the acceleration of global integration has thrust cosmopolitanism into the limelight, with an ever-increasing number of thinkers championing it as a way out of our current intellectual and political morass”. However, ever since Delanty (2006) coined the term “critical cosmopolitanism”, the question raised has been: what are the doubts, tensions and misgivings of the cosmopolitan project and whose cosmopolitanism is being invoked and for what purposes? (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015).

The plural of cosmopolitanism

Relying on cosmopolitanism to explore different ethico-political positionings in a global world, we recognize that our treatment of this body of literature is by no means exhaustive. Yet, we will show that cosmopolitanism is a plural and rich concept (Delanty and Inglis, 2011; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Pollock et al., 2000), which gives us the chance to develop multiple options

to think about ethics and politics in global organizations. Cosmopolitanism thus needs to be addressed plurally and its genealogy has to be examined critically.

Historically, cosmopolitanism is mostly seen as originating in ancient Greece, with Kant being the crucial figure in the evolution of European ideas of cosmopolitanism. ‘Cosmopolitan’ is derived from the Greek word *kosmopolites* and literally means ‘citizen of the world’. It was expressed by Diogenes the Cynic, the first person to declare himself a ‘citizen of the world’, a rebel against the city-state system. In opposition to people defining themselves by their local belongingness, he defined himself as a ‘kosmo polites’, signifying a more universal definition of the human being (Nussbaum, 2010). This idea was later developed by the Stoics, who emphasized the importance of the cosmos, the world rather than the polis, the city as a political system where harmony can be achieved (Held, 2002). Their cosmopolitan idea is that the wider community that a person belongs to should be the source of moral obligations. A second important momentum of cosmopolitanism occurred during the Enlightenment where Kant envisioned that locality constrains humans and their abilities to understand the boundaries of certain rules, convictions and predispositions. For Kant, being a member of a cosmopolitan society permits a ‘cosmopolitan right’ or the possibility of people to have a voice across political communities (Held, 2002; Nussbaum, 2010).

Whereas there is no denying of both influences, Vertovec and Cohen (2002) point out that cosmopolitanism has a much wider and more complex genealogy than that arising from either ancient Greek or Kantian ethics. They refer to the Arab and Muslim cultures, Chinese philosophers, and different religions advocating a universal message to show that the idea of cosmopolitanism finds fertile soil in many cultures and many contexts. For them, the idea itself remains universal but the locale in which cosmopolitanism finds a friendly home may change over time, from Athens in the ancient world, Istanbul and Venice in the early modern period, cities such as Paris, Berlin and London in the modern period to São Paulo, Singapore or Mumbai nowadays.

Informed by the plurality of cosmopolitan theory (Delanty and Inglis, 2011; Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), we distinguish three variations of cosmopolitanism and argue that each of them offers a different way to think about ethics and politics in global organizations (Janssens and Steyaert, 2012). For each perspective, we derive an ethical positioning by discussing its main conception and translating it to global organizations. In the discussion, we engage with the tensions between universality and particularity, between normativity and situativity, and between application and affirmation, aiming to see how the three cosmopolitan perspectives help to nuance our understanding of the ethics and politics of global organizations.

A political perspective on cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism as the centrality of common humanity

Central to the political perspective on cosmopolitanism is the thought of a common humanity where human beings are bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. It “translates ethically into an idea of shared or common moral duties towards others by virtue of this humanity” (Brown and Held, 2010: 1). This understanding is probably the most well-known one (as well as widely discussed) and refers to normative issues relating to both world citizenship and a new political order of world democracy concerned with issues of global justice, the protection of universal human rights and forming institutional global systems so that they are in line with cosmopolitan moral principles (Brown and Held, 2010; Delanty and Inglis, 2011).

Cosmopolitanism refers here to a philosophy that urges us all to be citizens of the world, creating a worldwide community of humanity committed to common values with an openness toward others whose origin is non-local (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). This neo-Kantian understanding came to the foreground through the much-discussed essay by Martha Nussbaum (1994) on patriotism and cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum's cosmopolitan idea is that each person inhabits two communities: the community of the place where one is born and lives, and a larger one "which is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun" (Nussbaum, 2010: 157) and it is this latter community that becomes the source of moral obligations. World citizenship therefore means that local influence and attachment to families, neighbourhoods, workplaces, nations and churches must give way to inclusive humanitarian aspirations. It implies the elimination of the 'accident of birth', the undoing of the original local conditioning and transcendence of the restraints of local influence. This idea of cosmopolitan citizenship is thus marked by the decreasing importance of territory in the definition of the rights of citizenship (Delanty and Inglis, 2011), and Nussbaum (2002) holds that in an era of global connection, the cosmopolitan ethos has become a moral necessity. On their way to becoming world citizens, human beings need to loosen their local attachments, to establish a critical stance towards their own locality and to assume an intellectual stance of openness towards strangers and strangeness (Nussbaum, 2002).

These same normative values are taken up by political scholars who explore institutional ways to create a cosmopolitan world. The argument to conceptualize a cosmopolitan world order is that many emergent political issues such as human rights, pollution, crime and terrorism are beyond the capacity of individual states to control. Also the political and economic processes of globalization and regionalization increasingly impact upon the accustomed sovereignties of the nation-state and ask for the institutionalization of democratic activities which are no longer restricted to nation-states only. In most cases, such institutional focus is concerned with questions about how cosmopolitan principles can be structured in practice or how current global systems are failing the ethical concerns of moral cosmopolitanism (Brown and Held, 2010). Several scholars have argued for a new cosmopolitan order or cosmopolitan democracy such as Archibugi (2008), Habermas (2003), Held (1995) and Meyer et al. (1997). For instance, in the work of Held (2002, 2004), cosmopolitan values are expressed in terms of a set of eight principles – equal worth and dignity; active agency; personal responsibility and accountability; consent; collective decision making about public matters through voting procedures; inclusiveness and subsidiarity; avoidance of serious harm; and sustainability – that are interrelated and together form the basis of a cosmopolitan orientation. These principles are argued to be universally shared and realize the protection of each person's equal significance in the "moral realm of all humanity" (Held, 2010: 230).

Global organizations as actors within a single human community

Translating this cosmopolitan understanding into an ethico-political positioning of global organizations, these organizations become actors in a single, human community whose ethical responsibility is about moral obligations owed to all human beings based solely on our humanity alone (Brown and Held, 2010). The political cosmopolitan ethos urges global organizations to act like citizens of the world, treating all human beings, regardless of their origins, categorical identity or social status, as equal participants of that single, human community (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015). As this ethos is geared towards a universal ethical code, global organizations can realize the abstract idea about the essential harmony of humankind in the cosmopolis through following a series of general guidelines and principles that represent the centrality of humanity.

Central to this is that the ethico-political positioning is one of taking up duties of global justice and protecting universal human rights (Brown and Held, 2010).

Interestingly, the literature on CSR, and political CSR in particular, strongly corresponds with this political cosmopolitan ethos. The scholarly interest is focused on describing the multi-stakeholder initiatives which bring together corporations and civil society organizations, as well as, in some cases, governments, labour organizations and academia (Fransen and Kolk, 2007; Rasche, 2012) to take up a variety of social and environmental problems and set ethical codes and rules to address transnational governance voids. The United Nations Global Compact is probably one of the best known codes (Rasche, 2009; Gould, 2010), defining ten principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption which are argued to ‘enjoy universal consensus’ (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/abouttheGC/TheTenPrinciples>). Global companies subscribing to the UN Global Compact are asked to embrace, support and enact, within their sphere of influence, a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. The emphasis of these multi-stakeholder initiatives is very strongly oriented towards setting universal rules, either as defining broad principles of engagement such as the UN Global Compact but also as offering reporting frameworks for communicating and assessing non-financial information (e.g. the Global Reporting Initiative), outlining criteria for certification (SA 8000) or standardizing management processes related to CSR (ISO 26000) (Gilbert et al., 2011; Waddock, 2008).

Of all norms and principles, increasing attention is given to human rights violations (Arnold, 2010; Wettstein, 2010). In addition to the growing consensus that corporations should take a firm stand in case of human rights violations (Maak, 2009), scholars are calling for an understanding of MNCs’ responsibility that entails more active agency in matters of global justice. For instance, considering that corporations are political actors of considerable power, Wettstein (2010) argues that companies’ responsibility must go beyond the idea of ‘doing no harm’ or ‘silent complicity’. Rather, as MNCs are in positions of political authority, one must demand from MNCs a duty or positive obligations to protect human rights. Such discussions clearly refer to the political responsibility of global organizations in creating principles in a compatible way with the ‘logic’ of political cosmopolitanism.

Next to setting ethical codes of conduct, the political CSR literature emphasizes a type of public deliberation for multi-stakeholder initiatives that strongly reflects the political cosmopolitan ethos. Theorizing multi-stakeholder initiatives primarily within Habermas’s deliberative model of democracy (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007, 2011), the idea put forward is that global organizations need to engage in public deliberation with a variety of actors. Through a communicative process with other societal actors characterized by the “forceless force of the better argument” (Habermas, 1990: 185, cited in Scherer and Palazzo, 2011: 916), MNCs can take up their political engagement in the public arena but also establish normative legitimacy for their activities. Underlying this is the same idea that the role of global organizations is one of co-creating a worldwide community of humanity through communicative action (Habermas, 2003) or deliberative reason (Ferrara, 2007). Negotiations and problem solving are seen as guided by the idea of what is common to people as citizens of the world (Held, 2002) and therefore resulting in contributing to global justice.

A cultural perspective on cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism as respect for otherness

Central in the cultural perspective is the opening up of cosmopolitanism to issues around meaning and culture (Delanty and Inglis, 2011). Hannerz’s (1990) essay on ‘Cosmopolitans and Locals

in *World Culture*' was a seminal text drawing attention to the cultural dimension of living and working in a global world. He regards 'genuine cosmopolitanism' as: "an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other . . . an intellectual and aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity" (Hannerz, 1990: 239). As such rather than a normative stance of ethical codes and universal virtues, cosmopolitanism in this understanding represents a mode of cultural orientation to the world and emphasizes appreciation for the plurality of cultures made inevitable by globalization (Featherstone, 2002; Hannerz, 1990, 1996; Urry, 1995). Its ethics zooms in on otherness, being open-minded to difference and the Other, and showing an interest in engaging with people from other cultures.

Along with this orientation towards otherness, cultural cosmopolitanism is guided by the possibility to engage with multiple forms of belonging and identity. Rather than seeing cosmopolitan peoplehood as merely an allegiance to the world community as opposed to national community, cosmopolitanism involves a reframing of identities, loyalties and self-understanding in ways that have no clear direction (Delanty, 2006). This argument follows that of Appiah (2005) who argues that cosmopolitans are people who construct their lives from whatever cultural resources they find themselves attached to. Friedman (1994: 204), too, sees cosmopolitanism as characterized by a mode of behaviour that "in identity terms is betwixt and between without being liminal. It is shifting, participating in many worlds, without becoming part of them". For Waldron (1992), it is such partial cultural competencies that comprise 'the cosmopolitan self'. If we live the cosmopolitan life, he says, "we draw our allegiances from here, there and everywhere. Bits of cultures come into our lives from different sources, and there is no guarantee that they will all fit together" (Waldron, 1992: 788–789).

Most especially postcolonial scholarship has contributed to the ethics of otherness by rewriting a Eurocentric history and making visible different historical experiences of former colonized states, ethnic groups or global diasporic communities. Indeed, the western genealogy of cosmopolitan studies poses a problem, which urges the question whether "cosmopolitanism [is] uncosmopolitan in being a product of the West?" (Delanty, 2012: 4). This postcolonial approach replies to that question by drawing attention to the historical context and the experiences of the western society and its model of modernity (Delanty and Inglis, 2011). Therefore, an adequate account of the history of cosmopolitanism would take account of non-western forms of cosmopolitanism (Pollock, 2000) and acknowledge alternative histories of cosmopolitanism as practised in the many other "world cultures" (Inglis, 2012). Through the development of postcolonial scholarship, attention is given to historical and contemporary varieties of cosmopolitanism, by studying the movements of global diasporic communities or engaging with dialogues between civilizations (Mignolo, 2012).

A postcolonial critique of a universalist ethics which dominates moral and partially political cosmopolitanism tries to dismantle its dualist ethics by pointing out, as Said (1978) has done, how its construction of the Other is orientalist, marking difference with the West as inferior. As a consequence, global solidarity becomes hierarchical, as the self-understanding that sees itself in moral terms is constructed to save others; however, such operation is based on a certain dislocation from history through which those who care for the Other obtain a moral positioning that disconnects them from the responsibility of the injuries they have contributed to (Jabri, 2007). Whether drawing upon Said's analysis or on other explorations of otherness, such as Bhabha's notion of the completely Other (Bhabha, 1994) and Spivak's idea of absolute alterity (Spivak, 1993), a postcultural ethics deconstructs intercultural relations as hierarchical. Aiming to resist global domination and to favour heterogeneity, the ethical moment is related to the paradox that the possibility of alterity can only be guaranteed through claiming the impossibility of knowing the Other.

Global organizations as culturally competent actors

Translating these cosmopolitan understandings to an ethical positioning of global organizations, the focus is no longer on general moral principles or codes but changes to understand global organizations as culturally competent actors that intervene in worldly problems by developing cultural capital. In this respect, a few studies examining cosmopolitanism in daily life conceive cosmopolitanism as a set of cultural competences or cultural capital. Studies on foreign families living temporarily in France (Wagner, 1998) and parents' choice to give their children an international education in the Netherlands (Weenink, 2008) suggest to conceptualize cosmopolitanism as a set of cultural competences or as a form of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Cosmopolitan capital is, first of all, a propensity to engage in globalizing social arenas (such as international schools for children of expatriates, or international business schools that prepare students for positions of managers in multinational companies) and, second, it comprises bodily and mental predispositions and competencies ('savoir faire') which help individuals to engage confidently in such arenas (Weenick, 2008; Wagner, 1998). For these scholars, applying the concept of cosmopolitan cultural capital directs attention to the ways people try to make the best out of the cosmopolitan condition, given the cultural resources they have at their disposal and the social arenas they are engaging in. However, a cultural cosmopolitan view of global organizations requires a 'genuine cosmopolitanism', a cosmopolitan openness that does not negotiate with the other culture but accepts it as a 'package deal'. Such an attitude Hannerz (1996) completely misses in the intercultural training industry which he labels a 'culture shock prevention industry' where culture is conceived as something to be managed.

Countering such a managerialist and essentializing view on culture thus implies a much more critical take on the possible ethico-political positionings of global organizations. Reading international business and cross-cultural management studies from a postcolonial perspective, scholars (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006; Jack and Westwood, 2009; Westwood, 2004) have shown how essentialistic and Orientalistic descriptions of the cultural differences between the West and other cultures are scattered throughout this literature. For instance, central texts depict sometimes clearly gross generalizations, not to say simplistic stereotypes. Cultures, regions and even continents are homogenized and undifferentiated through claiming that the cultural descriptions apply 'in general' to all. Like the Orientalists described by Said (1978), researchers in this field have also displayed binary thinking that represents the other as exotic and inferior, in need of civilization (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006). They have imposed their concepts on members of the culture they are studying, making the representations of the other accessible, understandable and manageable. This leads to forms of negativity, where the other is seen as dangerous and threatening as well as suffering from lack or deficiency (Westwood, 2004). The texts perform a typical Orientalist practice by tying management practices of the other countries to ineffectiveness or failure.

Instead, the perspective of cultural cosmopolitanism relates ethical responsibility with the question whether and how the Other can be known and represented (Rhodes and Westwood, 2007), not in the least through the invention of new concepts. For instance, Frenkel's (2008) conceptualization of the MNC as third space acknowledges otherness as we construct ethical relations in hybrid, corporate spaces. Applying Bhabha's (1994) epistemology of mimicry, hybridity and the third space, Frenkel offers an alternative understanding of the nature of the MNC where national affiliation receives its meaning and significance through the encounter within the MNC, where culture is hybrid and all actors in the MNC can strategically draw on different cultural repertoires available to them from both inside and outside the firm, and where relations between host countries can be conceptualized as hierarchical power relations embedded

in a postcolonial world order. Frenkel argues that Bhabha's concept of the third space forces us to understand that the construction of asymmetrical power relations between the colonizers and the colonized is an ambivalent process that never closes off the (ethical) possibility that the colonized will creatively subvert the knowledge imposed by the colonizer.

A social perspective on cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism as a social process of global interdependencies

A social perspective on cosmopolitanism is a more recent development which can be seen as an attempt to avoid a purely normative analysis of cosmopolitan values and principles as well as a pure cultural analysis of diversity (Delanty and Inglis, 2011). Instead, its aim is to understand the social process through which cosmopolitanism is produced (Beck, 2004; Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Calhoun, 2002), taking issue empirically with a lived cosmopolitanism and its complex consequences and positionings. This approach is sometimes called 'cosmopolitanization' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006) which seeks to capture the growth of many transnational forms of life which emerge from global interdependencies and "the processes by which the cosmopolitan perspective replaces the national in people's everyday lives" (Beck, 2004: 139).

In focusing on the awareness and actual performance of cosmopolitanism in daily lives, this perspective emphasizes the situatedness of social interactions in a global world. Cosmopolitanism is not so much seen as an outcome of social and cultural interaction, but rather an uneven, incomplete and situated process that emerges in specific moments and contexts (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015). This approach recognizes that people's actions are rooted and attends to contexts and situations where people make choices about how to engage with and act towards other human beings. Cosmopolitanism is therefore not a matter of abstract tolerance of the other (Hannerz, 1990) but "explores the social processes and complex moral shifts that are necessary for moments of mutual connection and relationality to emerge or be denied within social and cultural context" (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015: 6). So, rather than declaring a belonging to the world, it is about belonging to it in a particular way. In this sense, this perspective puts forward a relational ethics, exploring the dynamics of the possibilities and constraints of human beings living in an uncertain global world. The ethics of social cosmopolitanism neither prioritizes the self and its interests, or the radical positions of the Other; rather, it is a relational ethics that is targeting change, socially produced through the mixing of and struggle between political, cultural and postcolonial forces.

In an attempt to develop such a cosmopolitan ethos, Delanty (2006) draws upon elements from the previously mentioned debates and proposes a *critical* cosmopolitanism which orients its ethics as one that highlights transformational possibilities with respect to cultural, political and social criteria. Ethics 'happens' in everyday practices as a form of (self)-transformation of cultural forms and discourses that takes place as a consequence of world openness. The ethics of social cosmopolitanism neither privileges the universal or the particular, the normative or the empirical, rather, ethics concerns processes of self-reflection and self-transformation through moments of openness when the self or the local comes in contact with the other or the global. Importantly ethics is not oriented at some status quo – be it some universal norm or some localized arrangement – rather it is opting for something new: transformative moments where the terms that are part of translation are themselves altered. Simultaneously, Delanty (2006, 2009) engages with a normative stand, called 'cosmopolitan imagination', when arguing that it makes little sense in calling something cosmopolitan when no learning process or internal transformation has taken place.

The term ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ is now widely deployed signalling a rejection of universalizing narratives of cosmopolitanism whilst adopting a processual, socially situated, self-problematizing and incomplete, contested nature of any cosmopolitan claim (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015). In particular, in attending to the process through which cosmopolitanism is constituted, hierarchical differences within time and space are recognized that possibly produce inequality, isolation, precarity and fear. As such, within this situated, emplaced cosmopolitanism, a critical approach emphasizes *whose* experience and *whose* understanding of cosmopolitan is being invoked and *for what* purposes (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015). It considers the powers at work, the ideologies upon which truths are based and the incompatible moral subject positions that go along with them. In this sense, including the perspective of people in subaltern positions becomes a ‘tool’ of critical cosmopolitanism (Mignolo, 2002).

Global organizations as actors taking part in a social situated process

Translating this cosmopolitan understanding into an ethico-political positioning of global organizations, one becomes interested in how global organizations and their members engage in the actual performance of cosmopolitanism in everyday life. Rather than following universalist cosmopolitan models, global organizations become involved in a search for creative and positive alternatives to this potentially hegemonic approach. In these transformative projects, the social cosmopolitan ethos urges us to consider moments of experience or perception that, as they occur, sometimes open up ethical possibilities. The question becomes how are global organizations and their members involved in an open process of interaction and communication between individuals from communities that cross multiple locations and thereby contribute to ‘world-making’ (Braidotti, 2013)? As a relational ethics of cosmopolitanism entails “the opening up of normative questions within the cultural imaginaries of societies” (Delanty, 2006: 43), elements of newness and ambiguity through which an ethical practice is based on making a practical decision in a moment of undecidability requires consideration.

While we could find no empirical studies examining global organizations’ practices from this social cosmopolitan perspective, there is resemblance between understanding the ethico-political positioning of global organizations in this social way and a practice-based view on ethical responsibility (Ibarro-Colado et al., 2006; Parker, 2002). Simplified, the theory on cosmopolitanism follows a similar distinction in the ways business ethics has been conceived (Loacker and Muhr, 2009; Parker, 2002). As Parker suggests, business ethics has largely been constituted by the distinction between a prescriptive moral philosophy and a more descriptive ethics, “a divide between understanding ethics as a form of everyday practice that can be understood in anthropological terms and understanding ethics as a timeless code that can be refined through the use of reason” (2002: 100). The former ethical understanding – similar to what social cosmopolitanism would urge us to do – focuses on ethical subjectivity and the ways people constitute themselves as subjects in relation to both their own conduct and their sense of responsibility to others (Ibarro-Colado et al., 2006). It considers how managers constitute themselves as the moral subjects of their own actions within the frameworks or so-called ‘regimes of truth’ they find themselves. Instead of turning to grand claims about business ethics, this conception “concerns itself with how a manager defines their ethical position in relation to everyday practice” (Ibarro-Colado et al., 2006: 48). Thus ethics does not follow an a priori logic, but forms a situated and aesthetic practice which requires a possibility of freedom: ethics and ethical relations can emerge while relating to discursively constituted norms (Carter et al., 2007; Loacker and Muhr, 2009). Rather than a free subject making ethical choices, the subject is constituted by practices of self-invention in relationship to certain social or organizational communities. With adopting such

practice-based understanding of ethical responsibility, there is an important shift away from “an ethics discourse grounded in maxims and practical reason (ethical *saying*) to an ethics discourse premised on human existence as an *aesthetic* phenomenon (ethical *showing*)” (Chan and Garrick, 2002: 695; italics in original).

Tensions between the political, cultural, social cosmopolitan perspectives

In our view, the ethics and politics of global organizations can be understood by carefully considering the possibilities and tradeoffs of each cosmopolitan perspective, and how they respond to central debates at play in the ethical positioning of global organizing, such as how to assess particular interests in a global business or how to draw upon universal criteria when looking into regional conflicts. Important debates that are relevant for our understanding of ethical stances of global organizations centre around the universality versus particularity of cosmopolitanism, the normativity versus empirical condition of cosmopolitanism and its rigorous application versus affirmative practice (Delanty and Inglis, 2011; Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015). It is these debates that allow for finding common points and alternative ‘third’ options which we suggest are required when considering the everyday ethics and politics of global organizing.

Between universality and particularity

The emphasis on universal norms and principles in the political perspective has raised much discussion on whether there is only one form of cosmopolitanism possible. Or, as Delanty and Inglis (2011: 9), ask: “Can there be numerous expressions, each culturally and historically specific, of the cosmopolitan ideal or is cosmopolitanism itself a transcendent value?” Central in this discussion is the issue of the superiority of internationalism over particularity as the political perspective tends to promote certain distance from more ‘local’ level forms of affiliation and community, disapproving of them in favour of commitment to more universal or global communities (Delanty and Inglis, 2011).

Against this universal view are arguments, reflected in cultural and postcolonial approaches, that see cosmopolitanism more expressed in the particular than in the universal. Rather than favouring the cosmopolitan ideal of global citizenship, the emphasis is placed on multiple forms of belonging and identity or the reconciliation of local attachments with global allegiances. Additionally political scholars who take an institutional perspective on the cosmopolitan world have pointed to the existence of variegated interests of political actors. A cosmopolitan politics in this understanding emphasizes that individuals are members of different communities simultaneously and have – and are encouraged to have – multiple affiliations (Hollinger, 1995). This leads to multidimensional conceptions of political society, in which the legitimacy of plural loyalties is an important democratic principle, resulting in different political institutions – civil and voluntary associations, networks and coalitions – that provide the expression of various interests and voices (Vertovec, 1999).

A similar critique can be found in reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which highlight that the universal justification of fundamental rights does not imply identical human rights practices around the globe. As many scholars (Jackson, 2011; Wettstein, 2009) recognize, a well-understood ethical universalism must be paired with cultural sensitivity. Rather than being an absolute global code of conduct, human rights, as ethical principles, “provide a universal, normative horizon” and “as such they do not eliminate but, in fact, emphasize the need for culturally sensitive interpretation and implementation” (Wettstein, 2009: 144). Further,

we would argue that a sole focus on universal rights may miss out on local ethical responses on the complex matters of human dignity, equality and equity.

Overall, the debate is about the relationship between the universal over the particular, where more and more the argument is that they don't need to be each other's opposite but that cosmopolitanism may be a secondary identification that builds upon more locally based identities (Delanty and Inglis, 2011). Crucial from Delanty and Inglis's perspective (2011: 2–3) is that a “cosmopolitan spirit sought to encourage people to relativize their own culture in light of the encounter with the other . . . to challenge all kinds of narrow patriotism and to open up the political community to a wider understanding of human community”.

Between normative conception and empirical condition

A related critique refers to the normative conception of moral or political cosmopolitanism, highlighting the political and material reality within which a universal, normative ethics is practised. The normative emphasis in political cosmopolitanism is, as Ferrara (2007: 55) argues, its “intrinsic desirability of a predicament whereby relations among the states of the world are regulated through norms rather than through force”. It is a system of norms constituted in its core by human rights that is seen as regulating political relations with the aim of a fair distribution of economic chances. Against this normative view is the recent attention geared towards the ‘real’ application of cosmopolitan principles, emphasizing how to implement a global governance based on the norm of global and sustainable justice (Hayden, 2005), also as a response to cynical responses which consider this normative stance as naively utopian.

Scholars emphasizing the empirical condition of cosmopolitanism primarily point to relations of power and structures of domination. As Glick Schiller and Irving (2015: 2) simply but properly say: “it is hard to know where to begin and how to act” as any action in the name of universal values is ultimately political and material. The argument is that one cannot assume, as implicitly done in the political perspective, that the worldwide community is an equal place, consisting of single, universally shared experiences or an undifferentiated category of humanity. Rather, once situated in a world of difference and unequal power, any application of a kind of moral code is “bound to create a hierarchy that supports some moral positions and interests while discriminating against others” (Glick Schiller and Irving, 2015: 3). This concern for unjust consequences of moral codes is formulated not only in relation to agendas and actions of large MNCs but also to those of NGOs and other societal agencies which often do not take seriously the impact of their agendas on politically marginalized communities (Cheah, 1998).

Within the political CSR literature, this same concern is taken up by Banerjee (2010), arguing that scholars often remain silent on the power dynamics that underlie deliberative democracy initiatives. Focusing on public deliberation with other actors, this perspective of deliberative democracy may fail to notice how the multi-stakeholder dialogue on the design and implementation of ethical codes may reproduce power inequalities, serving only the interests of the powerful MNC rather than those of less powerful civil organizations or local communities. In this respect, Banerjee (2010) argues that it is crucially important to attend to the power dynamics that underlie the norm-creation process of deliberative democracy initiatives and analyse how the criteria of transparency and democratic accountability are enacted, taking into account ways to correct for the disproportionate bargaining power of MNCs.

To respond to this need for an ‘empirical’ study of the notion of openness as a principal discourse of contemporary cosmopolitanism studies, Woodward and Skrbis (2013) propose to turn to performative (and qualitative) approaches. As they are interested in the emerging and processual quality of social life, they argue that analytical models of social performativity can

“highlight the assembled and contingent nature of cosmopolitan sentiments and the way such attitudes are afforded and constructed within particular contexts”. Therefore, Woodward and Skrbis (2013: 127) argue “that the long-term value of the concept must rest with both imaginative, critical and ethically challenging accounts of the concept as well as the movement toward realization of its empirical specificities and forms”. Drawing upon several studies of non-elite citizens, such as workers of various ethnicities, they argue that cosmopolitanism is not necessarily the exclusive domain of western, middle-class or elite groups. They propose that, although “being cosmopolitan does involve having access to repertoires of universalism, though such discursive resources and everyday practices are not necessarily articulated or deployed in universal and consistent ways but rather have an emergent and performative quality, depending on the facilitating contexts of environment and social setting”.

Between rigorous application and affirmative practice

Despite their differences, it seems the various perspectives are in the same boat when it comes to finding the appropriate terms for everyday ethical ‘practice’. While some (in a political perspective) keep underlining general principles, they are trying to find ways of rigorous application; vice versa, others have taken the route of situated and emerging ethical practice, while affirming – how undecidable this may be – future effects of hope and solidarity. While the critiques calling for a cosmopolitanism that is more attentive to the material reality of our social and political situation are severe, Held (2013) recently provided a defence of a political understanding of cosmopolitanism. For Held, the notion of moral cosmopolitanism inherited from the Kantian tradition remains the cornerstone of global governance. Crucial is that the elaboration of cosmopolitan principles is not an exercise in seeing a general and universal understanding on a wide spectrum of issues concerning diverse ethical matters. Rather, what is and remains at stake is the recognition of people’s equal moral worth, their active agency and what is required for their autonomy and development (see also Held, 2010). Every human being is the ultimate unit of moral concern.

Further, the failure of creating a global cosmopolitan democracy does not in Held’s opinion refute the Kantian approach, but rather intensifies the urgency of a more rigorous application of its tenets. A universalistic cosmopolitan approach does not deny the reality and ethical relevance of living in a world of diverse values and identities. As Held (2013: 36–37) argues:

At the heart of a cosmopolitan conception of a global order is the idea that citizenship can be based not on exclusive membership of a territorial community but on general rules and principles that can be entrenched and drawn upon in different settings. The meaning of citizenship thus shifts from membership in a community that bestows, for those who qualify, particular rights and duties to an alternative principle of world order in which all persons have equivalent rights and duties in the cross-cutting spheres of decision making that can affect their vital needs and interests.

Even if Held’s position is quite different from a relational, cosmopolitan ethics, both views share a similar need to find ways that align the social belonging of alternative group formation with the affirmative possibilities of a people becoming, and an ethics of sustainable transformation (Braidotti, 2013). In this regard, a very explicit affirmative, performative stance is taken by Braidotti when she proposes the notion of cosmopolitanism as ‘becoming-world’ that implies transformative projects which embrace diversity and the immanence of structural relationality but are affirmatively and creatively generated to creating possible futures. This latter requires “mobilizing resources and visions that have been left untapped and [by] actualizing them in

daily practices of interconnections with others” (2013: 23). At the heart of this political project, she argues, lays “an ethics that respects vulnerability but re-works it affirmatively, while actively constructing social infrastructures of generosity and hope” (Braidotti, 2013: 14). Such cosmopolitan relational ethics asks for visionary power and the pursuit of practices of hope, routed in the ordinary micro-practices of everyday life. For Braidotti, hope and social structures of generosity are a way of dreaming up possible futures, “which might enable ‘us’ to be affirmatively in this together” (p. 25). While Braidotti and other scholars within this perspective engage in a critique of the promises and pitfalls of cosmopolitanism, we also notice how they take back the concept of cosmopolitanism and reclaim the sense of solidarity, hope and struggle that helped shape the cosmopolitan tradition.

Conclusion

With the sketch of three perspectives of cosmopolitanism (and their take on the ethical and political ‘choices’ between universality and particularity, between normativity and situativity and between application and affirmation), we arrive at a rather complex picture to suggest that an ethical stance on global organizing needs to connect the principle of cosmopolitanism with the practice and process of cosmopolitanization. How to connect principle with practice is exactly how Featherstone (2002: 3; our italics) summarizes the challenge of the cosmopolitan ethos: even if “[t]he cosmopolitan was meant to be someone who *in principle* could know everything, who would learn how best to act from the accumulation of knowledge”, this “does not offer any easy recipes for how to make adequate *practical* judgments”. In our view, the future challenge needs to be concentrated around this central question of how research of global organizations can connect an ethics of (philosophical) principles with processual understandings of everyday and situated, ethical practice. In our view, it is important that an ethical grounding of the research agenda of global organizing as it draws upon cosmopolitan theory does not limit itself to the normative or ideal model of cosmopolitanism but actually adopts the complexity which comes along when relating to the process of cosmopolitanization, otherwise it might become a case of “fatal attraction” (Woodward and Skrbis, 2013: 127). Actually, by acknowledging the ethics of cosmopolitanism as a practice, we agree with Ibarro-Colado et al. (2006) the need to imagine a different “research agenda that is concerned with understanding the present, and with appreciating how people make sense of situations as ethically charged and to which spheres of knowledge they make reference to in so doing” (p. 52). Whereas cosmopolitanism offers us principles for a more inclusive world, we suggest that such principles are never final but always ask for a situated take of them as ethical practice. Such a practice-based conceptualization requires an empirical investigation of how particular decisions and behaviours are enacted in relation to these principles, and how this may give rise to social struggle and create opportunities to distance oneself from the specific structure in which we are embedded. Our proposal is thus, as many others have done, to approach the cosmopolitan ethos through a study of the present, which focuses on ethical practice, yet also acknowledges the riskiness, openness and impossibility of the ethical moment. It is exactly the tension between the ideological and the affirmative use of the cosmopolitan ethos, between the instrumental and radical moment of such cosmopolitan ethical practice that will keep our fascination going into how ethics is effectuated within the cosmopolitan context of global organizations.

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